

Pages 14-16



Scan the QR code to access the Arab Times WhatsApp Channel

MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2025 / RAMADAN 24, 1446 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 18855

16 PAGES

150 FILS

Amir calls for unity, reform in last 10 days of Ramadan

'No room for division'

KUWAIT CITY, March 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah called on Kuwaiti citizens to adhere to the democratic approach and the constitutional references.

"National identity is at the top of our priorities. It belongs to every genuine Kuwaiti keen on his country's progress and the elevation of its status," His Highness the Amir said in an address to the nation on the occasion of the last 10 days of Ramadan.

During the speech, His Highness the Amir lauded the reactions of the loyal and faithful people of Kuwait towards the reform decisions that the government took lately.

"I would like to say that the advocates of division and the instigators of sedition are trying to confuse matters, spread rumors, and distort statements, to divide the ranks and cause discontent," His Highness said.

His Highness the Amir emphasized the keenness to balance between firmness in everything that affects national unity and achieving justice in citizenship issues, and that dealing with them is by the law, far from political outbidding and pressures.

"I affirm commitment to reforming, strengthening stability, and upholding the country's supreme interests,

continuing to combat corruption and confronting anyone who attempts to tamper with the nation's security and stability," His Highness the Amir added.

His Highness also stressed that he follows with great interest the work of the state's agencies, as he directs, monitors, follows up and holds accountable as well as directs the government to expedite the implementation of all state development projects, especially health, education and housing.

"I am certain, with a reassured soul, an optimistic spirit and great confidence in the authentic Kuwaiti people's ability to overcome challenges," said His Highness the Amir.

On the other hand, His Highness the Amir affirmed that Kuwait will maintain its diplomatic approach with friendly countries and their common causes, with its firm stances that uphold justice and stand against injustice.

The Palestinian cause will remain at the top of its foreign policy priorities, and Kuwait will maintain its principled position in support of the brotherly Palestinian people's right to achieve all their legitimate rights, His Highness added.

Continued on Page 5



Amiri Diwan photo
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addresses the nation on the occasion of the last 10 days of Ramadan.

5-year limit on expat driving license

Kuwait, China collab on seaport development

Mubarak Al-Kabeer port to boost Vision 2035

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Minister of Public Works and acting Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Noura Mohammad Al-Mashaan conducted an inspection tour to the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project site on Bubiyan Island to follow up the progress of work related to the study, design and provision of pre-implementation services contract for the completion of the project.

In a press statement Sunday, Al-Mashaan disclosed that the visit to the site is in compliance with higher authority's directive to accelerate the implementation of the project to create a safe regional corridor and commercial center in the region, as well as to review the latest developments in the implementation of the contract that commenced on March 16.

Continued on Page 5



KUNA photo
Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan visits the site of the project in Boubyan Island.

Kuwait rolls out new licensing amendments

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: The official gazette 'Kuwait Alyoum' published Minister of Interior's Decision No. 425/2025 for amending certain provisions of ministerial Resolution No. 81/1976 regarding the executive regulations of the traffic law and its amendments, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decision stipulates that Clauses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of Article 85 of ministerial Resolution No. 81/1976

shall be amended as follows:

Category A:

1. Private driving license:

This license is issued to drive private vehicles with no more than seven passengers, transport vehicles with a capacity not exceeding two tons, and taxis.

The license is valid for 15 years for Kuwaitis and GCC citizens, and five years for non-Kuwaitis. For illegal residents (Bedoun), the license is valid according to the duration of the security card.

Continued on Page 5

US commerce secretary's remarks on Kuwait trade policies spark backlash

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick's remarks have sparked widespread controversy after he criticized Kuwait by accusing it of imposing the highest tariffs on American products, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to Lutnick, the United States spent "nearly \$100 billion to liberate Kuwait". He went on to recall his country's efforts to extinguish Kuwaiti oil wells after the Iraqi invasion, stating, "This must stop".

These statements have been widely criticized by poli-

ticians and media figures in Kuwait, who have described them as containing several inaccuracies and false claims. Many have called for the comments to be treated seriously, but also viewed within a broader context.

In this regard, former MP Saleh Al-Mulla stressed that the information cited by the US Secretary of Commerce is, at best, false.

He indicated via his X account that it is important to read such messages carefully and attentively.

Continued on Page 5

'Scheduled power outages' likely this summer amid energy deficit

By Mohamed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: With the countdown to summer underway, former Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy Eng. Mohammed Boushahri indicated that the ministry will face a difficult challenge during the summer of 2025, and will likely be forced to implement scheduled power outages.

Boushahri explained that the expected peak load during the summer season will reach 18,853 megawatts, compared to a safe production capacity of 17,234 megawatts, creating a shortage of approximately 1,600 megawatts. The ministry plans to purchase 1,000 megawatts from the Gulf Interconnection Authority. To conserve the remaining 600 megawatts, scheduled power

outages may be necessary, especially if production units and network components are operating at full capacity under temperatures exceeding 50 degrees Celsius.

He attributed the energy production crisis to several factors, most notably bureaucracy, the lengthy and complex documentation process, and the presence of certain officials in various important positions who are neither equipped to handle their responsibilities nor fully understand the importance of advancing energy and water production projects as pillars of development.

Eng. Boushahri stressed that no new projects have been proposed or implemented since 2020 due to these issues, citing a specific example of one 900-megawatt production project,

Continued on Page 5

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Monday 18:02
Imsak Tuesday 04:26

Newswatch

20 individuals lose Kuwaiti citizenship

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: The official gazette Kuwait Al-Youm has published a number of decrees that revoked the citizenship of a total of 20 individuals in accordance with Amiri Decree No. 15/1959 on Kuwaiti citizenship and its amendments, and the proposal of the Minister of Interior, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decrees are as follows:
■ Decree No. 47/2025, which revoked the citizenship of one individual,
■ Decree No. 48/2025, which revoked the citizenship from three individuals,
■ Decree No. 49/2025, which revoked citizenship of 16 individuals.

Move expected to ease housing shortage, boost economy

Kuwait set to revolutionize finance with mortgage law approval

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Kuwait is on the verge of reshaping its financial arena as part of its ongoing efforts to diversify its sources of income beyond oil and its sovereign wealth fund. In an unprecedented move, Kuwait is preparing to allow banks to offer mortgages for the first time, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to informed sources who spoke to Bloomberg on condition of anonymity due to confidentiality, the Cabinet is expected to approve the legislation soon.

They indicated that this move could open up a market worth up to \$65 billion, representing a 40 percent increase in banks' loan portfolios.

Mortgages were previously not permitted or legally regulated in Kuwait due to concerns about political repercussions. Instead, the government offered a public housing program that allowed married citizens to obtain a house or plot with substantial subsidies and low-interest loans.

The long-awaited law will improve access to home financing for eligible citizens, but the system is currently burdened by a backlog of approximately 103,000 applications, with waiting periods extending up to ten years. This has prompted the government to consider introducing radical changes to the system.

While Kuwait's oil wealth has positioned it among the world's richest countries, years of political stag-

nation have caused it to lag behind its more ambitious regional peers.

The acting CEO of Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait Abdullah Al-Sumait stated that the long-awaited mortgage law could provide a regulatory framework that enhances access to home financing for qualified citizens.

The introduction of the mortgage law comes ten months after His Highness the Amir of Kuwait suspended parliament for up to four years, clearing the way for the government to pass substantive legislation.

Continued on Page 5

Eid Al-Fitr travel costs skyrocket as demand peaks

By Mohammed Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: As the Eid Al-Fitr holiday is fast approaching, the air transport sector is witnessing a remarkable increase in airfare; with the cost of flights to nearby destinations now higher than usual.

This is due to the increased demand for travel dur-

ing the Eid holiday, since many citizens and expatriates want to take advantage of the short vacation to spend the holiday abroad to visit family and relatives or to enjoy the touristic atmosphere.

With this seasonal pattern of rising airfare, travel and tourism experts confirmed to the newspaper that early planning is essential for travelers to secure reasonable prices; because waiting until the last few days before the travel date could limit options and

result in costs much higher than they were a few weeks ago.

General Manager of Alam Al-Salehiya Tourism and Travel Company Ayman Zandah explained that the rise in airfare during the holiday and vacation seasons is a normal and recurring phenomenon, as it is subject to supply and demand.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait keen on strategic partnership with China, says Kuwait ambassador

BEIJING, March 23, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Jassem Al-Najem affirmed on Sunday Kuwait's keenness to enhance cooperation with China, especially within economy and investment.



Al-Najem

In a statement to KUNA, Ambassador Al-Najem said that several major projects between the two countries were in the works,

after a delegation from the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) visited Beijing.

He explained that the delegation's visit was a continuation of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the field of free trade and economic zones, which was signed between KDIPA and China's Commerce Ministry in September 2023 during His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to China.

Ambassador Al-Najem added that the KDIPA delegation would visit a number of companies and institutions in the Beijing Economic and Technological Development Area, and meet

Continued on Page 5



This photo taken on March 22, 2025 shows lightning over the skyline of Kuwait City. (Xinhua)



2 Muslims flock to mosques on 23rd in 'Night of Power' hunt



9 Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait celebrates Ramadan with annual staff Ghabga

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:30 Asr 15:23
 Sunrise .. 05:49 Maghrib .. 18:01
 Zohr 11:55 Isha 19:18

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm with moderate to fresh northwesterly wind, with speeds of 20-50 km/h with a chance for rising dust.

By Night: Rather cold to cold with light to moderate freshening

Weather

over coastal areas northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-40 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec		
Kuwait City	22	15	Bubyan	22
Kuwait Airport	24	15	Jahra	24
Abdaly	24	10	Failaka Island	23
			Salmiyah	22
			Ahmadi	22
			Jal Aliyah	23
			Nuwaisib	23

Amir congratulates Pakistan President on National Day

KUWAIT CITY, March 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations, Sunday, to the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed sincere wishes of further progress and prosperity to Pakistan and its people and wished the President long-lasting health.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a congratulatory cable on Sunday to Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari on his country's National Day, and wished him long-lasting health.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah then set a congratulatory

cable to Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari on his country's National Day, and wished him long-lasting health.

Defense ties discussed: Deputy Chief of General Staff of Kuwait Army Air Vice Marshal Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held, Sunday, discussions with the Military Attache of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Kuwait, Brigadier General Farhan Al-Shathri, on military affairs.

In a press statement, the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army stated that the Deputy Chief of General Staff received the Saudi Military Attache in his office, and that the meeting included an exchange of cordial discussions and a review of key issues of mutual interest, particularly in military affairs.

Mexican ambassador wishes Amir, Kuwaitis Eid Mubarak

On behalf of the Government and people of Mexico, I extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, the esteemed Government, and the friendly people of Kuwait on the joyous occasion of Eid-al-Fitr.

Eid Al-Fitr is a time of reflection, gratitude, and unity, embodying the values of compassion, solidarity, and generosity. As our two nations continue to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation, I sincerely hope that this blessed occasion brings peace, prosperity, and happiness to Kuwait

and its people.

Mexico and Kuwait share a long-standing and dynamic relationship built on mutual respect, cooperation, and shared aspirations for progress and development. Our countries continue to deepen bilateral ties across various fields, including trade, investment, culture, and education, fostering greater understanding and collaboration for the benefit of both our peoples. We look forward to further enhancing this partnership in the years to come.

May this Eid be filled with joy, harmony, and renewed hope for a future of continued success and well-being.

Eid Mubarak!
Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller
 Ambassador of Mexico



Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller

Muslims flock to mosques on 23rd in 'Night of Power' hunt



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

A worshipper weeps, asking Allah's forgiveness during supplications on the 23rd night of holy month of Ramadan.

Around 8,000 turn up at Grand Mosque for 'Qiyam' prayer

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: In an atmosphere brimming with spirituality and faith, the 23rd night of Qiyam prayer witnessed a large turnout of worshippers in various mosques throughout the country.

The mosques are adorned with the spirituality of the holy month of Ramadan and lights are lit in anticipation of the nightly prostrations, during which worshippers express their hopes and prayers to Allah.

In the heart of the Capital, the Grand Mosque witnessed a large turnout of worshippers; as around 7,670 people -- 4,810 men and 2,860 women -- flocked to the mosque from early evening to reserve the front rows.

In the first four rak'ahs, the worshippers were led by Sheikh Bader Al-Ali whose reverent voice and exquisite performance immersed the audience in a profound spiritual atmosphere with every

verse he recited.

During the second four rak'ahs, Sheikh Omar Al-Damkhi led the prayer performing a masterful recitation that enhanced the worshippers' humility and brought them a sense of peace and tranquility.

The spiritual atmosphere in the Grand Mosque was complemented by the words of preacher Dr. Bassam Al-Shatti in a faith-based sermon delivered midway through the prayer.

He spoke about the virtues of Islam, learning about religion, importance of Laylat al-Qadr, and the importance of investing these days in getting closer to Allah through good deeds and worship.

He also underscored the importance of young people attending religious lectures and seminars organized by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to learn and cultivate their faith.

The Grand Mosque witnessed special preparations by relevant authorities, facilitating the entry of worshippers through organized corridors, with designated lanes for men and women to ease traffic flow within the mosque.

Medical and security teams and volunteers were also provided to ensure the comfort and safety of worshippers.

At Al-Ghanim and Al-Kharafi Mosques, a huge turnout of worshippers was witnessed amidst strict security arrangements, with both the external and internal courtyards designated for everyone.

Worshippers were not limited to men, the mosque also included prayer areas for women, contributing to the comfort of everyone and enabling them to perform the prayer in a faithful atmosphere.

In the first four rak'ahs, the worshippers were led by Sheikh Elias Hijri who added a special spirituality to the prayer with his melodious voice. In the second four rak'ahs, Sheikh Mishary Al-Afasy led the worshippers, radiating a mesmerizing recitation that captivated hearts and purified souls.

Bilal bin Rabah Mosque witnessed a big turnout of worshippers as well. Sheikh Qutaiba Al-Zuwaid led the first four rak'ahs, while Sheikh Shaye' Al-Tamimi led the second four rak'ahs.

In Jahra, Aqla Al-Dhafiri Mosque witnessed an unprecedented turnout, with thousands of worshippers flocking to commemorate the 23rd night of Ramadan.

The mosque and its surrounding facilities were fully prepared, with all services provided to ensure the comfort of worshippers.

No significant hike in prices; issues with tailors exacerbate

'Dishdashas', 'abayas' ... demand grows as Eid approaches

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: As Ramadan progresses and Eid Al-Fitr approaches, the tailoring market in the country is witnessing a surge in demand as both citizens and expatriates -- from the young people to the elderly -- are eager to have 'dishdashas' tailored for the occasion.

Women and girls are not left behind, as many of them are prefer custom-made 'abayas' and other outfits due to the generally poor quality of ready-made clothing available in the market.

The newspaper interviewed several tailor shop owners who confirmed that while prices have not increased remarkably compared to last year, they still vary from shop to shop. However, many customers have reported significant issues with tailors, particularly regarding inconsistent timelines, which are especially problematic during the busy holiday season. In fact, tailoring prices have seen an increase of 15 to 20 percent this year.

Abdullah Al-Azmi shared that he always ensures 'dishdashas' are made for himself and his children before the middle of Ramadan. While he noted that tailoring prices have not gone up, he expressed concern about the rise in fabric costs, which have increased by at least 20 per-

cent compared to last year.

Bouali also reported having a disagreement with his tailor due to delays. "Despite providing the tailor with multiple appointments after measurements were taken on the 10th day of Ramadan, the 'dishdashas' were not ready on the agreed date," he revealed; confirming that prices have risen by at least 15 percent compared to previous years.

Jamal Abdulrahman, an expatriate, emphasized the importance of tailoring 'dishdashas' as Eid approaches. He needs at least seven 'dishdashas' made before returning home, but he noted a worsening issue -- the scarcity of tailors in Kuwait. "With fewer tailors available in shopping malls, the remaining shops are facing increased pressure," he disclosed.

Joby Keeton, a tailor, explained that 'dishdashas' tailoring is always in demand, especially before Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, as well as during the change of seasons. Nevertheless, he affirmed that fabric prices have remained consistent, as most of his customers are low-income.

Tailor Shehab Sadou observed that Kuwaitis are particularly selective about fabric quality. Despite a slight increase in fabric prices, he stated that it has not affected his customers significantly, as they are known for their sense of style and preference for the finest materials.

Sadou said the cost of tailoring starts at KD5, with fabric prices varying depending on quality. "Premium winter fabrics can cost up to KD10 per meter, while lighter summer fabrics start from KD1 and could go higher based on quality," he added.

Saadoun Saeed, another tailor, pointed out that while tailoring prices have remained stable; fabric prices have risen by 10 to 15 percent due to increase in the cost of producing high-quality fabrics. "Many Kuwaiti customers prefer imported fabrics from Japan, England and France; while a smaller and a more budget-conscious group opts for Chinese fabrics. For expatriates, fabrics from South Korea, India, Pakistan and China remain the more affordable options."

Abdul Nasser, a tailor, attributed this year's fabric price hike to increased shipping cost. He pointed out that European fabrics have seen a 10 percent price increase compared to last year, and that some tailors have been charging customers excessively. "The tailoring rush during Ramadan led to delays, with many customers experiencing longer-than-expected wait times for their 'dishdashas'," he revealed.

Nour Abu Maryam, another tailor, stated that the tailoring market is more vibrant than ever, with customers frequently opting for custom-made 'dishdashas' instead of ready-made ones.

7 categories of Kuwaitis can apply

No. 90 job registrations open Friday

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: The registration period for Central Recruitment No. 90 will start on Friday; during which seven categories of Kuwaitis aged 18 and older will be eligible to register without any condition, reports Al-Anba daily quoting sources.

Sources said these categories include university graduates, diploma holders, those who completed training courses, university graduates who resigned from the public or private sectors, and those whose contracts ended or been terminated in the private sector.

Sources confirmed that two categories of Kuwaitis with high school diploma or lower who do not need to complete a training course will also be allowed to register. "The first category consists of those above the age of 25 by the end of the registration period on April 11; while

the second category comprises of the married, divorced and widowed regardless of gender," sources added.

"Furthermore, those with high school diploma or lower, who did not complete a training course; and have been out of service in government agencies, military sector or State-owned companies for at least one full year by April 11 are eligible to register," sources revealed.

Sources clarified that those currently employed in any public sector agency, business owners, school students, university students, students at Kuwait University, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) students, and retirees are not permitted to register. Sources said the retired teachers who obtained approval from the Ministry of Education to apply for a job will be an exception.

Other Voices

State security ... systems, laws

By Ahmad alsarraf

I recently wrote an article in which I called for the need to strengthen both our internal and external fronts in response to anticipated ambitions and demands, and to prepare for all eventualities through solidarity with the regional community and wide cooperation with major powers.

Along with the points I raised, it is imperative to make our systems and laws more humane and generous. This can only be achieved by expediting the full implementation of all provisions of human rights agreements, and ensuring they apply to both citizens and residents, regardless of the cost.

The logical and humane principle dictates that, when necessary, all prohibitions should be overridden or disregarded, particularly when they concern the state's security, its people, and their very existence.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a historic document that defines the fundamental rights of all humankind. It stresses that all individuals are born equal in dignity and rights. It rejects discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion, origin, or wealth.

I have written more than ten articles about this Universal Declaration, yet no official has paid attention to them.

Here, we find ourselves falling short of fully implementing the aforementioned principles.

However, we must also highlight the positive actions, often stemming from noble Amiri directives to enhance women's participation in various decision-making bodies, after decades of neglect.

Torture and cruel treatment must be prohibited in any state penal institution. I am unsure of the extent to which these matters are being fully implemented.

We must recognize the legal personality of every individual before the law, without discrimination or distortion of the law.

Everyone has the right to a fair trial, which should be accessible. However, nearly everyone complains about the slow pace of litigation and the appalling delays in issuing judgments, which is unjust.

Human beings also have the right to live in a clean environment, but this right remains unfulfilled and is not a priority for the ineffective Environment Public Authority. Kuwait suffers from high levels of air pollution, despite its small popula-

tion, few factories, and low levels of emissions from its refineries. It appears that addressing this threat is not a core concern of the relevant authorities due to their inability and lack of understanding.

On the other hand, I have noticed a growing push to amend personal status laws, as announced by Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait. These amendments pertain to the Family Court, domestic violence, juveniles, and children. There is also an increasing emphasis on the need to change laws to protect women, whether as wives, daughters, sisters, or mothers, and to eliminate violence against them.

However, it was disappointing that Al-Sumait stated there are many flaws in the current law that are not compatible with Islamic law, leading to encouragement and leniency in the divorce process. Dozens of issues that conflict with Islamic law have been ignored. The ministry's standards should be based on justice and humanity, not on anything else.

The legal provision that grants a father only six hours, as is currently the case, to see his children on Fridays is inhumane and must be amended. It has no basis in Islamic law.

The wife's right to request a divorce is a purely humanitarian issue and should not be changed under the pretext that it is not implemented in neighboring countries. How can we force a woman to live with someone she despises simply because the law in another country requires it?

It was also commendable to raise the age of criminal responsibility for children from 7 to 10 years, but this is certainly not enough. How can children of that age be prosecuted for their actions? A more humane approach is needed, one that aligns with the developmental stage of the child being convicted.

In addition, raising the minimum marriage age to 15 years for girls and 18 years for boys is a positive step. However, while this move may be seen as somewhat contrary to Islamic law, how is it permissible to violate Sharia law in this case but not in others?

The decision to amend Article 153, which previously allowed a lenient sentence for perpetrators of heinous crimes under the pretext of defending a man's honor, was also significant. It is a positive change to reclassify such a crime as premeditated murder.

As a small, wealthy country, Kuwait is surrounded by various threats. Ensuring our security requires strengthening our national unity and fully respecting and adhering to international law.

□ □ □

email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

High-schoolers ... and the art of 'censorship' in media field

"IN A recent interview on a television channel, distinguished artist Sa'ad Al-Faraj recounted the story of censorship, along with a clip of a scene or situation within the framework of a comprehensive theater play," journalist Hassan Ali Karam wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Al-Faraj said 'the late playwright Abdul Amir Turki and I were editing a play, so we included the incident of the bombing of the motorcade of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad, yet the censorship authority strongly rejected it on the grounds that the perpetrators of the bombing were not Arabs, but foreigners.'



Hassan Ali Karam

"The great artist added in his account: The next day, we met with HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad to find out who carried out the operation, and His Highness confirmed that they were Arabs.

"In another incident, after the war to liberate Kuwait from the brutal Iraqi aggression, MBC Al-Arabiya TV broadcasted an interview with the late Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The conversation proceeded normally until Saleh was asked about his position on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

"Everyone knows that he was a supporter of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Suddenly, Kuwait TV, which was broadcasting the interview, went off the air and resumed its regular programs. The next morning, I wrote an article on the back page of Al-Rai Al-Aam newspaper, strongly criticizing the interruption of the interview.

"The late Minister of Information, Sheikh Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, called me and explained the reasons behind the censorship authority's interruption of the interview, explaining that it was afraid Ali Saleh would speak about the invasion. I said: 'I wish he would speak, let us hear his opinion and discuss his position in support of the invasion.'

"I told Sheikh Saud that the censorship authority should be smarter and more cultured than the media professionals. The government should not relegate censorship to the margins of government jobs, employing those with intermediate or high school diplomas for positions typically reserved for intelligent people and holders of advanced degrees.

"Are developed and democratic countries with free media free of censorship, media monitoring or the banning of books and artistic works?

"Look at the amount of materials and works confiscated by the United States -- a country whose motto is freedom and freedom of expression. Censorship there is part of the national defense line, no less than the Army and Police.

"We, in Kuwait, are not safe. Our enemies are from within. Censorship does not necessarily target journalistic material, a joke or a pornographic film. Censorship should target content no less dangerous than drugs and intoxicants.

"On this planet filled with conspiracies and crimes, we must abandon our sense of good faith."

Also:

"In articles such as these, in which we establish national education in a comprehensive and unprecedented manner; we can only establish a structure for national education that influences Kuwaiti human behavior and we can provide more details later if the space allows," Kuwaiti author Dr. Hamoud Al-Hattab wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"We previously discussed the role of national institutions in national education in general. In this brief discussion, we will focus on the mechanism of the school's role in national education, which should be divided into three pedagogical stages: national education in the elementary stage, the intermediate stage and the secondary stage.

"National education must adopt a scientific educational approach in constructing its curricula; taking into account the demands related to the students' development, needs of the society, modernity, nature of the subject matter and the educational objectives of the applied scientific curriculum, not the emotional or constructive one.

"This enables the students at all three educational stages to find direct practical benefit, as well as emotional and practical enjoyment in learning the subjects. This is the pedagogical nature that should prevail in all educational materials.

"In the educational mechanisms for national education in schools at the three levels; the students engage in activities that complement the theoretical, intellectual and philosophical education they receive from textbooks. These include activities in and outside the school. Examples of school activities in the elementary stage -- as a description of a form of educational material -- include practicing agriculture with the aim of beautifying the nation. Students plant flowers in the school garden in the shape of a map of Kuwait, Kuwait flag, Kuwait Towers and so on. This activity is linked to a theoretical lesson titled, 'I Beautify My Country, Kuwait.'

"I have presented this as an example only, describing it as a conceptual model for an applied mechanism for an integrated curriculum aimed at building a national educational orientation in Kuwaiti schools. This model emphasizes the inter-connectedness of all academic subjects within this educational framework, as well as other subjects in what

is called in the curriculum Science as the 'comprehensive' or 'integrated' curriculum. Science, Islamic education and Arabic language can also support the curriculum in a diverse manner. Teachers are trained in this integration. And there is more to come, God willing."

"We are taught from a young age to avoid mistakes, as if they are an unforgivable stain, and that success is a straight path with no detours. 'Think before you act', 'Don't rush', 'Take the safe route' - these are words we constantly hear growing up," columnist Dr. Sulaiman Al-Khudari wrote for Al-Qabas daily.

"This reached the extent that we find ourselves facing questions no one ever taught us how to answer: What about the mistakes we didn't make? What about the ones we should have experienced to better understand life and be more capable of making the right decisions later?"

"Do these questions surprise you?"

"Let me shock you further by saying that some mistakes are more like passports to maturity and entry visas to a deeper understanding of life. These are not tragic endings, but new beginnings for a broader perspective, a clearer vision, and perhaps even more beautiful stories!"

"How many times have we hesitated to take a bold step because we feared making a mistake, only to realize later that the hesitation itself was the real mistake? Don't you think that the fear of failure could actually be the true failure, because in doing so, we deny ourselves the opportunity to learn and grow? Strangely enough, we often only learn from our mistakes, whether they are big or small!"

"Nothing is more frustrating than realizing that the mistake you avoided was not worth all the panic. What if you had taken the risk? What if you had said what you wanted to say, tried what you feared, or made the decision they warned you against? The sad truth is that some people live their lives as if they are trying to leave it with the least amount of damage, only to be surprised at the end that they never truly lived.

"You can read a thousand books on leadership, but you will not truly learn it until you get lost on the road once or twice. You can hear hundreds of pieces of advice on love, but you won't really understand it until you experience it, with its mistakes as well as its successes. There are things that can only be understood by falling into them, bending under their weight, and then rising stronger than before.

"Life is not a theoretical test, but a practical experience. And sometimes, that experience means failure, and often, it means failing. But it also means you are trying, you are moving forward, and you are breaking the mold you were placed in to discover yourself as you truly are, not as others want you to be.

"Our ability to make mistakes is not a flaw or a manufactured error; it is part of being human. No one leaves this life without making wrong decisions, but the difference is that some mistakes build, while others destroy. Those who make mistakes and learn from them will grow, while those who live in constant fear of mistakes may end up discovering that their greatest mistake was the fear itself.

"So, the next time you hesitate out of fear of making a mistake, remember that some mistakes are not just fleeting accidents but stations you need to pass through. The safest routes are sometimes the most stagnant.

"What if the mistake you fear now is exactly the one you need to make?"

"The proposal announced by the Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait to amend family laws, including personal status, family, and domestic violence laws, is an important topic for discussion due to the huge impact these legislations have had on families in Kuwait," columnist Hussein Al-Abdallah wrote for Al-Jarida daily.

"A review of these laws, after more than 45 years of implementing the Personal Status Law, ten years of the Family Law, and three years of the Domestic Violence Law, has become necessary in light of the various consequences these laws have had on society, particularly on family unity. This is especially relevant in terms of regulating marital relationships and their dissolution, as well as the subsequent effects on children's rights, their maintenance, and the rights of parents regarding custody and visitation.

"I have previously stated on several occasions that the Personal Status Law is, unfortunately, one of the laws that encourages divorce in Kuwait due to the formal procedures involved, which do not effectively prevent or reject divorce requests.

"In fact, one of the rulings from the Court of Cassation, in its efforts to empower women with the right to divorce for harm, emphasized that mere discord between spouses is grounds for a woman to request divorce. This reflects an expansion of the right for women to divorce if they despise their husband and are determined to end the marriage."

— Compiled by Saeed Mahmoud/
Simi K. Kutty

Kuwaiti woman files insult report

Lawyer claims article linked to her on social media fabricated

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Lawyer Fawziya Al-Sabah has denied any connection to the article attributed to her on social media, and called for accuracy and caution before publishing or republishing any article or news that was not authored by her, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

She emphasized that she only publishes her articles in Kuwaiti newspapers and has not contributed to any Egyptian or foreign publications.

Lawyer Fawziya affirmed her commitment to promoting unity among Islamic sects, and reiterated that she does not engage in international politics.

She stated that she would never have written the content of the article, which she described as fabricated.



Fawziya Al-Sabah

Insult complaint filed: A female Kuwaiti citizen filed a report at Hawally Police Station that an expatriate woman allegedly insulted her, reports Al-Anba daily. During the investigation, the defendant admitted to sending the voice message but claimed that she did not believe her words constituted slander.

A lawyer representing the complainant, along with her four siblings, filed a formal complaint at the police station; accusing the expatriate woman of insulting his clients. According to a security source, the accused voluntarily appeared at the police station, where she was confronted with the charges. Upon hearing

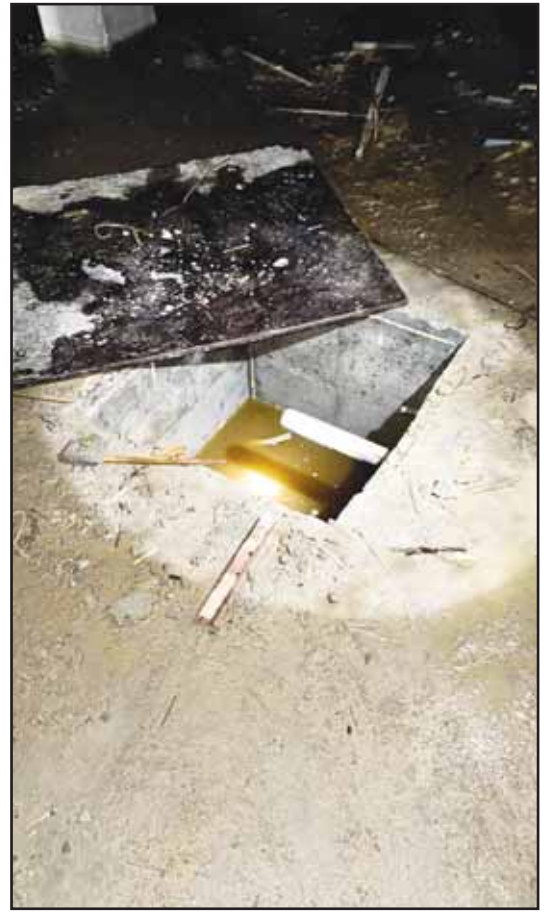
the allegations and listening to the audio recording, she acknowledged the authenticity of the message and confirmed that she sent the voice message through WhatsApp due to ongoing financial disputes between the parties.

It is important to note that the Kuwaiti Penal Code criminalizes electronic slander and defamation, stipulating penalties for insults and offensive language shared through social media.

Article One of the Cybercrime Law states: Anyone who intentionally misuses social media platforms through a mobile phone or computer by using obscene or indecent language shall face imprisonment for up to two years and a fine of KD2,000 or either penalty; in addition to the confiscation of the devices used in committing the offense.

Article 70 of the Telecommunications Regulatory Law stipulates: Anyone who sends insulting messages that violate public morals through social media shall be subject to imprisonment for up to two years and a fine of KD5,000 or either penalty.

Article 83 of the same law stipulates that a legal entity (such as a company) will be penalized with double the prescribed fine if defamation or slander occurs on social media in its name, on its behalf, or using its devices or network due to the entity's action, negligence or consent. Penalties are increased in the event of repeated offenses.



KFF photo

A worker fell into a water pit at a construction site.

Firemen rescue injured worker from water pit

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: A laborer sustained injuries when he fell into a hole in a building under construction in Salmiya on Saturday evening, reports Al-Anba daily.

Firefighters from Al-Bida'a Fire Station rushed to the location and rescued the laborer. He was referred to the paramedics for treatment, and the site was handed over to the concerned authorities.

Court rejects citizens' appeal

Discrepancies result in financial claims loss

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: The Court of Cassation, headed by Counselor Fouad Al-Zuwaid, rejected the appeal filed by a number of citizens in a financial claims case arguing that the lawyer's signature on the petition was invalid due to the lawyer signing the appeal without indicating that he is registered with this court, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In its ruling, the court cited Article 153 of the Code of Civil Procedure, which stipulates that "the appeal shall be filed with the registry and signed by a lawyer, which shall include -- in addition to information relating to the names, descriptions, residence and place of work of the parties -- the identification of the contested judgment, its date, a statement of the grounds upon which the appeal is based, and the appellant's requests. If the appeal is not filed in this manner, it is invalid, and the court shall rule on its own motion to invalidate it."

The court ruled that the invalidity was related

to public order and that the court would rule on it on its own initiative. The court stated that this indicates that the legislature requires the parties to appoint lawyers admitted before the Court of Cassation to represent them in conducting proceedings and pleading before it. The rationale behind this is that the court only considers legal matters. Only lawyers qualified to examine legal matters may submit, sign and plead appeals. Failure to do so renders the appeal invalid.

The court pointed out that the documents indicate "although the appeal petition was issued by the lawyer's office, the signature under the lawyer's name was preceded by the word 'voluntarily' -- a signature by someone claiming to be a lawyer without any evidence of his status as a lawyer admitted before the Court of Cassation.

The court explained that since the appeal's brief --like all pleading documents -- must contain the necessary elements to fulfill its validity requirements; that it be signed by a lawyer admitted before the Court of Cassation. This is because his signature is the sole document attesting to its legally required issuance. This statement cannot be supplemented by evidence outside of the brief, not derived from it. Consequently, the brief becomes invalid. This invalidity is related to public order, and the court rules on its own initiative. Therefore, it is necessary to declare the appeal inadmissible.

□ □ □

No to street vending

Abandoned cars, illegal mobile food trucks lifted

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Teams from the Public Sanitation and Road Occupancy Department at Kuwait Municipality have intensified efforts to address negative phenomena and enforce regulations on cleanliness, road occupancy and street vending in the governorates, reports Al-Anba daily. This is in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, specifically its Public Security Sector. The teams also removed abandoned vehicles and illegal mobile food trucks (vending carts) throughout Farwaniya Governorate.

These campaigns resulted in the issuance of a total of 110 violation citations for space exploitation, encroachment on State properties, illegal street vendors, and unauthorized vehicles; while 105 abandoned vehicles and mobile food trucks were impounded.

Assess citizen's disability, issue certificate -- court

By Jaber Al-Humoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: The Administrative Court of Appeals has overturned the decision of the medical committee of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA), which had refused to issue a disability certificate to a Kuwaiti woman based on visual impairment.

The court ordered the committee to assess the degree of the citizen's disability and issue a certificate confirming her condition.

In its ruling, the court stressed that the plaintiff's permanent disability prevents her from fully participating in society, thereby entitling her to the rights of persons with disabilities under law No. 8/2010, and that the original decision lacked sound legal grounds.

Lawyer Khaled Al-Suwaifan stated that medical reports confirm his client suffers from permanent visual impairment, despite the medical committee's decision asserting that no such impairment exists.

He explained that the court ordered the Forensic Medicine Department to conduct an assessment, which confirmed visual impairment in her left eye, hindering her ability to see objects up close. However, this finding did not qualify as a permanent visual impairment. While the Court of First Instance rejected the lawsuit, the Court of Appeal reviewed the medical reports and ruled in favor of his client.



Al-Suwaifan



Ramadan Iftar Buffet

بوفيه إفطار رمضان

KD 7.450 ONLY

CHILD BUFFET KD 4.250

LARGEST SPREAD IN TOWN

Serving in Hawally & Fahaheel branch

CALL US : 1800 188 / 5501 1985

@mughalmahalkuwait

www.mughalmahal.com



LOCAL

HH Amir receives Crown Prince and senior officials

KUWAIT CITY, March 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Sunday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received President of the

Supreme Judicial Council, head of the Court of Cassation Dr. Adel Majed Bouresli, as well as Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah.

Also on Sunday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received

at Bayan Palace the President of the Supreme Judicial Council and head of the Court of Cassation Dr. Adel Majed Bouresli.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received the Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah.

Greener tomorrow

KEPS launches drive to mark 'Earth Hour'

KUWAIT CITY, March 23, (KUNA): The Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) announced on Saturday launching an initiative marking the "Earth Hour", a worldwide movement organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which falls on March 22.

Yusuf Al-Ramzi, deputy head of the KEPS engineers' team, which launched the move, said in a news statement that the initiative designs a daily lifestyle and behavior of individuals, bodies, institutions and companies, and turns the symbol of "Earth Hour" to a sustainable environmental act.

The move aims to encourage daily habits, which lessen water and electricity consumption through raising awareness programs and student activities, as part of green schools programs affiliated to the KEPS, he added.

He referred to a series of activities, challenges and competitions to be declared in this regard.

This occasion does not include only giving up lights but it also seeks to raise awareness on preserving environment and climate change by making varied activities and following up effective methods and steps to make use of renewable energy at workplaces, he noted.

The "Earth Hour" event is held annually to encourage individuals, communities and businesses to give up non-essential electricity for an hour, from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m., for the sake of Earth, as a symbol of commitment to the planet.



KUNA photos
Kuwait Environment Protection Society logo.

KD2.29mn project
Ministry plans solar carports in Subhan

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has referred the contract for the supply, installation and operation of a photovoltaic system on carports at the main workshops and the Emergency Services Department in Subhan to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for review, audit and approval; say reliable sources from the ministry.

Sources said the total value of the contract is KD2.29 million, indicating that implementation will begin after obtaining approval from SAB and concluding the contract with the winning company.

Sources confirmed that the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) had earlier approved the tender and the ministry referred it to SAB on Feb 18.

Sources revealed this is one of the small renewable energy production projects the ministry included in its plan to obtain electricity from sustainable sources. Sources added the plan is to produce 7,000 kilowatts to supply electricity to the ministry's buildings and departments in Subhan, instead of traditional energy sources. "This will save money spent on electricity production from oil, while protecting the environment," sources explained.

Meanwhile, recent statistics released by the ministry revealed the appointment of 240 Kuwaiti employees in the technical and administrative sectors in February; bringing the total number of employees to 35,628.

Educational facilities set for investment overhaul

Plan aims to generate new income streams

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: The Ministry of Education has joined the ranks of higher education institutions investing in their facilities.

This step was taken after the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) and Kuwait University activated partnerships with the private sector and utilize available facilities and sites more efficiently.

Educational sector sources confirmed that the ministry is currently preparing plans to invest in underutilized educational buildings and facilities through long-term investment projects or by providing temporary opportunities to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Sources said this approach aims to enhance financial sustainability and maximize the use of available facilities. "The ministry intends to leverage the experience of PAAET and Kuwait University by activating investment in school buildings and their associated facilities in order to contribute to financial returns that can be used to develop the educational

process, improve the school environment and support student activities. It has completed the preparation of regulations for investing in educational facilities and maximizing income and revenue sources," they added.

Sources revealed that the specialized team, headed by the assistant undersecretary for Educational Facilities and Planning, prepared a comprehensive report that included a detailed study of the ministerial decisions regulating the use of educational facilities in schools and in the ministry's administrative buildings.

Sources affirmed that the committee identified the ways to fully utilize the ministry's assets, while introducing

new regulatory decisions to ensure the optimal use of resources. "This includes investing in unused facilities in schools like the indoor playgrounds and unused buildings; in addition to regulating the use of idle facilities, such as indoor playgrounds and unused buildings.

The use of ministry facilities for which previous decisions have been issued and implemented is regulated as well, including the allocation of some facilities to educational headquarters or investing in them to better serve the community through cooperation with private schools, government agencies and licensed public benefit associations. They also include investing in sports facilities such as playgrounds and swimming pools to maximize the use of available assets," sources disclosed.

Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal issued a directive on the preparation of a comprehensive study to identify all available investment opportunities in Sabah Al-Salem University City, given the large spaces and multiple facilities within the campus that offer ample investment potential.

"This will create additional sources of income for the general budget; thus, contributing to alleviating the financial burden on the State, as well as generating self-generated revenues for the university that can be used to develop the educational and research process, in accordance with the State's laws and regulations," sources added.



Dr. Al-Jalal

Algerian envoy hails strong bonds with Kuwait

Algerian Embassy pays tribute to nat'l struggle on 63rd Victory Day

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: The Algerian Embassy commemorated the 63rd Victory Day, with the theme, "On the Path of Victory... Loyalty to the March of the Free".

A number of the Algerian community members attended the event.

On this occasion, Algerian Ambassador Abdelkader Kasmi Al-Hassani praised the strong fraternal relations between Algeria and Kuwait; confirming the depth of the bonds of cooperation and solidarity between the two countries.

He stressed the importance of the 63rd Victory Day, considering it a pivotal moment that embodies the Algerian people's struggle for freedom and the restoration of national sovereignty.

He pointed out that the Evian Accords were the fruit of a heroic resistance led by the Algerian people with courage and tremendous sacrifices for more than seven years in order to end colonialism and achieve independence.

He said this occasion is not just a military or political victory, as it is



Abdelkader Kasmi Al-Hassani, Algerian Ambassador to Kuwait

rather a victory for noble values like steadfastness, public will and adherence to the right to self-determination.

He concluded his speech by extending his warmest greetings to the Kuwaiti people and their wise leadership, represented by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber

Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, on the occasion of the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan.

He also wished Kuwait continuous progress and prosperity, and the Islamic nation a blessed month filled with goodness and peace.



Embassy of Algeria photos

Algerian Embassy in Kuwait commemorates the 63rd anniversary of Victory Day.

Cabinet orders eligibility audit

Kuwait tightens diplomatic passport rules

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: The Secretariat General of the Cabinet issued a circular to ministries and government agencies regarding the Cabinet's decision to instruct the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to compile a list of officials and their families who hold diplomatic or special passports, along with the relevant personal information, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The first provision of the circular mandates the ministries and government agencies to work with the Legal Advice and Legislation Department to amend specific provisions of Law No. 1/1962 concerning passports.

This includes reviewing the categories of individuals who are ineligible for diplomatic and special passports. The ministries and government agencies are required to report back to the Cabinet with the results within one month.

The second provision outlines the Cabinet's decision for coordination with ministers and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to take appropriate action to revoke diplomatic and special passports from individuals who no longer qualify. The Cabinet must be informed about the progress on this matter.

The circular also referenced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' letter dated Feb 6, 2025 on the issuance of diplomatic and special passports. It includes a directive to all ministries and government agencies to compile and submit a list of all officials entitled to hold these passports, including their families. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs must be notified promptly once a concerned official's tenure ends. Upon termination of the service, the relevant diplomatic or special passport must be returned to the ministry, along with a clearance confirming the passport has been surrendered.

Firms must meet CBK rules by March 31

MoCI sets deadline for exchange firms

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: The Cabinet's Resolution No. 552 issued during its meeting in June 2024, which transferred the supervision and monitoring of exchange offices from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to the Central Bank of Kuwait, and in accordance with ministerial Resolution No.

233/2024 for regulating the work of exchange companies and institutions per the Central Bank of Kuwait's requirements, the Ministry of Commerce has called on the owners of licenses for exchange companies and institutions to adhere to the final deadline of March 31, 2025 to regularize their status

to comply with the Central Bank's requirements, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry warned that, after the expiry of this deadline, any companies or institutions that have not regularized their status will have their activities stopped, and their practice will be prohibited.

Other Voices

China and Kuwait: 54 years of friendship and strong partnership

By His Excellency Zhang Jianwei
The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Kuwait

MARCH 22 marks the 54th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the State of Kuwait. Kuwait was the first Gulf state to establish diplomatic ties with China. Over the past 54 years, the relationship between the two countries has weathered international changes and continued to develop in a sound and steady manner. Bilateral cooperation in various fields has yielded fruitful results.

China and Kuwait have always supported each other. Kuwait adhered to the one-China principle and has always voted in favor of restoring the People's Republic of China's legitimate seat in the United Nations. In return, China has supported Kuwait's efforts to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

When Kuwait was invaded in 1990, China provided strong support for the restoration of Kuwait's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The two countries have always maintained close coordination in international affairs, advocating for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and opposing hegemony, power politics, and interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

China and Kuwait have collaborated to uphold the international system, with the United Nations at its core. Both countries have worked together to support efforts to develop a more just and equitable international order.

The Amir of the State of Kuwait His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was the first Gulf leader to publicly express support for the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the World Civilization Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping. This has laid a solid political foundation and injected strong momentum into the deepening of the strategic partnership between the two countries in the future.

China and Kuwait have consistently deepened practical cooperation based on mutual benefit. Kuwait became the first country in the Middle East to sign a cooperation document under China's Belt and Road Initiative. For ten consecutive years, China has been Kuwait's largest trading partner. Also, the Kuwait Investment Authority opened its second overseas investment office in Shanghai, becoming the first foreign investor in China's high-speed railway network.

Chinese companies have completed the construction of several major projects in Kuwait, including the new headquarters of the Central Bank of Kuwait, a university campus, a refinery, a housing project, and the development of the Seventh Ring Road. These efforts have positively contributed to the development of Kuwait's economy and improved the livelihoods of its people.

Chinese products, especially automobiles, are also highly popular among Kuwaiti consumers. Furthermore, in collaboration with Huawei, Kuwait became the first country in the Middle East to successfully implement nationwide 5G network coverage. Cooperation between the two countries continues to expand, now including investment, finance, the digital economy, and other sectors.

The two sides are currently working to implement a series of cooperation agreements signed by the leaders of both countries. Recently, the Chinese and Kuwaiti sides signed a contract for the study, design, and pre-construction services for the completion of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project in Kuwait, as well as a framework agreement for technical arrangements regarding

joint renewable energy cooperation in Beijing. This practical cooperation between the two countries is sure to bring greater prosperity to both peoples.

On the cultural front, China and Kuwait have continued to strengthen understanding and rapprochement between their peoples. Exchanges between the two countries are growing rapidly, with direct flights from Kuwait City to Guangzhou operating three times a week. More Kuwaitis are traveling to China for tourism and business purposes, especially during the Canton Fair, when all flights to China are fully booked.

The first Chinese Cultural Center in the Gulf region was established in Kuwait. It organized a series of diverse cultural events and provided a new window for the Kuwaiti people to gain a deeper understanding of China. The center has created a valuable platform for promoting cultural exchange and mutual learning between the two countries.

The Chinese Embassy in Kuwait has worked tirelessly to implement the important consensus reached by Chinese President Xi Jinping and His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and enhance cultural and humanitarian cooperation between the two countries.

The embassy has organized several major cultural events and hosted Chinese art troupes in Kuwait for introducing Kuwaiti society to China's rich traditional culture and receiving widespread appreciation among various Kuwaiti circles. Mutual visits by media outlets, think tanks, youth,

academics, and students have increased, further strengthening ties between the two peoples, and moving from a stage of acquaintance and understanding to one of closer rapport and solidarity.

Over the past 54 years, China and Kuwait have remained close friends and partners. Looking ahead, the two countries will continue their friendship and partnership, built on trust and support.

Under the strategic guidance of the political leadership of both friendly countries, Sino-Kuwaiti relations have entered the best period in their history, with broader and more promising prospects.

China is currently focusing on promoting high-quality development and a higher level of opening-up. Through Chinese-style modernization, it aims to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, which will bring more opportunities to the world, including Kuwait.

It is worth noting that China is chairing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) this year, and Kuwait is chairing the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The Chinese side is eager to use this opportunity to enhance communication and coordination with Kuwait in order to advance China-GCC relations toward high-quality development.

China also looks forward to deepening cooperation with the GCC states in areas such as energy, infrastructure, aviation, renewable energy, the digital economy, combating desertification, and strengthening mutual investment and trade ties. This will bring more tangible benefits to the peoples of the region and all SCO members.

We are fully confident in the future development of Sino-Kuwaiti relations and will continue our tireless efforts to further strengthen them.



Jianwei



Amiri Diwan photos
His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and the Al-Sabah family attend a Ghabqa hosted by Sheikh Mubarak Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his brothers in his honor.

HH Amir attends 'Ghabqa' hosted by Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah

KUWAIT CITY, March 23, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended a 'Ghabqa' (a traditional holy Ramadan dinner banquet), hosted by Sheikh Mubarak Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Dar Noor in Messila area

on Saturday.

The banquet gathered His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and other ruling family members.



Continued from Page 1

Amir calls

His Highness the Amir also went on warning of the upcoming challenges, stressing the importance of realizing the magnitude and size of the responsibility, which requires everyone to adhere to national unity and work with a spirit of responsibility to preserve the security and stability of the homeland.

His Highness the Amir also prayed to the Almighty to have mercy on "our martyrs, heal the sick, and have mercy on our former rulers."

5-year limit

2. General driving license (Category A):

This license is issued for driving passenger transport vehicles with more than 25 passengers, public transport vehicles, transport vehicles, locomotives, trailers, and semi-trailers with a capacity exceeding eight tons, as well as vehicles transporting hazardous materials and for vehicle driving instruction.

Category B:

This license is issued for driving passenger transport vehicles with more than seven passengers, up to 25 passengers, public transport vehicles, and transport vehicles with a capacity exceeding two tons but not exceeding eight tons.

The general driving license in both categories is valid for 15 years for Kuwaitis and GCC citizens. For non-Kuwaitis, it is valid for five years. For illegal residents, the validity is determined by the security card.

A person holding a general driving license in category B is not permitted to drive vehicles allowed under a general driving license in Category A.

General driving licenses issued prior to this decision will remain valid until their expiration.

Kuwait set

Just days earlier, the Cabinet approved a preliminary decree allowing the OPEC member to issue international bonds for the first time in eight years, a move that has helped boost market confidence.

Kuwaiti stocks have also outperformed their Gulf peers this year, driven by strong performances from Boubyan Bank, Burgan Bank, and Warba Bank, all of which posted gains exceeding 17 percent.

Meanwhile, Director of Gulf Economics and an analyst at Global Source Partners Justin Alexander noted that accumulated housing demand means that mortgages, despite significant regulatory constraints, could substantially boost the profitability of Kuwaiti banks. This move could also attract foreign investor interest in banking stocks, as current foreign investments in the Kuwaiti banking sector are estimated at approximately KWD 4.7 billion (\$15.3 billion), or 15 percent of the total sector.

Furthermore, Deputy Group CEO of the National Bank of Kuwait Shaikha Al-Bahar said, "This opportunity extends beyond the direct impact of housing financing, given the scale of infrastructure investments needed to develop new residential areas to meet the growing demand."

Also, Salome Skhirtladze, a financial sector analyst in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, explained, "Potential legislative amendments could include mortgage terms, government support, interest rate caps, and regulatory limits such as debt service ratios. Accelerating the mortgage market could stimulate the construction sector, driving domestic credit growth to single-digit rates in the medium term."

The mortgage law is expected to contribute to a long-term expansion in Kuwait's real estate sector.

In this regard, Head of research at Arqaam Capital in Dubai Jaap Meyer said, "This should lead to increased

project awards for infrastructure and new cities, as well as a rise in housing project starts".

Also, Assistant Professor at Kuwait University and associate fellow at Chatham House Bader Al-Saif stated, "Kuwait has a lot to offer; it is an untapped market compared to its neighbors in the region."

The mortgage market in numbers:

- Potential mortgage market: \$65 billion
- Expected 40 percent increase in bank mortgage loan portfolios
- Accumulated applications in the government housing system: 103,000
- 5,000 housing units included in signed housing contracts
- \$15.3 billion: foreign investments in Kuwaiti banks

Kuwait keen

with relevant officials from China's Commerce Ministry.

He emphasized Kuwait's commitment to its strategic partnership with China, and its contribution to achieving mutual benefits.

He also praised the contributions of Chinese companies in economic cooperation between the two countries, with Kuwait launching massive development programs and projects, and welcoming Chinese companies to contribute due to their experience.

Kuwait signed several MoUs with China in 2023, including the implementation of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project.

Eid Al-Fitr

He pointed out that travelers who book early enjoy discounted and attractive prices, while those who book at the last minute face higher costs due to limited availability.

He said the most popular destinations during the Eid holiday include Cairo, which experiences crowding due to the Egyptian community's desire to spend the holiday in their home country, coinciding with the improved weather.

He added that tourist destinations such as Dubai, Beirut, Istanbul, London and Rome are witnessing influx of holiday travelers.

He disclosed that ticket prices three weeks before Eid were much lower, with return tickets ranging from KD130 to KD190, depending on the destination.

He affirmed that the few days before the holiday witnessed significant increases, with ticket prices to London reaching KD450, to Cairo ranging from KD280 to KD300, to Istanbul between KD250 and KD300, and to Dubai ranged between KD130 and KD140.

He revealed Dubai is also witnessing a surge in demand, with approximately 13 flights operating daily to the city; reflecting the high demand for this destination, alongside European destinations that are attracting increasing numbers of travelers during this period.

He also emphasized that travel during holidays and vacations remains consistently active, indicating that early booking remains the best option to avoid high prices; since prices vary significantly depending on the timing of the booking and the proximity of the travel date.

On the other hand, tourism expert Kamal Kabsha said the limited number of seats before the holiday date, compared to the increased demand during peak times, leads to an automatic increase in ticket prices as the holiday date approaches. "This is something travelers notice annually during holidays and tourist seasons," he added.

He stated that some destinations are experiencing high demand; particularly in cities that combine tourism, shopping and entertainment services, leading to flight seats filling up quickly and ticket prices gradually rising.

Mubarak Al-Kabeer

She affirmed that this vital development project is very important to high leadership, as it will transform Kuwait into a commercial port and regional transportation center in line with the New Kuwait 2035.

She stressed that efforts to develop the northern region as an integrated economic and urban system are based on a comprehensive and integrated vision for developing urban areas in the country, which takes into account all economic and urban aspects to diversify sources of income, increase the gross domestic product and restore Kuwait's commercial, financial and regional pioneering role.

She added this project is one of the main pillars of development to expand economic and commercial activity in the fields of import and export.

It is worth noting that the current contract is one of the fruits of the memoranda of understanding signed between the governments of the State of Kuwait and the People's Republic of China last September, marking the beginning of a series of future contracts between the two parties that reflect mutual cooperation between the two countries.

The current contract includes a number of tasks like the review and completion of the special designs for Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, and the presentation of the vision and comprehensive plan for the implementation and operation of the port.

'Scheduled power

which, if executed, would have helped the ministry achieve electricity security by now, and prevent the need for scheduled power outages both last summer and the upcoming one.

He highlighted that Kuwait is rich in financial resources and national expertise, stressing that the situation calls for paving the way for the proposal and implementation of urgent projects, such as the construction of power generation plants, transmission and distribution networks, and their operation.

Eng. Boushahri stressed the importance of skilled technical personnel and continuous maintenance to ensure round-the-clock service.

He explained three ways to implement electricity and water projects in Kuwait. The first is through the ministry itself, which proposes and implements projects, including the Subiya plant to produce 900 megawatts and the Nu-waiseeb plant, which is set to generate 3,600 megawatts.

The second way is through the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) system, which successfully implemented the first phase of the Al-Zour North project. Phases two and three of the Al-Zour North project are also planned to produce 2,700 megawatts, while the first phase of the Khairan plant is scheduled to produce 1,800 megawatts. The third method involves an independent supplier.

Eng. Boushahri called for cooperation among relevant authorities to accelerate project tendering and eliminate all obstacles.

US commerce

Al-Mulla called for these remarks to serve as a "wake-up call" to raise awareness about the global changes taking place, insisting these changes necessitate internal cohesion, unity, political stability, and a renewed commitment to a balanced foreign policy and diversified partnerships.

Meanwhile, former MP Dr. Jinan Boushahri warned against dismissing the US Secretary of Commerce's statement regarding Kuwait's failure to pay the costs of the liberation war as a mere passing comment.

She highlighted that US President Donald Trump had made similar statements during the 2011 presidential election race.

Boushahri said Kuwait is not immune from the US administration's scrutiny in its trade wars or potential escalatory measures related to money or oil wealth.

While she acknowledged that foreign affairs fall under the government's responsibility, she stressed the need for the government to take a deeper look at the local situation, and listen to genuine national opinions rather than those seeking influence or power.

Boushahri affirmed the importance of strengthening national unity and combating divisive ideas, highlighting that while Kuwaiti-American relations have a long history, the global conditions has shifted, and positions of importance have evolved.

Furthermore, media personality Ahmed Al-Barjas explained via his X account that Kuwait, through the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), enforces a unified customs tariff of five percent on nearly all goods, which is lower than that of many other countries.

He said, "Spreading misleading information like this could damage relations with allies who have stood by the United States during critical moments. Kuwaitis deeply appreciate the role the United States played in the liberation and have consistently shown this appreciation through meaningful contributions and ongoing cooperation."

In addition, former MP Essam Al-Dabbous stressed that the US Secretary of State's statement is both dangerous and contrary to the truth.

He insisted that Kuwait adopts fair trade policies designed to protect and develop its economic interests, and it always adheres to international trade principles as a member of the World Trade Organization.

Al-Dabbous highlighted that Kuwait strives to maintain balance in its economic relations with all countries, including the United States, while respecting mutual rights and interests.

He indicated that such statements should be addressed through diplomatic channels, rather than through methods that could be seen as political blackmail.

Required for
Academic Year 2025-26
at Private American School

- Kindergarten**
- Female Physical Education Teacher/Lifeguard
 - English Teacher
- Elementary**
- English Teacher
 - Science Teacher
 - Math Teacher
 - Physical Education Teacher
- Middle High School**
- Math Teacher
 - AP English Teacher
 - English Teacher
 - Science Teacher
 - Social Studies/Humanities Teacher
 - Counselor (Social-Emotional and Academic Focus)
 - College Counselor
- Leadership Positions - Middle High School**
- Vice Principal
 - Middle School Principal
 - Curriculum Coordinator
 - Dean of Students

Interested applicants may apply through our website at the following link:
<https://www.abs.edu.kw/careers/abs>

INTERNATIONAL



Crime scene technicians investigate the parking lot at Young Park after Friday night's fatal shooting in Las Cruces, NM on March 22. (AP)

New Mexico park shooting kills 3

Three people were fatally shot, and 15 others were hurt, after an altercation broke out at a park in the desert city of Las Cruces, police said Saturday.

Police and fire crews arrived at just after 10 p.m. Friday to a chaotic scene at Young Park, where an unauthorized car show had drawn about 200 people, police said in a news conference. Gunshot victims ranging in age from 16 to 36 were treated there or taken to hospitals.

Between 50 and 60 handgun casings were scattered across a wide swath of the park, Police Chief Jeremy Story said, suggest-

ing multiple shooters and multiple weapons among two groups whose "ill will" toward each other are believed to have led to the shootings. Several others were injured in the crossfire, he said.

The dead were identified only as a 16-year-old boy and two men, ages 18 and 19, police said. Their names and those of the other victims were not yet being released.

Local police were being assisted in their investigation by New Mexico State Police, the Doña Ana County Sheriff's Office, the FBI and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. (AP)

Noem pledges to step up lie detector tests on employees

Pentagon latest agency to announce leak investigation

WASHINGTON, March 23, (AP): The Pentagon's intelligence and law enforcement arms are investigating what it says are leaks of national security information. Defense Department personnel could face polygraphs in the latest such inquiry by the Trump administration.

A memo late Friday from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's chief of staff referred to "recent unauthorized disclosures" of such information, but provided no details about alleged leaks. Earlier in the day, President Donald Trump rejected reports that adviser Elon Musk would be briefed on how the United States would fight a hypothetical war with China.

"If this effort results in information identifying a party responsible for an unauthorized disclosure," then such information "will be referred to the appropriate criminal entity for criminal prosecution," according to the memo.

At the Homeland Security Department, Secretary Kristi Noem pledged this month to step up lie detector tests on employees in an effort to identify those who may be leaking information about operations to the media.

The Justice Department on Friday announced an investigation into "the



The Pentagon is seen in this aerial view through an airplane window in Washington on Feb 20. (AP)

selective leak of inaccurate, but nevertheless classified, information" from intelligence agencies about Tren de Aragua, a Venezuelan gang whose members in the United States are being targeted for removal by the Republican administration.

Leaks occur in every administration - and government officials can be the

source - as a trial balloon to test how a potential policy decision will be received.

While polygraph exams are typically not admissible in court proceedings, they are frequently used by federal law enforcement agencies and for national security clearances. In 1998, the Supreme Court ruled they were

also inadmissible in military justice proceedings.

They are inadmissible because they are unreliable and often result in false positives, said George Maschke, a former Army interrogator and reserve intelligence officer who went on to found AntiPolygraph.org. Maschke failed a polygraph himself when applying to the FBI.

But they have been intermittently used since the 1990s to intimidate and scare sources from talking to reporters, Maschke said. A 1999 Pentagon report said it was expanding the program to use polygraphs on defense personnel "if classified information they had access to has been leaked."

Meanwhile, military officials are reviewing plans that would cut the number of US troops deployed to the Guantanamo Bay naval base in Cuba to handle detained migrants by as much as half, because there are no detainees there now and the program has stumbled during legal challenges, The Associated Press has learned.

US officials said the military's Southern Command was asked to give Hegseth a plan that would outline how many troops are actually needed and what additional space may be required if more detainees are sent there.

They are all actors reading a script: Musk

Dems digital strategy tops trending charts but draws mockery from allies, foes

WASHINGTON, March 23, (AP): For weeks, Democratic lawmakers have met with and mimicked figures they believe may offer them a path back to power in Washington: online influencers and content creators.

Hours before US President Donald Trump's joint address to Congress this month, Senate Democrats huddled with a dozen online progressive personalities who have millions of followers. House Democrats were introduced, without staff, to 40 content creators who Democratic leaders said could help them grow their audience online.

An earlier tutorial session in February featured online personalities like the YouTube commentator Brian Tyler Cohen.

The result has been a burst of Democratic online content, including direct-to-camera explainers in parked cars, scripted vertical videos, podcast appearances and livestreams - some topping trending charts online, others drawing mockery from liberal allies and Republicans in Congress.

But while the Democratic Party is largely divided over the path forward after last year's election losses, party leaders agree that, no matter the mes-

sage, how they connect with voters in the digital media landscape will be key to a political comeback.

More than a dozen Democratic senators, asked about the party's digital strategy, pointed to Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey as the architect of their new push.

"We've seen tremendous growth of Democratic senators now. They're engaging in the tools and strategies necessary to elevate their voice in a new, changing media market, where legacy media is not the place that people get their news now," Booker said. "We're just weeks into this, but just by making key changes ... we're seeing a massive growth in engagement with the content that our senators are creating, and we've only just begun."

Booker said he's aiming for Democratic senators to double online engagement with their content over the next year - and early metrics have been noticeable. Democratic senators racked up more than 87 million views on content they published in response to Trump's joint address to Congress, according to Booker's office.

Not all of that online engagement is positive. After more than two dozen



Malcolm Kenyatta, (center), a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, poses with DNC content creators Kory Aversa, (from left), Johnny Palmadessa and Alexander Pearlman at the Democratic National Convention on Aug 22, 2024, in Chicago. (AP)

Democratic senators posted identical scripted videos knocking Trump's speech, saying he should have addressed the cost of living and his support for billionaire adviser Elon Musk, conservatives mocked them as inauthentic and out of touch.

"They are all actors reading a script," Musk wrote on X, the social media platform he owns.

There's no doubt that Democrats are playing catch-up. Trump and his fellow Republicans built a digital operation that fed on bombast and celebrity,

and it's a strategy they've taken with them to the White House. Official government accounts are now filled with right-wing memes, cinematic videos and pugnacious statements.

The Democratic embrace of influencers has also yielded mixed early results. Democrats were ridiculed online after a food and wellness influencer who attended the House Democrats' creators event created a "Choose Your Fighter" video collage of Democratic congresswomen for Women's History Month.

The White House posted a video in response that read "America chose its fighters last November," and the Pentagon, normally known for being studiously non-partisan, posted a video stating "We chose our fighters a long time ago."

But Booker and other Democratic leaders don't consider the sneers to be a downside. Missteps are to be expected, they say, but the path to Americans' attention will require some discomfort from lawmakers.

"I do think that the caucus as a whole is trying to figure out how we show people that we are real people," said Rep. Jasmine Crockett of Texas, one of the congresswomen featured in the viral "Fighter" video. Crockett, whose posts

regularly garner millions of views online, said she was used to criticism for her often frank statements and was more interested in combating perceptions that Democrats are "elitist" or "robotic."

"I didn't like the jumping, I'm going to be honest, though," Crockett added about the viral "Choose Your Fighter" video.

Democrats adopted a more combative stance online in recent weeks as Trump's moves to slash the federal workforce drew protests from liberals and pushback at GOP town halls. Top Democratic digital operatives who worked for the 2024 presidential campaign of then-Vice President Kamala Harris have been in high demand, with many Democrats anticipating close 2026 races in which digital strategies may be key.

Some of the most prominent Democrats across the country have been engaging more in new media since the election. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York has touted the party's message on progressive podcasts over the last month, including from the comedian Jon Stewart and the progressive outlet MeidasTouch. Clips of those videos were also lampooned online but garnered millions of views.

Carney seeks to join Parliament

Canadian PM to run in Ottawa area district

TORONTO, March 23, (AP): New Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney will run in an Ottawa area district as he seeks to join Parliament for the first time, the Liberal Party announced Saturday, a day before Carney triggers an early general election before a vote on April 28.

The election will take place against the backdrop of a trade war and sovereignty threats from US President Donald Trump.

The Liberal Party said Carney will run to represent the suburban

Ottawa area of Nepean, noting in a social media post that Ottawa is where he raised his family and devoted his career to public service. He previously served as the head of Canada's central bank and before that its deputy.

The election campaign for 343 seats or districts in the House of Commons will last 37 days.

The party that commands a majority in the House of Commons, either alone or with the support of another party, will form the next

government and its leader will be prime minister.

Carney replaced Justin Trudeau, who announced his resignation in January, but remained in power until the Liberal Party elected a new leader on March 9 following a leadership race by the governing party.

Carney, sworn in as Canada's 24th prime minister on March 14, has said the government in a time of crisis needs a strong and clear mandate.

The governing Liberals had appeared poised for a historic election defeat this year until Trump declared a trade war. Trump has repeatedly said that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state and he acknowledged Friday that he has upended Canadian politics.

What Trump hasn't said is that the almost daily attacks on Canada's sovereignty have infuriated Canadians. That has led to a surge in Canadian nationalism that has bolstered Liberal poll numbers.

The opposition Conservatives hoped to make the election about Trudeau, whose popularity declined as food and housing prices rose and immigration surged. But after decades of bilateral stability, the vote is now expected to focus on who is best equipped to deal with Trump.



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney, (front left), walks alongside Francois Legault, Premier of Quebec, as they are joined by first ministers as they arrive to take part in the First Minister Meeting at the National War Museum in Ottawa on March 21. (AP)

UK govt orders probe into Heathrow shutdown

LONDON, March 23, (AP): The British government on Saturday ordered an investigation into the country's "energy resilience" after an electrical substation fire shut Heathrow Airport for almost a day and raised concerns about the UK's ability to withstand disasters or attacks on critical infrastructure.

While Heathrow Airport said it was now "fully operational," thousands of passengers remained stuck, and airlines warned that severe disruption will last for days as they scramble to relocate planes and crews and get travelers to their destinations.

Inconvenienced passengers, angry airlines and concerned politicians all want answers about how one seemingly accidental fire could shut down Europe's busiest air hub.

"This is a huge embarrassment for Heathrow airport. It's a huge embarrassment for the country that a fire in one electricity substation can have such a devastating effect," said Toby Harris, a Labour Party politician who heads the National Preparedness Commission, a group that campaigns to improve resilience.

Energy Secretary Ed Miliband said he'd asked the National Energy Sys-

tem Operator, which oversees U.K. gas and electricity networks, to "urgently investigate" the fire, "to understand any wider lessons to be learned on energy resilience for critical national infrastructure."



Travellers wait outside the terminal as Heathrow Airport slowly resumes flights after a fire cut power to Europe's busiest airport in London on March 22. (AP)

It is expected to report initial findings within six weeks.

"The government is determined to do everything it can to prevent a repeat of what happened at Heathrow," Miliband said.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, firefighters put out the fire after a drone hit an apartment in a multi-storey building during Russia's drone attack in Kyiv, Ukraine on March 23. (AP)

'Mass drone attack'

7 killed after Moscow targets Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine, March 23, (AP): At least seven people were killed after Russia launched a barrage of drones across Ukraine overnight on Sunday, according to local Ukrainian officials and emergency services.

The attack on the Ukrainian capital came ahead of ceasefire negotiations in Saudi Arabia in which Ukraine and Russia are expected to hold indirect U.S.-mediated talks on Monday to discuss a pause in long-range attacks targeting energy facilities and civilian infrastructure.

The Ukrainian delegation is expected to meet with US officials in Saudi Arabia a day ahead of the indirect talks, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. Ukraine is planning to send technical teams to discuss the details of the partial ceasefire.

Russia launched 147 drones across

Ukraine, according to the Ukrainian Air Force. Ukrainian air defenses shot down 97 and 25 others didn't reach targets due to Ukrainian countermeasures. The attacks struck the Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Odesa and Donetsk regions, as well as the capital, Kyiv.

Three people, including a five-year-old child, were killed and 10 others were injured in a drone attack on Kyiv, the city's military administration said. Extended sounds of explosions were heard across the Ukrainian capital in the early hours of the night as the air raid blared for over five hours. Russian drones and debris from shot-down drones, which were flying at lower altitudes to evade air defenses, fell on residential buildings.

Two residential buildings in the district of Dnipro caught fire due to falling drone debris, according to Kyiv

City Military Administration head Tymur Tkachenko. A fire broke out on the top floors of a 9-storey building, killing one woman, the State Emergency Service said.

In the district of Podil, a fire broke out on the 20th floor of a 25-storey building. In Holosiivskiyi, fires broke out in a warehouse and office building, killing one person, according to the State Emergency Service.

Elsewhere, four people were killed in Russian attacks on Ukraine's Donetsk region, regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said, including three who died in a strike on the frontline Ukrainian town of Dobropillya.

In a statement on social media, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said attacks such as the one in Kyiv were a daily occurrence for Ukraine.

America

Kitty Dukakis dies: Kitty Dukakis, the wife of former Massachusetts governor and Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis, who spoke openly about her struggles with depression and addiction, has died. She was 88.

Dukakis died on Friday night surrounded by her family, her son, John Dukakis, said on Saturday by telephone. She fought to make the world better, "sharing her vulnerabilities to help others face theirs," her family said in a statement.

"She was loving, feisty and fun, and had a keen sensitiv-



Dukakis

ity to people from all walks of life," the family said. "She and our dad, Michael Dukakis, shared an enviable partnership for over 60 years and loved each other deeply." (AP)

Wildfires in Carolinas: Wildfires forced a mandatory evacuation in one North Carolina county as emergency crews fought separate fires in an area of the state still recovering from Hurricane Helene, while South Carolina's governor declared an emergency in response to a growing wildfire.

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety announced a mandatory evacuation starting at 8:20 p.m. Saturday for parts of Polk County in western North Carolina about 80 miles (128.7 kilometers) west of Charlotte.

"Visibility in area will be reduced and roads/evacuation routes can become blocked; if you do not leave now, you could be trapped, injured, or killed," a social media post by the agency warned residents of specific roads. (AP)

Two countries locked in rising friction over trade tariffs

China's PM meets US Sen Daines, calls for dialogue instead of confrontation

BEIJING, March 23, (AP) — Chinese Premier Li Qiang said Sunday that Beijing and Washington should choose dialogue instead of confrontation during his meeting with US Senator Steve Daines, a strong supporter of President Donald Trump, as the two countries are locked in rising friction over trade tariffs and efforts to combat illegal fentanyl trade.

Daines is the first member of Congress to visit Beijing since Trump took office in January. During the meeting with Li, he was joined by the leaders of several American businesses, including FedEx Corp. CEO Raj Subramaniam, Boeing Co.'s senior vice president Brendan Nelson, Qualcomm's CEO Cristiano Amon and Pfizer's CEO Albert Bourla. Li said relations between the countries "have come to an important juncture" and Chinese President Xi Jinping had noted the two countries could become partners and friends that contribute to each other's success during a call with Trump in January.

"History tells us that China and the United States both stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. Our two sides need to choose dialogue over confrontation, win-win cooperation over zero-sum competition," he said.

China hoped that the US would work together to promote the steady and sustainable development of the China-US relations, he added.

During the first Trump administration, Daines served as a go-between when tariffs were also a major issue. Ahead of the trip to China, his office said he is coordinating closely with the White House and will be "carrying President Trump's America First agenda."

Since he arrived in the Chinese capital on Thursday, he has talked with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng to voice Trump's ongoing call for Beijing to stop the flow of fentanyl precursors from China. Additionally, he met with Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxian.

Just months into Trump's second term, relations between the world's two



Chinese Premier Li Qiang, right, meets US Senator Steve Daines in the Fujian Room at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China on March 23. (AP)

largest economies have deteriorated. Washington slapped 20% tariffs on Chinese imports, with Beijing hitting back with 15% duties on US farm goods.

Trump is planning to impose "reciprocal" tariffs by increasing US duties to match the tax rates that other countries charge on imports "for purposes of fairness." These reciprocal tariffs are expected to be announced on April 2.

Earlier Sunday, Li said at the China Development Forum that his country may see unexpected shocks, mainly from external factors. He said the government, when necessary, will introduce new policies to ensure the local economy runs smoothly. The forum is a government-sponsored event that invites senior officials and business leaders.

Facing rising economic fragmentation and instability, Li said it has become even more crucial for every country to open up its markets, calling for entrepreneurs to help maintain economic globalization proactively.

"We are not against competition, but we should advocate for fair competition under internationally recognized rules, rather than zero-sum games or deliberate suppression of vicious competition by other countries," he said.

The US has also criticized China for not doing enough to stop the export of precursor materials for fentanyl, a highly potent opiate blamed for tens of thousands of deaths in the US. Beijing responded with a report detailing its efforts to control the illegal trade in fentanyl, specifically the ingredients for the opiate that are made in China. The report said China is committed to cooperation but opposes the US imposition of unreasonable pressure on China on the pretext of responding to fentanyl-related issues.

The US Embassy in China posted on X later Saturday that Daines voiced Trump's ongoing call for Beijing to stop the flow of fentanyl precursors from China. Daines also expressed hopes that further high-level talks between the two countries will take place in the near future.

Vice Premier He said that China firmly opposes the politicization and weaponization of economic and trade issues, and is willing to engage in candid dialogue with the U.S. on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefits, official news agency Xinhua reported. He said the two countries have many common interests and they can become partners and friends to achieve mutual success.

Asia

Bus accident kills 1, 21 hurt:

A large bus crashed into a windbreak forest alongside a national route in Mihama Town of Japan's Mie Prefecture on Saturday night, leaving the driver dead and 21 passengers injured, national broadcaster NHK reported on Sunday.

The incident occurred at around 8:30 pm local time on Saturday when the bus crossed the center line and struck the protective trees lining the road, according to NHK.

According to the police, the bus driver was taken to a hospital but later pronounced dead. Altogether 21 passengers sustained injuries and were transported to hospitals for treatment.

Footage captured by NHK at the scene showed the bus's left front violently colliding with a tree, causing significant damage to part of the vehicle, including shattered front windshield glass. The bus was operated by Seibu Kanko Bus, headquartered in Saitama, and departed from Nachikatsuura Town in Wakayama Prefecture about an hour before the accident while en route to Saitama City.

Authorities are investigating the cause of the crash. (Xinhua)

'State of disaster': The South Korean government declared a state of disaster on Saturday over wildfires that broke out in the country's southeastern areas including Ulsan city, North Gyeongsang province and South Gyeongsang province, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety said.

A mountain fire first broke out in Sancheong County in the province

of South Gyeongsang on Friday afternoon before the fire continued to spread on Saturday.

More massive mountain fires erupted on Saturday morning in other parts of the southeastern regions.

Acting President Choi Sang-mok inspected the situation in the affected places, ordered relevant authorities to work together to mobilize all equipment available and bring the wildfires under complete control.

At around 3:30 p.m. local time on the same day, the Korea Forest Service raised the national emergency alert level in the most affected areas to its highest, which is the "severe" stage. So far, four firefighters were reported dead and six were injured, local media reported. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Aussie teen charged: Police in the



A helicopter performs a water drop on a wildfire in North Gyeongsang province, South Korea on March 22. (Xinhua)

Australian state of Victoria announced on Saturday that an 18-year-old man was charged with murder following a fatal stabbing in Lyndhurst, a suburb in Melbourne, earlier this month.

Police officers arrested the 18-year-old and a 17-year-old boy in Doveton, another suburb in Melbourne, at about 5:30 p.m. local time on Friday.

The two teenagers were interviewed by homicide detectives. The 18-year-old was charged with murder, and the 17-year-old was released pending further inquiries.

According to the police statement, investigators were told that a group of males were seen fighting near a street in Lyndhurst at about 8:30 p.m. local time on March 14. Emergency services arrived and found a male with serious injuries consistent with a stabbing, and all other parties had fled the scene. (Xinhua)

Indonesia's new military law alarming rights groups and pro-democracy activists

JAKARTA, Indonesia, March 23, (AP) — Indonesia's Parliament unanimously voted to pass a controversial revision of its military law that will allow military officers to serve in more government posts without resigning from the armed forces, despite growing opposition from pro-democracy and rights groups who see it as a threat to the country's young democracy.

In a plenary session, all eight political parties represented in Parliament backed the bill. The House of Representatives is largely controlled by parties supporting President Prabowo Subianto, a former army general with ties to the country's dictatorial past.

Currently, active military officers can only serve in ministries or state institutions related to security, defense or intelligence under a landmark 2004 law that reduced the military's role in civil affairs.

The amendment to the 2004 Law on the Indonesian Armed Forces introduces several changes that aim to broaden the military's role beyond defense.

Once in force, the new law will allow active officers to take civilian positions without having to retire or resign from service in four more bodies, including the Attorney General's Office, the Supreme Court and the Coordinating Ministry for Political and Security Affairs.

Under current law, military personnel are permitted to serve in only 10 ministries and state institutions, in-



Protesters tear down the fence at parliament in Jakarta, Indonesia on March 20 during a rally against the passing of a controversial revision of a military law that will allow military officers to serve in more government posts without resigning from the armed forces. (AP)

cluding the Ministry of Defense, the National Intelligence Agency and the Search and Rescue Agency. But that number will now be expanded to 14 for non-combat military functions.

A new clause also grants the president the authority to appoint military personnel to other ministries as needed, according to the draft.

The revision has raised concerns among pro-democracy activists and students who fear that expanding the

military in civilian roles would restore the "dual function" of the armed services that they had in the era under the dictator Suharto.

At that time, seats in the legislature were reserved for the military, and officers occupied thousands of civilian roles from district chiefs to Cabinet ministers. The dual-function system effectively turned the armed forces into a tool for Suharto when he later became president to crush his political opponents.

German govt says temporarily closing its embassy in S. Sudan

BERLIN, March 23, (AP) — The German government said Saturday that it is temporarily closing its embassy in South Sudan.

"After years of fragile peace, South Sudan is once again on the brink of civil war," German Foreign Minister **Annalena Baerbock** said on social media platform Bluesky.

The crisis team of the German Foreign Office "has therefore decided to close the embassy in the capital Juba for the time being. The safety of the employees has top priority," she added.

Baerbock also wrote that South Sudan President Salva Kiir and his rival, Vice President Riek Machar, "are plunging the country into a spiral of violence. They have a responsibility to stop the senseless violence and finally implement the peace agreement."

South Sudan has been plagued

by political instability and violence since it gained independence from Sudan in 2011.

In 2018, a peace deal signed between Machar and Kiir ended a five-year civil war in which more than 400,000 people were killed. Machar serves as the country's first vice president in a government of national unity, even though his political group opposes Kiir.

The political rivalry between the two men is widely seen as a major obstacle to peace in South Sudan, with Kiir suspicious of his deputy's ambitions and Machar calling Kiir a dictator.

Meanwhile, a Sudanese pro-democracy activist group said Saturday that at least 45 people have been killed after members of the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group entered a city in the western region of Darfur.

The Resistance Committees, a network of youth groups tracking Sudan's war, said the RSF carried out attacks in the city of al-Maliha over the past two days.

The dead included at least a dozen women, according to a partial casualty list published by the activist group.



Baerbock

Peru lawmakers remove minister

LIMA, Peru, March 23, (AP) — Peru's Congress voted Friday to remove the interior minister from office after deciding that he had failed to adequately handle rising violent crime in the Andean country.

Interior Minister **Juan José Santiváñez** by law has 72 hours to leave his position after the no-confidence vote, which succeeded with 78 votes in favor, 11 against and 20 abstentions. Santiváñez insisted that he had worked hard alongside police during his 10 months in office, but that he would respect the lawmakers' decision.

Santiváñez must step down and take responsibility for his "inability to address the wave of citizen insecurity the country is facing," the Peruvian Congress said on its X account.

Public outrage has surged over an increase in killings and other violence, especially the killing Sunday of Paul Flores, the 39-year-old lead singer of the cumbia band Armonía 10. He was fatally shot when assailants attacked his band's tour bus after a concert in Lima.



Santiváñez



Venezuelan migrants deported from the United States deplane at the Simon Bolivar International Airport in Maiquetia, Venezuela on Feb 20. (AP)

Venezuela to resume repatriation of migrants after deal with United States, says official

CARACAS, Venezuela, March 23, (AP) — Venezuela will once again accept repatriation flights from the United States carrying its deported nationals after reaching an agreement with the US, a Venezuelan official said on social media Saturday. Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro suspended flights on March 8, after the U.S. Treasury Department announced the withdrawal of Chevron's license to export Venezuelan oil.

"We have agreed with the US government to resume the repatriation of Venezuelan migrants with an initial flight tomorrow, Sunday," said Jorge Rodríguez, president of Venezuela's Assembly and Maduro's chief negotiator with the US.

Venezuela accepted the deal to guarantee the "the return of our compatriots to their nation with the safeguard of their Human Rights," Rodríguez said.

In his statement, Rodríguez referred to the deportation by Donald Trump's government of some 250 Venezuelans to a high-security prison in El Salvador.

"Migrating is not a crime and we will not rest until we achieve the return of all those who require it and until we rescue our brothers kidnapped in El Salvador," Rodríguez said. Maduro ratified the measure during a public event later in the day. "We are resuming flights to rescue and release migrants from US prisons," Maduro said.

The Venezuelan leader also said that he held the president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, responsible for the well-being of the Venezuelans deported to that country.

"You guarantee their health and, sooner rather than later, you have to hand them over and release them, because they are kidnapped," Maduro said.

Trump alleged the deportees were members of the Tren de Aragua gang. He labeled the Tren de Aragua an invading force on March 15 when he invoked the Alien Enemies Act, a little-used authority from 1798 that allows the president to deport any non-citizen during wartime. A federal judge issued an order temporarily barring the deportations, but flights were in the air when the ruling came down.

Subcontinent

India home explosion kills 4:

Four members of a family died and one was critically injured in a blast inside a house in India's northern state of Haryana on Saturday, confirmed a local police officer over the phone.

The dead included two children, the police said, adding that the blast took place in an air conditioner unit of a bedroom in the house. An investigation was ordered to find the reason for the blast. The whole house has been affected by the impact of the blast. Four people have died on the spot, and one person is critical and undergoing treatment at a hospi-

tal, said the police. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Bus accident injures 35: Around 35 people were injured after two buses collided in Warakapola in Sri Lanka's Sabaragamuwa province on Saturday afternoon, police said.

Both buses were state-owned, and police were investigating the cause of the accident.

It had been raining in the area when the buses collided head-on, local media reported.

Road accidents are common in Sri Lanka, with many involving buses, official data showed. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Nepal fire kills 6: Six people were killed and 64 others injured in hundreds of fires across Nepal in the past month, police said on Friday.

A total of 501 fires broke out in Nepal between mid-February and mid-March, also leaving 146 animals dead and 54 houses and 57 sheds destroyed, Nepal Police said in a report.

"Properties worth 404 million Nepali rupees (2.92 million U.S. dollars) were destroyed in the fires," the report said, noting most of the fire incidents were reported in the provinces of Koshi, Madhesh and Lumbini. Between mid-January and mid-February, 478 fire incidents across Nepal claimed 22 lives and wounded 87 others. (Xinhua)

US lifts bounties on senior Taliban officials: Kabul

KABUL, March 23, (AP) — The US has lifted bounties on three senior Taliban figures, including the interior minister who also heads a powerful network blamed for bloody attacks against Afghanistan's former Western-backed government, officials in Kabul said Sunday.

Sirajuddin Haqqani, who acknowl-

edged planning a January 2008 attack on the Serena Hotel in Kabul, which killed six people, including US citizen Thor David Hesla, no longer appears on the State Department's Rewards for Justice website. The FBI website on Sunday still featured a wanted poster for him.

Interior Ministry spokesman Abdul Mateen Qani said the US govern-

ment had revoked the bounties placed on Haqqani, Abdul Aziz Haqqani, and Yahya Haqqani. "These three individuals are two brothers and one paternal cousin," Qani told the Associated Press.

The Haqqani network grew into one of the deadliest arms of the Taliban after the U.S.-led 2001 invasion of Afghanistan.

The group employed roadside bombs, suicide bombings and other attacks, including on the Indian and US embassies, the Afghan presidency, and other major targets. They also have been linked to extortion, kidnapping and other criminal activity.

A Foreign Ministry official, Zakir Jalaly, said the Taliban's release of US prisoner George Glezmann on Friday and the removal of bounties showed both sides were "moving beyond the effects of the wartime phase and taking constructive steps to pave the way for progress" in bilateral relations.

"The recent developments in Afghanistan-US relations are a good example of the pragmatic and realistic engagement between the two governments," said Jalaly. Another official, Shafi Azam, hailed the development as the beginning of normalization in 2025, citing the Taliban's announcement it was in control of Afghanistan's embassy in Norway.



Acting interior minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, speaks during the funeral prayers of Khalil Haqqani, the minister for refugees and repatriation, during his funeral procession in eastern Paktia province, Afghanistan on Dec 12, 2024. (AP)

Visa study reveals 94 pct of Kuwaiti consumers taking extra precautions with digital payments

Increased consumer awareness of fraud in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Visa released a recent study showing increased consumer awareness and heightened precautionary measures when making digital payments in Kuwait, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ninth annual 'Stay Secure' study surveyed 5,800 adults across 17 markets in the Central Europe, Middle East, and Africa (CE-MEA) region.

The study revealed that 94 percent of consumers in Kuwait are taking additional precautions to secure their digital transactions, reflecting a growing awareness in line with the sector's significant momentum.

Nearly 44 percent of survey respondents in Kuwait reported having limited experience with detecting fraud. However, the increased adoption of precautionary measures and a preference for more secure authentication methods indicate a clear positive shift in consumer behavior compared to the previous 'Stay Secure' study in 2023.

Consumers are now better equipped to recognize warning signs and verify the legitimacy of online transactions, signaling a significant rise in digital awareness. The study also highlights strong growth in the adoption of digital payments in Kuwait.

About 80 percent of respondents expressed full or partial confidence in digital payment methods, while 79 percent expect their use of digital payments to increase over the next year.

Head of Risk for the Middle East and North Africa at Visa, Neil Fernandez, said: "The digital payments arena is rapidly evolving, and consumers in Kuwait are demonstrating a strong willingness to adopt digital payment methods while becoming more aware of the importance of taking precautionary measures."

Educating consumers about fraudulent methods is the most important line of defense against these threats, and collaboration with industry partners is important for achieving this goal.

Fraudulent attacks are evolving and becoming more sophisticated over time, which underscores the need to redouble efforts to ensure the security

of digital transactions."

Meanwhile, Visa's Vice President and General Manager for Kuwait and Qatar, Shank Singh, said: "We are pleased to launch Visa's latest 'Stay Secure' study in Kuwait, which highlights the important role that retailers and financial institutions play in building and maintaining customer trust in digital payments."

"The study provides valuable insights that will help inform industry strategies to enhance customer trust, ensure the security of the digital payments system, and support the Kuwaiti government's efforts to build a resilient digital economy."

"The 'Stay Secure' study sheds light on customer preferences, offering Visa important information to develop trust-building strategies and educational materials that empower customers to detect fraud."

In addition, Visa's 'Stay Secure' study in Kuwait revealed that as reliance on digital payments grows, the scope of fraud is also expanding, with nearly half of consumers (44 percent) in Kuwait having fallen victim to fraud.

KIB launches 'Eidiya' service across all branches & ATMs

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that its Eidiya service will be available across its nationwide network of branches and ATMs in the lead-up to Eid Al-Fitr. This annual initiative aligns with the initiative launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) on the same occasion. The annual Eidiya service further confirms the Bank's commitment to offering comprehensive banking services and solutions that fulfill its customers' needs and guarantee they enjoy a banking experience that is convenient and rewarding. The initiative



Hassan Al Wayel

also comes under KIB's expansive social responsibility program. In this regard, Hassan Al Wayel, Executive Manager - Head of Quality & Control of Retail Banking at KIB, said: "We extend our warmest wishes to Kuwait—its leadership and people—on the occasion of the approaching Eid Al-Fitr, reaffirming our commitment to delivering innovative banking services that cater to our customers' needs and complement their modern lifestyles. The Eidiya service underscores our dedication to simplifying transactions and enhancing our connections with customers by celebrating their joyous moments and special occasions."

Al Wayel added: "Through this initiative, our valued customers can obtain Eidiya in all denominations, including KD 1, KD 5, KD 10, and KD 20. We are committed to providing this service to meet our customers' needs during this delightful occasion, enhancing their celebrations and making



KIB launches Eidiya service nationwide for Eid Al-Fitr.

it easier for them to share Eidiya with their loved ones, especially children. This initiative reflects our ongoing dedication to being part of the community's celebrations and preserving its cherished traditions."

KIB is also offering its Eidiya requests home delivery service exclusively for its KIB Black segment customers. Deliveries are available all over Kuwait, 24 hours a day/seven days a week. Accordingly, Black segment customers can apply for KIB's exclusive Eidiya home delivery service, which can be accessed through KIB's contact center, reachable on 1866866, or by the private customer relations manager.

It is worth noting that KIB's commitment to providing exceptional banking solutions, such as the Eidiya service, reflects its ongoing efforts to elevate the banking experience for all customer segments. By delivering high-quality products and services that exceed expectations and enhance everyday convenience, KIB reinforces its dedication to its main slogan, "Bank for Life."

Installing new appliances in collaboration with the Tarahom Volunteer Team

stc transforms home of underprivileged family under its 'With good, we go further' campaign

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it has renovated the home of a family in need as part of its "With good, we go further" campaign.

The initiative, organized in collaboration with the Tarahom Volunteer Team, aligns with the core objectives behind stc's annual Ramadan campaign, which comes as part of the Company's extensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework under the pillar of supporting various segments within the community, especially families facing financial hardships.

As part of this heartfelt initiative and in collaboration with the Tarahom Volunteer Team and Media Personality Mohammad AlSaddani, stc supplied the family in need with essential appliances that were delivered and installed into the family's home in order to help improve their daily living conditions.

In addition to equipping the household with new appliances, stc fulfilled the wish of the young child by gifting them a PlayStation 5 as an additional form of entertainment to enjoy at home. stc also ensured that the family stays connected to the digital world by installing a high-speed internet router.

A documentary film was also shown on social media platforms, talking about the value of giving, presented by media personality Mohammed AlSaddani.

stc indicated in a statement that the initiative aligns with the values of Ramadan, which encourages practicing generosity, compassion, and community support.

Through its collaboration with the Tarahom Volunteer Team, stc aimed to create a lasting positive impact that aligns with the core values behind being socially responsible and helping those in need.



The supervising team from stc and the Tarahom Volunteer Team with the media figure Mohammed AlSaddani during the renovation of the homes of needy families.

The home renovation initiative was organized to not enhance the family's living conditions but also provide them with the necessary tools to lead a more comfortable and connected life.

These initiatives, as well as others launched by stc during its Ramadan campaign, highlight the Company's efforts to uplift various segments of the community and enhance their overall well-being.

stc's 2025 Ramadan campaign aligns with the Company's mission to drive social responsibility

by organizing, sponsoring and participating in various community-drive initiatives.

Through the "With good, we go further" initiative, stc embraces the spirit of Ramadan by launching programs that uplift the community in meaningful ways, ensuring that support reaches those who need it the most.

In leveraging its resources and strategic partnerships, stc aims to create long-lasting impact that reflects its pioneering position in the private sector as a key enabler of positive change.

Burgan Bank supports CBK's 'Eidity' campaign

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: In the leadup to Eid Al-Fitr, Burgan Bank is once again participating in supporting the Eidity campaign in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), and KNET. As part of the campaign, a total of 15 ATMs spread across Kuwait in select branches, the bank's Head Office – Main Branch, Al-Jahra and Al-Adailia branches, and a number of malls, including the Avenues Mall and gate 26, Al Assima Mall, Al-Khairan Mall, Marina Mall, Farwaniya Maghateer Mall, 360 Mall & 360 Food Court, will provide bank customers and the public with cash bills in all denominations. In addition, the Bank is providing customers with Eidy cash bills through its 28 branches across Kuwait, due to in-

creased demand during the Eid period.

The Eidity initiative has been quite successful throughout the past few years, being well received by customers and the public at large, as it facilitates the easy withdrawal of Eidyas. On its part, Burgan Bank has always been committed to participating in and supporting all initiatives organized by CBK and KBA to help serve all customers of the banking sector in Kuwait.

Every year, Burgan Bank also offers a complimentary Eidy delivery service to its Elite customers, in collaboration with Peacock Concierge. As part of this service, the Bank delivers fresh bank notes in the denominations of the customer's choice and to any location they prefer – be it their home or workplace – to save them the hassle of visiting a branch in person.



Burgan Bank supports Eidity campaign with 15 ATMs across Kuwait.

Navigating risk and uncertainty: Central Banks balance growth, inflation, and volatility

By National Bank of Kuwait

Market Commentary

This week, global markets experienced notable developments, with central banks maintaining cautious stances amidst shifting economic conditions. In the United States, the Federal Reserve maintained the federal funds rate at 4.25%-4.50%, lowered its 2025 GDP growth forecast to 1.7%, and raised its inflation outlook to 2.7%. US retail sales increased modestly by 0.2% in February, whilst core sales rebounded by 1.0%. The US dollar index (DXY) hovered around the 103-104 range. Meanwhile, Canada's inflation surged to 2.6% y/y, potentially delaying rate cuts by the Bank of Canada. In Europe, Germany approved a 1tn euro spending plan, loosening its debt brake, whilst Eurozone inflation was revised down to 2.3%, strengthening the case for further European Central Bank rate cuts. The Swiss National Bank reduced its policy rate to 0.25%, citing rising global uncertainties, and the Bank of England held rates at 4.5%, citing inflation risks. EUR/USD traded between the 1.080 and 1.096 levels. In Asia, the Bank of Japan maintained its policy rate at 0.5%, flagging trade risks and inflation concerns, whilst the People's Bank of China left benchmark lending rates unchanged for the fifth consecutive month amidst early signs of economic recovery. China's retail sales accelerated to 4.0% y/y, whilst industrial production growth slowed but beat expectations. USD/JPY and USD/CNY were last seen at 149.32 and 7.252, respectively. Global markets responded to the developments with divergent movements across equities, bonds, and foreign exchange markets, underscoring investor uncertainty over the economy and trajectory of monetary policy, whilst gold surged past \$3,050 for the first time amidst mounting global growth concerns.

United States and Canada

Federal Reserve Holds Rates, Lowers US Growth Forecast to 1.7%, Raises Inflation Outlook to 2.7%

The Federal Reserve maintained its target federal funds rate at 4.25%-4.5% and revised its 2025 US real GDP growth forecast downward to 1.7% from 2.1%, citing the impact of trade policies, particularly tariffs. PCE inflation projections were raised to 2.7%, up from 2.5%, as policymakers acknowledged persistent price pressures. The Federal Open Market Committee signalled uncertainty regarding future rate adjustments. The Fed also announced a slowdown in quantitative tightening, reducing the monthly roll-off of US Treasury debt from \$25B to \$5B starting in April. The market reaction was positive, with the S&P 500 rising 1.1% and US Treasury yields declining to 4.25% following the announcement. DXY was last seen at 104.088.

US Retail Sales Increased 0.2% m/m in February, Core Sales Rebounded 1.0%

US retail and food services sales rose by 0.2% m/m in February, following a revised -1.2% m/m decline in January. Vehicle and parts sales fell by 0.4% m/m, while gasoline station sales dropped by 1.0% m/m. However, core retail sales, excluding autos, gasoline, and building materials, rebounded by 1.0% m/m, fully reversing January's decline. Online sales increased by 2.4% m/m, while sales at bars and restaurants declined by 1.5% m/m, marking a third consecutive monthly drop. Year-on-year retail sales showed limited progress, with consumer spending expected to decelerate in Q1 2025, reflecting weaker confidence amidst inflation concerns and trade uncertainties.

US Weekly Jobless Claims Rise to 223,000, Slightly Below Expectations

US initial jobless claims increased by 2K to 223K for the week ending March 15, slightly below the expected 224K but within the 203-242K range observed this year. Continuing claims rose by 33K to 1.892 million, reflecting prolonged job searches amidst hiring caution. Despite low layoffs, policy uncertainty and high interest rates are limiting new employment opportunities. Small business sentiment weakened, affecting capital expenditures and labour demand. The Federal Reserve maintained its policy rate at 4.25%-4.50% but projected a 50bps cut by year-end. Meanwhile, large-scale public sector layoffs led to legal disputes, impacting unemployment data. Treasury yields declined, whilst the US dollar strengthened on the data.

Canada's Inflation Surges to 2.6% y/y in February, Retail Sales Drop 0.6% in

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0879	1.0798	1.0955	1.0816	1.0740	1.0950	1.0873
GBP	1.2935	1.2888	1.3015	1.2918	1.2810	1.3000	1.2917
JPY	148.64	148.18	150.15	149.32	148.15	150.45	147.79
CHF	0.8851	0.8756	0.8855	0.8832	0.8760	0.8920	0.8733

January

Canada's Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose to 2.6% y/y in February from 1.9% y/y in January, marking the highest inflation rate in eight months. Month-on-month, inflation increased by 1.1%, driven by the expiry of a sales tax break and broad-based price pressures. Core inflation measures, CPI-median and CPI-trim, both climbed to 2.9% y/y from 2.7% y/y in January. Concurrently, retail sales declined by 0.6% in January to C\$69.36 billion (\$48.42 billion), with volume-based sales contracting 1.1%. A preliminary estimate indicates a further 0.4% decline in February. Market expectations for a pause in the Bank of Canada's rate-cut cycle in April rose to over 60% following the inflation data release. USD/CAD was last seen at 1.4349.

Europe and the United Kingdom

Germany Approves 1tn euro Spending Plan, Loosens Debt Brake to Boost Defence and Infrastructure

Germany's parliament has approved Friedrich Merz's 1tn euro investment plan, securing 513 votes—exceeding the two-thirds majority required for constitutional amendments. The reform aims to modernise infrastructure with a 500bn euros, 12-year fund and increase defence spending, addressing the estimated 400bn euros required for military upgrades. Key provisions include loosening the "debt brake" which limits the structural deficit to 0.35% of GDP, allowing Germany's 16 federal states greater borrowing flexibility. The approval, secured before the Bundestag's term ends on March 25, enables fiscal expansion amidst economic stagnation. On Friday, Germany's upper house voted in favour of the landmark bill paving the way for significant reform, and influencing broader EU economic and security policies. EUR/USD was last seen at 1.0818.

Eurozone Inflation Revised Down to 2.3%, Strengthening Case for ECB Rate Cuts

Eurozone inflation was revised down to 2.3% y/y in February from the initial 2.4% estimate, following an unexpected decline in Germany's inflation rate. The downward revision reinforces the case for the European Central Bank to consider further rate cuts, having already reduced its deposit facility rate by 150bps since June 2024 to 2.5%. Wage growth moderation and easing services inflation further support disinflation trends. However, risks remain, including trade tensions with the US and increased defence and infrastructure spending. Markets currently anticipate two additional rate cuts by year-end, though uncertainty persists over whether the ECB will move in April or adopt a more cautious approach.

Swiss National Bank Cuts Rates to 0.25% Amidst Rising Global Uncertainty

The Swiss National Bank reduced its policy rate by 25 basis points to 0.25%, marking its fifth consecutive cut since March 2024. The decision follows subdued inflation, which eased to 0.3% y/y in February, and growing concerns over global trade policies. SNB Chairman Martin Schlegel highlighted "significantly increased" uncertainties, particularly regarding US tariffs and economic policy shifts. The Swiss franc weakened slightly against the euro and dollar post-announcement. Whilst inflation remains within the 0-2% target range, the SNB reiterated its readiness to intervene in foreign exchange markets if necessary. Economic growth forecasts remain between 1% and 1.5% for 2025, with 1.5% projected for 2026, though risks remain elevated. USD/CHF was last seen at 0.8828.

Bank of England Maintains Rates at 4.5% Amidst Inflation Concerns and Eco-

nomie Uncertainty

The Bank of England (BoE) held its benchmark interest rate at 4.5%, with the Monetary Policy Committee voting 8-1 in favour of maintaining the rate. Swati Dhingra dissented, advocating a 25bps cut. Governor Andrew Bailey reiterated the BoE's cautious stance, stating that rates remain on a "gradually declining path." Inflation is projected to rise to 3.75% later this year, above the 2% target, whilst wage growth remains strong at 5.9% annually. With UK economic growth forecasted at 0.75% for 2025 and weakening employment trends, markets are currently pricing in two rate cuts by year-end, with the probability of a May reduction at 65%. GBP/USD was last seen at 1.2919.

Asia-Pacific

Bank of Japan Holds Rates at 0.5% Amidst Rising Trade Risks and Inflation Concerns

The Bank of Japan (BOJ) kept its short-term policy rate unchanged at 0.5%, citing heightened global trade uncertainty and inflationary pressures. Governor Kazuo Ueda highlighted concerns over US tariff policies, with potential levies on Japanese exports adding risk to the economic outlook. The BOJ noted that domestic inflation remains below the 2% target, though record-high rice prices and wage gains—averaging 5.46% per Rengo, the largest in 33 years—could influence price expectations. The central bank signalled a cautious approach to further rate adjustments, balancing the need for economic stability with the challenge of normalising monetary policy after decades of stagnation. USD/JPY was last seen at 149.32.

China Holds Benchmark Lending Rates Steady for Fifth Consecutive Month

China maintained its benchmark lending rates in March, with the one-year loan prime rate (LPR) unchanged at 3.1% and the five-year LPR steady at 3.6%, in line with market expectations. A Reuters poll showed 88% of respondents anticipated no changes. The decision reflects early signs of economic recovery, including improvements in manufacturing activity, industrial output, and retail sales. The People's Bank of China has signalled further easing measures at an appropriate time, balancing liquidity support with yuan stability concerns. The Chinese currency has remained resilient against the US dollar despite trade tensions, limiting immediate pressure for additional monetary easing. USD/CNY was last seen at 7.2518.

China Retail Sales Growth Accelerates to 4.0% y/y, Industrial Production Slows to 5.9% y/y

China's retail sales increased by 4.0% y/y in the January-February period, up from 3.7% in December, marking the strongest growth since November 2024. This rise was driven by heightened consumer spending during the Lunar New Year holiday and government subsidies for durable goods. However, industrial production growth slowed to 5.9% y/y, above expectations of 5.3%, but down from 6.2% in December, reflecting seasonal factory closures and external trade pressures. Policymakers continue to prioritise domestic demand expansion to mitigate the impact of ongoing US tariffs. Despite these efforts, rising unemployment and weak consumer confidence pose additional challenges. The government has announced fiscal and monetary support measures, including a 300 billion yuan (\$41.5 billion) consumer goods trade-in scheme, to sustain growth.

Australian Employment Declines by 52.8K in February, Unemployment Steady at 4.1%

Australia's unemployment rate remained unchanged at 4.1% in February despite a significant decline in the labour force, with 52.8K jobs lost, contrary to forecasts of a 30K job increase. The labour force participation rate fell to 66.8%, down from 67.3% in January, contributing to employment weakness. The decline was partly attributed to lower workforce re-entry among older workers. The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) projects the unemployment rate to average 4.2% by mid-year. Despite the employment contraction, economists expect the labour market to remain tight, with minimal impact on the RBA's monetary policy stance. The Australian dollar saw a modest decline following the data release. AUD/USD was last seen at 0.6273.

Kuwait

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30795.



Abdullah Al-Sumait, Ahmed Al-Duwaisan, Mohammed Al-Qattan, and Afrah Al-Arbash with the Human Resources Management Team.



Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Al-Sumait surrounded by some of the executive members.



Part of the audience.



Group photo

Executive management joins employees in festive Ramadan gathering

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait celebrates Ramadan with annual staff Ghabga

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently organized its annual staff ghabga to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan, attended by the Bank's executive management and employees. This annual gathering is part of its efforts to gather staff outside the workplace in an effort to strengthen relationships and foster a spirit of teamwork.

The event featured a range of activities, including raffle draws prizes, offering colleagues a chance to connect in a festive atmosphere.

On this occasion, Afrah Al Arbash General Manger of Human Resources at ABK, said, "Our employees are our most valuable assets, the cornerstone of our success, and the secret to our distinction. Therefore, we consistently aim to bring them together outside the workplace through recreational events filled with joy and happiness. These gatherings reflect the spirit of cooperation among all divisions in the Bank and help strengthen communication and foster a sense of belonging to our family."



Ms. Afrah Al Arbash, GM of Human Resources at ABK

She added, "We are dedicated to organizing the annual ghabga, which is our largest annual gathering. This event is one of the most cherished social occasions our employees attend each year, as it is associated with the blessed month of Ramadan and its unique family atmosphere. It is integral to help maintain communication amongst each other and strengthen the bonds that unite us within the spirit of a single family, marked by giving, dedication, and loyalty. These values have contributed to numerous achievements over the past years."

She continued by stating that the annual ghabga is an ideal opportunity for fostering communication between employees and the executive management. She emphasized the Bank's commitment to nurturing a spirit of good-

will and friendship among all team members. She affirmed that the continuous interaction and gatherings at various events strengthen the robust relationship within the ABK family. This, in turn, creates a motivating work environment, stimulating greater efforts to deliver services, products, and solutions that enrich the customer experience and encourage them to choose the Bank as their preferred financial partner.

Al Arbash also expressed pride in ABK's position as a leading bank that generously invests in human capital to enhance employee efficiency. Recognizing that employees are central to achieving its goals, the Bank provides them with the latest expertise and skills necessary to keep pace with developments in the banking industry.

Al Arbash concluded her statement by commending the efforts of all employees and emphasizing the importance of teamwork. She noted its vital role in boosting productivity and enhancing ABK's overall success.

Instant 'Eidiya' transfers via mobile app

Weyay Bank offers digital 'Eidiya' service for convenient Eid gifting

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Continuing its annual tradition, Weyay Bank, the first digital bank in Kuwait, is keen to provide digital "Eidiya" through its mobile application. This service is part of the Bank's ongoing commitment to facilitate the process of sending and receiving "Eidiya" simply and quickly, without the need to go to the bank or use ATMs and other traditional "Eidiya" services. This aligns with the Weyay Bank's efforts to keep pace with technological developments and provide its customers with an innovative banking experience that always meets their needs.

Through this digital service, which contributes to improving customer experience and providing more convenience during Eid Al-Fitr, Weyay Bank aligns with the vision of the Central Bank of Kuwait to enhance digital transformation in the banking sector and develop the financial system in Kuwait to keep pace with the latest global technologies.

One of the most prominent features of Weyay Bank's "Eidiya" service, which reflects its understanding of its customers' needs, is the ability to determine the amount the sender wishes to send as "Eidiya". After the customer creates an "Eidiya" request link through the Weyay app and adds a greeting message, the recipient of the link can determine the "Eidiya" amount, providing flexibility in choosing the appropriate amount. The Bank also offers the "Eidiya Link" service for Jeel cardholders, aged between 8 and 14 years old. This step aims to educate this age group on how to deal with financial technology and develop their skills in digital banking services, contributing to the development of a generation capable of dealing with digital payment tools in the future.

With the activation of the new "Wamd" service in the Weyay app, Weyay cardholders can instantly send "Eidiya" through "Wamd", powered by The Shared Electronic Banking Services Company (KNET), providing customers with a unique experience in terms of speed and security while transferring "Eidiya" between bank accounts.

In this context, Amal Al-Duwaisan, Head of Weyay Bank, said: "The "Eidiya" service, which Weyay Bank offers for the third year in a row, is part of the Bank's digital solutions that always meet customer requirements on every occasion and evolve to ensure the enhancement



Weyay Bank offers Digital 'Eidiya' for the third year in a row with the activation of the new 'Wamd' service from KNET.

of customer experience, and we are proud to add the new "Wamd" service by "KNET" this year. We also recognize the importance of "Eidiya" in our culture, and we strive to present it in a modern way that aligns with the lifestyle of youth and younger generations, contributing to building a conscious and empowered generation in an increasingly digital world."

Weyay Bank continues its leading role in providing innovative banking solutions, offering access to banking services easily and securely through its mobile app. The "Eidiya" service will be available to all Weyay Bank customers during the last days of Ramadan and throughout Eid Al-Fitr on the Weyay app, providing families with a safe and convenient way to celebrate such a special occasion with their loved ones.

Kamco Invest successfully exits Yargici in a strategic transaction with TIMSGROUP

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, has successfully completed the sale of Yargici, a prominent Turkish fashion retailer, to TIMSGROUP, diversified business group with operations in content production, tourism, construction and land development, in Turkey.

This transaction marks the final exit of the Global Buyout Fund ("Under Liquidation"), a private equity fund outside the State of Kuwait, which is being liquidated by Kamco Invest, and reinforces Kamco Invest's commitment to unlocking long-term value for its clients while ensuring the continued growth and success of the businesses it nurtures.

Despite Turkey's challenging macroeconomic conditions, characterized by high inflation and elevated interest rates, Kamco Invest navigated a complex and prolonged transaction to secure an optimal outcome. The sale was conducted with the utmost respect for Yargici's rich legacy and brand values, ensuring that the company is well-positioned for its next phase of growth under TIMSGROUP's leadership.

Founded in 1978 as a men's clothing store in Osmanbey, Yargici has evolved into a leading lifestyle brand in Turkey, offering a unique blend of simple elegance and modern aesthetics. Initially attracting attention with its unconventional pastel colors, the brand expanded to include women's collections in 1988 and later diversified into accessories, and home decor. The launch of Yargici Homeworks in 2015 further cemented its presence in interior design, bringing globally inspired, artist-crafted furniture and accessories to living spaces. Renowned for its commitment to sustainability, Yargici prioritizes high-quality materials and craftsmanship, ensuring timeless designs with lasting value.

Commenting on the transaction, Mohammad F. Al Othman, Senior Executive Director of Alternative Investments at Kamco Invest stated: "This exit represents more than just a financial transaction; it is a testament to our ability to



Mohammad Al Othman



Timur Savci



Yargici Store

enhance and transform businesses. The successful exit of Yargici is particularly significant given the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely impacted the retail sector. Through strategic initiatives, operational restructuring, and a steadfast approach to value creation, Kamco Invest successfully revitalized the business, positioning it for this landmark transition. Our focus has always been on creating sustainable value, and we are confident that under TIMSGROUP, Yargici will continue to thrive and expand its presence in Turkey and beyond."

Timur Savci, founder of TIMSGROUP, expressed enthusiasm about the acquisition, stating: "Yargici is a

distinguished brand with a rich heritage, unique identity, and a strong market presence. We are thrilled to embark on this new chapter, building upon its legacy while infusing fresh energy and innovation. With our deep expertise in the entertainment and drama industry, as well as tourism, construction, and land development sectors, we see immense potential in creating new synergies that will enhance Yargici's brand storytelling, expand its reach, and further strengthen its emotional connection with consumers."

Savci added, "By leveraging our creative vision and strategic resources, we aim to elevate Yargici to new heights, transforming it into an even more dynamic and globally recognized lifestyle brand."

Tebboune highlights Algeria's role in African and European energy security

Algeria reaffirms commitment to energy security, regional cooperation

ALGIERS, March 23, (Xinhua): Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune reaffirmed on Saturday Algeria's commitment to energy security and regional cooperation, emphasizing plans to boost gas production, support African economies and meet Europe's energy needs.

During a meeting with media representatives, he highlighted the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline (TSGP), a 4,000-km project connecting Nigeria's gas reserves to Europe via Algeria, set to transport 20-30 billion cubic

meters annually.

"This project will reinforce pan-Africanism and help Niger and Mali benefit from the gas pipeline, allowing them to capitalize on their own hydrocarbon production. This will serve our economies as Africans while also helping meet Europe's increasing energy demands," Tebboune said.

He also said that Algeria plans to export hydrogen energy to Ger-

many and Italy via the existing pipeline infrastructure linking Algeria to Italy.

Meanwhile, Tebboune stressed Algeria's shift from crude oil reliance to natural gas, hydrogen, and renewables for a sustainable energy future.

"Our focus is not just on oil barrels but on a balanced and sustainable energy strategy," he said.

BUSINESS



Group photo of the team in front of Zain Hospital.



Zain recognized for its annual support of the Girgeaan celebration at Al-Kharafi Center.

Celebrating Girgeaan at Zain & Jaber Hospitals, Al-Kharafi Center, and Al-Tomoooh Club

Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team shares Ramadan joys with community

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: As part of its annual mission to share the joys and blessings of the Holy Month of Ramadan with the various segments of Kuwaiti community, the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team organized a series of humanitarian visits to celebrate Girgeaan (candy distribution) with children and their families in hospitals, as well as with centers and clubs for individuals with special needs.

The team visited the pediatric wards at both Zain Hospital and Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, where they joined children, their families, and the nursing staff in celebrating Girgeaan. Gifts and toys were distributed in collaboration with Dabdooh.

Zain also continued its support for the annual Girgeaan celebrations at Al-Kharafi Special Needs Center and the Al-Tomoooh Sports Club for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Both events featured a variety of entertainment and cultural ac-



The Zain Al-Shuhoor volunteer team at Jaber Hospital.

tivities designed to bring happiness and joy to the hearts of children with special needs and their families.

The Girgeaan celebrations included traditional performances with the participation of children from Al-Kharafi Center and Al-Tomoooh Club, alongside numerous recreational activities and interactive competitions aimed at developing their talents and enhancing their creative abilities. Zain's team also distributed Girgeaan treats to spread cheer and delight among the children.

The Zain Al-Shuhoor campaign continues to evolve each year, expanding its programs and initiatives. Through this campaign, the company builds bridges of collaboration with various entities across the country, embodying the spirit of giving that defines the Holy Month and reflecting the deep-rooted values of the Kuwaiti people in helping others and spreading love and peace.

China, Japan hold 6th high-level economic dialogue in Tokyo

'We are partners, not rivals'

TOKYO, March 23, (Xinhua): Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Japanese counterpart Takeshi Iwaya co-chaired the sixth China-Japan High-Level Economic Dialogue in Tokyo.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, pointed out that since the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, bilateral trade has increased more than 300 times and has remained at a high level of 300 billion U.S. dollars for 15 consecutive years, with the accumulative bilateral investment reaching nearly 140 billion U.S. dollars.

The economic outcomes proved that China and Japan are partners, not rivals, Wang stressed.

Amid profound adjustments in the global economic landscape, rising unilateral protectionism, and setbacks to economic globalization, China and Japan, as major world economies, should establish a correct understanding of each other, demonstrate responsibilities, seek development with innovative thinking, add momentum to cooperation and mutual benefit, and reduce obstacles and differences, Wang said.

He called for efforts on four key areas of cooperation, including accelerating the transformation and upgrading of economic and trade cooperation, achieving strong partnerships for mutual success, addressing each other's concerns in a balanced manner, and strengthening regional and multilateral cooperation.

The two countries should uphold the tradition of promoting political relations through economic cooperation, expand dialogue and exchanges across all sectors to cultivate new growth driv-



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, co-chaired the sixth China-Japan High-Level Economic Dialogue with Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya in Tokyo, Japan. (Xinhua)

ers, Wang said.

Enterprises from both countries should be encouraged to collaborate in artificial intelligence, the digital economy, energy conservation, environmental protection, and green trade.

Cooperation in medical and elderly care industries will be further strengthened to foster the "silver economy." The two countries should expand third-market cooperation to benefit the Global South, support each other in the successful hosting of the Osaka Expo and the China International Import Expo, while promoting regional cooperation, Wang said.

With a forward-looking approach,

China and Japan should leverage the China-Japan economic partnership consultation mechanism to enhance government-business communication, expand market access and eliminate discriminatory restrictions.

The two sides will work to avoid the politicization of economic security in order to maintain stable and smooth industrial and supply chains.

Upholding Asian values, the two countries should advocate openness over isolation, and promote inclusiveness over exclusiveness, Wang noted.

Negotiations for the China-Japan Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement should be resumed and the pro-

cess of establishing an Asia-Pacific Free Trade Area should be advanced, according to Wang.

Officials from 15 government departments of both countries attended the meeting.

In conclusion, Wang said that the dialogue enhanced mutual understanding and confidence in cooperation.

At a time when unilateral protectionism is rampant, the dialogue has sent a strong signal in support of a free trade system, adherence to international trade rules, and alignment with economic globalization.

Both sides should further expand their horizons and explore new areas of

Modest setback for shoppers

Average US rate on a 30-yr mortgage rises slightly for the 2nd week in a row

WASHINGTON, March 23, (AP): The average rate on a 30-year mortgage in the U.S. rose slightly for the second week in a row, a modest setback for prospective home shoppers as the spring homebuying season ramps up.

The rate rose to 6.67% from 6.65% last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. A year ago, the rate averaged 6.87%.

Including this week, the average rate on a 30-year home loan has risen only twice in the past nine weeks, a welcome trend for aspiring homebuyers struggling to afford a home after years of soaring home prices.

"The 30-year fixed-rate mortgage has stayed under 7% for nine consecutive weeks, which is helpful for potential buyers and sellers alike," said Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist.

Borrowing costs on 15-year fixed-rate mortgages, popular with homeowners refinancing their home loans, also rose this week, pushing the average rate to 5.83% from 5.8% last week. A year ago, it averaged 6.21%, Freddie Mac said.

Mortgage rates are influenced by several factors, including bond market investors' expectations for future inflation, global demand for U.S. Treasuries and the Federal Reserve's interest rate policy decisions.

After climbing to just above 7% in mid-January, the average rate on a 30-year mortgage has been mostly declining, loosely following the moves in the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use as a guide to pricing home loans.

The yield, which was nearing 4.8% in mid-January, has mostly fallen since then, reflecting worries about the economy's growth and the fallout from the Trump administration's decision to im-

pose tariffs on imported goods from many of the nation's key trade partners. The yield was at 4.23% in midday trading Thursday.

Tariffs can drive inflation higher, which could translate into higher yields on the 10-year Treasury note, pushing up mortgage rates. That's because bond investors demand higher returns as long as inflation remains elevated.

The Fed has been holding its key interest rate steady this year, after cutting it sharply through the end of last year. While lower rates can help give the economy a boost, they can also stoke inflation.

On Wednesday, the central bank kept its benchmark interest rate unchanged. It also signaled that it still expects to cut rates twice this year, even as it sees inflation staying stubbornly elevated.

While the Fed doesn't set mortgage rates, its actions can ultimately influence borrowing costs for mortgages and other consumer loans.

"In the near term, we expect mortgage rates to remain in a fairly narrow range, between 6.5% and 7%, which should support the spring housing market," said Mike Fratantoni, chief economist at the Mortgage Bankers Association.

The U.S. housing market has been in a sales slump dating back to 2022, when mortgage rates began to climb from pandemic-era lows. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes fell last year to their lowest level in nearly 30 years. They rose 4.2% last month from January, but were down 1.2% from February last year, the National Association of Realtors said Thursday.

Opposition remains

Panama reopens talks about future of a controversial copper mine

DONOSO, Panama, March 23, (AP): More than a year after Panama's Supreme Court halted operations at a huge copper mine because its government concession was deemed unconstitutional, the country's new administration is signaling a potential restart.

Business groups are lobbying President José Raúl Mulino, who says he'll start discussing the mine's future with his team next week. The mine's owner is conducting media tours and has said it will suspend arbitration, while the coalition of environmental and civic groups that snarled traffic for weeks in 2023 calling for the mine's closure is

preparing to hit the streets again. Mulino has already ordered that the mine's power plant be restarted and that some \$250 million worth of copper concentrate sitting at the mine be sold. And on Thursday, he appeared to signal where he was leaning.

Noting the mine's economic impact - it accounted for nearly 5% of Panama gross domestic product the last year it operated - Mulino said: "On what basis can I say, as president of the republic, 'good-bye, to the mine, there won't be a mine because five people who don't pay a payroll don't want a mine?'"

In March 2023, Panama's Congress

reached an agreement with Canadian mining company First Quantum, allowing its local subsidiary Panama Copper to continue operating the mine for at least 20 more years. The open-pit mine was temporarily closed in 2022 when talks between the government and First Quantum broke down over payments the government wanted.

The contract, given final approval Oct. 20, 2023, allowed the subsidiary to continue operating the mine in a biodiverse jungle on the Atlantic coast west of the capital for the next 20 years, with the possibility of extending for a further 20 years if the site remained productive.

Applications for jobless benefits inch up, layoffs remain low, labor market healthy

WASHINGTON, March 23, (AP): Slightly more Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week, but layoffs remain historically low.

U.S. jobless claims filings rose by 2,000 to 223,000 for the week ending March 15, the Labor Department said Thursday. That's just less than the 224,000 new applications analysts forecast.

Weekly applications for jobless benefits are considered a proxy for layoffs, and have remained mostly in a range between 200,000 and 250,000 for the past few years.

The four-week average, which evens out some of the week-to-week swings, inched up by 750 to 227,000. It's not clear when job cuts ordered by the Department of Government Efficiency, or "DOGE," will show up in the weekly layoffs report, though the Labor Department's February jobs report showed that the federal government shed 10,000 jobs. That's the most since June of 2022.

Economists don't expect the federal workforce layoffs to have much of an impact until the March jobs report.

Those layoffs are part of the Trump administration's efforts to shrink the size of the federal workforce through DOGE, spearheaded by billionaire Elon Musk.

Senior U.S. officials set the government downsizing in motion late last month via a memo dramatically expanding President Donald Trump's efforts to scale back the workforce. Thousands of probationary employees have already been fired - though two federal judges last week issued orders requiring the rehiring of thousands of those workers.

Despite showing some signs of weakening during the past year, the labor market remains healthy with plentiful jobs and relatively few layoffs.

The Labor Department reported that U.S. employers added a solid 151,000 jobs last month, and while the unemployment rate ticked up to a 4.1%, it remains a historically healthy figure.

Some high-profile companies have announced job cuts already this year, including Workday, Dow, CNN, Starbucks, Southwest Airlines and Facebook parent company Meta.

Joplin tornado survivors relive the horror

Netflix docu revisits one of US's deadliest twisters

LOS ANGELES, March 23, (AP): The horror of the Joplin tornado is the subject of a new documentary film, released nearly 14 years after the twister struck Missouri with cataclysmic force, ripping into a hospital, destroying neighborhoods and killing around 160.

"You see pictures of World War II, the devastation and all that with the bombing," Kerry Sachetta, then the Joplin High School principal, told The Associated Press on the evening of May 22, 2011, after the school was destroyed.

"That's really what it looked like," Sachetta said.

As he spoke on that dreadful night, fires from gas leaks burned across town. The EF-5 twister, then the single deadliest in six decades, packed winds of 200 mph (320 kph). At times, it was nearly a mile (1.6 kilometers) wide. Left in its wake was a hellscape of cars crushed like soda cans and shaken residents roaming streets in search of missing family members. About 7,500 homes were damaged or destroyed.

"The Twister: Caught in the Storm" was released last week by Netflix fol-

lowing a recent spate of deadly storms that have unleashed tornadoes, blinding dust storms and wildfires.

Some of the most startling damage in Joplin was at St. John's Regional Medical Center, where staff had only moments to hustle patients into the hallway before the 367-bed hospital was knocked off its foundation.

Flying debris blew out windows and disabled the hospital's exposed generators, causing ventilators to stop working. The winds also scattered X-rays and medical records around 75 miles (121 kilometers) away.

Five patients and one visitor died in the immediate aftermath. And other patients later died of injuries they suffered in the storm.

On the morning after the storm, Dr. Jim Riscoe told the AP that some members of his emergency room staff showed up after the tornado with injuries of their own but worked through the night anyway.

"It's a testimony to the human spirit," Riscoe said, comparing the scene to a nuclear disaster. "Cars had been thrown like playing cards. Power lines



In this May 25, 2011 file photo, Beverly Winans hugs her daughter Debbie Surlin while salvaging items from Winans' devastated home in Joplin, Mo. (AP)

were sparking. I couldn't believe it." The building was so badly damaged it had to be razed the following year.

The deaths from the storm were so numerous that a makeshift morgue was set up next to a football stadium in Joplin. Hundreds of others were injured in the city of 53,000.

In the following years, his family kept his room as it was: an open pack of chewing gum, his trademark mismatched socks, his computer and the green screen that helped earn him a YouTube following for his travel chronicles.

"It's a little comfort to go in there, go back in time and remember how it was," his father, Mark Norton, said close to the five-year anniversary.

Around a dozen died in a single nursing home after the tornado tossed four vehicles, including a full-size van, into the building. Those who survived were scattered to nursing homes in four states, their records and medications blown away. Widespread phone outages then complicated efforts to locate the residents, some of whom had dementia.

Officials still disagree about the final death toll. The federal storm center says 158 died while local officials count the deaths of three additional people, including a person struck by lightning after the tornado blew through the city.

The tornado forced school officials to end the spring term nine days early. Six school buildings were destroyed, including the high school. Seven other buildings were badly damaged.

The district scrambled to rebuild with federal funds, donations, insurance money and a \$62 million bond, cobbling together a hodgepodge of temporary locations while construction was underway. Seniors and juniors took classes in a converted big-box store in a shopping mall, while freshmen and sophomores went to school in a building across town.

Then-President Barack Obama was the commencement speaker during the high school's 2012 commencement and then-Vice President Joe Biden attended the 2014 dedication of the new high school, calling the community the "heart and soul of America."

The dedication included two live eagles, the school's mascot. During the first home football game after the tornado, a single eagle flew over the football field and became a symbol signifying that the students, like the bird who returns to the same nesting spot each year, would come home again.

The tornado forced school officials

Variety

PROVIDENCE, R.I.: The March Madness legend of McNeese manager and social media sensation Amir Khan continues to grow.

While Khan sat behind the bench chatting with filmmaker Spike Lee during the Cowboys' second-round game against Purdue on Saturday, some of the team's players wore T-shirts with Khan's name and picture on them.

The cheerleading squad also wore the shirts, along with the socks that made an appearance on Thursday night, when 12th-seeded McNeese upset Clemson for the school's first-ever NCAA Tournament victory.

Khan and his sponsored boombox went viral heading into the tournament as the unlikely hype man for the even more unlikely tournament darlings from Lake Charles, Louisiana, becoming the first known basketball manager to receive an NIL deal. (AP)

ANKARA, Turkey: Filiz Akin, a screen actress and iconic figure of Turkish cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, has died, the Health Ministry said. She was 82.

Akin died Saturday in a hospital in Istanbul. The cause of death was not specified.

"Filiz Akin, one of the rare gems of Turkish cinema has passed away at the hospital where she had been receiving treatment for some time," the ministry said, adding that the actress had left "unforgettable marks on the history of cinema."

Along with Turkan Soray, Hulya Kocoyigit and Fatma Girik, Akin was considered one of the four most iconic actresses of the Turkish film industry that was known as "Yesilcam" - after the street in Istanbul where film companies were based. Girik died in 2022.

Akin was born in Ankara on Jan. 2, 1943. Her journey to stardom began when she submitted her photograph to a beauty contest organized by a magazine in 1962, encouraged by the mother of a high school friend. (AP)

NEW YORK: Longtime broadcaster Bob Davis, whose voice became synonymous with Jayhawks basketball and football and who spent many years calling games for the Kansas City Royals, died Thursday in his hometown of Lawrence, Kansas. He was 80.

Davis died one week after his wife of 53 years, Linda, passed away. His family did not provide a cause of death Friday.

"Bob was not only superior at his craft but he was also a terrific, humble and unselfish person that gave so much of himself to so many," said Kansas coach Bill Self, whose team was knocked out of the NCAA Tournament by Arkansas on Thursday. (AP)

BEIJING: The "Ne Zha" animated film franchise has reached another historic milestone for the Chinese film industry, with its total box office revenue surpassing 20 billion yuan (about 2.79 billion U.S. dollars).

The latest installment, "Ne Zha 2," has grossed over 15.3 billion yuan as of Sunday afternoon, while its 2019 predecessor contributed an additional 5.035 billion yuan.

This remarkable achievement has made director Yang Yu the first filmmaker in Chinese cinema history to helm a franchise with a combined box office exceeding 20 billion yuan.

The "Ne Zha 2" screening has been extended on the Chinese mainland to April 30.

The Chinese blockbuster has also made waves globally, currently ranking fifth on the worldwide box office chart, including pre-sales and overseas earnings. (Xinhua)

Film



Jonathan Majors poses for a portrait on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, in New York. (AP)

'I'm stronger, wiser and better now'

Jonathan Majors is on a redemption tour

NEW YORK, March 23, (AP): Throughout the implosion of his once-skyrocketing Hollywood career, from his arrest two years ago to his assault conviction, Jonathan Majors has maintained that he has never struck a woman.

But last Monday, amid a PR push that returned him to magazine covers ahead of Friday's release of "Magazine Dreams," Rolling Stone published an audio recording of Majors and Grace Jabbari. Majors was found guilty of one misdemeanor assault charge and one harassment violation for striking Jabbari in the head and breaking her middle finger.

"I aggressed you," Majors acknowledges in the recording, confirming her description of him strangling her and pushing her against a car and appearing to contradict his previous claims.

In a Wednesday interview with The Associated Press, Majors declined to address the recording, and whether he has assaulted women.

"I can't answer that," Majors responded. "I can't speak to that." Majors, who was sentenced to probation and has settled Jabbari's lawsuit, is striving for an unusually swift rebound following a precipitous downfall. Before his arrest, Majors was steering toward years of Marvel stardom and a possible Oscar nomination for "Magazine Dreams," in which he plays an aspiring bodybuilder prone to violent outbursts.

Two years later, Majors returns to the public eye with a pledge that he's changed after completing a year of court-ordered domestic violence counseling. At the same time, he's not directly addressing any of the allegations against him - including those from two previous partners, Emma Duncan and Maura Hooper, who in statements submitted pretrial, detailed physically violence and emotional abuse

that bear similarities to the Jabbari case.

"It's not something I can talk about legally," Majors says. "I said to my wife the other day, I've changed. I don't recognize myself. I don't recognize that guy. I'm in a completely different place."

Majors spoke reflectively about his experience of the past two years - with the exception of anything specifically related to the conviction, the additional abuse allegations or the women who say he harmed them. Despite never naming a misdeed, Majors says he is reformed.

"I'd say to anyone who cares to listen: I've had two years of deep thought and meditation and rumination on myself and my actions, my community, my industry," he said. "I'm stronger now. I'm wiser now. I'm better now."

Convinced

Not everyone is convinced. Hooper described a traumatizing and controlling relationship. After it ended, Majors shamed her for having an abortion, which he had encouraged, and told her to kill herself, her statement said.

"The level of anger that I experienced from this man, I don't know you exercise that from your life or your behavior in only 52 weeks," Hooper told the AP. "People go to therapy for years. I went to therapy for years after Jonathan Majors just to get my mind back."

Hooper and Duncan's statements weren't allowed as evidence during the trial, but they remain public record. Majors' attorneys have denied some of their claims, describing both relationships as "toxic."

Duncan, who was engaged to Majors, described at least eight

physical or threatening encounters in her statement, including threats to kill her. (She didn't respond to an email from the AP seeking comment. Attorneys for Jabbari also didn't respond to emails.)

"There is a documented history of 10 years of abuse of women where he calls women 'sluts,' he calls us 'fat whores,' he tells us to kill ourselves," Hooper says. "When I hear people say, 'Come on, how come he can't come back into the fold?' I don't know that those people have read this or understand that we're talking about a pattern."

A changed political climate and several recent cases, including the overturning of Harvey Weinstein's New York sexual assault conviction, have suggested Hollywood has entered a new chapter in the #MeToo movement. Majors' attempted comeback is one of the most conspicuous tests to the fraying curbs of cancellation and #MeToo vindication.

"We're suffering a period of tremendous political retrenchment and backlash in this movement," says Debra Katz, the civil rights attorney who has represented Weinstein accusers. "Much of what we've fought for seems to be on the line."

But women are still coming forward, and Katz believes the accused will be held accountable. For his part, Majors has no new films announced. "Magazine Dreams," filmed pre-arrest and dropped by Searchlight Pictures, is being released by indie distributor Briarcliff Entertainment.

"Jonathan made a mistake. There was due process. Justice was served. And then we move on, which I think is generally how we like to think this country operates," Briarcliff CEO Tom Ortenberg said Thursday.

The resilience of punk in China's youth culture

China's punk scene draws a new generation of fans

HANGZHOU, China, March 23, (AP): Young fans, some sporting spiky mohawks, slam-danced and stage-dived as the music blasted into the night. One wore a metal-studded jacket with what looked like vintage buttons.

Several hundred people packed Nine Club early this year for the "Unite Punk Music Festival" in the city of Hangzhou, a tech hub in southeastern China also known for its scenic West Lake.

The mostly young crowd shouted out the lyrics and raised clenched fists under blinking red lights. Some had pierced lips. Others looked like clean-cut college students.

Then the body slamming began.

About a dozen people in front of the stage slammed into each other as if possessed by the thumping beat. There



A woman attends a punk festival in Hangzhou, China, Friday, Jan. 17, 2025. (AP)

was chaos, but no fights.

Punk rock burst onto the scene globally in the 1970s with groups such as the Ramones. It took longer to reach China, but witnessed explosive growth there in the late 1990s, when influential bands such as SMZB, Brain Failure, and Queen Sea Big Shark inspired hip young people to sport mohawks and leather jackets.

It's no longer as trendy as it once was. Many younger people today view punk as their parents' music and gravitate toward hip-hop and rap, said Liu Fei, the owner of School Bar in Beijing. Others frequent underground raves with pounding techno beats.

But some are forming new punk bands, and China has skateboard, new school and hardcore punks, Liu said before a recent punk night at his bar for fans of a Beijing soccer team. The fan club has a fight song written by a Chinese punk rocker who died in 2015.

"The atmosphere is not as enthusiastic as before, but it is still there," said one of the performers, Wang Lixing, from the band Labor Glory.

The lyrics are less rebellious than in the past, said Liu, who remembers the hopping scene in China during a punk revival in the early 2000s. Today, the songs are more about the "sang" culture of depression, pessimism and

apathy that some young people feel in modern society.

"They need channels to relieve pressure and release negativity to help themselves adjust," said Zedd, a mechanical engineering student by day who plays guitar by night for the band System Chaos and prefers to be identified by his stage name.

The entertainment industry in China is tightly censored, with regulations over lyrics and portrayals of subcultures and images deemed unsuitable.

"It may be more difficult to do punk rock in China," Liu said. "But in different environments, it has its own way of survival."

NEWS/FEATURES

Ramadan inspires US foundation to serve the homeless

Detroit residents share blessings after Ramadan fast

DEARBORN, Mich., March 23, (AP): After a nightly iftar meal with family members breaking fast together during Ramadan, Nadine Daoud noticed full pots and trays of untouched leftover food lining the shelves of her grandmother's refrigerator. Too often, she felt the food was quickly forgotten and then wasted.

The observations inspired her 2017 creation of The Helping Handzzz Foundation that brings volunteers together each year during the Islamic holy month. They round up spare food from families in Dearborn - where nearly half the 110,000 residents are of Arab descent - and bring it to people without homes in neighboring Detroit.

Daoud said the group's efforts are emblematic of Islam's emphasis on respecting and valuing resources such as food and matches Ramadan's focus on "self-discipline and empathy toward those less fortunate."

"Every family cooks a lot of food to end the night when you're breaking your fast," Daoud said. "And a lot of food gets left over. And we noticed that a lot

of this food was just getting stored in the fridge and forgotten about the next day.

"What I decided to do was instead of sticking it in the fridge and forgetting about it or throwing it in the trash, I said, 'Let me take it. I always see people on the corners. Let me help out and give it to them instead with a drink and a nice treat on the side.'"

One recent night, Helping Handzzz board members Hussein Sareini and Daoud Wehbi and four others enjoyed an iftar prepared by Sareini's mother.

When the meal ended, several attendees said some of the daily prayers. Then, Wehbi hopped in Sareini's truck, and they stopped at several area homes to pick up untouched dishes. From there, they drove to the parking lot of a nearby mosque, where Nadine Daoud and others organized the food. A caravan of vehicles then visited several spots in Detroit where people without housing regularly can be found.

Board member Mariam Hachem approached a man bundled up in blankets and lying on the sidewalk. "Hi, we have a meal for you," she said. "We're go-

ing to set it right here, OK?"

"OK," came the response.

Other volunteers added bottled water and a sweet treat alongside the food container.

The Helping Handzzz team goes through the same process six nights each week during the sacred month, taking off Sundays. And it comes after going without food or water from sunrise to sunset.

Wehbi, 27, is a design engineer at Toyota. Sareini demolishes bathrooms and kitchens and rebuilds them as part of his residential remodeling business.

The 25-year-old Dearborn resident said he gladly stays out until 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. each day to put some "good out into the world." "It's all about appreciating what you have," he said.

Wehbi said it's no coincidence he and his friends undertake their annual effort during Ramadan.

"It's not just a 'no food, no drink' time," he said. "It's a lot about growing and coming together as a community and bettering ourselves and bettering each other."



The Helping Handzzz Foundation board member Mariam Hachem organizes items in the back of a pickup truck as part of a Ramadan food donation effort March 7. (AP)

Television



This image released by Apple TV+ shows Zach Cherry, (from left), Adam Scott, Britt Lower and John Turturro in a scene from 'Severance.' (AP)

Adam Scott and Ben Stiller talk show delays

'Severance' returns after historic delays

LOS ANGELES, March 23, (AP): "Severance" is beloved by critics and audiences alike. But there was a time when star Adam Scott and Ben Stiller, who executive produces and directs the Apple TV+ series, worried it might never get made.

The show - a dark, surrealist commentary on our work-obsessed culture that was hardly guaranteed to reap mass appeal - was set to start production on its first season in March 2020. Then the lockdowns began.

One pandemic, two historic Hollywood strikes and a three-year gap between Seasons 1 and 2 later, Apple TV+ confirmed a third season Friday, the morning after the release of the second season's finale. Scott and Stiller spoke to The Associated Press in advance; the interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: Adam, was it challenging to get back into character after all this time?

Scott: It's funny because I feel like I was kind of working on it the whole time. I mean, I guess doing press and talking about the character and the show is sort of keeping it kind of fresh in my mind the whole time. But also, Ben and Dan (Erickson, the show's creator, writer and executive producer) and I talk all the time and I'm always peppering them with questions about where things are going or what we're doing. We were kind of always talking about it and kind of mulling it over the entire time so, by the time we started shooting, I did feel pretty prepped and ready to go in. But it was challenging because, like the show itself, the character - both the "innie" and the "outie" - kind of expand a little bit and the aperture sort of widens.

AP: So much time has passed since the first season. Did the arc of this season or your approach to any of it change from when you initially thought you were going to make Season 2?

Stiller: I mean, it's constantly in process. That's what the process of making the show was on Season 1 and also on Season 2. And I don't know if I could explain the process, but it's very fluid, even though it's obviously a show that has a lot of specifics that we're always trying to think



Ben Stiller, (left), and Adam Scott arrive at a screening of 'Severance' during PaleyFest, on March 21, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

about. That's, I think, one of the reasons why it's fluid actually, is because we're always looking at what we're doing and looking back at what we've shot and edited and just really trying to track it. It goes on all the way through until the final sound mix, really.

AP: So, you start filming Season 2 and then the strike happened?

Stiller: Yeah. We started in October 2022 and we shot through until the strike and we had completed about seven episodes at that point. And then we had to regroup for the last three after the

strike.

AP: Did you have to go back and reshoot any of it?

Stiller: In both seasons, we constantly go back and we're always looking at stuff and sometimes we'll pick up something. But that's part of the process of making the show. And one of the, I think, luxuries of being able to make the show like this is that we're able to kind of look at what we made and go, "Wait, you know, this doesn't work," or "That doesn't work," or "Let's try this new idea."

So, any time we've had delays, especially the first season we were in prep and were about to start shooting, then COVID hit so we had an extra six months to work on the scripts and all the other ideas that we were developing. And the strike, same thing. You know, we couldn't write, obviously, but I was allowed to edit because I'm a non-writing producer on the show, so I edited throughout the whole strike period, which was really helpful when we went back in.

Scott: We were, of course, in full support of the strikes, both writers and actors. But yeah, for this show in particular, we were just like, "Good Lord. OK, let's close up shop and see when we can get back together." And it ended up, like Ben said, being beneficial in the long run.

AP: Were you ever worried Season 2 might not happen?

Stiller: No. I felt like we'd shot enough that we had to at least complete the job. I remember at one point on Season 1 when we were starting up and, you know, we were kind of down the line and then COVID. And at one point I wondered if we actually were going to make the show because a lot of productions got canceled when COVID happened. And, you know, we were lucky enough to make it through that.

Scott: Over the pandemic, like the shelter-at-home portion of pandemic, I was checking in with Ben or Nicky Weinstock, one of the producers, constantly, just like, "Is this still a show? Are we still going to do it?" I did not believe that we were actually ever going to make it at a certain point.

Lifestyle

Relaxed and friendly

Fla. beach town is now a remote work hotspot

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla., March 23, (AP): Lori Matthias and her husband had tired of Atlanta traffic when they moved to St. Augustine, Florida, in 2023. For Mike Waldron and his wife, moving from the Boston area in 2020 to a place that bills itself as "the nation's oldest city" was motivated by a desire to be closer to their adult children.

They were among thousands of white-collar, remote workers who migrated to the St. Augustine area in recent years, transforming the touristy beach town into one of the top remote work hubs in the United States.

Matthias fell in love with St. Augustine's small town feeling, trading the hour-long commute she had in Atlanta for bumping into friends and acquaintances while running errands.

"The whole pace here is slower and I'm attracted to that," said Matthias, who does sales and marketing for a power tool company. "My commute is like 30 steps from my kitchen to my office. It's just different. It's just relaxed and friendly."

Centuries before becoming a remote work hub, the St. Augustine area was claimed by the Spanish crown in the early 16th century after explorer Juan Ponce de Leon's arrival. In modern times, it is best known for its Spanish architecture of terra cotta roofs and arched doorways, tourist-carrying trollies, a historic fort, an alligator farm, lighthouses and a shipwreck museum. In St. Johns County, home to St. Augustine, the percentage of workers who did their jobs from home nearly tripled from 8.6% in 2018 to almost 24% in 2023, moving the northeast Florida county into the top ranks of US counties with the largest share of people working remotely, according to US Census Bureau figures.

Workforce

Only counties with a heavy presence of tech, finance and government workers in metro Washington, Atlanta, Austin, Charlotte and Dallas, as well as two counties in North Carolina's Research Triangle, had a larger share of their workforce working from home. But these were counties much more populous than the 335,000 residents in St. Johns County, which has grown by more than a fifth during this decade.

Scott Maynard, a vice president of economic development for the county's chamber of commerce, attributes the initial influx of new residents to Florida's lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in businesses and schools in the fall of 2020 while much of the country remained locked down.

"A lot of people were relocating here from the Northeast, the Midwest and California so that their children could get back to a face-to-face education," Maynard said. "That brought in a tremendous number of people who had the ability to work remotely and wanted their children back in a face-to-face school situation."

Public schools in St. Johns County are among the best in Florida, according to an annual report card by the state Department of Education.

The influx of new residents has brought growing pains, particularly when it comes to affordable housing since many of the new, remote workers moving into the area are wealthier than locals and able to outbid them on homes, officials said.

Many essential workers such as police officers, firefighters and teachers have been forced to commute from outside St. Johns County because of rising housing costs. The median home price grew from \$405,000 in 2019 to almost \$535,000 in 2023, according to Census Bureau figures, making the purchase of a home further out of reach for the county's essential workers. Essential workers would need to earn at least \$180,000 annually to afford the median price of a home in St. Johns County, but a teacher has an average salary of around \$48,000 and a law enforcement officer earns around \$58,000 on average, according to an analysis by the local chamber of commerce.

"What happened was a lot of the people, especially coming in from up North, were able to sell their homes for such a high value and come here and just pay cash since this seemed affordable to them," said Aliyah Meyer, an economic researcher at the chamber of commerce. "So it kind of inflated the market and put a bit of a constraint on the local residents."



Aliyah Meyer, an official with the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, walks through a downtown neighborhood in St. Augustine, Fla., which has become a top remote work hub in the US during the 2020s, on Thursday, March 13. (AP)

Variety

BUCHAREST, Romania: After weeks in the United States, influencer brothers Andrew and Tristan Tate arrived early Saturday back in Romania, where they face charges of human trafficking and forming a criminal gang to sexually exploit women.

The Tates, who are dual US and British citizens, were arrested in Romania in late 2022 and formally indicted last year on charges that they participated in a criminal ring that lured women to Romania, where they were allegedly sexually exploited. Andrew Tate was also charged with rape. They deny all of the allegations against them.

The brothers' plane - which Andrew Tate said earlier in a post on X cost \$185,000 to "jet across the Atlantic to sign one single piece of paper" - landed at Bucharest Henri Coanda International Airport shortly before 1.00 a.m. local time Saturday morning (2300 GMT, Friday).



Andrew Tate

After arriving at their residence near the capital, Bucharest, Andrew Tate told reporters they returned because "innocent men don't run from anything" and he vowed to clear his name in court.

"After all we've been through, we truly deserve the day in court where it is stated that we've done nothing wrong and that we should have never been in court in the first place. We should have never gone to jail. We should have never had our assets seized. We should have never had our names slandered," he said. "Anyone who believed any of this garbage has a particularly low IQ."

Their return to Romania comes nearly a month after a travel ban imposed on the brothers was lifted, after which they flew on a private jet to the US, landing in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The brothers remain under judicial control, which requires them to appear before judicial authorities in Romania when summoned. Eugen Vidineac, one of the Tate brothers' lawyers in Romania, told The Associated Press that the Tates are due to check in with a surveillance officer on Monday. (AP)

NEW YORK: A posthumous memoir by Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, Hisham Ma-

tar's novel "My Friends" and a poetry collection by Anne Carson were among the winners Thursday night of the 50th annual National Book Critics Circle awards.

Winner in the autobiography category, Navalny's "Patriot," which came out eight months after he died in prison, was a blunt and improbably optimistic account of his years of oppression and confinement. Alfred A. Knopf publisher Jordan Pavlin accepted the award on his behalf, telling hundreds gathered at the New School Auditorium in Manhattan that "it was very difficult to conceive of a leader as committed to his country, his people and ideals as Navalny was." (AP)

PARIS: Gisèle Pelicot, who became a symbol of the fight against sexual violence during the drug-and-rape trial that riveted France last year and turned her into a global icon, will publish her memoir next year.

"A Hymn to Life" will be published in English, in French and 20 other languages in January 2026, British publisher the Bodley Head said in a statement late on Thursday.

"I am immensely grateful for the extraordinary support I have received since the beginning of the trial. I now want to tell my story in my own words," Pelicot said. (AP)



Artist Lenny Kravitz performs on stage at the Royal Arena, in Copenhagen, Saturday, March 22. (AP)

The second-longest hospitalization in recent papal history

Pope leaves hospital after surviving serious pneumonia

ROME, March 23, (AP): A weak and frail Pope Francis left the hospital Sunday after surviving a five-week, life-threatening bout of pneumonia, giving a thumbs up to an adoring crowd and taking a detour to go pray at a Rome-area church before returning home to the Vatican.

A motorcade carrying the 88-year-old pope wound its way through light Rome traffic Sunday morning and kept going after reaching Vatican City, where crowds of people had lined the streets to welcome him home. Francis later arrived across town at St. Mary Major basilica, where his favorite icon of the Madonna is located and where he always goes to pray after a foreign visit.

Before leaving Gemelli hospital, Francis gave a thumbs up and acknowledged the crowd after he was wheeled out onto the balcony overlooking the main entry. Hundreds of people had gathered on a brilliant Sunday morning to say goodbye.

"I see this woman with the yellow flowers. Brava!" a tired and bloated-looking Francis said. He gave a weak sign of the cross before being wheeled back inside.



Pope Francis gestures as he appears at a window of the Agostino Gemelli Polyclinic in Rome, Sunday, March 23. (AP)

Chants of "Viva il papa!" and "Papa Francesco" erupted from the crowd, which included patients who had been wheeled outside just to catch his brief appearance.

Doctors, who announced his planned release at a Saturday evening news conference, said he should

refrain from meeting with big groups of people or exerting himself, but that eventually he should be able to resume all his normal activities.

His return home, after the longest hospitalization of his 12-year papacy and the second-longest in recent papal history, brought tangible relief to

the Vatican and Catholic faithful who have been anxiously following 38 days of medical ups and downs and wondering if Francis would make it.

"Today I feel a great joy," said Dr. Rossella Russomando, a doctor from Salerno who didn't treat Francis but was at Gemelli on Sunday. "It is the demonstration that all our prayers, all the rosary prayers from all over the world, brought this grace."

At the Vatican Sunday, pilgrims flocked as they have all year to St. Peter's Basilica to participate in the 2025 Holy Year. They swarmed St. Peter's Square and progressed through the Holy Door in groups, while big TV screens in the square were turned on to broadcast Francis' hospital greeting live.

No special arrangements have been made at the Domus Santa Marta, the Vatican hotel next to the basilica where Francis lives in a two-room suite on the second floor. Francis will have access to supplemental oxygen and 24-hour medical care as needed, though his personal physician, Dr. Luigi Carbone, said he hoped Francis would progressively need less and less assistance breathing as his lungs recover.

While the pneumonia infection has been successfully treated, Francis will continue to take oral medication for quite some time to treat the fungal infection in his lungs and continue his respiratory and physical physiotherapy.

"For three or four days he's been asking when he can go home, so he's very happy," Carbone said.

The Argentine pope, who has chronic lung disease and had part of one lung removed as a young man, was admitted to Gemelli on Feb. 14 after a bout of bronchitis worsened.

Doctors first diagnosed a complex bacterial, viral and fungal respiratory tract infection and soon thereafter, pneumonia in both lungs. Blood tests showed signs of anemia, low blood platelets and the onset of kidney failure, all of which later resolved after two blood transfusions.

The most serious setbacks began on Feb. 28, when Francis experienced an acute coughing fit and inhaled vomit, requiring the use of a noninvasive mechanical ventilation mask to help him breathe. He suffered two more respiratory crises a few days later, which required doctors to manually aspirate

"copious" amounts of mucus from his lungs, at which point he began sleeping with the ventilation mask at night to help his lungs clear the accumulation of fluids.

He was never intubated and at no point lost consciousness. Doctors reported he always remained alert and cooperative, though they say he has probably lost a bit of weight given a natural loss of appetite.

"Unfortunately yes, there was a moment when many were saying that he might not make it. And it was painful for us," said Mario Balsamo, the owner of coffee shop in front of Gemelli. "Instead, today with the discharge, we are very happy that he is well and we hope he will recover soon and will recover his strength."

Dr. Sergio Alfieri, the medical and surgical chief at Gemelli who coordinated Francis' medical team, stressed that not all patients who develop such a severe case of double pneumonia survive, much less are released from the hospital. He said Francis' life was at risk twice, during the two acute respiratory crises, and that the pope at the time understandably lost his typical good sense of humor.



Marianne de Reynier Nevsky, the cultural mediation manager in Neuchâtel, (left), and town council member Julie Courcier Delafontaine chat about a new 'museum prescription' program outside the Ethnographic Museum of Neuchâtel in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, Wednesday, March 19. (AP)

Novel medical option

Swiss town prescribes art for better health, wellness

NEUCHÂTEL, Switzerland, March 23, (AP): The world's woes got you down? Feeling burnout at work? Need a little something extra to fight illness or prep for surgery? The Swiss town of Neuchâtel is offering its residents a novel medical option: Expose yourself to art and get a doctor's note to do it for free.

Under a new two-year pilot project, local and regional authorities are covering the costs of "museum prescriptions" issued by doctors who believe their patients could benefit from visits to any of the town's four museums as part of their treatment.

The project is based on a 2019 World Health Organization report that found the arts can boost mental health, reduce the impact of trauma and lower the risk of cognitive decline, frailty and "premature mortality," among other upsides.

Art can help relax the mind - as a sort of preventative medicine - and visits to museums require getting up and out of the house with physical activity like walking and standing for long periods.

Neuchâtel council member Julie Courcier Delafontaine said the COVID crisis also played a role in the program's genesis. "With the closure of

cultural sites (during coronavirus lockdowns), people realized just how much we need them to feel better."

She said so far some 500 prescriptions have been distributed to doctors around town and the program costs "very little." Ten thousand Swiss francs (about \$11,300) have been budgeted for it.

If successful, local officials could expand the program to other artistic activities like theater or dance. Courcier Delafontaine said. The Swiss national health care system doesn't cover "culture as a means of therapy," but she hopes it might one day, if the results are positive enough.

Marianne de Reynier Nevsky, the cultural mediation manager in the town of 46,000 who helped devise the program, said it built on a similar idea rolled out at the Fine Arts Museum in Montreal, Canada, in 2019.

She said many types of patients could benefit.

"It could be a person with depression, a person who has trouble walking, a person with a chronic illness," she said near a display of a feather headdress from Papua New Guinea at the Ethnographic Museum of Neuchâtel, a converted former villa that overlooks Lake Neuchâtel.

Wellness fads or proven health tips?

It's easy to find health advice on social media, but trusting it is more difficult

NEW YORK, March 23, (AP): In the corners of social media dominated by wellness content, influencers recommend an assortment of treatments and products to support weight loss, fight exhaustion or promote other desired health outcomes.

Some of the endorsed approaches may be helpful. Many play into fads with scant evidence to back up enthusiasts' claims, medical experts say.

Some influencers encourage their followers to avoid specific food items, such as seed oils, while others advocate going all in on certain foods, such as the meat-heavy carnivore diet. There are video pitches for berberine, a chemical compound that's been touted online as "nature's Ozempic," and for non-medical IV vitamin therapy, which businesses popularly known as drip bars market as cures for hangers or fatigue.

To be sure, alternative health practices and cures that lacked the medical establishment's backing were a part of popular culture long before the internet age. But the plethora of advice shared online has both prompted calls for safeguards and found a measure of mainstream acceptance.

Misinformation

The new U.S. health secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., had his Instagram account suspended in 2021 for posting misinformation about vaccine safety and COVID-19, but many of the ideas he champions have a widespread following. Critics of Dr. Mehmet Oz accused him of sometimes making misleading assertions on the talk show he used to host; Oz now is President Donald Trump's nominee to lead the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services.

A Netflix series released last month explored the story of Belle Gibson, a popular Australian wellness influencer who amassed a following talking about curing her terminal brain cancer with a healthy lifestyle and alternative medicine. In 2015, Gibson admitted to lying about having a cancer diagnosis. Australia's federal court later fined her for failing to donate money she said would go to charity through sales of her cookbook and app.

With personal wellness remaining a hot topic, here are some tips health ex-



A man uses a cell phone in New Orleans on Aug. 11, 2019. (AP)

perts have for evaluating the material you see online:

Most influencers have or want business relationships with companies that allow them to earn income by promoting products. The arrangements don't necessarily mean content creators don't believe in what they're marketing, but they do have a vested interest in publicizing products that may or may not work.

Creators can get paid for pictures or videos that hype up a product and also earn commissions on sales through features such as affiliate links. Experts note it's therefore better to proceed with caution when someone inspires you to hit the "buy" button, whether it's for natural supplements, teas with purported weight loss benefits or any other wellness products that show up in your social media feed.

Interest

Research published last month in the Journal of the American Medical Association showed a sizable amount of Instagram and TikTok posts that discussed five popular medical tests mostly came from account holders with "some form of financial interest" in promoting the screenings.

After analyzing roughly 980 posts on the two platforms, researchers said most of the posts they found were misleading and failed to "mention important harms, including overdiagnosis"

resulting from health people having full-body MRIs or tests to detect early signs of cancer, evaluate microorganisms in the gut or measure hormone levels.

Promoting dietary supplements has been a particularly lucrative exercise for many influencers, said Timothy Caulfield, a health policy and law professor at the University of Alberta. He views the supplements industry as "the backbone" of health misinformation aimed at consumers and designed to fuel billions of dollars in revenue.

"It's gotten to the point where if someone is selling a supplement, it's a red flag," he said. "I don't think it was always like that, but it certainly is now."

In general, consumers should take all bold claims with a degree of skepticism, said Cedric Bryant, chief executive officer at the nonprofit American Council on Exercise. The goal of creators is to increase engagement with their content, and some influencers may be tempted to make unproven assertions to draw in more viewers.

"If it's too good to be true, it probably is," Bryant said.

Some health and wellness influencers have medical training, but many do not. Before taking health tips from someone on social media, it's a good idea to make sure they have the proper expertise or at least able to share the data that led them to recommend certain products or lifestyle choices.

Bird flu case

AI pediatric care expands in China

BEIJING, March 23, (Xinhua): An artificial intelligence (AI) pediatrician is expected to enter more grassroots hospitals in China, as it has won widespread recognition since its debut at Beijing Children's Hospital in February.

The hospital unveiled the country's first pediatric large-scale AI model under the name "Futang-Baichuan" this week, introducing two AI-powered applications -- the AI Pediatrician Basic Version and the Expert Version.

The applications will be deployed in medical centers and community hospitals across Beijing as well as over 150 county-level hospitals in neighboring Hebei Province, according to the developer.

The model features a robust knowledge system for common and rare childhood diseases, leveraging pediatric "evidence-based medicine" to generate personalized diagnosis and treatment plans.

Trained on clinical expertise from more than 300 renowned specialists at the hospital and decades of high-quality medical records, it excels in clinical reasoning, multi-modal processing, and multi-round chatting.

When interacting with patients' parents, it can autonomously conduct multi-round inquiries and engage in communication patiently.

"The Basic Version targets daily pediatric care, empowering grassroots clinicians, while the Expert Version addresses complex and rare diseases to enhance decision-making efficiency," said Ni Xin, head of Beijing Children's Hospital.

Bird flu: A three-year-and-six-month boy from northeast Cambodia's Kratie province has been confirmed for H5N1 human avian influenza, raising the number of cases to three so far this year, said a Ministry of Health's statement on Sunday.

The boy had been brought to the hospital in a critical condition with fever, cough, and dyspnea, it said, adding that he is receiving medical treatment with the utmost care from a team of doctors.

"According to queries, the patient's family raised chickens and about five chickens had died, as some others were sick, and his family members cooked the dead poultry for food," the statement said.

MEDICAL CLASSIFIEDS

Take care of your health

To advertise in this page please call: 69994428 or E-mail: advt@arabtimesonline.com

For your ads on this page

Call: **69994428**

E-mail: **advt@arabtimesonline.com**

DEPARTMENT OF OPHTHALMOLOGY

مركز شفاء الجزيرة الطبي

SHIFA AL JAZEERA MEDICAL CENTRE

الفحاحيل

Dr. Sabitha Venkitesh MBBS, DNB (Ophthal)

Dr. Vivek P.S MBBS, DO, DNB (Ophthal)

Dr. Reshma Ravindra MBBS, MS (Ophthal)

Special package for family available for eye check up

HOTLINE: 65 95 95 34

Comprehensive Eye screening
Paediatric visual assessment
Glaucoma screening
Diabetic Retinopathy Screening
Foreign Body removal

Mecca Street, Near Roundabout, Life Tower Fahaeel.
Tel: +965 2391 9020
www.shifaaljazeeera.com.kw

SPORTS

Salt scored 56 off 31 balls

Royal Challengers see off defending champs Knight Riders in IPL opener

KOLKATA, India, March 23, (AP): Virat Kohli scored 59 not out off 36 balls as Royal Challengers Bengaluru beat Kolkata Knight Riders by seven wickets in the opening game of the Indian Premier League.

The star batter hit four fours and three sixes as Bengaluru chased down the defending champions' 174-8 with 22 balls to spare.

Phil Salt scored 56 off 31 balls, adding 95 off 51 balls with Kohli in a whirlwind opening stand that powered Bengaluru's total of 177-3 in 16.2 overs.

Salt, who played a prominent role for Kolkata in their 2024 triumph, was picked by Bengaluru in this season's player auctions and made an impression in the very first game.

For Kolkata, skipper Ajinkya Rahane scored 56 off 31 balls, including six fours and four sixes.

Rahane is leading the defending champions after last year's winning captain Shreyas Iyer was not retained by the franchise and moved to Punjab Kings for this season.

Bengaluru, led by Rajat Patidar for the first time, had won the toss and opted to bowl with the dew-factor in mind.

Put into bat, Kolkata lost Quinton de



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Virat Kohli bats during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Royal Challengers Bengaluru at Eden Gardens in Kolkata, India. (AP)

Kock early when he was caught behind off Josh Hazlewood for four.

A couple of catching chances went begging as the hosts fought back through Rahane and opener Sunil Narine.

Narine hit 44 off 26 balls, with five fours and three sixes, and put on 103

off 55 balls with Rahane. It was the skipper who set the tone by hitting six fours and four sixes in his first outing for Kolkata.

Bengaluru put on the brakes with spin as the duo both fell within four deliveries with the score reading 109-3 in 10.3 overs.

Kolkata then lost its way as big-money all-rounder Venkatesh Iyer was bowled for six, while Rinku Singh scored only 12.

Both were bowled off Krunal Pandya, who picked 3-29 in four overs in his first outing for Bengaluru. Andre Russell was also bowled for four off wrist spinner Suyash Sharma - another former Kolkata player.

Impact sub Angkrish Raghvanshi's 30 off 22 balls pushed the score past 170, but it proved under par.

In reply, Kohli and Salt set an electric pace as the packed Eden Gardens chanted for the visiting side.

Salt hit nine fours and two sixes to set the tone and brought up 50 off only 25 balls. Kohli also scored at a brisk pace, as RCB was 80-0 in six overs - the highest opening stand in the power-play in IPL history.

Kohli reached his 56th IPL half-century off 30 balls, and continued in attacking fashion, even as wickets fell at the other end.

There was too much dew for Kolkata's spinners to have any impact, as Bengaluru pushed aggressively through the chase.

Patidar chipped in with a quickfire cameo - 34 off 16 balls, with five fours and a six - on his captaincy debut.

Purdue returns to Sweet 16

Houston holds off Gonzaga comeback to reach Sweet 16



Houston guard Emanuel Sharp (21) tries to shoot around Gonzaga guard Dusty Stromer (4) during the second half of the second round of the NCAA college basketball tournament in Wichita, Kan. (AP)

WICHITA, Kan., March 23, (AP): LJ Cryer matched a career high with 30 points, including two free throws with 14.2 seconds left, and No. 1 seed Houston held on to beat eighth-seeded Gonzaga 81-76 on Saturday night to reach the Sweet 16 for the sixth straight NCAA Tournament.

J'wan Roberts added 18 points and Milos Uzan made two last free throws with 2.1 seconds left, giving the Cougars (32-4) their 15th consecutive win and pushing them into a regional semifinal against No. 4 seed Purdue on Friday night in Indianapolis.

Houston also ended Gonzaga's run of nine straight Sweet 16s, which had been the longest active streak in the nation.

"It's not just winning the game," Cougars coach Kelvin Sampson said. "It's beating a great program like Gonzaga."

The Bulldogs (26-9) trailed 76-67 with just over 2 minutes to go when Graham Ike made two free throws to start their comeback bid, and most of it wound up coming at the foul line. And when Uzan turned the ball over and Khalif Battle made two free throws of his own, the Bulldogs had pulled to 77-76 with 21 seconds remaining.

Houston got the ball to Cryer, who was fouled, and he made both of his free throws to extend the lead. At the other end, Ja'Vier Francis stuffed Battle's tying 3-point try from the corner, and Uzan knocked down his foul shots to seal the win.

Given that no program has won more games than Gonzaga and Houston over the past eight seasons, it seemed as if their second-round matchup in the Midwest Region

would have been better suited for the second weekend.

Trey Kaufman-Renn had 22 points and 15 rebounds, and Purdue used a fast start to roll to a 76-62 win over McNeese in the second round of the NCAA Tournament on Saturday.

Fletcher Loyer added 15 points. C.J. Cox finished with 11 points for the Boilermakers (24-11), who advanced to the Sweet 16 for the second straight season.

Purdue will meet top-seeded Houston in the Midwest Region semifinals in Indianapolis. Coach Matt Painter has reached the Sweet 16 in eight of his 16 NCAA Tournament appearances with the Boilermakers.

Painter said the challenge is to maintain the offensive efficiency his team has shown over the first two rounds.

"We can't go further without playing great offensively," Painter said. "We have to execute well, we have to shoot the ball well. That's not really pressure, that's just a fact."

Sincere Parker scored 17 points for McNeese (28-7), which won its first-ever NCAA Tournament game during coach Will Wade's second and final season at the school. Javohn Garcia added 12 points as the Cowboys came up short in their bid to give the Southland Conference its first Sweet 16 team since Louisiana Tech in 1985.

McNeese came out in the 2-3 zone that was so successful during its first-round win over Clemson.

But Purdue hit seven of its first nine field goals and three of its first four 3-point attempts to build an early double-digit advantage.

Pacers fend off hard-charging Nets



Chicago Bulls guard Josh Giddey (3) passes the ball in front of Los Angeles Lakers center Jaxson Hayes (11) and guard Luka Doncic (77) in the first half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles. (AP)

Bulls wreck James' return from injury

INDIANAPOLIS, March 23, (AP): Pascal Siakam scored eight of his 26 points over the final 3 1/2 minutes Saturday and Myles Turner made five 3-pointers and finished with 22 points to help the Indiana Pacers hold off the charging Brooklyn Nets 108-103.

Indiana swept its two home games against Brooklyn this week. The Pacers have won four straight and six of seven.

Turner also had eight rebounds and three blocks after his sister left the court on a stretcher during pregame warmups. All-Star guard Tyrese Haliburton returned from an injured back that kept him out of Indiana's previous three games and recorded his 10th straight double-double with 16 points and 12 assists to go with eight rebounds.

Trendon Watford scored a season-high 26 points to lead the Nets, who have lost three straight and 13 of 15. Cam Johnson added 20 points, nine rebounds and five assists.

The Pacers closed the third quarter on an 11-0 run to take a 90-70 lead, but allowed Brooklyn to open the fourth quarter on a 13-0 run. Then after giving up a dunk, the Nets scored eight straight to get within 92-91 with 4:30 to play.

Bulls 146, Lakers 115

In Los Angeles, Coby White scored 36 points, Josh Giddey flirted with



Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green (23) and Atlanta Hawks forward Zacharie Risacher (10) vie for a loose ball during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Atlanta. (AP)

a quadruple-double and Chicago wrecked LeBron James' return from injury with an impressive victory over the Los Angeles Lakers.

Luka Doncic scored 29 of his 34 points in the first half and hit eight 3-pointers, while James had 17 points after a seven-game absence.

Neither superstar could do a thing to slow the Bulls, who scorched Los Angeles' normally sturdy defense on the way to their seventh win in nine games. Chicago's 146 points were 12 more than the Lakers had allowed in any game this season.

Matas Buzelis scored 31 points for Chicago, and Giddey recorded 15 points, 17 assists, 10 rebounds and

eight steals. White was dominant while hitting six 3-pointers, and eight Bulls scored at least nine points on the fifth stop of a six-game road trip.

Austin Reaves scored 25 points for LA.

Rui Hachimura made his own return from a 12-game absence with a knee injury, making the Lakers' roster largely whole - but Los Angeles then played perhaps its worst defensive game.

Hawks 124, Warriors 115

In Atlanta, Trae Young had 25 points with 10 assists for his 41st double-double of the season and Atlanta beat Golden State.

Golden State was without star

guard Stephen Curry, who was injured Thursday night in a victory over the Toronto Raptors.

Georges Niang added 23 points on 6-of-9 shooting from 3-point distance, and Onyeka Okongwu had 20 points and 12 rebounds for the Hawks.

Jimmy Butler led the Warriors with 25 points, and Moses Moody added 20 points. Golden State lost for just the third time since the All-Star break.

Bucks 114, Kings 108

In Sacramento, Giannis Antetokounmpo had 32 points and 17 rebounds and Milwaukee shook off a sluggish start to beat the Sacramento.

Kyle Kuzma added 14 points and 14 rebounds for the Bucks, who trailed 25-15 after one quarter. Brook Lopez scored 21 points, Kevin Porter Jr. had 18 and Taurean Prince added 11.

DeMar DeRozan scored 22 points for Sacramento, which has lost six of eight. Keon Ellis added 20 points and Jonas Valanciunas had 16 points, seven rebounds and five assists.

Both teams played short-handed. The Bucks were without Damian Lillard (right calf) for a second consecutive game, while the Kings continued to be without injured center Domantas Sabonis (right ankle) and point guard Malik Monk (illness).

Knicks 122, Wizards 103

In New York, Karl-Anthony Towns had 29 points and 11 rebounds, Mikal Bridges scored 27 points and New York beat the Washington.

OG Anunoby had 23 points and Cam Payne chipped in 13 for the Knicks, who snapped a two-game losing streak.



In a photo provided by Fair Grounds Race Course, Tiztastic with Joel Rosario aboard wins the 112th running of the Louisiana Derby horse race at Fair Grounds Race Course in New Orleans. (AP)

Tiztastic wins Louisiana Derby

NEW ORLEANS, March 23, (AP):Tiztastic galloped past three horses down the stretch to win the \$1 million Louisiana Derby by two lengths on Saturday, earning the Steve Asmussen-trained horse enough Kentucky Derby qualifying points to enter the opening race of the Triple Crown.

Going off at 9-1 from the third post, Tiztastic cruised just behind a tight pack of six frontrunners before picking up the pace in the final turn and was fourth by the time jockey Joel Rosario steered him on to the back stretch.

John Hancock, 2-1 favorite in the 10-horse field, took the early lead from the first post position and didn't relinquish it until Built, the third-place finisher in last month's Risen Star Stakes, pulled even entering the final turn.

Risen Star runner-up Chunk of Gold and Tiztastic pulled even as they entered the stretch, with Instant Replay trailing close behind.

Tiztastic steadily pulled in front from there.

Chunk of Gold, with Jareth Loveberry aboard, finished second for trainer Ethan West. Instant Replay came home third and Brad Cox-trained John Hancock faded to fourth.

Tiztastic finished the 1 3/16-mile race distance in 1:56.20 and paid \$17, \$7.20 and \$4.40. The Grade II victory also earned him 100 Kentucky Derby qualifying points.

Chunk of Gold paid \$8.40 and \$5.20 and earned 50 qualifying points. Instant Replay, also trained by Cox, and with Florent Geroux aboard, paid \$5.20 and earned 25 points.

China claims bronze in World Women's Curling Championship

SEOUL, March 23, (Xinhua): China claimed the bronze medal at the World Women's Curling Championship with a 9-4 victory over host South Korea on Sunday, securing a berth for the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics.

After finishing fifth in the round-robin stage with seven wins and five defeats, China staged a comeback win against Sweden on Saturday, reaching the semifinals for the first time in 14 years. However, a narrow loss to Switzerland set up

a third-place clash against South Korea.

South Korea, the bronze medalist at the 2024 Women's Curling World Championship, had previously defeated China twice this year - once in the final of the Harbin Asian Winter Games in February and again during the round-robin stage of this championship.

The first five ends saw a tight contest, with the teams tied at 2-2. South Korea scored two points in the sixth end to take a 4-2 lead, but China responded im-

mediately, entering the final end with a 6-4 advantage. In the tenth end, China executed their strategy flawlessly, using three stones in the house to block their opponent. South Korea's last attempt failed to clear the stones, allowing China to steal three points and seal a decisive 9-4 victory.

This win not only secured China a spot in the 2026 Winter Olympics but also marked their return to the World Championship podium after 14 years.



Team China and China's Hong Kong pose for photos after the Curling men's bronze medal match between China and China's Hong Kong at the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

For Rent

3 apartments in a new residential villa only for expatriates, hospitals and companies
Location: Sabah Al-Salem, Block 5 opposite Mishref, investment plots, and hospitals
(Block 1, Block 2, Block 3)
Area: 500 square meters
Rent: KD 2,100 per month
Six-month rent downpayment is required.

97 620 620

SPORTS

Qadsia determined to climb the standings

Kuwait Club eyes unbeaten run in the league

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Volleyball fans are shifting their focus to the Volleyball Federation Hall at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, where a high-stakes league showdown is set to take place between Kuwait Club and Qadsia.

Kuwait Club sits at the top with 26 points, followed by Kazma (24 points), Al-Shabab and Qadsia (21 points each), Burgan (16 points), Al-Arabi (15 points), Al-Nasr (11 points), Al-Sulaibikhat (9 points), Al-Yarmouk (5 points), Al-Tadamon (3 points), and Al-Sahel (2 points).

The top six teams – Kuwait Club, Kazma, Al-Shabab, Qadsia, Burgan, and Al-Arabi – have already secured their places in the Premier League, which kicks off on April 13. The competition will feature a two-round format (home and away), after which the top four teams will advance to the Golden Square. In this stage, the first-place team will face the fourth, while the second-place team will take on the third to determine the finalists.

Under the guidance of new Brazilian coach Talmo Oliveira, Kuwait



Qadsia player spikes the ball as Kuwait Club players defend.

Club aims to solidify its lead at the top, banking on key players, including Iranian star Saber Kazemi and Brazilian standout Joao Ferreira. With a flawless 9-0 record, Kuwait Club is eager to complete a perfect run in the league.

Meanwhile, Qadsia, coached by Bahraini Redha Ali, has suffered just one defeat (against Al-Shabab) and is determined to climb the standings while handing Kuwait Club its first loss. The team relies on Iranian

Mohammad Reza Bey and Bulgarian Branimir Grozdanov to lead the charge, especially ahead of its final-round showdown against Kazma on March 27.

In other league action, Kazma secured sole possession of second place with 24 points, breaking its tie with Al-Shabab after a commanding three-set victory (25-16, 25-12, 25-15) over Al-Tadamon at Union Hall. With the loss, Al-Tadamon remains at three points in the standings.

Al-Salmiya seeks Super Cup revenge against Kuwait Club

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Kuwait Club faces Al-Salmiya at 9:30 pm at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Hall, marking its second showdown in six days to conclude the 12th round of the preliminary handball league. Their last encounter, in the Super Cup semifinals on March 18, saw Kuwait Club defeat Al-Salmiya 37-32 at the same venue.

Under the leadership of newly appointed Algerian coach Said Hegazi, Kuwait Club (The Dean) aims to maintain its perfect league record, sitting at the top with 22 points from 11 matches. The team will rely on stars Frankis Marzo, Angel Hernandez, Abdullah Al-Khamis, Saif Al-Adwani, Mishari Saywan, Mishaal Taha, and Mohammed Amer, with Hassan Safar anchoring the defense. Despite injury concerns, Kuwait Club boasts strong squad depth with quality replacements available in every position.

Meanwhile, Al-Salmiya is determined to avenge its Super Cup loss. Under national coach Yaqoub Al-



Kuwait Club players defend as an opponent makes a goal attempt.

Moussawi, the team showcased strong performances in the Super Cup's third and fourth rounds, including a victory over Al-Arabi. German professional Valentin Spohn, alongside Yahya Zamoushi, Rakan Taqi, Ali Al-Balushi, and Haider Dashti, will be key players

in its quest for redemption.

Al-Tadamon secured its first league win, edging Al-Yarmouk 25-24 in a thrilling contest.

Burgan dominated Khaitan 44-31, strengthening its position in the standings.

Piastrri takes historic Chinese GP win as McLaren marks 50th one-two finish

Russell completes the podium

SHANGHAI, March 23, (AP): McLaren driver Oscar Piastri cruised to his maiden Chinese Grand Prix win from pole position with the Australian untouchable ahead of his teammate Lando Norris as the pair completed McLaren's milestone 50th one-two placing in Formula 1.

Piastri, who took his maiden pole position on Saturday, got a great start in Sunday's race to lead into the first corner, as Norris passed George Russell's Mercedes for second.

The Australian then slowly stretched his legs in an untroubled drive for his third career win, after Hungary and Azerbaijan last year.

"(It's) very satisfying, obviously," said Piastri, who is now up to fourth in the standings, just 10 points behind leader Norris with 22 races to go.

"I think it's always a pretty good day when you cross the line first, but I think this has been the most satisfying, not just race, but (race) weekend for myself. I think the two wins I had previously were very different, and I think this one's been the most complete." Norris had a trickier afternoon to earn his runner-up spot - with the British driver having to pass both Russell and Williams' Alex Albon after his stop. He then trailed his teammate to the checkered flag, though in the closing stages had to deal with a worsening brake-pedal issue that threatened his ability to finish the race.

"Tough race," Norris said. "I mean I'm just justified, for the result, for the team, the 50th one-two for McLaren is quite an achievement. So happy to be part of that, first of all, and a great race by Oscar."

"I'm (also) happy considering how bad my last few days have been and how much I struggled just to kind of get comfortable and understand how



McLaren driver Oscar Piastri of Australia celebrates on the podium after winning the Chinese Formula One Grand Prix race at the Shanghai International Circuit, Shanghai. (AP)

to drive the car." Russell finished third for Mercedes' 300th podium in F1. It was the Briton's second-straight podium place of the young season, with his consistency leaving him third in the standings - one point ahead of China winner Piastri.

"In the last three races, with the sprint as well, the result we achieved was the maximum (we could achieve), so that gives me a lot of satisfaction," Russell said.

"If we do deliver a car that is capable of fighting the McLaren, I have no doubt that we can finish ahead because we're doing such a solid job as a team." Last year's race winner, Red Bull's Max Verstappen took fourth from Ferrari's Charles Leclerc in the

closing laps, with the Monégasque's race compromised by lap one contact with his Scuderia teammate Lewis Hamilton that sheared the left-front endplate from his front wing and hampered his car's aerodynamics throughout the race.

However, Leclerc, and Alpine's Pierre Gasly, who finished in 16th, are at risk of being disqualified, with each of their cars found to be 1 kilogram below the minimum weight limit at the conclusion of the race and the matter referred to the stewards.

Hamilton, who won Saturday's Sprint race for his first victory in a Ferrari, finished sixth. But the result has also been passed to the stewards with excessive wear on his Ferrari's

rearmost skid putting it outside of the minimum thickness limit.

Haas earned its first points of the season, a double score with new recruit Esteban Ocon coming home seventh and rookie Oliver Bearman 10th. Mercedes rookie Andrea Kimi Antonelli was eighth, ahead of Williams driver Alex Albon, who briefly led the race as the frontrunners pitted. The British team's highly rated new signing Carlos Sainz saw his first chequered flag of the season in 13th.

The next race will be held at Japan's legendary Suzuka Circuit on April 6th to start a triple header with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Al-Nasr overpowers Al-Arabi

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Al-Nasr secured a dominant 114-91 victory over Al-Arabi at the Basketball Association Hall in Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Complex, as part of the Merger League's second division. With this win, Al-Nasr (Al-Annabi) improved to 18 points, while Al-Arabi (Al-Akhdar) remained at 17 points, suffering its third consecutive defeat after losses to Kazma, Sulai-bikhat, and Al-Nasr.

Both teams are now focusing on improving their league standings, having missed out on semifinal qualification for the championship title.

Al-Nasr controlled the game from start to finish, winning all four quarters. It led 23-20 after the first quarter and extended its advantage to 53-47 by halftime, thanks to a 31-point second quarter. Al-Nasr delivered its strongest defensive performance in the third quarter, restricting Al-Arabi to just 17 points, while American



Players fighting for the ball.

star Ibrahim Thomas led the charge with 31 points.

The final quarter saw Al-Arabi score 27 points, but Al-Nasr responded with 30, sealing a comfortable 23-point win. American player Tomer was Al-Arabi's top scorer with 29 points.

Pace attack thrives

NZ secures 115-run victory over Pakistan

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, New Zealand, March 23, (AP): Jacob Duffy and Zakary Foulkes shared seven wickets as New Zealand bowled out Pakistan for 105 Sunday to win the fourth Twenty20 international by 115 runs and clinch victory in the five-match series with a game remaining. Duffy took 4-20 and Foulkes 3-25 as New Zealand's pacers thrived in responsive conditions under the floodlights at Bay Oval and bowled out Pakistan in 16.2 overs.

At 56-8 Pakistan was in danger of falling short of its lowest score in T20 internationals - 74 against Australia in 2012. But Abdul Samad made an unbeaten 44 to steer his team past that total and, at 91, past its lowest total against New Zealand.

Earlier, Finn Allen made a half-century from 19 balls and captain Michael Bracewell made an unbeaten 46 as New Zealand posted 220-6 after being sent in. Tim Seifert made 44 from 22 balls to dominate an opening partnership with Allen that produced 59 runs in 4.1 overs. New Zealand went on to 79-1 after six overs, it's highest power play total against Pakistan.

Allen hit six fours and three sixes to accelerate the New Zealand scoring: the home team was 134-2 at the midpoint of its innings. Haris Rauf took 3-27 to curb the New Zealand scoring before Bracewell finished strongly.

"With Tim (Seifert) belting them it makes it tough to get some rhythm sometimes," said Allen who was Player of the Match. "It's nice for me to sit at the other end and watch him go and then try to take over when he goes."

Pakistan lost three wickets in the first two overs including third match century-maker Hasan Nawaz for 1. O'Rourke and Duffy produced devastating opening spells to upset the Pakistan run chase.

O'Rourke cut a ball back from outside off to bowl Mohammad Haris (2) with the second ball of the Pakistan innings. Duffy then removed Nawaz and captain Salman Ali Agha (1), both caught behind by wicketkeeper Mitchell Hay.

The New Zealand pacers were able to move the ball around in conditions under floodlights that previously had seemed relatively benign. Even leg spinner Ish Sodhi found the purchase to turn the ball sharply.

Dallas pips Real Salt Lake

Fire hands Whitecaps first loss of the season

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, March 23, (AP): Hugo Cuypers scored in the first minute, Philip Zinckernagel had an assist and his first career goal and Rominique Kouamé played just eight minutes and scored in his debut as the Chicago Fire rallied to hand the Vancouver Whitecaps their first loss of the season with a 3-1 victory at BC Place on Saturday night.

Chicago has won three straight matches on the road for the first time since 2009.

Cuypers scored 53 seconds into the match to give the Fire (3-1-1) the lead. All five of Cuypers' goals this season have come in the last four matches. Zinckernagel notched his second assist in his fourth career start and appearance.

Daniel Ríos pulled the Whitecaps (4-1-0) even in the 14th minute with his first goal in his first start and fourth appearance this season. Ríos scored 19 goals over four seasons with three previous clubs before joining Vancouver. Jayden Nelson had the helper on the score and has already collected a career-high four assists this season. The 22-year-old midfielder had three assists in 45 career appearances with Toronto FC. Luciano Acosta scored in first-half stoppage time after Real Salt Lake lost rookie Ariath Piol to a red card in the 23rd minute, and FC Dallas held on for a 1-0 victory behind

goalkeeper Michael Collodi in his league debut at America First Field.

Piol, a 20-year-old forward, did not last long in his fourth career start for Real Salt Lake (2-3-0).

Dallas (2-2-1) didn't take advantage until the seventh minute of stoppage time when Acosta scored unassisted off a deflection. It was Acosta's second goal in his first season with the club and his 74th in 256 career appearances. The former league MVP has yet to add to his 97 career assists.

Alex Muhl, Josh Bauer and



Vancouver Whitecaps' Daniel Rios, left, and Chicago Fire's Jack Elliott vie for the ball during the second half of an MLS soccer match in Vancouver, British Columbia. (AP)

Jonathan Pérez all scored during an 11-minute stretch of the second half to spark Nashville SC to a 3-0 victory over CF Montreal at GEODIS Park.

Muhl opened the scoring for Nashville (3-1-1) in the 56th minute when he took a pass from Sam Surridge and scored for the first time this season and the 23rd time in his career. It was the first assist for Surridge this season and his third in 42 career appearances. Josh Bauer stretched the lead to 2-0 six minutes later with his first

career goal in his 39th appearance.

David Martínez scored in the first half, Aaron Long added a goal in the second half and Los Angeles FC defeated Sporting Kansas City 2-0.

Hugo Lloris made two saves for his clean sheet and LAFC (3-2-0) picked up its first road win of the MLS season. All three MLS wins have been by shutout.

In the 18th minute, Martínez scored with a left-footed shot from the left side of the box to the upper left-central zone. Mark Delgado assisted.

Emil Forsberg scored a goal in each half to lead the New York Red Bulls to a 2-1 victory over Toronto FC at Sports Illustrated Stadium.

The Red Bulls (2-1-2) took a 1-0 lead into halftime on a penalty-kick goal by Forsberg in the 44th minute. The PK was awarded when Raheem Edwards was fouled by Toronto defender Henry Wingo. Edwards played three seasons with Toronto. Toronto (0-4-1) scored the equalizer in the 70th minute on a goal by Deandre Kerr. It was the second goal this season for the 22-year-old forward and his 13th in 79 career appearances. Derrick Etienne Jr. and Lorenzo Insigne collected their first assists of the season. Etienne played five seasons with the Red Bulls.

ARAB TIMES
Kuwait's No.1 English Newspaper

For Subscriptions and Complaints

Please Call

51508991
51526559





Norway's Erling Haaland controls the ball next to Moldova's Victor Mudrac during a Group I, World Cup qualifier soccer match between Moldova and Norway at the Zimbru stadium in Chisinau, Moldova. (AP)

Sports

Blues complete final training at Jaber Stadium

Kuwait's World Cup journey at stake in Oman encounter

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Kuwait wrapped up its final training session at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium in preparation for a must-win match against Oman on Tuesday, in the eighth round of Group B of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The Blues are in a must-win scenario to keep their hopes alive for a third or fourth-place finish, which would secure a play-off spot in the qualifiers. A draw would extend Kuwait's chances to the final two rounds, while a loss would eliminate it from the race to qualify.

In Group B, South Korea leads with 15 points, while Iraq and Jordan share second place with 12 points each. Oman sits in fourth with 7 points, while Kuwait (5 points) is just ahead of Palestine (3 points) at the bottom of the standings.

The entire squad participated in the latest training session, giving all players an equal shot at making the starting lineup for the decisive match. The session was attended by Kuwait Football Federation officials, in-

cluding Chairman Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef and board members Osama Hussein, Mubarak Abdulaziz, and Ayman Al-Husseini, who offered their full support to the players.

Kuwait's Argentine head coach Juan Pizzi, alongside assistant Ahmed Abdul Karim, has emphasized that form and fitness will determine the lineup, rather than reputation.

The Blues will be without striker Yousef Nasser and goalkeeper Abdulrahman Al-Fadhli, forcing Pizzi to explore attacking alternatives. Salman Al-Awadhi and Fawaz Mbilish are among the top candidates to step in, while Kuwait may also shift tactics to rely on a false striker.

A Qatari officiating crew will oversee the match, led by referee Salman Falahi, assisted by Ramzan Al-Nuaimi and Majed Al-Shammari. Abdullah Al-Marri and Mohammed Ahmed will serve as VAR officials.

The Kuwait Football Association (KFA) has launched ticket sales for the high-stakes clash, urging fans to rally behind the team with the campaign "The Promise at Jaber Stadium." In a message to supporters, the KFA stated:

"Our dear fans ... you are our source of strength. Book your tickets and cheer for the Blues!"



The head coach Juan Pizzi, alongside assistant Ahmed Abdul Karim lead training session.

Rashid shines in Equestrian League 4th round



Al-Jerawi and Al-Sabah are among the champions.

KUWAIT CITY, March 23: Fawaz Rashid secured victory in the fourth round of the Kuwait Equestrian League, triumphing in the main event, the Grand Prix, at a height of 140 cm. He clocked 36.84 seconds without incurring penalty points, finishing ahead of Abdullah Al-Awadhi, Stephen Daniels, Yara Al-Hunaidi, Khaled Al-Khubaizi, and Marhood Al-Marhood.

The winners were crowned by Ghazi Faisal Al-Jerawi, Secretary-General of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation, alongside Sabah Al-Sabah, during the competitions held at Sahara Equestrian Resort.

In the Minor Prix event at 130 cm, British rider Nick Channing dominated by securing both first and second place, followed by Stephen Dan-

iels, Anaz Al-Anaz, Faisal Al-Shatti, Fawaz Al-Shammari, and Abdullah Al-Awadhi.

The first day of the championship saw Fawaz Al-Subaie clinch victory in the fourth main round at 135-140 cm, while Mohammed Al-Rifai took first place in both the second and third rounds at 115 cm and 125-130 cm, respectively.

Kuwait Olympic team edges UAE, eyes 5th place



Kuwaiti players celebrate after besting UAE.

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff
MUSCAT, March 23: The Kuwait Olympic team secured a 1-0 victory over the UAE at the Qaboos Complex in Muscat, during the West Asian Under-23 Championship.

Abdulrahman Al-Rashidi scored the match's only goal.

Next, the Blues are set to face Saudi Arabia tomorrow evening, Tuesday, in a match to determine fifth and sixth place.

Kuwait began the tournament with a 2-0 loss to Jordan.

In an update, the West Asian Football Federation has revised the tournament format, turning it into a knockout competition. Winners will advance to the next round, while the losers will compete in a "consolation round."

Norway starts WCup qualifying campaign with rout of Moldova

Wales tops Kazakhstan in Cardiff

CHISINAU, March 23, (AP): Erling Haaland helped Norway make a positive start to its World Cup qualifying campaign by scoring in a 5-0 rout at Moldova. Wales beat Kazakhstan 3-1 in Cardiff as the British team seeks a second straight World Cup appearance. Also in Group J, North Macedonia won 3-0 at Liechtenstein.

Czech Republic's Patrik Schick scored twice in a 2-1 win over Faroe Islands in Group L, where Montenegro fought back for a 3-1 win over Gibraltar.

Norway's third and last World Cup appearance was back in 1998, two years before Haaland was born.

Now, Haaland leads a team featuring Arsenal midfielder Martin Odegaard that bears high expectations of reaching the 2026 tournament in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

The Scandinavian side is favored to win Group I, which also saw Israel beat Estonia 2-1 in the opening round.

Haaland scored Norway's second goal against the outmatched Moldova. That took his exceptional career haul to 39 goals in 40 appearances for his country since his 2019 debut.

Dortmund defender Julian Ryerson opened the scoring for Norway five minutes after kickoff in Chisinau.



Kazakhstan's Serikzhan Muzhikov (7) and Wales' Connor Roberts battle for the ball during a 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifying soccer match at the Cardiff City Stadium in Cardiff, Wales. (AP)

Haaland doubled the lead in the 23rd. Thelo Aasgaard, who assisted Ryerson for the opener, made it three before Odegaard set up Alexander Sorloth before halftime. Substitute Aron Donnun got on the scoreboard in the second half.

Haaland already knows what it is to win the Champions League, Premier

League and FA Cup with Manchester City, but he has yet to take his country to a major tournament. Injury ruled Haaland out of several matches during Norway's unsuccessful qualifying campaign for the 2022 World Cup. The talented Norway team likewise failed to qualify for the 2024 European Championship when it disappointed

with a third-place group finish behind Spain and Scotland.

Europe will have 16 teams in the expanded 48-team field for next year's World Cup in North America.

They will come from the winners of the 12 qualifying groups plus four from a playoff of the group runners-up.

Hendrickson stuns Steveson

Penn State's Starocci wins a record fifth national title

PHILADELPHIA, March 23, (AP): Penn State's Carter Starocci won an unprecedented fifth national title and Oklahoma State's Wyatt Hendrickson stunned Olympic gold medalist Gable Steveson 5-4 in the heavyweight final Saturday night at the NCAA men's wrestling championships with President Donald Trump in attendance.

Hendrickson, a transfer from Air Force, trailed in the last match of the evening until scoring on a takedown in the final minute - the only takedown Steveson allowed all season.

Hendrickson saluted Trump after his victory. With a United States flag draped over his shoulders, he then walked over and shook Trump's hand and hugged him as part of his celebration. Trump attended the event, just as he did as a candidate in 2023 when the tournament was in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

"It's bigger than worlds, Olympics, anything," an emotional Hendrickson said moments after the win.

Minnesota's Steveson, seeking his third national title, was on a 70-match win streak. The 2021 and 2022 national champion retired at the end of the 2022 event, but returned this year after stints in World Wrestling Entertainment and the National Football League.

Steveson entered the third period with a 3-2 lead before giving up the takedown with about 20 seconds remaining. The crowd erupted when Hendrickson scored and as time expired.

Starocci's Nittany Lions claimed their third four-peat, running away from the field to claim their 12th men's Division I men's wrestling national title under coach Cael Sanderson.

Starocci defeated Northern Iowa's Parker Keckeisen 4-3 in the 184-pound final. Keckeisen was the defending champion in the class.

Starocci kept it all in perspective.

"It means a lot to me, but as for me - I never want to down play the moment - but I mean, it's always cool, but one thing that Coach Cael really instills in us, this is all just preparation for the next thing."

Penn State, just the second program to have 10 All-Americans in one season, scored 177 points to top its record from last year. The Nittany Lions picked up another championship when Mitchell Mesenbrink won the 165 final 8-2 over Iowa's Michael Caliendo. Mesenbrink finished unbeaten this season after losing in the national final a year ago.

Nebraska finished second with 117 points and closed out its best tournament ever with Ridge Lovett winning at 149 and Antrell Taylor at 157. Oklahoma State finished third with 102.5 points and Iowa was fourth with 81.

North Carolina State freshman Vincent Robinson defeated Oklahoma State's Troy Spratley 2-1 at 125, and Illinois' Lucas Byrd defeated Iowa's Drake Ayala 3-2 at 133.

At 141, Ohio State's Jesse Mendez rallied from a 5-0 deficit to beat Nebraska's Brock Hardy 12-9 and claim his second straight national title. Hardy was the No. 1 seed.

At 149, Lovett toppled the defending champion, Virginia Tech's Caleb Henson, 1-0. Lovett became the first Cornhusker national champion since Jordan Burroughs in 2011.