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Hamas flexes muscles in swap

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Dr M Ziad Al-Alyan appointed Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times

KUWAIT: Dr M Ziad Al-Alyan has been appointed as the Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times, marking a new chapter in the leadership of the Arabian Gulf's first daily English-language newspaper, which was established in 1961. Dr Al-Alyan follows in the path forged by his late father and Kuwait Times' founder Yousef Al-Alyan, and his brother Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, continuing the journey with a renewed sense of purpose.

Dr Al-Alyan brings extensive experience across diverse fields, combining his roles in media and healthcare. Prior to his new appointment, he served as Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times.

In addition to his role in journalism, Dr Al-Alyan is the CEO of Central Circle Company Kuwait, a healthcare company specializing in medical equipment, consumables and pharmaceuticals. Central Circle is also a turnkey provider of mega hospital projects and has been operational since 1979.

With an impressive medical and academic background, Dr Al-Alyan is also an emergency medicine and trauma consultant. He graduated from Imperial College School of



Dr M Ziad Al-Alyan

Medicine in London and is a member of the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. He also completed a fellowship in emergency medicine from the College of Emergency Medicine in the UK. Complementing his medical expertise, Dr Al-Alyan holds an MBA from a joint program at the London School of Economics, HEC Paris and NYU Stern School of Business.

With his diverse expertise, Dr Al-Alyan is set to steer Kuwait Times towards continued excellence in journalism while contributing to the newspaper's role in shaping the region's media landscape.

GAZA: Hamas and the Zionist entity carried out a captive-prisoner swap on Saturday under a Gaza ceasefire deal, but a last-minute dispute blocked the expected return of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to devastated northern Gaza. As part of the exchange, the second since the truce took effect last Sunday, four freed Zionist women captives, all soldiers, arrived home in the Zionist entity after more than 15 months of captivity in Gaza. In exchange, the Zionist prison service confirmed that 200 Palestinian prisoners were freed.

The Zionist captives, Karina Arie, Daniella Gilboa and Naama Levy, all aged 20, and Liri Albag, 19, waved, smiled and gave thumbs up as they were paraded on a stage in Gaza City. Masked and armed fighters flanked them during a slick cere-

mony watched by hundreds of residents. After their handover to the Red Cross, the Zionist military said the women were transferred back into the Zionist entity and "reunited with their parents".

Buses carrying the released Palestinians left Ofer prison in the occupied West Bank and Ktziot prison in the Negev desert. As dozens of the former prisoners reached the West Bank city of Ramallah, crowds of Palestinians erupted in joy, raising many of them onto their shoulders. Hundreds waited in the local sports center where the prisoners were dropped off for a short health checkup, while hundreds more watched on from the surrounding hills as fireworks went off. The Palestinian Prisoners Club advocacy group said among those to be released was Mohammed Al-Tous, 69, who

has spent the longest continuous period in Zionist detention.

Bassem Naim, of the Hamas political bureau, had told AFP on Friday that Palestinians displaced by the war to southern Gaza should have been able to begin returning to the north following Saturday's releases. But the Zionist entity on Saturday said it would block such returns until civilian woman hostage Arbel Yehud is released.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said she "was supposed to be released today" but a Hamas source told AFP Yehud will be "released as part of the third swap set for next Saturday". On social media platform X, the military's Arabic-language spokesman, Avichay Adraee, reiterated that Gazans were not allowed to

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(Left) Hamas fighters escort four Zionist captives on a stage before handing them over to a team from the Red Cross in Gaza City on Jan 25, 2025. (Right) Palestinian prisoners released by the Zionist entity wave and cheer to people gathered to receive them at a sports centre, after arriving aboard buses of the Red Cross in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on Jan 25, 2025. — AFP photos



NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwaiti yoga practitioner honored

KUWAIT: The government of India on Saturday conferred the Padma Shri, one of the nation's highest civilian honors, on Sheikha Shaikha A J Al-Sabah for her significant efforts in promoting yoga in Kuwait and the region. The Indian Embassy in Kuwait extended its congratulations, noting that Sheikha Shaikha is the first Kuwaiti national to receive this distinguished recognition, which came on the eve of Republic Day celebrations in India.

Drone attack kills 67 in Darfur

PORT SUDAN: A drone attack on the Saudi Hospital, one of the last functioning hospitals in El-Fasher in Sudan's Darfur region, has killed 67 people and injured dozens, local activists and a medical source said Saturday. Some 850 km east, army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan on Saturday toured the Jaili oil refinery, the country's largest, a day after his forces reclaimed it from the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. — AFP

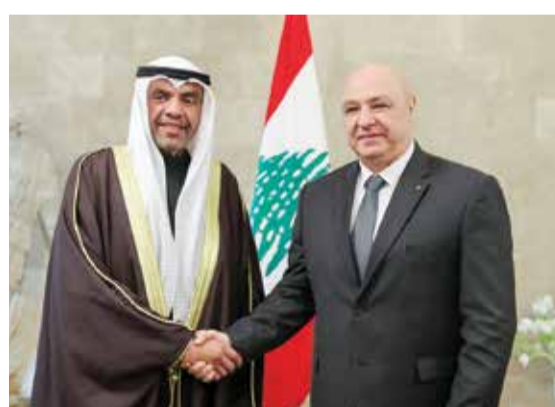
Denmark files desecration case

COPENHAGEN: Denmark charged two people on Friday under its law banning desecration of the Holy Quran, a first for legislation adopted after a series of holy book burnings that sparked outrage among Muslims, authorities said. The pair, whose identities were not disclosed, are accused of "inappropriate treatment of a Quran" during a festival in June gathering people from the political, economic and social spheres. — AFP

Lebanon slams Zionist refusal to withdraw troops

BEIRUT: The Lebanese army said on Saturday it was ready to deploy its forces in the country's south, accusing the Zionist entity of "procrastination" in its withdrawal under a ceasefire, a day before the pull-out deadline. Under the terms of the Zionist-Hezbollah ceasefire that came into effect on Nov 27, the Lebanese army is to deploy alongside United Nations peacekeepers in the south as the Zionist army withdraws over a 60-day period that ends Sunday.

Hezbollah is to pull back its forces north of the Litani River — about 30 km from the Zionist border — and dismantle any remaining military infrastructure in the south. "There has been a delay at a number of stages as a result of the procrastination in the withdrawal from the (Zionist) enemy's side," the army said in a statement. It said it was "ready



BAABDA, Lebanon: Lebanese President Joseph Aoun meets Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya at the presidential palace east of Beirut, on Jan 24, 2025. — AFP (See Page 2)

to continue its deployment as soon as the (Zionist) enemy withdraws".

Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Friday that the military's withdrawal

would continue beyond the Sunday deadline. "The withdrawal process is conditional upon the Lebanese army deploying in southern Lebanon and fully and effectively enforcing the agreement, with Hezbollah withdrawing beyond the Litani River," a statement from Netanyahu's office said.

"Since the ceasefire agreement has not yet been fully enforced by the Lebanese state, the gradual withdrawal process will continue in full coordination with the United States." Ceasefire mediators the United States and France have helped monitor its implementation. The accusation from the Lebanese army comes after UN chief Antonio Guterres called on Jan 17 for the Zionist entity to end its "occupation" of the south.

In a telephone call with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, Lebanon's new President Joseph Aoun spoke of the "need to oblige (the Zionist entity) to respect the terms of the deal in order to maintain stability in the south," his office said. Aoun said last week that the Zionist entity must "withdraw from occupied territories in the south within the deadline set by the agreement reached on November 27".

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Houthis free 153 prisoners of war

SANAA: Yemen's Houthi rebels, who are poised to return to the US terrorism blacklist, released more than 150 prisoners of war in tearful scenes on Saturday. Those freed, who included elderly men with long, grey beards, hugged and kissed relatives, some of them crying, as they were reunited in the rebel-held capital Sanaa.

The second unilateral release in eight months took place with the Houthis in the sights of not only US President Donald Trump but also the United Nations, after they detained seven UN humanitarian staff on Thursday. The rebels have also been fir-

ing on the Zionist entity and Red Sea shipping during the Gaza war, claiming solidarity with the Palestinians.

Prisoners in traditional clothes, sandals and keffiyeh scarves were led out under the eyes of heavily armed Houthi soldiers in combat fatigues. "We can't describe our feelings, as if we are born again," said Mohammed Nasser, one of the released prisoners. "We thank God that we are out of this prison. We thank everyone who helped in the success of this initiative."

The International Committee of the Red Cross, which had interviewed the prisoners and carried out medical checks during preparations for the release, said 153 "conflict-related" prisoners were freed. "This operation has brought much-needed relief and joy

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SANAA: Houthi fighters stand guard around newly-released Yemeni prisoners waiting to be united with their relatives on Jan 25, 2025. — AFP



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Local

GCC renews support to Lebanon, urges country to pursue reforms

Al-Yahya, Al-Budaiwi meet with Lebanon's leadership during visit to Beirut



BEIRUT: Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri (right) and Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya meet in Beirut on January 24, 2025. — AFP and KUNA photos



Lebanese Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati (right) meets with GCC officials, including Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya and GCC Secretary-General Jasem Al-Budaiwi.



Lebanese President Joseph Aoun speaks with Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya.

BEIRUT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya reaffirmed the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) strong commitment to Lebanon during a visit to Beirut on Friday.

At a press conference with GCC Secretary-General Jasem Al-Budaiwi and Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bouhabib, Al-Yahya emphasized the GCC's dedication to Lebanon's sovereignty, security, stability, and territorial integrity. "We reaffirm the GCC's demand for adherence to the ceasefire agreement in Lebanon and the cessation of any aggressions by Zionist occupation forces on Lebanese territory and UN peacekeeping forces (UNIFIL)," said Al-Yahya, who is the current President of the GCC Ministerial Council.

This visit follows a directive from GCC member states, in line with the outcomes of the 46th Extraordinary Ministerial Council meeting held in Kuwait on December 26, 2024, which addressed the situations in Syria and Lebanon. The visit conveys a message of solidarity from the GCC, reaffirming the council's commitment to preserving Lebanon's unity and territorial integrity.

The visit also underscored the need for comprehensive political and economic reforms to help Lebanon overcome its ongoing crises. Al-Yahya emphasized that the Lebanese people have a "historic opportunity" to shape their future, rebuild their country, and achieve their aspirations for security and prosperity.

He reiterated the importance of implementing



Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Nawaf Salam meets Abdullah Al-Yahya during his official visit to Beirut.



(From left) Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bouhabib, and GCC Secretary-General Jasem Al-Budaiwi hold a press conference on January 24, 2025.

key UN Security Council resolutions, especially Resolution 1701 and the Taif Agreement, to ensure permanent stability and security in Lebanon. Additionally, he highlighted the vital role of Lebanon's Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces in maintaining sovereignty and extending state authority across the country.

During the visit, Al-Yahya met with Lebanese leaders, including Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati, and Prime Minister-designate Nawaf Salam. He also conveyed greetings from Kuwait's leadership to Lebanese

President Joseph Aoun.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Bouhabib expressed gratitude for Kuwait's continued support, particularly its diplomatic efforts that helped ease tensions in 2022, following a dispute between Lebanon and the GCC triggered by controversial comments from Lebanon's then-Information Minister Georges Kordahi regarding the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen. Bouhabib praised Kuwait as a "wise, moderate, and open country" and noted that GCC member states have long hosted Lebanese citizens.

GCC Secretary-General Jasem Al-Budaiwi re-

iterated the GCC's support for Lebanon's security, emphasizing the importance of assisting Lebanon's army and internal security forces. He also rejected efforts to turn Lebanon into a base for terrorism, drug trafficking, or regional instability. He called on international partners to enhance regional and international cooperation to support Lebanon, stressing that Lebanon's stability is crucial for the region. Al-Budaiwi expressed hope that Lebanon's new government would meet the aspirations of its people and succeed in implementing essential reforms. — Agencies

Indian Embassy extends warm greetings on 76th Republic Day of India

By Dr Adarsh Swaika
Ambassador of India to Kuwait

On the joyous occasion of the 76th Republic Day of India, I extend my warm greetings to all Indian nationals and persons of Indian origin in the friendly State of Kuwait. I take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for their patronage and support for a strong India-Kuwait partnership.

Today, as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of our Republic Day, we feel proud of India's many achievements. Equitable development has been the corner-



By Dr Adarsh Swaika

stone of socioeconomic policies of India. Democracy, pluralism and unity in diversity are the traditional ethos of Indian society. India believes in its ancient philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family). This belief guides our foreign policy as well.

India today is a land of billion opportunities. Our collective resolve has ensured that the Indian economy is today the 5th largest economy in the world. And it is going to be the 3rd largest global economy in the next couple of years. India is moving ahead with the spirit of 'Make in India, Make for the World'. The massive business-friendly reforms and policies have contributed in unleashing the true potential of the country.

The new India has made tremendous strides in science and technology; it's one of the leading centers of innovation and Information Technology globally; it's the 'Pharmacy of the World'; has world-class production and manufacturing capabilities; and is a leading global partner to address new age challenges facing the humanity. Today, we are on the right track to build an Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) with the goal of becoming a developed country by 2047.

In the international arena, India has been playing a significant role in contributing to world peace, stability and prosperity. India has championed many global initiatives with like-minded countries in recent years, including the International Solar Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, Global Bio-Fuels Alliance, etc to foster pro-planet action. India has a multi-vector foreign policy that is designed to continuously strengthen its independence, freedom of choice and pursuit of national interest.

India believes that dialogue and diplomacy is the only way to resolve disputes and conflicts. In the region,

India's relations with GCC countries have been growing rapidly with major economic, energy, diaspora, security and political stakes. We are confident that India-GCC relations will be further strengthened under Kuwait's GCC Presidency.

The historic and successful visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi to Kuwait in December 2024 has opened a new chapter in our bilateral relations with Kuwait. The conferment of the highest national award of Kuwait 'The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer' on the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is a matter of pride for every Indian. The leadership of both countries attach utmost importance to relations with each other's country. This was evident from the exceptional gestures and hospitality accorded by the leadership of Kuwait to the Hon'ble Prime Minister during his recent visit. Our bilateral relations have been elevated to that of a 'Strategic Partnership'. This is expected to be reflected in various domains of cooperation. We look forward to greater engagement with Kuwait, both at Government and people-to-people level, in the coming times. The large Indian community in Kuwait remains a living and vital bridge of our bilateral relations.

The Embassy places highest priority to the welfare and well-being of the Indian community in Kuwait. I thank all the community associations, professional bodies, cultural groups and members of the Indian community for joining hands with the Embassy, where required, for the welfare of the community in Kuwait and contribute to the strengthening of our relations with Kuwait. Once again, on this special and proud occasion of the 76th Republic Day of India, I convey my best wishes to every Indian in Kuwait and all friends of India in Kuwait for their continued success, happiness and good health.



KUWAIT: The Korean community in Kuwait participate in a tree-planting event at the Al-Abdaliya Nature Reserve.

KOC, Koreans in Kuwait collaborate on tree planting initiative

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) hosted the third edition of the "Go Green Kuwait" initiative on Saturday at the Al-Abdaliya Nature Reserve. The tree-planting event is part of a larger environmental campaign aimed at supporting the New Kuwait's 2035 vision, focusing on afforestation and the development of natural reserves to expand green spaces across the country.

In a significant gesture of collaboration, KOC allocated a special tree-planting zone within the nature reserve exclusively for the Korean community, highlighting the bonds of friendship and cooperation between Kuwait and South Korea.

The event was attended by South Korean Ambassador Park Chong-suk, Vice President of the Korean Community Association in Kuwait Oh Sung-dae and Kuwait Branch Manager of the Korean Peaceful Unification Advisory Council (PUAC) Hyeon Bong-cheol. Several volunteers from the Korean community and KOC participated.

Ambassador Park expressed his appreciation, stating: "Planting a tree is planting hope for future generations. Initiatives like 'Go Green Kuwait' reflect the strength of the Korea-Kuwait partnership and our shared commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship." Hyeon also shared his pride in being part of the event. "I am very proud of being part of Kuwait's government efforts to make Kuwait more sustainable and greener."

The event also highlighted the ecological significance of planting desert-adapted species such as *Vachellia tortilis* and *Rhanterium*. These hardy plants, capable of thriving in the challenging Kuwaiti desert, serve as a metaphor for the enduring and resilient relationship between Kuwait and South Korea. The "Go Green Kuwait" campaign reinforces the shared vision of Kuwait and South Korea for a sustainable future, further strengthening the ties between the two nations.



KUWAIT: Ambassador of India Dr Adarsh Swaika and the LuLu Hypermarket management team launch the India Utsav 2025 festival.



Officials examine a display of Indian products at the Al-Rai outlet of the hypermarket.

LuLu Hypermarket launches India Utsav 2025

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket is celebrating the 76th Republic Day of India with the launch of India Utsav 2025, a festival that showcases Indian products and offers special discounts on a range of goods from India. The grand festival was inaugurated on Thursday, 23 January at the Al-Rai outlet of the hypermarket by Ambassador of India Dr Adarsh Swaika, in the presence of top LuLu Hypermarket management in Kuwait and a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers of the brand.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador Swaika highlighted the enduring friendship and trade ties between India and Kuwait. He praised LuLu Hypermarket

for its role in promoting Indian products, culture, and heritage through the India Utsav 2025 festival, and for fostering connections between the two nations.

The highlight of India Utsav 2025, which is being held from January 22-28 at all outlets of the hypermarket in Kuwait, is an exciting lineup of exclusive deals on a wide range of Indian products. Shoppers can enjoy special discounts on Indian fruits, vegetables, and groceries, as well as a 25 percent discount on sarees, men's kurta and churidars, allowing everyone to bring a touch of Indian tradition to their wardrobes.

Adding to the excitement of the week-long festival are a range of activities designed to engage and inspire young minds. School students are taking center stage in competitions such as The Great Indian Quiz, Patriotic Song Competition, Indian Ethnic Fashion Show, and an Art Gallery, showcasing their creativity, knowledge, and talent while celebrating India's diversity.

The Great Indian Quiz Competition saw ICSK Khaitan secured the first prize, with Carmel School Kuwait and United Indian School earning second and

third prizes, respectively. In the Indian Patriotic Song Competition, the first prize was proudly clinched by ICSK Khaitan, followed by ICSK Amman in second prize and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Indian Educational School in third.

The Indian Ethnic Fashion Show showcased remarkable creativity, with Delhi Public School claiming the first prize. ICSK Junior and Smart Indian School followed in second and third places. In the Art Gallery Competition (Junior Category), ICSK Khaitan won the top spot, while Carmel School Kuwait secured both the second and third prizes. In the Senior Category, ICSK Senior emerged as the winner, with ICSK Junior achieving both the second and third prizes.

The India Utsav 2025 celebration is not just an event, it is an experience of India's culture, flavors, and artistry. With tri-coloured displays, fun activities, and unbeatable offers on Indian products throughout the festival, LuLu Hypermarket is inviting families and communities across Kuwait to join in sharing and celebrating the spirit of India at the India Utsav 2025.

Local

Zain title partner of Qout Market's 11th season

Market supports homegrown talents and local products



KUWAIT: Hundreds of people visit Qout Market, which featured nearly 100 local businesses and creative local projects at Mishref Oasis, on January 25, 2025.

KUWAIT: Zain is the Title Partner of the 11th season of Qout Market — the premier gathering of local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) specializing in food, farm, and crafts. This partnership underscores Zain's commitment to nurturing young talent, fostering national creativity, and supporting homegrown products. This year's first market took place at Mishref Oasis, offering a vibrant winter atmosphere for visitors. Nearly 100 local businesses and creative local projects from various specialties participated, attracting thousands of visitors, including families, children, and youth, who enjoyed a memorable experience. The next market is set to take place on Saturday, February 22, 2025.

Zain takes pride in being one of the earliest supporters of this community-driven initiative over the years, a platform that consistently achieves re-

markable success each season. The event is highly regarded by the Kuwaiti community, bringing people together in an inspiring environment that celebrates local products and national creativity. It also provides a space for meaningful dialogue and the exchange of shared passions. Renewing its support for the 11th edition of Qout Market, Zain reaffirms its strategic commitment to empowering local talent and entrepreneurs. The company aims to contribute to cultivating a new generation of capable young Kuwaitis who can actively and effectively participate in the nation's economic development.

As in previous years, Zain participated in Qout Market through its dedicated booth, which offered interactive games for children and families, exciting competitions, and prizes. This created a unique atmosphere of fun and engagement, reflecting the

company's brand identity, A Wonderful World, and showcasing its close connection with the community.

Since its inception in 2013, Qout Market has aimed to attract and empower local talent and creativity, shining a spotlight on their efforts. The event has successfully established a vibrant platform with high-quality standards, encouraging the community to discover local industries and products, connect with one another, and share experiences and ideas.

Qout Market, run by two young women, seeks to empower small producers, artisans, artists, farmers, musicians seeking an audience, aspiring chefs, and even seasoned chefs looking for creative outlets. It provides small businesses with opportunities to stand out and engage with a passionate and enthusiastic audience, with participants carefully selected based on a number of quality standards.



KUWAIT: KPC employees are gathered to listen to a speech at the 45th anniversary event.



A Kuwaiti folklore band performs at the celebration of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) 45th anniversary.

KPC celebrates 45 years as Kuwait's economic backbone

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) expressed pride in the corporation's accomplishments and gratitude to its employees as it celebrated its 45th anniversary on Thursday at Levels Bnaidar. "I would like to convey the message from His Highness the Amir to all employees in the oil sector, affirming full and unwavering trust in the tireless work we do for Kuwait's benefit, especially in light of the new discovery (of hydrocarbons) and as part of our ongoing efforts," Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud said.



Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud, CEO of KPC.

He highlighted KPC's transformation into Kuwait's economic backbone, reflecting on its remarkable growth over the past 45 years. "KPC has evolved from a small entity into a cornerstone of Kuwait's

national economy, creating an enduring legacy built on hard work, dedication and innovation. Our success reflects not only technical expertise in the oil industry but also a commitment to pushing boundaries and embracing new technologies," he added.

Sheikh Nawaf emphasized the corporation's ability to implement ambitious strategies, from pioneering onshore and offshore oil extraction to becoming a leader in sustainable energy solutions. He noted that innovation remains the driving force behind KPC's success, ensuring it stays ahead of global energy demands. He also credited the collective efforts of employees for the corporation's growth.

The celebration brought together all KPC employees, offering opportunities to bond and enjoy the festivities. A visual presentation showcased KPC's milestones and achievements, while the corporation honored its valued partners, including the National Bank of Kuwait, which received a plaque of appreciation for sponsoring the event.

Kuwait's Q8 to operate 2 of Europe's largest fuel stations

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum International (Q8) has won two bids to operate two gas major gas stations in Europe, said the company's CEO Shafi Al-Ajmi. In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Ajmi confirmed that the company won the bid for the rights to operate a fuel station, located on a major highway in Luxembourg, as well as another bid to operate a second major station in the same region, both of which are among the largest on the European highways.

He emphasized that this achievement is a significant step in the company's strategy to strengthen its position in the European market, highlighting the long history of Kuwait Petroleum International in providing fuel services.

"This milestone will further enhance the Kuwaiti oil sector's position in global oil markets, especially in the retail fuel market," Al-Ajmi noted, adding that it will also promote the company's brand "Q8," symbolizing development, innovation, and distinguished services.

He explained that operations at both stations will begin on May 1st for a period of four years. These stations, which are 30 times larger than typical fuel stations, are expected to serve up to 25,000 customers daily, offering comprehensive services that

meet the needs of a large number of clients.

As part of the company's commitment to sustainability, solar panels will be installed on all suitable surfaces at the stations to reduce carbon footprints and support the use of clean energy, reflecting the company's vision for promoting sustainable solutions and innovation in the transportation services sector.

Kuwait Petroleum International was established in 1983 as the refining and marketing arm of Kuwait

Petroleum Corporation. It manages a vast network of over 4,700 retail fuel stations and transportation service stations across Europe, including more than 2,800 stations in Italy. The company also supplies jet fuel to global aviation at more than 70 airports worldwide and manufactures and markets some of the highest quality oils globally. Additionally, it holds shares in three refineries in Italy, Vietnam, and Oman through partnerships with global oil companies. — KUNA



This photo shows one of the two European gas stations to be operated by Kuwait Petroleum International (Q8). — KUNA

In my view

Justice for Palestine, justice for all

By Dr Bodour Nasser Behbehani

Genocide continues in Gaza under the guise of a 'ceasefire', revealing a crisis in the international community's failure to intervene and uphold human rights. The complicity of Western nations, especially the US and its European allies, is evident through their military and diplomatic support that legitimizes the Zionist entity's actions against Palestinians. Additionally, the decline of US influence and the emergence of a multipolar world indicate a shift in global power dynamics as nations demand justice. The struggle for Palestinian rights is connected to broader global efforts for justice and equality, highlighting the need for collective action and accountability.

In light of this, I am compelled to address a series of critical questions currently on the minds of the international community: Why has the international community not intervened to stop the killing of tens of thousands of innocent people? How can nations — under the supposed guidance of international law — remain silent in the face of such atrocities? Moreover, how have these calls for justice, which have led to widespread mass protests in cities worldwide, failed to influence government actions? This is a painful inquiry into a significant crisis of our global order.

The Palestinian people have suffered for 76 long years, and the past year and a half have seen this suffering rise to horrific levels, documented as genocide. The world is waking up to the fact that Western nations are giving political cover to these atrocities in broad daylight, and this growing awareness is laying bare the systemic racism and injustices characterizing the treatment of Palestinians. The United States and its European allies contribute to the oppression of the Palestinian people through military assistance, diplomatic support and the narratives shaped by their leaders, which lend political legitimacy to the illegal and inhumane actions against Palestinians.

This alliance represents a troubling moral failing, perpetuating violence and disregarding the cries for justice from Palestinian communities. Western media's silence on the plight of Palestinian children in Zionist prisons under horrific conditions contributes to a disturbing complicity among those who claim to advocate for human rights, allowing these injustices to go unchallenged. The unconditional support of Western powers for the Zionist entity, despite mounting evidence of brutality and suffering, exacerbates the crisis and deepens the global sense of injustice. This unwavering backing raises questions about the effectiveness and morality of the current world order.

Western moral authority is being called into question, exposing hypocrisy as American influence wanes in international institutions like the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The US has become increasingly isolated in its stance against calls for a ceasefire, often voting to continue hostilities while many member states support ending the violence. The UNSC's inability to uphold international law in Gaza reflects the diminishing capacity of the US to lead a unified international response, as member states increasingly seek alternatives to US-led initiatives. This indicates a shift in global order and balance of power toward more independent, multipolar strategies that bypass traditional Western dominance.

Nations are increasingly asserting their independence, as seen in Burkina Faso's challenge to French dominance, signaling a broader rejection of neo-colonialism and a shift toward a multipolar world where US dominance wanes. This movement reflects a wider uprising against exploitation, economic inequality, and unchecked capitalism. The collective voice of discontent is gaining momentum, urging governments to either heed the demands of their people or face repercussions.

This moment offers transformative opportunities on both international and domestic fronts, linking struggles for justice into a unified narrative. Understanding the fight for justice in Palestine within this global context highlights its connection to broader struggles against oppression, inequality, and systemic injustices everywhere. The harsh realities faced by one group can send ripples that affect global stability and morality.

Amid this transformative moment in history, we must recognize the interconnectedness of our struggles. The demand for justice in Palestine aligns with the calls for change from oppressed communities worldwide, illustrating that these struggles are not isolated but rather part of a collective narrative. Viewing the plight of the Palestinian people through the framework of universal human rights reveals that their fight reflects our shared humanity.

As the world confronts these truths, we must unite in our demands for justice, holding those in power accountable and challenging the systems that perpetuate injustice. Standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people affirms that their struggle is a call for justice for all, inherently linking the pursuit of justice for Palestine to the pursuit of justice everywhere.

NOTE: Dr Bodour Nasser Behbehani is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Kuwait University. Her research focuses on international relations and global politics, with specific interests in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions.

Local

Kuwait Times
Established 1961THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
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YOUSUF S. AL-ALYANEditor-in-Chief
DR. M. ZIAD AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24833199 Extn. 359
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 361
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.comInternational Dasman
Diabetes Summit brings
together over 400 experts

KUWAIT: Hundreds of local and international experts gathered this weekend at the first International Dasman Diabetes Summit (IDDS) to discuss the latest developments in diabetes science. The conference focused on advanced diabetes care, reviewing prevention methods, treatments, and the management of the disease's complications.

Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi highlighted that diabetes is a common chronic disease, both in Kuwait and globally, and is a leading cause of serious complications, including diabetic foot amputations, the second leading cause after road accidents.

Dr Al-Awadhi emphasized the importance of the conference in addressing various aspects of diabetes and hope that the discussions would contribute to improving healthcare services and strengthen scientific cooperation between Kuwait and international centers participating in the event.

Dr Faisal Al-Refaei, Acting Director General of the Dasman Diabetes Institute, said over 400 doctors, researchers, and specialists from Kuwait, the Gulf region, and internationally attended the conference. He said the conference served as a vital platform for sharing knowledge and fostering collaboration. Dr Al-Rifai noted that one in five people in Kuwait suffers from diabetes, and five GCC countries are among the top 10 globally for diabetes prevalence, underscoring the significance of the disease's complications.—KUNA



KUWAIT: Dr Faisal Al-Refaei, Acting Director General of the Dasman Diabetes Institute and Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi open the conference alongside senior officials. — KUNA

Kuwait-UAE week to
explore avenues for
stronger trade ties

KUWAIT: The upcoming "Kuwait-UAE Week," set for February 3-4 in Dubai, aims to explore opportunities to strengthen economic cooperation and bilateral trade between the two nations, said Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel. The event, under the patronage of UAE Vice President Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, will focus on creating promising investment opportunities in key sectors.

Al-Ajeel emphasized that the conference reflects the countries' commitment to deepening cooperation through knowledge exchange and meetings between public and private sector entities. He highlighted Kuwait's goal of strengthening ties with the UAE in sectors like tourism, healthcare, energy, and financial services, supporting both countries' sustainable development visions. The Kuwaiti-UAE relationship, Al-Ajeel noted, has become a model

of economic integration in the Gulf, with leaderships working to elevate these ties into a broader strategic partnership. The event also aligns with Kuwait Vision 2023 and the UAE's "We Are the UAE 2031" vision.

Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, highlighted the rapid developments in Kuwait-UAE relations and the importance of the week as a platform for investment exploration and trade growth. He emphasized the role of the private sector and SMEs in driving economic growth and enhancing both countries' competitiveness in the global market.

Preliminary figures show non-oil trade between the UAE and Kuwait reached \$12.4 billion in the first 11 months of 2024, reflecting a 7.2 percent annual growth. Kuwaiti investments in the UAE neared \$4 billion as of early 2023. Kuwait's Consul General in Dubai, Khaled Al-Zaab, praised the strong relations between the two nations, noting that these ties have led to significant partnerships across multiple sectors, including investment, culture, and tourism. — KUNA



Khalifa Al-Ajeel

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Visitors browse cars on display at the Custom Auto Show at the International Fairground in Kuwait City on January 25, 2025.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

A mother's tribute: AAW Run 2025
celebrates children of all abilities

Race commemorates Abdulrahman Al-Wazzan's fight against spina bifida

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Children of all abilities raced toward the finish line at the AAW Run 2025 on Saturday at the Kuwait Athletics Association. Tiny racers clutched medals almost as heavy as they were, while older kids lined up for theirs with determined grins. Wheelchairs rolled alongside running feet, and parents held their little ones' hands, guiding them to race ahead of their peers.

"There's no winner. We're all in this together," says organizer and founder of AAW, Jude Hayat. Inspired by the memory of her late son, Abdulrahman Al-Wazzan, who passed away at age six after living with spina bifida, she shares, "We wanted to create a space where every child could come and enjoy, no matter what obstacles they face."

Spina bifida, a birth defect where the spine and spinal cord don't develop properly, left her son relying on a wheelchair, which kept him from joining sports events like this one. His experience sparked Hayat's mission to create an inclusive environment where all kids, regardless of their abilities, could participate and feel empowered.



Jude Hayat, AAW Run's organizer and founder

Holding the event on her son's birthday, Hayat reflects, "We wanted to celebrate his life, and this felt like the best way to do it." She adds, "My son's life was all about love—love for his friends and for everyone around him," Hayat shares, highlighting the deep connection that inspired the event's inclusive message. The air was filled with the sounds of carnival games, cookie decorating, and joyful laughter, creating a lively backdrop for the day's festivities. The event drew nearly 2,000 people, including parents and children,



creating a heartwarming sense of community. "This is almost more than double last year's event, which was held around the same time," Hayat noted, emphasizing the growing support. "The community in Kuwait is something else. I am so grateful and blessed."

The heartfelt messages the mother hoped to share throughout the event were ones of deep significance: "raising awareness of all types of disabilities," "spreading kindness," "embracing love,"

and "offering help to those in need."

Hayat explained that all the funds raised from this event will be donated to support children with disabilities in need across the region through "Give," a non-profit charity platform. Held from 10 am to 2 pm, the event welcomed kids of all ages. While waiting for their turn in the race, they enjoyed a variety of fun activities, including goal shooting, a human claw machine, teddy hospital imaginary play, tote bag making and face painting.



KUWAIT: Kids sprint off as the AAW Run 2025 race begins at the Kuwait Athletics Association track.



Medals are on display, ready for the winners.



Young boys gear up for the race at the start line.



Two boys proudly raise their hands while clinching their medals after finishing the AAW Run race.



Young kids compete in the boys and girls races.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Bangkok's severe air pollution forces 352 schools to close

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Trump threatens aid cutoff on US disaster zone visits

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GUATEMALA CITY: This handout picture released by Guatemalan Migration Institute shows Guatemalan migrants descending from an US military plane after being deported from US at the Guatemalan Air Force Base in Guatemala City on January 24, 2025. -- AFP

Trump begins crackdown on migrants

US deportation flights arrive in Latin America

GUATEMALA CITY: US military planes carrying dozens of expelled migrants arrived in Guatemala, authorities said Friday, as President Donald Trump moved to crack down on illegal immigration. A total of 265 Guatemalans arrived on three flights—two operated by the military, and one a charter, the Central American country's migration institute said, updating earlier figures.

Washington also sent four deportation flights to Mexico on Thursday, the White House press secretary said on X, despite multiple US media reports that authorities there had turned at least one plane back. The Mexican government has not confirmed either the arrival of flights or any agreement to receive a specific number of planes with deportees. But Mexico's foreign ministry said Friday it was ready to work with Washington over the deportation of its citizens, saying the country would "always accept the arrival of Mexicans to our territory with open arms."

The flights came as the White House said it had arrested more than a thousand people in two days with hundreds deported by military aircraft, saying that "the largest massive deportation operation in history is well underway." Some 538 illegal immigrant "criminals" were arrested Thursday, it said, followed by another

593 on Friday. By comparison, under Trump's predecessor Joe Biden deportation flights were carried out regularly, with a total of 270,000 deportations in 2024 -- a 10-year record—and 113,400 arrests, making an average of 310 per day.

The Guatemalan government did not confirm whether any of the migrants arrested this week were among the deportees that arrived Friday. "These are flights that took place after Trump took office," an official in the Guatemalan vice president's office told AFP.

A Pentagon source told AFP that "overnight, two DOD (Department of Defense) aircraft conducted repatriation flights from the US to Guatemala." Early Friday the White House posted an image on X of men in shackles being marched into a military aircraft, with the caption: "Deportation flights have begun." And Trump told reporters that the flights were to get "the bad, hard criminals out."

"Murderers, people that have been as bad as you get. As bad as anybody you've seen," he said. Friday's deportees were taken to a reception center at an air force base in Guatemala's capital, away from the media. Trump promised a crackdown on illegal immigration during the election campaign and began his second term with a flurry of executive actions

aimed at overhauling entry to the United States. On his first day in office he signed orders declaring a "national emergency" at the southern border and announced the deployment of more troops to the area while vowing to deport "criminal aliens."

His administration said it would also reinstate a "Remain in Mexico" policy under which people who apply to enter the United States from Mexico must remain there until their application has been decided. The White House press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, said Friday on X that program had been reinstated, and that Mexico had deployed some 30,000 National Guard troops to its border.

The Mexican foreign ministry did not confirm either claim in its statement. The White House has also halted an asylum program for people fleeing authoritarian regimes in Central and South America, leaving thousands of people stranded on the Mexican side of the border.

Migrants held in US 'sanctuary city' as Trump moves army to border US immigration officers swooped on a New Jersey seafood business, detaining undocumented migrants, officials said Friday, as President Donald Trump deployed troops to the Mexican border. Trump has pledged a crackdown on migrants with the White House reporting that agents arrested 538 undocu-

mented people nationwide Thursday, with hundreds removed from the country on military aircraft.

"The largest massive deportation operation in history is well underway," White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt wrote on X. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka said that in a night-time operation in his city, a US Army veteran was among those detained at Ocean Seafood Depot, marking a resumption of workplace raids that were suspended under former president Joe Biden.

"Some ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents raided a business in our city without a warrant," Baraka told a briefing. "The problem with this is that none of these people were rapists or murderers or criminals—the problem is that ICE went in without a warrant." Newark, New Jersey, like other major cities including New York, is a so-called "sanctuary city" meaning local officials and law enforcement do not typically cooperate with federal immigration agents.

Trump has threatened to curb federal funding for cities that uphold sanctuary policies. Immigration enforcement agents used raids on businesses and workplaces during Trump's first term, and he has vowed to resume them, and to conduct operations at schools, churches and hospitals—also off-limits under Biden. —AFP

Gaza development put back 60 years by war: UNDP chief

DAVOS: The Zionist-Hamas war has put back development in Gaza by 60 years and mobilizing the tens of billions of dollars needed for reconstruction will be an uphill task, the United Nations said. Around two-thirds of all buildings in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed or damaged, and removing the estimated 42 million tons of rubble will be dangerous and complex, the head of the UN Development Program told AFP. "Probably between 65 percent to 70 percent of buildings in Gaza have either been entirely destroyed or damaged," Achim Steiner said in an interview at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in the Swiss ski resort town of Davos. "But we're also talking about an economy that has been destroyed, where we estimate that roughly 60 years of development have been lost in this conflict over 15 months."

"Two million people who are in the Gaza Strip have lost not only their shelter: They've lost public infrastructure, sewage treatment systems, freshwater supply systems, public waste management. All of these fundamental infrastructure and service elements simply do not exist." And for all these towering numbers, Steiner stressed: "Human desperation is not just something that you capture in statistics."

The fragile ceasefire agreement between the Zionist entity and Hamas in the Gaza war took effect on Sunday. Steiner said it was difficult to put a timeframe on reconstruction due to the "volatile" nature of the ceasefire, and because the UN's immediate focus is on life-saving aid. "When we talk about reconstruction, we are not talking about one or two years here," he said.

"We are talking about years and years, until you even come close to rebuilding, first of all, the physical infrastructure, but it's also an entire economy. People had savings. People had loans. People had invested in businesses. And all of this is lost. So we are talking about the physical and economic, and in some ways even the psychosocial phase for reconstruction." He said the physical reconstruction alone would cost "tens of billions of dollars", and "we do face an enormous uphill struggle on how to mobilize that scale of finance". —AFP



EL-ARISH, Egypt: Workers unload boxes of UN's World Health Organisation (WHO) humanitarian aid from a UAE plane at Egypt's El-Arish airport on January 24, 2025.-- AFP

Gaza aid surge has an impact but challenges remain

JERUSALEM: Hundreds of truckloads of aid have entered Gaza since the Zionist entity-Hamas ceasefire began last weekend, but its distribution inside the devastated territory remains an enormous challenge.

The destruction of the infrastructure that previously processed deliveries and the collapse of the structures that used to maintain law and order make the safe delivery of aid to the territory's 2.4 million people a logistical and security nightmare. In the final months before the ceasefire, the few aid convoys that managed to reach central and northern Gaza were routinely looted, either by desperate civilians or by criminal gangs. Over the past week, UN officials have reported "minor incidents of looting" but they say they are hopeful that these will cease once the aid surge has worked its way through.

In Rafah, in the far south of Gaza, an AFP cameraman filmed two aid trucks passing down a dirt road lined with bombed out buildings. At the first sight of the dust cloud kicked up by the convoy, residents began running after it. Some jumped onto the truck's rear plat-

forms and cut through the packaging to reach the food parcels inside. UN humanitarian coordinator for the Middle East Muhammad Hadi said: "It's not organized crime. Some kids jump on some trucks trying to take food baskets. 'Hopefully, within a few days, this will all disappear, once the people of Gaza realize that we will have aid enough for everybody.'"

"Prices are affordable now," said Hani Abu al-Qam-baz, a shopkeeper in Deir el-Balah. For 10 shekels (\$2.80), "I can buy a bag of food for my son and I'm happy." The Gaza spokesperson of the Fatah movement of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said that while the humanitarian situation remained "alarming", some food items had become available again.

The needs are enormous, though, particularly in the north, and it may take longer for the aid surge to have an impact in all parts of the territory. In the hunger-stricken makeshift shelters set up in former schools, bombed-out houses and cemeteries, hundreds of thousands lack even plastic sheeting to protect themselves from winter rains and biting winds, aid workers say.

In northern Gaza, where Zionist entity kept up a major operation right up to the eve of the ceasefire, tens of thousands had had no access to deliveries of food or drinking water for weeks before the ceasefire. With Hamas's leadership largely eliminated by Zionist entity during the war, Gaza also lacks any political authority for aid agencies to work with. —AFP

India, US planning meeting between Modi and Trump

NEW DELHI: Indian and US diplomats are trying to arrange a February meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump in Washington, two Indian sources familiar with the discussions told Reuters. India, a strategic partner of the United States in its efforts to counter China, is keen to enhance trade relations with the US and make it easier for its citizens to get skilled worker visas, two topics that will be on the agenda if the leaders meet, the sources said. However, it's not certain the leaders will meet in February. Sources said a bilateral meeting was possible later in the year, including when leaders of the Quad grouping of India, Australia, Japan, and the US meet at an annual summit hosted by India.

The White House said it had no announcements about a possible meeting to share at this time. Trump's return to the White House has raised worries about the imposition of tariffs on India, a country he said has high tariffs on US products and indicated that he favored reciprocating them. But the sources said New Delhi was willing to offer some concessions to Washington and was open to offering incentives to attract more US investment. Trump visited India in February 2020 during his previous term in office. Then, he was cheered by more than 100,000 Indians at a cricket stadium in Modi's political homeland in Ahmedabad, where he promised India "an incredible trade deal".

In 2019, Trump held a "Howdy Modi" rally with Modi in Houston, drawing 50,000 people, mainly Indian Americans. The United States is India's largest trading partner and two-way trade between the two countries surpassed \$118 billion in 2023/24, with India posting a trade surplus of \$32 billion.

Other topics of discussion between the two leaders would be enhancing partnerships in technology and defense, the sources said. Migration would be another area of discussion, as Trump has pledged a crackdown on illegal immigration but has said he is open to legal migration of skilled workers.

India, known for its massive pool of IT professionals, many of whom work across the world, accounts for the bulk of the skilled worker H-1B visas issued by the United States. Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaisankar, who attended Trump's inauguration on Monday, met US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and they discussed concerns related to "irregular migration" on Tuesday, the US State Department said. — Reuters

International

Trump threatens aid cutoff on US disaster zone visits

Senate confirms former Fox News co-host as Pentagon chief

LOS ANGELES: US President Donald Trump visited disaster zones in North Carolina and California on Friday, using the first trip since his return to office to turn emergency aid into a political cudgel.

Trump said he would sign an order that could scrap the federal disaster agency, stepping up his effort to exert presidential power over the levers of government and to decide which states get money from Washington. The Republican billionaire also



Pete Hegseth

threatened to withhold funding for Democratic-led California—a long-term target of his ire—to deal with devastating wildfires if it does not follow his orders.

But faced with the destruction left by terrifying fires that ravaged California, Trump was emollient, pledging the "federal government (is) standing behind you, 100 percent." "I don't think you can realize how rough it is, how devastating it is, until you see it," he said after flying over the damaged areas.

"I mean, I saw a lot of bad things on television, but the extent of it, the size of it... it is devastation. It's incredible. It's really an incineration." Trump's comments came after he threatened to withhold assistance if California does not change laws which he says allow undocumented migrants to vote—and linked that to a false claim that the state could solve its drought by simply opening a valve.

"In California I have a condition," he said. "I want two

things, I want voter ID for the people of California... and I want to see the water be released and come down."

In Los Angeles a briefing with politicians and firefighters that began with empathy quickly derailed as Trump began claiming California had an "unlimited" supply of water. He then embarked on an extended complaint about the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

"FEMA is incompetently run, and it costs about three times more than it should cost," he said. Speaking in North Carolina earlier, where floods caused by Hurricane Helene last year killed more than 100 people in the state, he said that FEMA had "really let us down." Trump said he would sign an executive order to overhaul or even get rid of FEMA. "We're going to recommend that FEMA go away," he said.

Deportation flights

Trump's tour came as his administration also kept the focus on migration, one of the key issues that fueled the 78-year-old's extraordinary political comeback. The White House trumpeted the arrest of 593 undocumented migrants on Friday, after 538 arrests on Thursday.

It said it had deported "hundreds" of migrants on military aircraft—a departure from the normal use of civilian planes. By comparison, under Trump's predecessor Joe Biden there were a total of 270,000 deportations in 2024 -- a 10-year record—and 113,400 arrests, making an average of 310 per day.

Separately, the US Senate narrowly confirmed former Fox News co-host Pete Hegseth as Pentagon chief on Friday, despite allegations of alcohol abuse, sexual misconduct and other fears about his ability to lead the world's most powerful military. Three Republican senators voted against Donald Trump's pick as secretary of defense, resulting in a 50-50 tie that required J.D. Vance to cast the deciding ballot—only the second time in history a vice president has had to intervene to save a cabinet nominee. The razor-edged result underscored concerns about Hegseth, who will take over the Pentagon with war raging in Ukraine, the Middle East volatile despite ceasefires in Lebanon and Gaza, and as Trump expands the military's role in security on the US-Mexico border.

tration since, and rescinded by every Democrat in the White House. Separately, the Trump administration announced it would rejoin the "Geneva Consensus Declaration", a 2020 statement of countries saying they hope to "protect life at all stages."

The original statement was spearheaded by Trump's then secretary of state Mike Pompeo, an evangelical Christian, but rejected by Biden. Those moves "are direct assaults on the health and human rights of millions of people around the world," Rachana Desai Martin of the Center for Reproductive Rights said in a statement.

Biden had signed two orders following the Supreme Court's decision to overturn abortion rights. His July 2022 order aimed to expand access to emergency contraception and protect women's health data, pushing back against any attempts at digital surveillance. The order responded to concern that women's data such as their geolocation and apps that monitor their menstrual cycles could be used to go after those who have had abortions. The July order also sought to protect mobile clinics deployed to the borders of states that have banned abortion.

Trump rescinded that, as well as Biden's August 2022 order that aimed to help women travel out of state to access abortion services.

The moves are part of a flurry of orders Trump has issued since returning to the Oval Office shoring up his right-wing agenda.

Earlier, Trump had addressed the Washington rally, the 52nd annual March for Life on the National Mall, which also featured masked neo-Nazis. "In my second term, we will again stand proudly for families and for life," Trump said in a pre-taped video message broadcast to the crowd. — AFP

The ceasefire agreement should be implemented in three phases, but the last two stages have not yet been finalized. During the first, 42-day phase, 33 captives the Zionist entity believes are still alive should be freed in staggered releases in exchange for around 1,900 Palestinians held in Zionist jails. Three Zionist women captives returned home on the first day of the truce in exchange for 90 Palestinians.

State-linked Egyptian media on Saturday said 70 freed Palestinian prisoners "deported" by the Zionist entity had arrived in Egypt by bus. They were to transit and go on to third countries. Another 16 were sent to Gaza and the rest were released to the Zionist-occupied West Bank, where cheering crowds waving Palestinian flags gathered in Ramallah to greet them.

The Zionist military offensive has killed at least 47,283 people in Gaza, a majority civilians. Almost the entire Gaza population of 2.4 million has been displaced by the war. "Probably between 65 percent to 70 percent of buildings in Gaza have either been entirely destroyed or damaged," Achim Steiner, the head of the UN Development Program, told AFP in Davos, Switzerland. Hundreds of truckloads of aid have entered Gaza daily since the ceasefire began, but the UN says "the humanitarian situation remains dire".

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, will be effectively barred from operating as of Thursday. In a letter addressed to United Nations chief Antonio Guterres, Zionist Ambassador Danny Danon confirmed: "UNRWA is required to cease its operations in Jerusalem, and evacuate all premises in which it operates in the city, no later than 30 January 2025." UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini warned on Friday that preventing the agency from operating "might sabotage the Gaza ceasefire, failing once again hopes of people who have gone through unspeakable suffering." — Agencies



LOS ANGELES: US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump pose with a helmet reading "Bataillon Chief 47" as they tour a fire area in Pacific Palisades, a neighborhood of Los Angeles on January 24, 2025. — AFP

The 44-year-old is a former Army National Guard officer who until recently worked as a co-host for Fox News—one of Trump's favored television channels. Hegseth has a combative media personality, fierce loyalty and telegenic looks—common hallmarks in Trump's entourage.

Supporters say Hegseth's deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq give him the insight to run the Defense Department better than more experienced officials who would normally be considered for the job.

He has pledged to focus the military on "lethality" and to bring back "warrior culture" to the Pentagon.

In confirming him, Republicans brushed aside his lack of experience leading an organization anywhere near the size of the Defense Department—the

country's largest employer with some three million personnel. They also approved Hegseth despite allegations of financial mismanagement at veterans' nonprofits where he previously worked, reports of excessive drinking, and allegations that he sexually assaulted a woman in California.

Asked during his confirmation hearing last week about criticism he has faced, Hegseth said there was a "coordinated smear campaign" against him, and that he is "not a perfect person, but redemption is real." Trump has stood by him, telling reporters Friday: "Pete's a very, very good man." Shortly after he was confirmed, Trump wrote on his Social Truth platform: "Congratulations to Pete Hegseth. He will make a great Secretary of Defense!" — AFP

Trump targeting abortion access at home and abroad

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump took aim at abortion access in the United States and overseas Friday, after promising activists rallying in Washington that he would protect the "historic gains" of the anti-abortion movement. Trump revoked two executive orders signed by Joe Biden protecting abortion access, which the former president put in place after the Supreme Court's seismic decision to overturn the constitutional right to the procedure in 2022.

Biden had moved to protect access to abortion pills and women's ability to travel to states where the procedure is not banned for care, among other things. But Trump—who has been enthusiastically backed by the self-described "pro-life" movement—undid those protections with his own order Friday.

He also cut off US funding to foreign civil society groups that provide abortion services, and put the United States back into an international statement opposing abortion rights. A White House memo issued Friday reinstated the so-called Mexico City Policy—known by critics as the "global gag rule"—which bars foreign NGOs from using American aid to support abortion services or advocacy.

The policy, first instituted by Ronald Reagan in 1984, has been implemented by every Republican adminis-

Hamas flexes muscles in swap...

Continued from Page 1

approach the Netzarim corridor through which they have to pass to reach their homes in the north.

In contrast to chaotic scenes the week before, when crowds threatened to overwhelm vehicles holding the three captives released at the time, hundreds of fighters arrived before the handover and quickly established a cordon keeping the crowd well away from the slick handover proceedings.

Masked, armed Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters had arrived at Palestine Square in SUVs and on motorcycles with sirens blaring shortly before 9:30 AM (0730 GMT), an AFP reporter saw. Carrying assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers they fanned out across the square, many carrying their groups' banners and wearing green headbands, as local residents gathered.

Sources from Hamas and Islamic Jihad told AFP they had deployed around 200 members of their armed wings, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades and the Al-Quds Brigades respectively, to secure Palestine Square where the handover was to happen.

The truce has brought a surge of food, fuel, medical and other aid into rubble-strewn Gaza, but the Zionist entity's UN ambassador on Friday confirmed that the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, Gaza's main aid agency, must end all operations in the Zionist entity by Thursday. The captive-prisoner exchange is part of a fragile ceasefire agreement between the Zionist entity and Hamas that took effect last Sunday, and which is intended to pave the way to a permanent end to the war.

Adopted without consent, a woman seeks justice

COPENHAGEN: Kalanguak Absalonsen was born in Greenland in 1971 and adopted a few years later by a Danish family without her mother's informed consent, cutting her off from her Inuit culture for more than 50 years.

Now she wants Denmark to compensate her for her wrongful adoption. "My mother didn't know what it meant when she signed the paper, that she wouldn't be allowed to have any contact with me," the 53-year-old told AFP in her Copenhagen apartment. In 1975, her mother was a young widow with five children, struggling to make ends meet in Greenland at a time when Denmark had a strategy of cultural assimilation for its former Arctic colony, today an autonomous territory.

Her mother's employer, a Dane, suggested she consider putting some of her offspring up for adoption.

The employer's brother, who was temporarily living in Greenland with his wife and children, ended up adopting Kalanguak, whose name was changed to the more Danish-sounding Karen. "When she was told 'You can give them to a Danish family', my mother didn't say 'no' but she didn't say 'yes' either," Absalonsen said.

Her mother gave four of her five children up for adoption. "After I arrived in Denmark, she wanted to see me but they said 'No, you're not allowed to have any contact with Kalanguak'," Absalonsen explained. According to



Kalanguak Absalonsen

anthropologist Gitte Reimer, the misunderstanding was probably the result of a vast difference between Denmark's adoption legislation and culture, and the Inuit tradition of open adoptions. Among Inuits, adopted children maintain regular contact with their biological parents.

Absalonsen grew up in a village in Jutland, in continental Denmark, raised as a Dane with very little insight into her Inuit heritage. "My parents closed the door to Greenland," she recalled. She first saw photographs of her hometown, Sisimiut, when she was 14 years old.

"I grew up with the mentality of the colonized... with the idea that I should be really grateful because if they hadn't helped me I would have ended up like the other Inuits, drinking on a bench in the street," said Absalonsen, now a mother of three and a nursery school teacher.

As an adult, she pulled away from her adoptive family. She never met her biological mother but has had sporadic contact with her biological brother and sisters since the mid-1990s, following their mother's death at the age of 49. Initially, Absalonsen wouldn't let herself embrace her roots. — AFP

Lebanon slams Zionist refusal to...

Continued from Page 1

Lebanon's army urged people to "be cautious in heading back to the southern border areas, due to the presence of mines and suspicious objects left behind" by Zionist forces. Lebanese state news agency NNA reported that some people displaced from border areas had received international calls, purportedly from a Zionist military spokesperson, warning them not to return home.

It said several border villages had been sealed off by the Zionist army while troops carried out demolitions. It reported one resident wounded by Zionist fire. A Lebanese government source told AFP that "caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati contacted the new US administration, warned of the gravity of the Zionist entity's attempt to circumvent the implementation of the

ceasefire, and stressed the need to respect deadlines". A Lebanese military source said Zionist forces had "completed their withdrawal from the western sector" of the south in early January, but "have not completed their withdrawal from the eastern sector as their withdrawal from the middle sector was delayed".

Hezbollah warned on Thursday that "any violation of the 60-day deadline will be considered a flagrant violation of (the ceasefire) agreement, an infringement on Lebanese sovereignty and the occupation entering a new chapter". It said the Lebanese state should use "all means necessary... to restore the land and wrest it from the clutches of the occupation".

A committee composed of Zionist, Lebanese, French and US delegates and a representative of UN peacekeeping force UNIFIL is tasked with ensuring any ceasefire violations are identified and dealt with. The UN peacekeeping force has reported Zionist violations of the terms of the ceasefire. Guterres said peacekeepers had also found more than 100 weapons caches belonging "to Hezbollah or other armed groups". — AFP

Houthis free 153 prisoners of war...

Continued from Page 1

to families who have been anxiously waiting for the return of their loved ones," said Christine Cipolla, the ICRC's head of delegation in Yemen. "We know that many other families are also waiting for their chance to be reunited. We hope that today's release will lead to many more moments like this."

Abdulqader Al-Murtada, head of the Houthis' Committee for Prisoners' Affairs, said: "The initiative is for humanitarian reasons and unilaterally. Most of those released are humanitarian cases, including the sick, the wounded, the elderly." The release follows the Houthis' latest detention of United Nations staff, which prompted a protest from Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday. "Their

continued arbitrary detention is unacceptable," Guterres said in a statement, calling for the immediate release of all UN personnel held in Yemen.

The Houthis have detained dozens of staff from UN and other agencies, most since the middle of last year, alleging an American-Zionist spy ring. Saturday's prisoner release also comes after Trump signed an executive order that moves to return the Houthis to the list of foreign terrorist organizations. Re-listing the Houthis will trigger a review of UN and other aid agencies working in Yemen that receive US funding, according to the order signed on Wednesday.

A decade of war has plunged Yemen into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with 18 million people needing assistance and protection, according to the UN. Last May, the Houthis freed 113 prisoners in a similar unilateral release. In April 2023, the rebels and Yemen's government exchanged about 1,000 prisoners of war. — AFP

International

Bangkok's severe air pollution forces 352 schools to close

'It's hard to breathe... I really feel the burn in my throat'

BANGKOK: Air pollution in the Thai capital forced more than 350 schools to close on Friday, city authorities said, the highest number in five years. Bangkok officials also announced free public transport for a week in a bid to reduce traffic in a city notorious for noxious exhaust fumes. Seasonal air pollution has long afflicted Thailand, like many countries in the region, but this week's hazy conditions have closed the most schools since 2020.

"It's hard to breathe... I really feel the burn in my throat," drinks seller Benjawan Suknae, 61, told AFP. "I think (school closures) could help to a certain point." The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration said it had closed 352 schools across 31 districts due to air pollution.

More than 250 schools in Bangkok were closed on Thursday, and officials urged people to work from home and restricted heavy vehicles in the city. Air pollution hits the Southeast Asian nation seasonally as colder, stagnant winter air combines with smoke from crop stubble burning and car fumes.

The level of PM2.5 pollutants—cancer-causing microparticles small enough to enter the bloodstream through the lungs—hit 108 micrograms per cubic meter by Friday, according to IQAir.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends 24-hour average exposures should not be more than 15 for most days of the year. The reading makes the Thai capital currently the world's seventh-most polluted major city. By Friday morning, 352 of the 437 schools under the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) had shut their doors, affecting

thousands of students.

Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul ordered a ban on Thursday on stubble burning—intentionally burning leftover crops to clear fields—with those responsible risking legal prosecution. In another bid to curb pollution, the capital's Skytrain, metro, light rail system and bus services will be free to users for a week from Saturday, transport minister Suriya Jaungroongruangkit told reporters.

"We hope this policy will help reduce pollution," he said. Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who is currently attending the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, called for tougher measures to tackle pollution on Thursday, including limiting construction in the capital and seeking cooperation from nearby countries. The city's authorities introduced a voluntary work-from-home scheme for three days this week. "I think there should be more awareness raised (by the BMA) and maybe a work-from-home policy would be best," said freelancer Wisut Kitnrong, 59.

Cities in neighboring Vietnam and Cambodia also ranked high on IQAir's most-polluted list on Friday, with Ho Chi Minh second and Phnom Penh fifth. Cambodia's environment ministry confirmed on Friday that the air quality in Phnom Penh and three other provinces had reached a "red level", meaning highly polluted. The ministry said in a statement that the air pollution was caused by climate change, waste incineration and forest fires, and urged the public to monitor their health and avoid outdoor activities.

Air pollution has closed schools across other



BANGKOK: A BTS Skytrain runs along its tracks amid high levels of air pollution in Bangkok on January 24, 2025.—AFP

parts of Asia recently—specifically Pakistan and India. Nearly two million students in and around New Delhi were told to stay home in November after authorities ordered schools to shut because of worsening air pollution. Pakistan's most populated province, Punjab, closed schools in smog-hit major

cities for two weeks in November, with thousands hospitalized as air pollutants hit 30 times the level deemed acceptable by the WHO. Bangkok's school closures come as UNICEF said in a report that 242 million children's schooling was affected by climate shocks in 2024.—AFP

Philippines stops survey after China's 'harassment'

MANILA: The Philippines said Saturday it had suspended a scientific survey in the contested South China Sea due to "dangerous" harassment by Chinese navy and coast guard vessels and aircraft.

China claims nearly all of the disputed waterway, brushing off rival claims from other countries—including the Philippines—and an international arbitration tribunal ruling that its assertion has no legal basis. In recent months, China has deployed navy and coast guard vessels in a bid to bar the Philippines from strategically important reefs and islands in the South China Sea.

Three Chinese coast guard vessels and four smaller boats made "aggressive manoeuvres" towards two Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources ships and their inflatable boats on Friday near Thitu island, a Philippine Coast Guard statement said. The Filipino vessels were transporting scientists intending to conduct a "marine scientific survey and sand sampling" at a sandbar off Thitu, the largest Philippine-occupied island in the disputed Spratly chain, the coast guard said.

Thitu lies about 430 kilometers (267 miles) from the major Philippine island of Palawan and more than 900 kilometers from China's nearest major landmass of Hainan Island.

Chinese forces garrison the Subi Reef near Thitu. Manila's coast guard said a Chinese navy helicopter "hovered at an unsafe altitude" above the Philippine fisheries agency's inflatable boats on Friday, "creating hazardous conditions due to the propeller wash". "As a result of this continuous harassment and the disregard for safety exhibited by the Chinese maritime forces", the Philippine Coast Guard said it and the fisheries agency "regrettably suspended their survey operations and were unable to collect sand samples" from unoccupied sandbars off Thitu. Despite the "dangerous confrontations", no accidents occurred, the coast guard added.

The Chinese foreign affairs ministry and Beijing's embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to requests for comment from AFP. Also on Friday, the same day as the incident near Thitu, Philippine forces resupplied and rotated without incident troops manning a derelict navy vessel grounded on the Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratlys, the foreign affairs department said. Manila had deliberately grounded the vessel on the reef to assert its claim over the area.—AFP

DR Congo conflict 'catastrophic': HRW

NAIROBI: Civilians in eastern DR Congo face "increasing risks" as Rwandan-backed group M23 closes in on the key city of Goma, Human Rights Watch said on Saturday.

Friday saw intense clashes barely 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the provincial capital of North Kivu, which has a million inhabitants and at least as many displaced people. "Civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo are at increasing risk as the abusive M23 armed group, supported by the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF), as the group nears Goma," HRW said in a statement which warned of looming "catastrophic consequences" for people in the region. "The situation facing Goma's civilians is becoming increasingly perilous and the humanitarian needs are enormous," said Clementine de Montjoye, HRW's senior Africa researcher.

"The horrific abuses by the M23, Wazalendo (pro-Kinshasa militia) and the Rwandan and Congolese armies should serve as a stark warning to concerned governments that they need to press the warring parties to protect civilians," de Montjoye added. "Currently around 30 to 40 percent of injured people seeking medical care in Goma are civilians," one humanitarian source told HRW.

The rights group noted that on Friday, the Inter-



BANGKOK: Police enter an immigration detention centre in Bangkok.—AFP

UN urges Thailand not to deport Uyghurs to China

GENEVA: The UN indicated Friday it was urging Thailand not to send dozens of detained Uyghurs to any country where they fear "significant" harm, after reported plans to deport them to China.

Rights groups have warned that Bangkok is preparing to deport imminently a group of 48 members of China's mostly Muslim Uyghur minority, who are being held in immigration centers around Thailand.

The groups said they fled China—which has been accused of grave human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region against Uyghurs—more than a decade ago and live in constant fear of being sent back. Thai authorities have repeatedly denied such a plan. The United Nations human rights office has "been closely following these cases", spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told AFP on Friday.

"We have been in touch with the relevant authorities, encouraging a durable solution that would prevent anyone being returned to any country where they would face significant risks of harm, in line with Thailand's international human rights obligation and its own national law," she said in an email.

Her comment came after a group of independent

UN rights experts earlier this week urged authorities to "immediately halt" the possible transfer, warning the Uyghurs faced "real risk of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" in China. They said the 48 Uyghurs were detained after entering Thailand to seek protection, and that they have allegedly been held in de facto incommunicado detention for more than a decade, with no access to lawyers or family members.

Urging Thailand to help them access asylum procedures and humanitarian assistance, the experts said: "It is our view that these persons should not be returned to China... We are concerned they are at risk of suffering irreparable harm." The experts, who are appointed by the UN Human Rights Council but who do not speak on behalf of the United Nations, said 23 of the 48 Uyghurs suffer from serious health conditions. Human Rights Watch said last week that Thai immigration officials had asked the Uyghurs to complete new paperwork and had photographed them—steps the rights group believes are in preparation for their forcible transfer.

HRW says the Uyghurs are on hunger strike, although Thai authorities have denied this. The United States has branded China's treatment of the minority a "genocide". A damning report released by the UN rights office in 2022 detailed violations including torture and forced labor and "large-scale" arbitrary detention in what China calls vocational training centers. Beijing denies allegations of abuse and insists its actions in Xinjiang have helped to combat extremism.—AFP



GOMA: A group of residents observe fighting in the distance from the top of rocky formation in the town of Mugunga, 10km north-west of Goma.—AFP

national Committee of the Red Cross said the hospital it runs in Goma was "saturated" after an influx of patients, largely women and children. The group also accused the M23 of "forced labor, forced recruitment, and other abusive practices."

It added that "Rwandan forces and the M23 and the Congolese military and its allies have a legacy of atrocities including murder, rape, and looting." The

conflict between the M23, supported by some 3,000 to 4,000 Rwandan troops according to the UN, and Congolese forces has gone on for more than three years, deepening a chronic humanitarian crisis in the region. Many civilians have been forced from their homes on countless occasions. The UN estimates around 400,000 people have been displaced by fighting since the start of this year.—AFP

News in Brief

India probes mystery illness after 17 die

SRINAGAR: Authorities in India-administered Jammu and Kashmir were investigating a mysterious disease that has claimed the lives of 17 people, local media reports said Saturday. The deaths, including those of 13 children, have occurred in the remote village of Badhaal in Jammu's Rajouri area since early December. The village was declared a containment zone earlier this week with around 230 people quarantined, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency reported.—AFP

Iran arrests 13 Bahais for promoting 'misguided sect'

TEHRAN: Iranian authorities arrested 13 followers of the Bahai faith in the central province of Isfahan, accusing them of proselytizing for their "misguided sect", the Revolutionary Guards said on Saturday. The Bahais, Iran's largest non-Muslim minority, are branded "heretics" by the Islamic republic and are often targeted over their alleged ties to Zionist entity, home to their most important shrines and world headquarters. "These individuals, who were illegally and indirectly promoting their religious deviation, were arrested by intelligence agents," the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said in a statement carried by Iranian state news agency IRNA.—AFP

India's foreign secretary to visit China to revive ties

NEW DELHI: India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri will visit Beijing on Jan 26-27 to discuss steps to boost ties with China, as the Asian neighbors revive relations that were strained since a deadly military clash on their disputed frontier in 2020. New Delhi and Beijing reached a milestone pact in October on lowering military tensions on their Himalayan border and have begun taking baby steps to restore ties following talks between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Russia. India's foreign ministry said on Thursday that Misri's visit "flows from the agreement at the leadership level to discuss the next steps for India-China relations, including in the political, economic, and people-to-people domains".—Reuters

Spanish police detain fugitive over 2023 Brussels 'terror attack'

MADRID: Spanish police on Saturday announced the arrest of a man wanted in Belgium over his suspected role in an October 2023 "terrorist attack" in Brussels which claimed the lives of two Swedes. The man is suspected of having provided the attacker with the gun which he used to shoot at people in central Brussels before a football match between Belgium and Sweden was about to start, police said in a statement, adding that he had been arrested at Malaga airport on Friday as he tried to leave Spain.—AFP

France holds seven after crypto boss kidnapping

PARIS: France is holding six men and a woman following the kidnapping and torture of the co-founder of a global cryptocurrency company and his partner, prosecutors said Saturday. The seven, who could face long prison terms up to life, are among 10 people taken into custody late Thursday as anti-gang investigators probe the case. David Balland, a 36-year-old co-founder and former employee of Ledger—a world leader in security systems for crypto and digital assets—and his partner were taken from his home in Mereau in the Loire region early Tuesday, Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuau told reporters Friday.—AFP

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 2025

IMF chief tells Europe to take page out of US book

Meta guru urges Europe to gamble more on AI



DAVOS: (From left) CNBC anchor Sara Eisen, Singapore's President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde, BlackRock chairman and CEO US Larry Fink and Saudi Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal Alibrahim attend a session during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in the Alpine resort of Davos on January 24, 2025. — AFP

DAVOS: With the European economy lagging behind the United States, the head of the International Monetary Fund had a piece of advice for the continent on Friday: "Believe in yourself."

There was much handwringing about Europe losing its competitive edge at the World Economic Forum in Davos this week, with the European Union racing to act to catch up with the United States and China.

At the forum's closing panel, focused on the global economic outlook, IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva suggested a change in attitude to tackle the issue. "The United States has a culture of confidence. Europe has a culture of modesty," Georgieva said. "My advice to my fellow Europeans is more confidence. Believe in yourself and most importantly, tell others that you do."

European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde warned that Europe needed to keep its "huge amount" of talent at home and raised the

alarm for its leaders to act. "So if the European leaders can actually get their act together, respond to this wake-up call and existential threat that can be identified, then I think that there is a huge potential for Europe to respond to the call," said Lagarde, herself a former IMF chief.

She even suggested encouraging "disenchanted" talent to move to Europe after Donald Trump returned to the White House this week. "Maybe it's also time to import a few of the talents that would be disenchanted, for one reason or the other, from another side of the sea," she said, without directly mentioning Trump.

In front of hundreds of movers and shakers in business and politics in his hotly awaited virtual speech on Thursday, Trump criticized Europe, especially over the United States' trade balance gap with the EU.

"I'm trying to be constructive because I love Europe," Trump said. "They do treat the United States of America very, very unfairly with the bad taxes."

Lagarde said it was true there had to be negotiations with the United States. "There has to be trade relationships that are organized in a framework that is giving confidence to the partners. It cannot be about removing all the rules, ignoring the institutions," she said.

Europe should take greater risks and plough more money into artificial intelligence, Meta's chief AI scientist Yann LeCun told AFP at the World Economic Forum. Widely viewed as one of the "godfathers" of AI, he also judged as "a little unrealistic" a \$500 billion AI bazooka announced by US President Donald Trump this week. The major investment deal aims to build infrastructure for AI, led by Japanese giant SoftBank and ChatGPT-maker OpenAI. Tesla and X chief Elon Musk as well as Anthropic head Dario Amodei have also expressed doubts about the plans.

"It is not clear that any entity has this amount of money to invest, even over five years," LeCun said in an interview. "This is certainly what is lack-

ing in Europe in terms of investment," he said. But he admitted the United States' financial system was different to Europe's. "There is a lot of money to invest in the United States because of retirement funds, which do not exist in Europe."

AI was again the buzzword at the annual talkfest in the Swiss ski village of Davos, with technology firms such as Facebook-owner Meta out in full force on the thoroughfare near the forum's main center. Meta proudly put on show its Ray-Ban Meta AI glasses -- which can take photos and provide details about objects in view -- at its storefront, for participants to try.

The amounts involved in AI are massive. LeCun pointed to Meta's plans to invest around \$60 billion this year, while its rivals plan to plough billions of dollars too. "These are absolutely enormous numbers. And all of this is used to build a computing infrastructure that not only allows AI models to be trained -- it is not a huge amount of resources -- but above all to run them," LeCun noted. — AFP

Saudis showcase charm offensive at Davos forum

DAVOS: Two buildings branded "Saudi House" and "Saudi At Davos" stand out on the chic main street of the Swiss Alpine village hosting the World Economic Forum, showcasing the kingdom's growing presence at major international events.

Saudi officials and business leaders make the annual pilgrimage to the meeting of the world's global elites every year, with this year's delegation counting 57 people. Nine ministers made the trip this time, the most from any country, with some participating in panel discussions alongside other powerbrokers from around the world. The "Saudi At Davos" building, where the delegation hosts guests, overlooks the congress center hosting the WEF talks where world leaders and entrepreneurs hold their annual talkfest.

A European official who attends major international conferences said the Saudis have a "strong" presence at formal events such as G20 or IMF meetings or informal ones like the WEF.

"The delegations even seem large by our standards," he said on condition of anonymity.

Saudi Arabia began to increase its footprint in global events after Crown Prince Mohammed bin



DAVOS: Saudi Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal Alibrahim gestures as he addresses the audience during the annual meeting of the WEF at Davos on January 24, 2025. — AFP

Salman launched his Vision 2030 reform agenda in 2016, an official said. Since 2017, Saudi Arabia has held its own annual "Davos in the Desert" conference, officially dubbed the Future Investment Initiative (FII), to showcase the crown prince's vision of diversifying the country's oil-dependent economy.

Saudi Arabia "needs to punch at (its) weight" on the global stage given its growing institutional presence and the return of Donald Trump, the kingdom's finance minister told AFP in Davos.

The wealthiest country in the Arab world has taken a larger place on the international scene since

ber, reaching a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.2 million, the NAR said.

This was its strongest pace since February 2024 -- and in line with analysts' expectations. "Home sales in the final months of the year showed solid recovery despite elevated mortgage rates," said Yun in a statement. While sales during the winter months are typically softer than in the spring and summer, "momentum is rising with sales climbing year-over-year for three straight months," Yun added.

"Job and wage gains, along with increased inventory, are positively impacting the market," he said. From a year ago, existing home sales were up 9.3 percent in December -- the largest year-on-year gain since June 2021 -- the NAR said. Meanwhile, the median sales price jumped by 6.0 percent from a year ago, to \$404,400 last month. The growth in sales came despite the popular 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaging nearly 6.9 percent as of December 26, according to Freddie Mac data.

"The prospects for this year look better, but not by much as the triple threat of high mortgage rates, high

assuming the presidency of the G20 in 2020, and is seeking the right balance between its Western allies and emerging countries. "We are a key player in the world, the world economy, and we need to punch at our weight", Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan said on the sidelines of the annual World Economic Forum in Davos.

Through Al-Jadaan, the Gulf state also chairs the committee advising the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on monetary and financial matters.

Riyadh is also a key geopolitical player in the Middle East and a Global South looking to make its voice heard. "We need to make sure that emerging economies and low income countries' voice is heard," Al-Jadaan said.

It hosts Formula 1 races and professional golf tournaments. In 2021, the Saudi Public Investment Fund bought the Newcastle United football club in England. It scored a major coup last year when it was selected to host the 2034 World Cup. "It is about visibility. It's about leadership," Karen Young, a political economist at the Middle East Institute in Washington, told AFP.

The Saudi efforts are aimed at two audiences, domestic and international, Young said. "This is really to demonstrate to Saudi citizens that there is a government that's interested in what people want, especially what young people (want)," she said. "That's the first priority." Two-thirds of the Saudi population is under 30 years old. — AFP



WASHINGTON: US home sales dropped in December 2024.

home prices and low supply will continue," said economist Robert Frick with the Navy Federal Credit Union. Even with builders poised to add more homes, they will be constrained with interest rates still elevated. And homebuyers, Frick said, will likely face mortgage rates between 6.5 and 7.0 percent. — AFP

Airbus grounds its massive Beluga cargo flights

PARIS: European aerospace giant Airbus confirmed Friday that it was shutting down its specially freight business using colossal Beluga jets, resulting in the loss of 75 jobs. All flights operated by the Airbus Beluga Transport (AiBT) fleet have been suspended with immediate effect, a spokeswoman told AFP after a report in business daily Les Echos.

The Beluga—billed by Airbus as the world's biggest cargo plane in terms of volume transported—looks something like a whale, with a rounded fuselage mounted on an Airbus A300-600 base.

Big enough to carry two full-size helicopters of the Super-Puma type, the mega-transporter was brought into service in 1995 specifically to ferry large sections of aircraft between different Airbus manufacturing sites. Airbus began replacing its first generation of planes—BelugaSTs—with the even larger Beluga XLs based on the A330 in 2019. The latter continue to ferry parts between Airbus sites.

The consortium repurposed the previous jets by launching AiBT in 2022, with four planes offering to transport oversized cargo for customers in the aerospace, energy, maritime, military, space and humanitarian aid sectors. Airbus said there had been a notable shift in some areas towards using maritime transport, even though the demand for global air freight remained high.

But it said that was not the main reason for shutting down the business.

"AiBT is not ending operations because of changes in the air freight market," the spokeswoman said. "The main challenge was the significant operational difficulties" because the plane required specially trained teams and loading equipment, she said. —AFP

US home sales in 2024 weakest in nearly 30 years

WASHINGTON: Sales of previously owned US homes slipped to their weakest level in about three decades last year on the back of high housing prices and mortgage rates, according to industry data released Friday. Existing home sales came in at 4.06 million on an annual basis in 2024, the lowest level since 1995, said the National Association of Realtors (NAR).

The weakness came despite population and job growth over the past three decades, NAR chief economist Lawrence Yun said on a call with reporters. But he pointed to affordability issues with elevated home prices, alongside higher mortgage rates and a lack of inventory to explain the trend. In December, however, existing home sales rose by 2.2 percent from Novem-

Business

Al-Bahar: Empowering Kuwaiti youth as the future of country's growth and development

Tamakan welcomes Deputy Group CEO of NBK

KUWAIT: During a highly engaging panel discussion, the sixth edition of the Tamakan Program welcomed Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait. Drawing on her extensive experience in the banking sector, Al-Bahar shared valuable insights and offered Kuwaiti youth practical advice to help them establish successful careers.

First step in banking

Kicking off her speech, Al-Bahar reflected on the early stages of her career in the banking sector. She remarked, "I began my professional journey as an intern at NBK before transitioning to corporate banking, which proved to be an incredible learning experience. Throughout my career, I had the privilege of participating in numerous training programs, both locally and internationally, at esteemed institutions such as Harvard, Stanford, and the Wharton School of Business."

"I have always had an insatiable appetite for learning, knowledge, and gaining new experiences. I actively participated in numerous workshops and dedicated countless hours to reading, which helped me overcome challenges and address problems in collaboration with my team," Al-Bahar added.

When asked about her decision to pursue a career in banking, Al-Bahar explained, "I chose to work in this vital sector because it ignited my passion and provided the ideal platform to achieve my goals." She emphasized that one of the key strengths of the banking sector lies in its widespread influence across various fields, impacting everyone from individual customers to large corporations and even entire nations. She highlighted the sector's vital role in the national economy, noting that it supports the government's economic agenda by financing mega projects across multiple sectors. Additionally, she pointed out the significant contribution of banking in the residential sector, helping citizens realize their aspirations of owning their dream home.

Key challenges

Reflecting on the major challenges she faced throughout her banking career, Al-Bahar shared, "I encountered numerous challenges, particularly when I began working with international banks and large corporations on significant deals. While it was an incredibly exciting experience, it also placed immense pressure on me to meet deadlines and fulfill obligations on time."

She emphasized that her success in overcoming these challenges was largely attributed to the support of a highly skilled and diverse team, characterized by exceptional efficiency, commitment, and responsibility.

Private sector

Al-Bahar pointed out that, in contrast to the public sector, the private sector offers employees the opportunity for faster personal growth. It allows individuals to enhance their skills, gain valuable experience, and learn not only from their colleagues but also from customers. She further emphasized that working in the banking sector provides continuous learning opportunities, exposure to diverse challenges, and access to new markets and customers. Specifically, at NBK, employees benefit from the bank's strong presence not only in the local market but also in regional and global markets.

Furthermore, Al-Bahar offered a set of valuable insights to the participants of the "Tamakan" Program, stating, "I look forward to seeing many of you join the banking sector. However, to achieve this, you must work diligently, be active team members, avoid focusing solely on individual work, and take on responsibility to add value to the sector, which plays a crucial role in Kuwait's economic development."

"Teamwork benefits both the employee and the organization they work for. Therefore, always strive to earn the trust of your colleagues, make them believe in your abilities, and instill confidence in your ability to accomplish tasks. Embrace challenges and never yield to obstacles, as they are part of any job. Focus on finding solutions to the problems you encounter by reading and consulting with your managers and experienced colleagues," Al-Bahar advised.

Al-Bahar also advised young people entering the workforce to remain committed and ensure that the tasks entrusted to them are completed on time. She emphasized the importance of initiating innovative ideas and demonstrating loyalty to their workplace, as this would enhance managers' trust in the employee. Such dedication, she explained, paves the way for career advancement, offering opportunities for excellence, promotions, and ultimately reaching the top of the career ladder.

Al-Bahar emphasized, "Employees must be deeply passionate about their work, showcasing the ability



Shaikha Al-Bahar with the trainees of the Tamakan program.



Shaikha Al-Bahar speaks during the panel discussion.

to complete tasks with quality, timeliness, and innovation." She encouraged young professionals to embrace any task assigned by their superiors, regardless of its complexity, and to challenge themselves to successfully complete it.

Personal skills

She noted that finding solutions to the challenges and obstacles encountered in one's career is one of the most significant hurdles employees encounter. However, being part of a team provides an opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas, enabling the development of solutions to these problems and ultimately achieving success. Al-Bahar highlighted that employees require two key types of skills: technical skills, which can be acquired through learning, continuous training, and reading, and personal skills, which present a greater challenge. She particularly emphasized the importance of personal skills, especially those that embody leadership qualities.

"Leadership is not something that comes naturally to everyone, but as young professionals at the start of your careers, you must focus on acquiring personal skills that will enable you to play a more influential role in the organizations you will work for in the future. This includes interacting with your team effectively and positively, and always being ready to offer assistance to those in need," Al-Bahar explained.

Talent acquisition

Regarding the qualities NBK seeks when hiring young talent, Al-Bahar stated, "Youth are not only the future and the cornerstone of development in any organization but in any country. Therefore, NBK is committed to attracting talented Kuwaiti youth, investing in them by providing training and development opportunities, and supporting their career advancement to achieve success. This benefits not only the employee and the organization but also Kuwait as a whole."

"We are always keen to hire young individuals who are eager to develop their skills and advance to higher positions within the organization. We value those who are committed to growth and aspire to contribute meaningfully, rather than those who are simply looking for a paycheck at the end of the month," Al-Bahar confirmed. Al-Bahar emphasized that many Kuwaiti youth are both intelligent and innovative, particularly in the field of technology, aligning perfectly with banks' needs. She highlighted that

revolution that toppled her government. Work at Beximco's factories has since ground to a halt and employees have staged protests demanding the caretaker government come to their rescue.

"We have no other option but to fully shut down the factories as the government cannot manage them," Sakhawat Hossain, the interim government's labor minister, told a news conference late on Thursday. "The workers' request to nationalize the factories is also not feasible," he said, urging workers to seek employment elsewhere. The government has blamed Beximco's monumental unpaid loan balance as the reason behind its refusal to take over the conglomerate.

Bangladesh's central bank has valued the firm's outstanding loans and liabilities at more than \$4.1 billion. "The government considered resuming operations at the factories, viewing them as national assets with significant involve-

ment in employment and exports," commerce minister Sheikh Bashir Uddin told reporters.

"Despite the substantial amount of defaulted loans, we approached the issue with compassion. However, we have not received sufficient cooperation from the owners," Rahman was taken into custody shortly after Hasina fled to neighboring India, where she has remained since her ouster. Abdul Quayum, a senior officer of the Beximco Industrial Park, said the conglomerate's bank accounts had been frozen, preventing work at the factories.

"We need some loans," he told AFP. Beximco had requested a bridging loan of around \$33 million to continue operating, according to Bangladesh newspaper reports. Workers at the firm's factories took to the streets on Wednesday to demand the government help save their jobs, vandalizing numerous vehicles in their protest.—AFP

Al-Bahar's guidance for young professionals entering the workforce

- Actively contribute to team efforts, prioritizing collaboration over individual pursuits
- Demonstrate responsibility by consistently delivering value to your organization
- Embrace challenges with resilience, viewing obstacles as opportunities for growth
- Seek solutions proactively and leverage guidance when needed
- Strive to fulfill your responsibilities with excellence, timeliness, and a unique approach



An engaging panel discussion.

NBK remains committed to investing heavily in technology and innovation, as they play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the banking sector.

She stated that the adoption of modern technologies helps reduce operating costs and enhances the quality of services offered to customers, thereby increasing customer satisfaction and ensuring the bank keeps pace with their evolving needs.

NBK Tech Academy

Al-Bahar highlighted the Bank's launch of NBK Tech Academy, the first academy in Kuwait dedicated to digital technology and data systems. She remarked, "I was truly impressed to see the creative Kuwaiti youth enrolled in the Academy, particularly those in the field of technology, who possess the potential to play a significant role in shaping the future of the banking sector."

"Many jobs will disappear due to the technological advancements occurring globally, along with the changes they are driving across all sectors and industries, including banking. However, we rely on these young individuals for their creative thinking, their ability to adapt technology to effectively manage and analyze big data, and to then launch new products and services while improving existing ones to meet the evolving demands of customers," Al-Bahar explained.

"Data and the ability to manage it has become a discipline in its own right, and no bank can compete

in the field of digital banking without possessing a vast database and a team with the necessary skills to analyze that data and conduct market research to stay in tune with changes," Al-Bahar noted. She also highlighted that NBK has a young and skilled team in the field of data, whose efficiency has allowed the bank to adapt to market changes and maintain its leadership in the banking sector.

Al-Bahar observed that the world may experience a new technological wave within the next 10-15 years. She emphasized the critical need for banks to continuously monitor the market and staying prepared to adapt and respond to any changes or developments in this area. It is worth noting that Tamakan was honored with "The Social Work Pioneer Project Award" by the GCC Council of Ministers of Social Affairs and Labor. This prestigious accolade recognizes Tamakan as a trailblazing training initiative for Kuwaiti fresh graduates, fostering professional self-development and empowering them to emerge as a dynamic and effective workforce in the region.

NBK's support for the sixth edition of the "Tamakan" program, aimed at training Kuwaiti university graduates and organized by Creative Confidence, reflects the bank's commitment to the value of practical experience. The program offers intensive hands-on training to newly graduated national talents, empowering them to transition into an effective and dynamic workforce.

Bangladesh not to bail out factories linked to Hasina

DHAKA: Bangladesh's interim government has said it will not bail out garment factories linked to a senior ally of autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina, a move set to throw thousands out of work. Beximco, the South Asian nation's largest conglomerate, operates more than a dozen garment factories collectively employing more than 40,000 people in Bangladesh's key export industry.

Its detained co-founder Salman F. Rahman was a close adviser to Hasina, who fled the country in August following the student-led

Eurozone business activity rebounds in January

BRUSSELS: Business activity in the eurozone bounced back in January after a two-month contraction, as the pace of decline eased in the manufacturing sector, a closely watched survey showed Friday.

The HCOB Flash Eurozone purchasing manag-

ers' index (PMI) published by S&P Global registered a figure of 50.2 for the single-currency area, after 49.6 in December.

Any reading above 50 indicates growth, while a figure below 50 shows contraction. "The kick-off to the new year is mildly encouraging," said Cyrus de la Rubia, chief economist at Hamburg Commercial Bank. "The private sector is back in cautious growth mode after two months of shrinking."

"Germany played a major role in improving the eurozone economy," de la Rubia said, noting that business activity in the area's largest economy stabilized at the start of the year after six months of

decline. "In contrast, France's economy remained in contraction," he noted.

Overall, the improved eurozone dynamic was linked to timid improvements in manufacturing.

"The manufacturing sector is still in recession, but the pace of decline eased a bit," de la Rubia said. The sector was still shedding staff "rapidly" with new orders still falling too, he added.

But "on the flip side, companies are much more optimistic about the future, envisioning higher output a year from now," de la Rubia said. Services activity increased for the second month running in January, though modestly and slightly

less than in December.

"Some positive news from the eurozone at last," commented Bert Colijn, chief economist at ING. "It's not much, but a small increase in the PMI to bring the level above 50 is at least something."

But Jack Allen-Reynolds of Capital Economics tempered that analysis, saying that the survey remained "consistent with the economy stagnating." Allen-Reynolds predicted upcoming data to show the eurozone economy grew just 0.1 percent in the final quarter of 2024, and said January's PMI findings "point to a similarly poor performance" in the first quarter of 2025.—AFP



DHAKA: Garment workers sewing clothes at a Snowtex Group textile factory in Dhamrai, a sub-district in Dhaka.—AFP

Business

Gulf Bank renews strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait to support and empower youth

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has renewed its strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait for the 19th consecutive year, reaffirming its commitment to education and youth development in Kuwait. This enduring collaboration underscores Gulf Bank's dedication to training, empowering and equipping the next generation with vital skills, aligning with its core values and Kuwait Vision 2035.

Commenting on the partnership, Gulf Bank's Chief Marketing Officer, Najla Aleisa, stated: "We are honored to continue our collaboration with INJAZ Kuwait, supporting their mission to cultivate leadership and entrepreneurial skills in young Kuwaitis. Through innovative programs and activities designed for school and university students, we strive to provide them with the tools needed to succeed in today's dynamic economic environ-



Najla Aleisa and Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi after renewing the agreement.

critical skills, we are empowering them to become future leaders and innovators," she added.

Gulf Bank remains committed to bridging the gap between education and employment by supporting high school and university students, as well as recent graduates, through programs that focus on business fundamentals, career exploration, and hands-on training. These efforts aim to prepare young individuals for workforce success and entrepreneurial endeavors.

Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi, CEO of INJAZ Kuwait, praised the longstanding partnership with Gulf Bank, which has made a significant impact over nearly two decades. "Our success at INJAZ Kuwait is driven by the steadfast support of private sector partners like Gulf Bank. In the 2023/2024 academic year alone, this partnership facilitated training for over 22,000 students, ranging from elementary students to recent graduates," she said. Participants benefit-



Najla Aleisa and Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi pose for a group photo with the Gulf Bank and INJAZ Kuwait representatives.

from a variety of programs, including 'Innovation Camp', 'Personal Finance', 'Career Success', 'Head Start', 'Job Shadow', and the 'Company Program'. Al-Mutairi highlighted Gulf Bank's active role in the programs, with contributions that extend beyond sponsorship to include volunteering and program facilitation. "For example, the 'Company Program' plays a key role in preparing youth for entrepreneurship and the business world, equipping them with the practical knowledge they need to excel," she added.

Looking ahead to 2025, Al-Mutairi outlined plans for workshops, awareness seminars, and field pro-

grams designed to develop financial and entrepreneurial skills. These initiatives aim to empower youth to pursue innovative career paths or launch their own businesses, contributing to Kuwait's economic growth and supporting the realization of Kuwait Vision 2035. INJAZ Kuwait is a non-profit organization affiliated with Junior Achievement Worldwide. Supported by the Kuwaiti private sector, it collaborates with businesses and educational institutions to offer programs in both Arabic and English, focusing on entrepreneurship, leadership, and career readiness, all aimed at helping youth build successful futures.

Najla Aleisa: Fulfilling the Bank's vision of establishing community sustainability by investing in the youth of tomorrow

Laila Al-Mutairi: The partnership with Gulf Bank has provided training to over 22,000 students during the 2023/2024 academic year

ment." Aleisa emphasized the importance of this partnership as part of Gulf Bank's commitment to sustainable community development. "Investing in the next generation is essential to fostering societal and economic growth. By equipping youth with

Taiwan economy expanded at a faster rate in 2024

TAIPEI: Taiwan's economy expanded almost four times faster than the year before in 2024, government data showed Friday, thanks to global demand for the island's high-tech exports. The island of 23 million people is a world power in semiconductors, which are used in everything from smartphones to wind turbines, and even missiles.

Chips and other exports drive its economy but there are concerns that a record-high trade surplus with the United States last year could prompt Donald Trump to hit it with tariffs in his second term in the White House. Taiwan's gross domestic product grew 4.3 percent last year, the government's statistics agency said, matching the average forecast of analysts surveyed by Bloomberg News.

That compares with 1.1 percent growth in 2023, the data showed.

The statistics agency has forecast expansion of 3.3 percent this year. Trump has threatened to impose tariffs on imports from several US trading partners as he seeks to revive the country's manufacturing industry. In a video appearance at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Thursday, Trump warned companies to make their products in the United States or they would be hit with tariffs.

Taiwan's trade surplus with the United States soared about 83 percent to a record \$64.9 billion in 2024, according to Bloomberg, citing government figures. Trump has previously accused Taiwan of stealing the US semiconductor industry. London-based Capital Economics predicted Taiwan's economy to maintain "robust" growth over the coming quarters, supported by tech exports.

"This should translate through to robust investment growth," said Harry Chambers, an assistant economist at the research firm. "And with real wages now increasing, and the minimum wage recently hiked, consumption growth looks set to improve." —AFP

BoJ hikes interest rate to 17-year high, boosts yen

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan increased interest rates on Friday to their highest in 17 years and signaled more hikes to come, sending the yen higher against the dollar. The well-flagged 25-basis-point rise to 0.5 percent comes as data indicates the Japanese economy is developing in line with BoJ expectations and follows another bumper inflation reading.

The move, which leaves borrowing costs at the highest since 2008, was also underpinned by "steadily" rising wages and financial markets being "stable on the whole", the BoJ said in a statement.

"Japan's economic activity and prices have been developing generally in line with the Bank's outlook, and the likelihood of realizing the outlook has been rising," it said. If its outlook is met, "the bank will

Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar announces participation in Ya Hala Festival 2025!

KUWAIT: Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar is delighted to announce its participation in the Ya Hala Festival, which started on January 21, and runs until March 31, 2025. This exciting 70-day event promises exclusive offers, discounts, and promotions across various sectors, making it one of the most prominent shopping festivals in Kuwait.

The Ya Hala Festival coincides with key occasions such as Kuwait's National Days and Ramadan, offering exceptional value to customers and exciting opportunities to win incredible prizes. For every KD 10 spent, shoppers will receive a coupon to enter the festival's grand draw, where they can win:



- Over \$7,700,000 in cash prizes
 - 120 luxury cars
 - And many other exciting prizes!
- Ashish Tandon, General Manager of the Kuwait Automotive Imports Company (Alshaya & Alsagar), stated: "At Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar, we are committed to delivering exceptional value to our customers."



mazda

Our participation in the Ya Hala Festival reflects this commitment as we join one of Kuwait's most anticipated events to enhance our customers' shopping experience."

Excitingly, Peugeot genuine spare parts and services are also part of the Ya Hala Festival! If you want to repair or service your car, now is the perfect time to take advantage of exclusive offers and ensure your vehicle is in top condition. We invite everyone to visit



Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar showrooms during the festival period to explore our exclusive offers on our premium range of vehicles. Don't miss the opportunity to drive in style and experience the excitement with chances to win grand prizes!

For more information, visit Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar's showroom in Al Rai or follow us on social media. Let's kick off the celebrations with Ya Hala Festival and Peugeot Alshaya & Alsagar!

Sri Lanka revokes power purchase deal with India's Adani

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka has revoked a power purchase agreement with Indian conglomerate Adani Group following allegations of corruption, energy ministry sources in Colombo said on Friday. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's administration opened probes into the company's local projects after billionaire founder Gautam Adani was charged with bribery in the United States late last year.

The administration of his predecessor had agreed in May 2024 to buy electricity at US\$0.0826 per kilowatt from an Adani wind power complex yet to be built in the island nation's northwest. But a top energy ministry official said Dissanayake's cabinet decided this month not to proceed with the deal.

"The government has revoked the power purchase agreement, but the project is not cancelled. A committee has been appointed to review the entire project," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity. Several activists had challenged the agreement, arguing that smaller renewable projects were selling electricity at two-thirds the price of Adani.

The proposed construction of Adani's 484-megawatt wind power plant in the Mannar and Pooneryn coastal areas is facing a separate Supreme Court challenge over environmental concerns. An official

accordingly continue to raise the policy interest rate and adjust the degree of monetary accommodation", it added.

BoJ chief Kazuo Ueda told a news conference that the pace and timing of future hikes was yet to be determined. "We would like to make a decision after we have studied the impact of this rate hike," he said. The hawkish comments sent the yen up as much as 0.7 percent against the dollar to 154.84 yen.

Even as other central banks have raised borrowing costs in recent years—and started cutting again in 2024 -- the BoJ has remained an outlier.

But it concluded last March that Japan's "lost decades" of economic stagnation and static or falling prices were over, finally lifting rates above zero. That increase was followed by another in July that caught investors off guard and sparked turmoil in global equity and currency markets.

This time Ueda prepared markets for an increase—some 75 percent of economists expected one—and the reaction was more muted on Friday.

"With no market turbulence after (US President Donald) Trump's inauguration," conditions for the



Pedestrians walk past the 'Adani House' corporate building in Gurgaon on November 27, 2024. — AFP

document seen by AFP on Friday confirmed that Sri Lanka's cabinet this month decided to appoint a panel to "re-evaluate" the project's construction. It also confirmed the withdrawal from the power purchase agreement, which the current ruling party had strongly criticized while in opposition.

Adani confirmed in a statement that Sri Lanka's cabinet had decided to "re-evaluate the tariffs approved in May 2024". It described Colombo's decision to revoke the power purchase agreement as a "part of a standard review process, particularly with

a new government, to ensure that the terms align with their current priorities and energy policies".

Shares in Adani Enterprises, the conglomerate's main listed unit, fell nearly three percent during Friday trade in Mumbai. Dissanayake came to power in September promising to tackle corruption and bring back stolen Sri Lankan assets said to be stashed abroad. Indian industrialist Adani was charged in the United States on November 19, accused of paying bribes and hiding the payments from US investors, according to prosecutors in New York. — AFP



TOKYO: Bank of Japan (BoJ) Governor Kazuo Ueda speaks during a press conference after a two-day monetary policy meeting at the BOJ headquarters in Tokyo on January 24, 2025. — AFP

BoJ to hike its policy rate have been met, Ko Nakayama, chief economist of Okasan Securities Research, said before the announcement. "Raising just 25 basis points to 0.5 percent won't cool the economy."

There are, however, concerns among Japanese companies that Trump could impose huge tariffs on imports from key trading partners, which many economists warn could drive up inflation.

Japan's economic growth slowed in the July-September quarter, partly because of one of the fiercest typhoons in decades and warnings of a major earthquake, which did not materialize. "The Bank of Japan is dialing back monetary policy support despite the poor run of economic data. The weak yen is a key reason," Moody's Analytics said in a note. Data released Friday showed that headline Japanese inflation hit 3.6 percent in December, or 3.0 percent adjusted for food prices, up from 2.7 percent in November. The core reading remained above the BoJ's two-percent inflation target, which it has surpassed every month since April 2022.

The BoJ on Friday also raised its inflation forecast for fiscal 2024 -- running to March 31, 2025 -- to 2.7 percent from 2.5 percent previously. For fiscal 2025 it now expects inflation of 2.4 percent and 2.0 percent in 2026 -- both up from 1.9 percent previously forecast. — AFP

Lifestyle

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 2025



BLINDFOLDS AND BACK TO THE 50S FOR DIOR HOMME



British designer Kim Jones unveiled his latest collection for Dior Homme in Paris on Friday, sending some models out with blindfolds and drawing inspiration from the minimalist vintage looks of the 1950s. Speaking to journalists before the show at the Ecole militaire, Jones said he had dived into the Christian Dior archives to admire the famous Line H collection for fall-winter 1954-1955.

His collection contained "the idea of a very elegant, clean, graphic Dior, which is really going back to the origins of the house", he said. In a limited pallet of pristine white, ivory, pastel pink and black, the Autumn-Winter Dior range features belted coats, leather jackets, satin blouses and sweaters -- all with clean and highly structured silhouettes. The runway setting was a black cube

with two monumental white staircases used by the models -- many of whom had to negotiate the steps with their eyes bound.

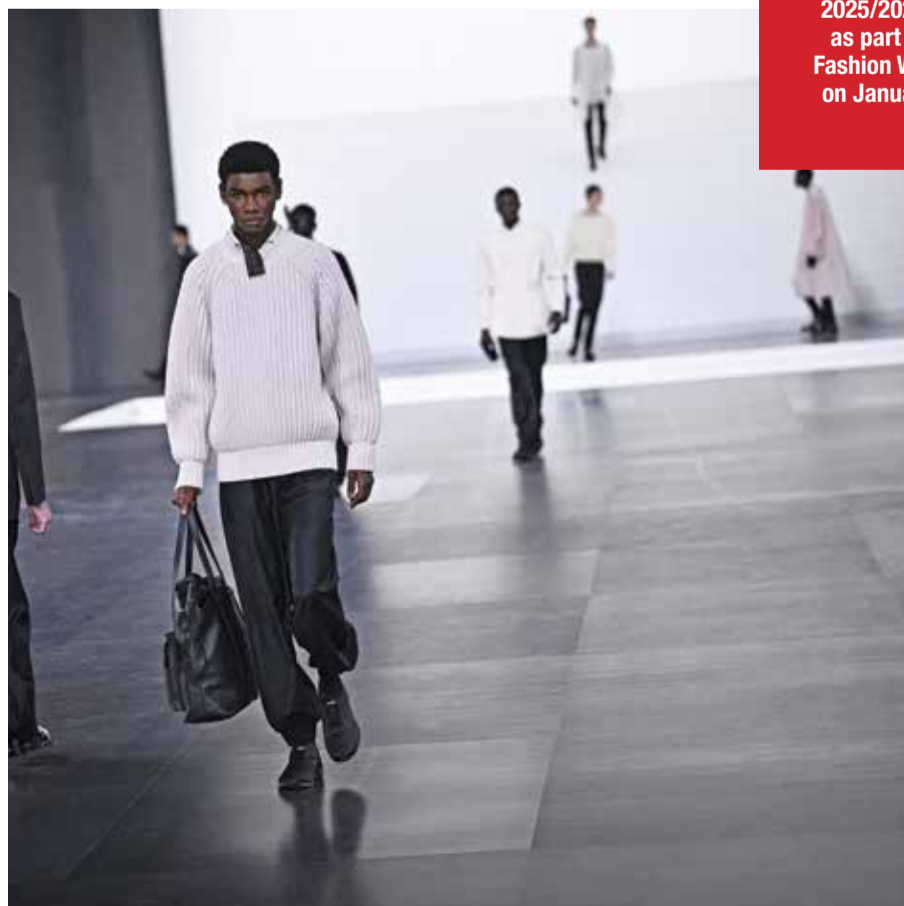
It drew its usual share of VIPs including actor and brand ambassador Robert Pattinson as well as model Kate Moss, a close friend of Jones. The 51-year-old Londoner began work at Dior in 2018 and initially introduced a younger streetwear-influenced look to the classic Parisian house. Believing that "gender doesn't matter any more", his designs are deliberately androgenous, with Friday's show featuring coats that transform into skirts, kimono-style dresses and jackets with bows. Jones stepped down as womenswear artistic director at fellow LVMH-owned brand Fendi in October last year after four years at the helm. — AFP



(From left) French model and singer Baptiste Giabiconi, US football player Odell Beckham Jr, French DJ Snake, and French ballet dancer Hugo Marchand sit in front row during the Dior Menswear Ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2025/2026 collection as part of the Paris Fashion Week.



Models present creations for the Dior Menswear Ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2025/2026 collection as part of the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris on January 24, 2025.



Lifestyle



Chile's Sebastian Araya carves ice as he competes in the 2025 Bocuse d'Or pastry contest.



South Korea's Jin Ha (left) and Sohee Sim (right) compete in the 2025 Bocuse d'Or pastry contest at the SIRHA.

Denmark's Sebastian Holberg sets sights on Bocuse d'Or win

Denish chef Sebastian Holberg Svendsgaard struggled at school as a child but loved competing -- a skill he'll put to the test when he goes for gold at gastronomy's Olympic Games, the Bocuse d'Or. "Now it is my time to shine," the 25-year-old with tattooed arms told AFP before the competition in Lyon, France, on Monday involving 24 hopefuls. Holberg has been a member of Denmark's Bocuse d'Or team since 2019 and won the European title in 2024.



the intensity... I said to myself, one day I have to be standing there."

Months of preparation Holberg attributes Scandinavia's culinary success to its chefs' respect for flavors. "For example, take an apple. We'll figure out the best an apple can taste in respect of the apple. "But

what makes apple better? Maybe a bit of horseradish, maybe a bit of kohlrabi. So we're trying to keep the same flavor but give it the energy back," he explained. For competition day, which lasts five and a half hours, Holberg insists he has "moved the limits for what is possible" -- and has left nothing to chance.

"We're going to make all the food on the day but everything has been tested for seven months," he said. "So by that time, the food is perfect. We know when we're boiling a potato slice, we'll slice it perfectly every time, three millimeters." Christophe Parisot, France's ambassador to Denmark, said he was impressed by the Danes' dedication to the competition. "It's interesting to see just how much effort Danes put into it," he told AFP. "They've understood the power and influence that gastronomy can have on a country," he said, adding that haute cuisine "conveys a very positive image of France".

Viking adaptability

Francis Cardenau, a Denmark-based French chef and head of the Danish delegation at the Bocuse d'Or, said Denmark's gastronomic breadth boils down to its chefs' ability to adapt. "Scandinavians are very flexi-



Japan's team compete in the 2025 Bocuse d'Or pastry contest at the SIRHA (Salon International de la Restauration, de l'Hotellerie et de l'Alimentation) at the Eurexpo hall in Chassieu, near Lyon. -- AFP photos

ble, malleable. They're Vikings. They're used to travelling," he said. "They go to other countries to see what tool boxes are being used, then they see if there is something they can bring back and use in their own tool box."

This curiosity and adaptability enables them to develop a food culture in a region that has little gastronomic tradition. "We are building the country's culture," Cardenau said. Once the Bo-

cuse d'Or is over, Holberg has vowed to spend more time on life outside the kitchen. "This is the biggest thing I can do for myself and I can do in my professional career as a chef. I have to be good in Lyon!" he said. But after that, he will focus on a new chapter. "Afterwards, the new dream is to do everything for my son." -- AFP



China's Tongton Sun



Chile's Nadia Castillo competes



South Korea's Jin Ha competes

Bob Dylan a contrast to 'narcissistic' modern stars, says biopic director

Bob Dylan's rich legacy of more than 50 albums is a counterpoint to "narcissistic" modern music focused on "me, me, me," the director of the recently released biopic about the singer told AFP. James Mangold, in Paris ahead of the release of "A Complete Unknown" in French cinemas, said that delving into Dylan's early career in the 1960s involved immersing himself in a different, simpler world. "It was really clear making the movie, that not just Bob's music, but that time in music was different," the director of "Indiana Jones 5" and "Le Mans '66" said. "And I feel like most music now is

so narcissistically about me, me, me. "You hurt me". 'I feel blah, blah, blah'. 'You betrayed me'. 'That's not nice what you did to me'," he said, reeling off the familiar modern themes of pop music from Taylor Swift to Beyonce. "Music was about more than just me, me, me (in Dylan's era). It was about the world. It was about the mysteries of the world. And I miss that."

'Loneliness of genius'

"A Complete Unknown", starring Timothee Chalamet, has been well received by critics and received eight Oscar nominations on Thursday, in-

cluding for best picture and best director. Mangold said it was intended as a study in "the loneliness of genius" and the difficulties of celebrity for Dylan. "A great artist, but maybe not great at being famous", he suggested.

"He described the feeling of being Bob Dylan in 1962 or 1963 as being a lonely feeling, in very specific ways: the loneliness of riding to your concert in a car, the loneliness of being on stage alone with your guitar," said Mangold. Where many people viewed Dylan's behavior as arrogant and concluded he was an "asshole", "what if he isn't an asshole? What if it's loneliness?" Man-

gold asked. Dylan recorded a remarkable 300 songs in just his first three years in the music business.

The writer of "Mr. Tambourine Man," "Like a Rolling Stone" and "Desolation Row" is adored by fans for his music and literary style. He received the 2016 Nobel literature prize "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition", according to the committee. "I don't know how I got to write those songs. Those early songs were almost magically written," he told the CBS channel in 2004.--AFP



Marilyn Manson performs during the Astroworld Festival at NRG Stadium on November 9, 2019 in Houston, Texas. --AFP

LA prosecutors say won't charge Marilyn Manson with sexual assault

The top prosecutor in Los Angeles said Friday that his office will not bring charges against goth rocker Marilyn Manson, who has been accused of sexual assault and domestic violence. Following "a comprehensive four-year investigation," prosecutors determined that "allegations of domestic violence fall outside of the statute of limitations," said a statement from Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman. "And we cannot prove charges of sexual assault beyond a reasonable doubt," it added.

Manson has faced allegations from multiple women, including his ex-fiancee, the actress Evan Rachel Wood, and Esme Bianco, who featured in "Game of Thrones." Manson, whose real name is Brian Warner, has denied wrongdoing. He filed court proceedings in 2022 against Wood for conspiracy, fraud and defamation after she accused him of raping her, but later dropped the civil suit. The 56-year-old musician has long cultivated a controversial image with his ghostly make-up and stage name evoking serial killer Charles Manson, one of the most notorious criminals in US history.--AFP



(From left to right top) Actors Eriko Hatsune, Ed Norton, Timothee Chalamet, Monica Barbaro, Elle Fanning, Scoot McNairy, Boyd Holbrook, Will Harrison and director James Mangold arrive for the premiere of the Bob Dylan biopic "A Complete Unknown" at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California on December 10, 2024. --AFP photos



US-French actor Timothee Chalamet attends the New York premiere of "A Complete Unknown" at the SVA theatre in New York.

Lifestyle

Saudi Arabia taps composer Zimmer to rework national anthem



Hans Zimmer attends the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures 4th Annual Gala in Partnership with Rolex at Academy Museum of Motion Pictures on October 19, 2024 in Los Angeles, California. --AFP

Saudi Arabia has asked Oscar-winning composer Hans Zimmer to work on a new version of its national anthem, a senior official said, as the conservative kingdom steps up an image makeover. Zimmer, whose film scores include 1994's "The Lion King", "Dune" and the "Dark Knight" trilogy, has agreed to the "broad outlines" of the project, General Entertainment Authority chairman Turki Alalshikh said.

"We discussed a lot about many future projects that I hope will see the light of day soon... including rearranging the Saudi national anthem with different

instruments," Alalshikh, the ringmaster behind several Saudi initiatives, posted on X. Germany's Zimmer also discussed a Saudi-inspired musical called "Arabia", a "very large concert" and the soundtrack for "The Battle of Yarmuk", a forthcoming Saudi film, Alalshikh said. "We agreed on the broad outlines of all these projects and I hope we will reach a final agreement on them," he said.

The Saudi anthem "Aash Al-Malik" ("Long Live The King") was written in 1947 by Egyptian composer Abdul Rahman Al-Khateeb, at the request of founding monarch King Abdulaziz, ac-

ording to nationalanthems.info. The current version is in the "Arab fanfare" style common in the region in that era, the website said. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter and home of Islam's holiest sites, is pursuing an ambitious revamp as it tries to diversify its economy away from crude.

After reopening cinemas, allowing women to drive and admitting the first non-Muslim tourists in 2018, the makeover has gone into overdrive with a slew of mega-projects including resorts and NEOM, a futuristic city in the desert costing \$500 billion. Alalshikh has been

involved in a number of cultural and sporting promotions including heavy-weight boxing and a list of concerts by foreign musicians.

It was not immediately clear why the authorities were looking to revamp the anthem. But activists have said the Saudi authorities' overall push to upgrade their image is an attempt to gloss over fundamentally unchanged hardline policies, including limited rights for women, curbs on free speech and some of the world's highest execution figures. —AFP



German aerospace engineer Rudiger Koch, 59, (right) stands on the balcony of the seapod after breaking the Guinness world record.

Georgian zoo adopts lion cub from judo champion after scandal

Tbilisi Zoo has adopted a lion cub from an Olympic judo champion, after a video of him playing with the cub while driving triggered outrage in Georgia. It is virtually impossible for individuals to legally import lion cubs into Georgia, with two-time gold medalist Lasha Bekauri coming under heavy criticism after posting the video on social media in December.

It showed him stroking and playing with the baby cub while it was curled up on the passenger seat of his Porsche as he drove through central Tbilisi. The director of Tbilisi Zoo confirmed to AFP on Friday that it had taken the cub in following the scandal. The cub was in a very bad condition when it was adopted, zoo director Zurab Gurielidze said, suffering from muscle atrophy, digestive problems and other diseases.

"Currently, he lives in my office. He chose to sleep on my desk where he spends most of his time," Gurielidze said. "He switches between lounging on the armchair, the table, the vet's desk, the couch, or even the secretary's desk ... he freely roams the entire floor, exploring wherever he pleases," the zoo said in a statement.

"This unrestricted movement is crucial to his development, as it fosters



A lion cub at the premises of the Tbilisi zoo in Tbilisi.

his natural curiosity and exploratory behavior." The zoo said it is looking to adopt another lion cub of a similar age. Reintroduction to the wild is deemed to be impossible.

The story has been big news in Georgia following the scandal and the zoo is searching for donations to help support the lion cub in its own enclosure. The zoo published photos showing the small cub being fed by a bottle, playing with a dog and perching on its hind legs to peer into a fridge. Authorities have not publicly opened an investigation into Bekauri, 24, over how he got the lion cub or whether he had a permit. The judo fighter won gold medals at the 2020 and 2024 Olympic Games and was a high-profile supporter of the ruling Georgian Dream party in divisive elections last year. — AFP

German man sets world record living for 120 days underwater

German aerospace engineer celebrated setting a world record Friday for the longest time living underwater without depressurization -- 120 days in a submerged capsule off the coast of Panama. Rudiger Koch, 59, emerged from his 30-square-meter

Florida lagoon. "It was a great adventure and now it's over there's almost a sense of regret actually. I enjoyed my time here very much," Koch told AFP after leaving the capsule 11 meters (36 feet) under the sea. "It is beautiful when things calm down and it gets dark

a boat picked him up and took him to dry land for a celebratory party.

Koch's capsule had most of the trappings of modern life: a bed, toilet, TV, computer and internet -- even an exercise bike. Located some 15 minutes by boat from the coast of northern Panama, it was attached to another chamber perched above the waves by a tube containing a narrow spiral staircase, providing a way down for food and visitors, including a doctor. Solar panels on the surface provided electricity. There was a backup generator, but no shower.

Koch had told an AFP journalist who visited him halfway through his endeavor that he hoped it would change the way we think about human life -- and where we can settle, even permanently. "What we are trying to do here is prove that the seas are actually a viable environment for human expansion," he said.

Four cameras filmed his moves in the capsule -- capturing his daily life, monitoring his mental health and providing proof that he never came up to the surface. "We needed witnesses who were monitoring and verifying 24/7 for more than 120 days," Reyes told AFP. The record "is undoubtedly one of the most extravagant" and required "a lot of work," she added. An admirer of Captain Nemo in Jules Verne's "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," Koch kept a copy of the 19th century sci-fi classic on his bedside table beneath the waves. — AFP



German aerospace engineer Rudiger Koch, 59, jumps into the water to celebrate breaking the Guinness world record for living in the ocean at a depth of eleven meters.

(320-square-foot) home under the sea in the presence of Guinness World Records adjudicator Susana Reyes.

She confirmed that Koch had beaten the record previously held by American Joseph Dituri, who spent 100 days living in an underwater lodge in a

and the sea is glowing," he said of the view through the portholes.

"It is impossible to describe, you have to experience that yourself," he added. To celebrate, Koch toasted with champagne and smoked a cigar before leaping into the Caribbean Sea, where



German aerospace engineer Rudiger Koch, 59, takes breakfast inside an underwater room off the coast of Puerto Lindo, Panama, on January 24, 2025. --AFP photos



German aerospace engineer Rudiger Koch, 59, jumps into the water to celebrate breaking the Guinness world record.



This handout picture taken by Mzia Shashidze, the photographer of the Tbilisi zoo, on January 22, 2025 shows a lion cub at the premises of the Tbilisi zoo.



A lion cub at the premises of the Tbilisi zoo in Tbilisi. — AFP photos

Poland says purchased rare 'treasure' Chopin manuscript

Poland announced it had purchased a rare manuscript of a ballad by Frederic Chopin, a score whose exhibition will coincide with this year's prestigious piano competition named after the composer. The manuscript for Ballade No. 4 in F minor was previously in private hands before Poland finalized a deal to buy it last year. "This is a treasure," Poland's Culture Minister Hanna Wroblewska told reporters in Warsaw's Chopin Institute, adding that original manuscripts by the French-Polish composer are "very rare".

The Institute has bought the four-page manuscript using state funds but said the price could not be disclosed due to a clause in the contract. "This manuscript is in excellent condition. It has been kept for over 100 years in optimal conditions," said the Chopin Institute's Seweryn Kuter curator.

Born in 1810 in Zelazowa Wola, near the Polish capital, Frederic Chopin fled his homeland just before the 1830 uprising against the occupying forces of Tsarist Russia. The composer later lived in the Austrian capital Vienna before moving to Paris, where he died aged 39 after years of poor health -- but his music remains a symbol of Poland's long struggle for freedom. The score will be displayed at the June opening of a Warsaw exhibition that runs until the end of October, coinciding with the final

stages of the Frederic Chopin International Piano Competition.

Held each five years since 1927, the competition brings top pianists from around the world to Warsaw. In October, its organizers said Russian pianists would only be allowed to enter the competition under a neutral flag and if they did not support Moscow's aggression in Ukraine. Host country Poland staunchly supports Kyiv's efforts to fend off the invasion. — AFP



This photograph shows a manuscript of the first and unpublished version of the Ballade in F minor, Op. 52 written by Polish composer Frederic Chopin, during its presentation at the Fryderyk Chopin Museum in Warsaw, Poland. — AFP

Sports

Gakpo stars as Liverpool rout Ipswich to maintain six-point lead over Arsenal

Arsenal survive red card drama to beat Wolves

LONDON: Cody Gakpo struck twice as Premier League leaders Liverpool thrashed Ipswich 4-1 to maintain their six-point lead over Arsenal, who survived Myles Lewis-Skelly's controversial red card to snatch a 1-0 win at Wolves on Saturday.

The Dutch forward netted again in the 66th minute, heading past Walton from Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross. Jacob Greaves' stoppage-time diving header was little consolation for third-bottom Ipswich, who have conceded 10 goals in their last two league games.

fender was sent off for "serious foul play".

But Wolves were also reduced to 10 men in the 70th minute when Joao Gomes earned a second booking for a foul on Jurrien Timber. And Italy defender Riccardo Calafiori won it for Arsenal in the 74th minute with a half-volley that went in off the far post.



LIVERPOOL: Ipswich Town's English goalkeeper #28 Christian Walton (R) saves from Liverpool's Hungarian midfielder #08 Dominik Szoboszlai during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Ipswich Town at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on January 25, 2025. - AFP

Arne Slot's side cruised to their second successive league victory thanks to a first half goal-spree at Anfield. Dominik Szoboszlai's 11th-minute opener fizzed past Ipswich goalkeeper Christian Walton from Ibrahima Konate's assist. Mohamed Salah doubled Liverpool's advantage in the 35th minute with a fierce strike for his 23rd goal in all competitions this term. It was also the Egypt forward's 100th Premier League goal at Anfield.

Gakpo killed off Ipswich before half-time when he bundled home after Walton parried Szoboszlai's shot in the 44th minute.

Liverpool's 16th win from 22 league games this season keeps them on course for a first English title since 2020. The quadruple-chasing Reds have a game in hand on second-placed Arsenal, who left it late before keeping the pressure on the leaders. Arsenal, without ill captain Martin Odegaard, had Lewis-Skelly contentiously sent off for tripping Matt Doherty to stop a Wolves counter-attack in the 43rd minute.

It was a cynical challenge but Arsenal were furious, protesting that the tackle was too far from goal to warrant a red card. The Premier League Match Centre confirmed on social media that the 18-year-old de-

Moyes celebrates milestone

Dango Ouattara hit a hat-trick as Bournemouth extended their club-record unbeaten run to dent Nottingham Forest's top four charge with a 5-0 demolition at the Vitality Stadium. Andoni Iraola's side are undefeated in their last 11 league games and up to sixth place after ending third-placed Forest's own impressive run of eight top-flight matches without losing.

Justin Kluivert struck for Bournemouth in the ninth minute for his sixth goal in his last four games. Ouattara increased Bournemouth's lead in the 55th minute when he nodded in from Kluivert's cross.

The Burkina Faso winger bagged his second six minutes later and completed a memorable treble three minutes from full-time. There was still time for Antoine Semenyo to net in the final minutes as Bournemouth followed last weekend's superb 4-1 win at Newcastle with their biggest victory this season. Alexander Isak starred as Newcastle moved into fourth place with a 3-1 win at bottom of the table Southampton. Jan Bednarek put Southampton ahead in the 10th minute with a powerful header from James Bree's cross.

But Isak levelled from the penalty spot in the 26th minute after Joe Aribo fouled the in-form striker. Isak made it 11 goals from his last eight games, and 19 for the season, when he finished a flowing move by converting Jacob Murphy's 30th-minute pass.

Anthony Gordon's pass sent Sandro Tonali sprinting clear to bag Newcastle's third goal in the 51st minute. Everton boss David Moyes celebrated becoming the third manager to reach 700 Premier League games with a 1-0 win at Brighton. Only Arsene Wenger at Arsenal and Alex Ferguson at Manchester United have managed more Premier League matches than Moyes, whose team earned their second consecutive victory to climb seven points clear of the relegation zone.

Brighton defender Joel Veltman's handball conceded a 42nd-minute penalty that Iliman Ndiaye slotted home. Troubled champions Manchester City host top four rivals Chelsea in Saturday's late game, with Pep Guardiola's side looking for a win that would lift them into fourth place. - AFP

Kuwait beat Algeria in handball WCup

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti handball team beat Algeria 38-31 at the 2025 IHF Men's Handball World Championship (the President's Cup) on Saturday. The "blues" managed to snatch their second win in Croatia, ending the first half ahead, with an 18-14 score.

Kuwait defeated Guinea 24-26 last Tuesday. Kuwait is competing over either 27th or 28th place. The tournament that kicked off on January 14 will proceed until February 2. The matches are held in Croatia, Norway and Denmark. - KUNA



CHENNAI: India's Tilak Varma (L) watches the ball after playing a shot during the second Twenty20 international cricket match between India and England at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on January 25, 2025. - AFP

Varma powers India home in T20 thriller against England

CHENNAI: Tilak Varma anchored India's chase with an unbeaten 72 to lead the hosts to a thrilling two-wicket victory over England in the second T20 international on Saturday. Chasing a tricky 166 for victory, India lost regular wickets but Varma kept calm in his 55-ball knock to steer the team home with four balls to spare in Chennai and lead the five-match series 2-0.

England fast bowler Brydon Carse returned figures of 3-29 to hurt the hosts, who slipped to 146-8, but Varma hung on with number 10 Ravi Bishnoi and hit the winning boundary. The chase went down to the wire as India needed 20 off 18 balls and then 13 off the final 12 as Bishnoi also hit two fours in his unbeaten nine to lend support to left-hander Varma who hit four fours and five sixes. England's new ball pair of Jofra Archer and Mark Wood removed the openers inside three overs before Carse made an instant impact with the ball in his first two overs. Carse had India skipper Suryakumar Yadav bowled for 12 after the batsman inside edged a quick in-coming delivery onto his stumps and then dismissed Dhruv Jurel in his next over.

Jamie Overton sent Hardik Pandya trudging back to the pavilion for seven as India lost half their side on 78 in 9.1 overs. Washington Sundar survived a reprieve on 10 when Adil Rashid dropped a catch at mid-on off Wood and the left-hand batsman smashed the speedster for a six and two fours in the over.

Carse bowled Sundar and India lost two more wickets but Varma was unstoppable. Earlier England skipper Jos Buttler hit 45 and Carse 31 off 17 deliveries to help the tourists to 165-9 after being invited to bat first. Spinners Axar Patel and Varun Chakravarthy took two wickets each. Buttler, who made 68 in the opening defeat, started aggressively despite England losing openers Phil Salt for four and Ben Duckett for three.

Left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh struck with the fourth ball of the match to have Salt caught for his 98th T20 wicket in 62 matches. Sundar got Duckett with his first ball, luring him into an attempted reverse sweep, but Buttler and Harry Brook then took up the attack with a flurry of sixes and fours. - AFP

Kane scores as Bayern Munich go six points clear

FREIBURG IM BREISGAU: Harry Kane scored as Bayern Munich won 2-1 at Freiburg on Saturday to move six points clear of Bayer Leverkusen, who threw away a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at RB Leipzig. Kane and English compatriot Eric Dier created the opener in the 15th minute.

Dier found Kane who drilled a low shot through the fingers of Freiburg goalkeeper Noah Atubolu. The goal was Kane's first from open play since mid-November and his 17th in 17 league games this season. Bayern doubled their lead after 54 minutes when Kim Min-jae outmuscled Atubolu and headed in a Joshua Kimmich corner. Freiburg made Bayern sweat when Matthias Ginter headed in a corner with 22 minutes remaining, but the German giants held firm to bounce back from Wednesday's surprise 3-0 Champions League loss at Feyenoord.

"We've played better games than that," Kimmich told Sky Germany. "But that is exactly what you need sometimes. We deserved to win." Bayern's win means defending champions Leverkusen are now six points behind the league leaders, after they dropped points in the league for the first time since early November at Leipzig. Florian Wirtz impressed throughout and was instrumental in Leverkusen's opener.

The Germany midfielder shrugged off two defenders with a jink and shot against the post, with Patrik Schick well placed to tap in and put Leverkusen in front after 18 minutes. Leverkusen's controversial second, scored on the 36-minute mark, was also created by Wirtz. Near the sideline, the 21-year-old won the ball from Leipzig's David Raum, while appearing to sink his studs into the defender's leg.

With Raum on the ground, Wirtz dribbled goalwards



FREIBURG IM BREISGAU: Players jump to head the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match SC Freiburg vs FC Bayern Munich in Freiburg, southern Germany on January 25, 2025. - AFP

and cut the ball back to Alex Garcia, who calmly slotted home. Raum had his revenge just five minutes later, thumping in a deflected free kick off the crossbar to cut Leverkusen's advantage. Leipzig equalized from another set piece with five minutes remaining. Xavi Simons sent a spiraling free kick into the box which Leverkusen defender Edmond Tapsoba turned into his own net.

In their first match since sacking coach Nuri Sahin, 10-man Borussia Dortmund also let a two-goal lead slip to draw 2-2 at home against Werder Bremen. Dortmund's chances took an early hit when center-back Nico Schlotterbeck was red carded for a last-man foul after 21 minutes.

The hosts were dangerous despite the disadvantage and took the lead seven minutes later when Julian Brandt found Serhou Guirassy who headed in his eighth

league goal of the season. Dortmund looked in charge when Guirassy's 51st-minute cross was turned into his own net by Bremen defender Marco Friedl, but Bremen levelled things up with two goals in eight minutes.

Former Dortmund midfielder Leonardo Bittencourt unleashed a rocket from outside the box before Marvin Ducksch caught the hosts napping, running in behind and scoring to level things up. Elsewhere, Mainz continued their impressive run this season, beating Stuttgart 2-0 at home thanks to goals from Nelson Weiper and Anthony Caci. Relegation candidates last campaign, Mainz's win sends them sixth, one point behind Stuttgart and Leipzig and in contention for a Champions League place. A stoppage time goal from Keven Schlotterbeck took Augsburg to a 2-1 home win over Heidenheim. - 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)

Abdulaziz and (surname) Shaik. He holds Passport No. T8765704, DOB 30/10/2018.
#6626 (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 Mohammed Masood to (given name) Mohammed Masood and (surname) Shaik. He holds Passport No. T8765258, DOB 17/05/2016.
#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)

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Madison Keys stuns Sabalenka in thriller to win Australian Open

For Keys it was the culmination of a 15-year journey from teenage prodigy to major winner

MELBOURNE: Underdog Madison Keys upset Aryna Sabalenka 6-3, 2-6, 7-5 in the Australian Open final on Saturday to win her first Grand Slam crown at the age of 29.

The American ended world number one Sabalenka's dream of becoming the first woman for 26 years to win a third successive Melbourne Park singles title. Keys yelled in delight and wiped away tears on securing the title after withstanding a fierce fightback from the Belarusian two-time defending champion.

Sabalenka, the 2023 and 2024 champion, buried her head in a towel after her 20-match win streak at Melbourne Park was ended. For 19th-seeded Keys it was the culmination of a 15-year journey from teenage prodigy to major winner.

"I have wanted this for so long and I have been in one other Grand Slam final and it did not go my way," said an emotional Keys, whose coach Bjorn Fratangelo is also her husband. "I didn't know if I was ever going to get back to this position to try to win a trophy again." The American had been tipped as a future world number one after winning her maiden WTA Tour match at the age of 14.

She made her first major semi-final at Melbourne Park 10 years ago as a 19-year-old, but a decade on she can finally call herself a Grand Slam cham-



MELBOURNE: USA's Madison Keys (R) and Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka pose for pictures after their women's singles final match on day fourteen of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 25, 2025. — AFP

pion. "I made my very first Grand Slam semi-final here in Melbourne," said Keys, the runner-up at the US Open in 2017.

"So to now have won my first Grand Slam in the same place means the ab-

solute world to me. "My team believed in me every step of the way. So thank you so much," added Keys, who will now equal her career-high seventh in the world ranking she attained nine years ago.

"They believed in me when I didn't believe in myself, and helped me every step of the way. Last year was so tough, with some really bad injuries, I didn't know if I was gonna be able to do it again."

'What a tournament'

Keys becomes the fourth oldest first-time winner of a major since the Open Era began in 1968. Sabalenka was gracious after a first Melbourne defeat since 2022. "First of all, Madison, what a tournament. You have been fighting really hard to get this trophy," Sabalenka said. "I really feel like it's home when I'm here and I'll come back stronger and do my best next year." It was Keys who came out of the blocks playing exemplary tennis to put Sabalenka under pressure and race to the first set in 35 minutes on Rod Laver Arena.

The Belarusian began to flip the script in the second set, breaking in the third game and moving ominously ahead 3-1. Another break followed on a brilliant Sabalenka cross-court pass and she levelled the match after an hour and 20 minutes on court.

The 26-year-old Sabalenka by now was timing the ball much better and a younger Keys might have buckled. But this mature version of Keys, who battled all the way to beat Iga Swiatek in a 10-point final-set tiebreak in the semi-finals, is made of sterner stuff.

At 5-6 when Sabalenka served to take it to another final-set tiebreak, Keys brought up two match points. She held her nerve to secure the long-awaited title on the second with her 29th winner after 2hr 2min. — AFP

V O L V O



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