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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

FINALLY, after years of patience, the Gazan people have begun to revolt against Hamas' rule.

For 17 years, they suffered from hunger, oppression, and the suppression of any opinions against the Muslim Brotherhood Group.

Hamas concluded this with the so-called "Al-Aqsa Flood" on October 7, 2023, which turned into a devastating "flood of blood and destruc-

tion". This ongoing cycle has not benefited the Palestinian cause in any way. Instead, it has only led to more innocent lives lost, contributed to the suffering of Gazans, and pushed them further into hunger and poverty.

All of this unfolded while regional agreements, particularly the Abraham Accords, were steering the two-state solution toward a potential resolution, strengthening the Palestinian National Authority and consolidating its presence in the occupied territories, especially the Gaza Strip.

However, this did not satisfy the primary benefi-

ciary of the region's escalation, as he, in a moment of recklessness, believed he could control four Arab capitals and thwart any initiative aimed at ending his dominance over Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and the Gaza Strip.

This is why Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and the sectarian militias in Iraq depicted the path to paradise as a path of gratuitous death.

They portrayed anyone opposing this vision as a reactionary Zionist agent serving the Zionist-American agenda.

These groups worked to brainwash the people of these regions and countries. After all the suffering,

it became clear that they were victims of the whims and desires of mercenaries who had been working to serve the Israeli plan to fragment the Arab states since 1928, with the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood Group.

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Kuwait inflation up as food leads surge

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau has released data showing an increase of 2.49 percent in the consumer price index (CPI) year-on-year in February.

The Bureau relayed to KUNA that the inflation rate in Kuwait rose by 0.22 percent month-on-month in February compared to January, prompted by the increase of major groups affecting the CPI, especially food, health, clothing and education, excluding transportation.

The CPI for the first group, food and beverages, rose by 5.23 percent in February compared to the same month in 2024, while the price index for the second group, cigarettes and tobacco, rose slightly by 0.07 percent year-on-year.

The statistics agency reported that the index of the third group, clothing, rose by 4.63 percent, while the prices of the, housing services group rose by 0.90 percent, and the inflation rate in the fifth group, furnishing, rose by 3.04 percent.

It explained that the price index of the sixth group, health, rose by 4.08 percent, while the prices of the, transportation group witnessed a decrease of 1.19 percent in February compared to the same month last year.

The statistics agency indicated that the prices of the eighth group, communications, rose by 0.88 percent on an annual basis, and the inflation rate in the ninth group, recreation and culture, rose by 2.48 percent, while the prices of the tenth group, education, rose by 0.71 percent.

It indicated that the prices of the restaurants and hotels group rose by 2.03 percent on an annual basis in February, while the prices of the miscellaneous goods and services group rose by 5.46 percent.

The Bureau pointed out that the inflation rate in Kuwait, excluding the food and beverages group, rose by 1.93 percent year-on-year in February and by 0.15 percent month-on-month.

TEC unveils big plans for Kuwait's tourism growth

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Tourism Enterprises Company (TEC) Chairman Hamoud Jassim Al-Falah confirmed that the company has offered a number of its facilities as private sector investments, particularly to qualified investors, in compliance with the government's directive to enable the private sector to play a greater role in the local economy.

Al-Falah made the statement during the ordinary General Assembly of the company for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024 with 100 percent attendance. He confirmed the approval of the agenda, including the reports of the Board of Directors and the auditor, as well as the audited final financial statements.

He explained that the abovementioned move aims to maximize revenues and achieve long-term financial sustainability.

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MoCI undersecretary resigns over prize draw controversy

Central Bank freezes bank draws pending review

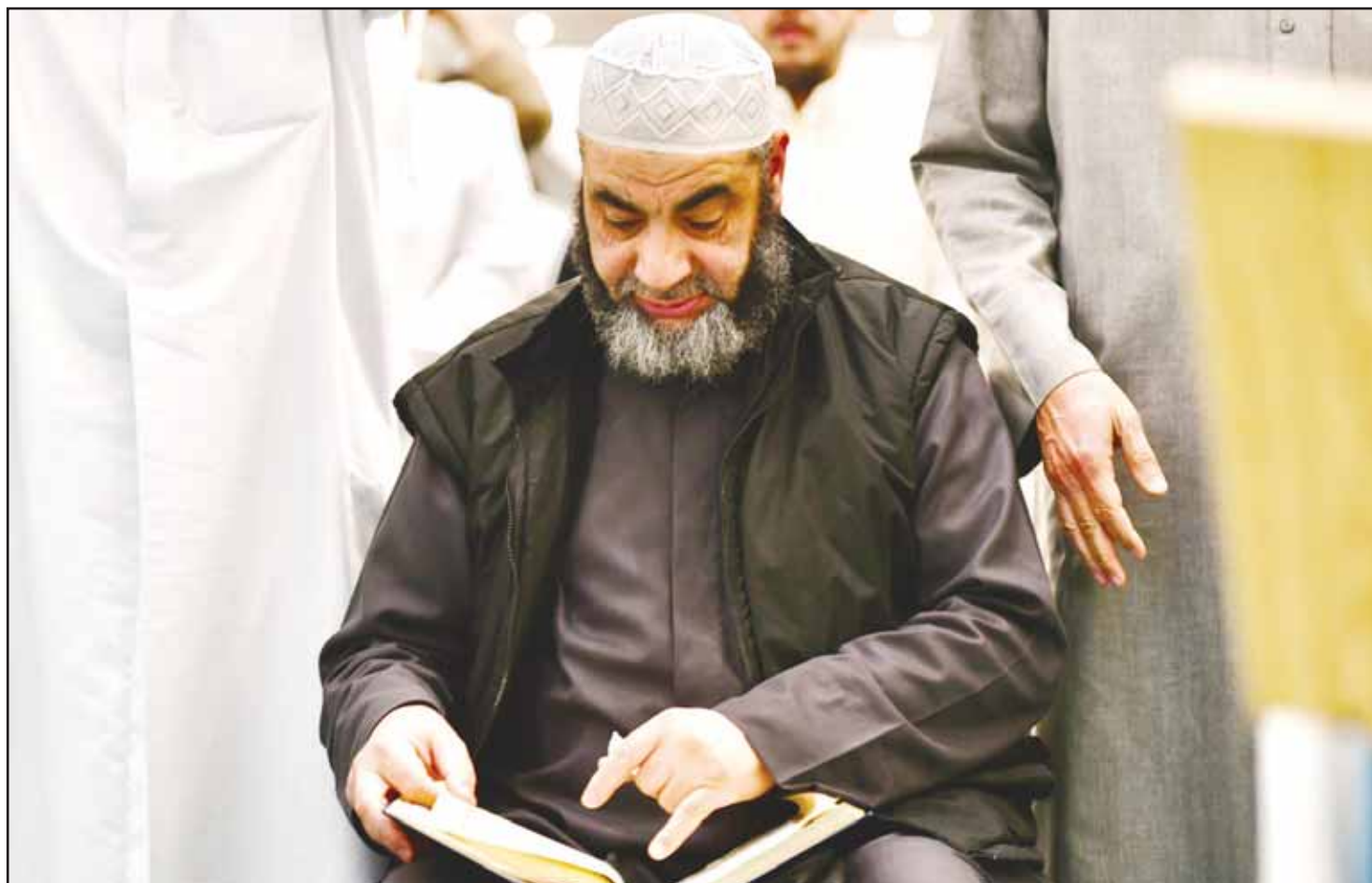


Photo by Mohammad Morsi

A worshiper reads the Holy Qur'an at the Grand Mosque on the 25th night of Ramadan. Muslims toil to earn reward from Allah by fasting from dawn to dusk, praying five times and maintaining good behavior. 'Qiyam' prayer (tahajjud) is being observed in the last days of the holy month.

Eid start hinges on Saturday crescent sighting

The Ministry of Justice announced that the Crescent Sighting Board will meet on Saturday evening, March 29, at the Supreme Judicial Council to observe and verify the appearance of the Shawwal crescent moon, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The board declared that anyone who confirms sighting the Shawwal crescent moon

with their own eyes should contact the board at 25376934. The ministry extends its warmest congratulations and best wishes to citizens and residents on this occasion.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs announced that Eid al-Fitr prayers will be held at 5:56 am in 57 prayer yards throughout the country, in addition to the mosques where Fri-

day prayers are held, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Tuesday, the ministry stated that the Assistant Undersecretary for Mosques Affairs Bader Al-Otaibi issued a circular specifying the public squares, youth centers, and model sports fields in the country where worshippers can gather for Eid prayers.

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Ziad Al-Najem submitted his resignation on Tuesday to the Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In his resignation, Al-Najem stated: "We took the necessary legal measures against the violators in the 'draw manipulation case' without any delay. However, this heinous incident has exceeded the ministry's scope and has negatively impacted the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's image in the eyes of the citizens.

Out of a sense of moral responsibility as a senior official, and in defense of the efforts of all loyal and honest employees of the ministry, I submit my resignation from my position as Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry."

Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Kuwait has instructed local banks to postpone any upcoming draws until the bank receives the results of the draw process evaluation, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a circular issued on Wednesday, the Central Bank stated: "Within the framework of the measures undertaken by the Central Bank to regulate banking activities, ensure the smooth operation of banking operations, and provide an appropriate environment for preserving customer rights in line with a balanced relationship that protects the banking sector, based on Article 71 of Law No. 32/1968 concerning currency, the Central Bank of Kuwait, the regulation of the banking profession and its amendments,

Continued on Page 5

Call for UN intervention as strikes claim 7

Kuwait condemns deadly Israeli attack on Syrian village

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (Agencies): Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly denounced the deadly attacks launched by the Israeli occupation forces on Koayiah village, Daraa Governorate, south Syria, on Tuesday.

The State of Kuwait renews the call for respecting Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial unity, the ministry said in a press release tonight.

It urges the UN Security Council to shoulder its responsibility for protecting international peace and security and putting an end to the

Israeli occupation's systematic violations of international law, which pose serious threat to regional stability, the statement added.

At least seven people were reportedly killed in an Israeli military onslaught on the village located to the west of Daraa.

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi on Wednesday denounced the Israeli occupation forces' aggression on Koayiah in Syria's Daraa Governorate, which claimed multiple casualties.

In a press statement, Al-Budaiwi said this aggression by Israeli occupation forces is a continuation of its aggressive attitude of destabilizing regional security and stability.

He underlined the significance of respecting Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity as a core pillar of regional and international security and peace, citing the final communique of the 163rd GCC ministerial meeting.

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The mother of Ali Mohammad al-Hneiss, reportedly killed in an Israeli drone attack that claimed at least seven lives, weeps during his funeral in the village of Koayiah, southwestern Syria, March 25, 2025. (AP)

Day by Day

THE scandal surrounding the draws that has unfolded over the past few days, are they limited to just cars?

Investigate other areas, and perhaps you will discover that the draws aren't just for car prizes and "Ya Hala" sales. In fact, this type of manipulation might also be taking place in hiring processes.

We seem to practice this form of lottery and draws even in matters like appointments or the distribution of houses and plots.

Ensure that this practice has not infiltrated every corner of the state.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Ramadan Timings

Iftar Thursday..... 18:04
Imsak Friday..... 04:22

Newswatch

CAIRO: Egypt and Qatar called on Wednesday for a political settlement in the Middle East via establishing an independent Palestinian state as a final solution to avoid instability and ensure regional security.

Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a statement this came in a phone conversation between Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdulatty and Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.

It added that the two official called for bringing back a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip according to the three-stages Jan 19 agreement, which ensured the release of all hostages, allowing humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip, and further talks for stability in the region. (KUNA)

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called on the guarantors of the ceasefire agreement to pressure Israeli occupation into adhering to its commitments, emphasizing that their credibility depends on ensuring the deal's implementation.

President Aoun remarks came during his meeting with the French presidential envoy Jean-Yves Le Drian on Wednesday, discussing security concerns along the Lebanese-Syrian border. (KUNA)

3 Video clip leads to arrest of drifters endangering lives



8 Agility Global PLC reports FY 2024 net profit of \$128 mln



9 AlShamlan: Favorable economic laws drive growth in capital expenditure & major development plans

Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:26	Asr	15:23
Sunrise ..	05:46	Maghrib ..	18:03
Zohr	11:54	Isha	19:20

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Rather hot with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h.

By Night: Rather cold with light

Weather

to moderate southeasterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	27	16
Kuwait Airport	28	10
Abdaly	28	11

Bubyan	28	12
Jahra	27	15
Failaka Island	26	16
Salmiyah	25	18
Ahmadi	25	13
Jal Aliyah	27	13
Nuwaisib	26	15



HH the Amir



HH the Crown Prince



HH the PM

Amir congratulates Bangladesh President on their National Day

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Mohammad Shahabuddin, on his country's Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished the President good health and well-being, and wished Bangladesh and its friendly people more progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sa-

bah also sent a cable of congratulations to President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Mohammad Shahabuddin, on his country's Independence day.

In the cable, His Highness the Crown Prince wished the President good health and well-being.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah then sent a cable of congratulations to President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Mohammad Shahabuddin on his country's Independence Day.

10,600 men, women flock to Grand Mosque on 26th night

Worshippers seek Allah's forgiveness and mercy

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: People continued their night prayers at the mosques on the 26th night of the holy month of Ramadan imploring Almighty Allah to forgive their sins, bestow abundance upon them, and grant them forgiveness and mercy.

They also asked Allah to protect Kuwait, its Amir and its people from all harm and to perpetuate the blessings of security and safety for the entire nation.

The halls of the Grand Mosque were filled with worshippers who started arriving since the evening hours opting to perform the night prayer behind a group of imams with melodious voices, carefully selected by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs



Photo by Mohammad Morsi
O, Allah, please forgive us: Worshippers packed like sardines in one of the mosques south of Kuwait City on the 25th night of holy month of Ramadan.

to create an atmosphere of faith that fosters humility and tranquility.

The Grand Mosque administration announced that the number of worshippers who performed the blessed night prayer exceeded 10,600 -- 6,600 men and 4,000 women -- who were committed to perform the prayer in an atmosphere of tranquility and peace.

Sheikh Omar Al-Damkhi led

the worshippers in the first rak'ahs (prayer units), reciting clear verses that touched hearts and moved souls. Sheikh Mishary Al-Afasy completed the final rak'ahs with his mellow voice on this blessed night.

Between the rak'ahs, Sheikh Dr. Bader Al-Hajraf delivered a spiritual speech: discussing the importance of optimism in the life of a Muslim. He stressed that despair

and hopelessness have no place in the heart of a believer who trusts in Allah's mercy.

He explained that the Almighty opened the doors of hope to His servants and made repentance open to all who turn to Him. "Therefore, a person should not surrender to distress or frustration, regardless of the circumstances," he added.

He pointed out that optimism is the characteristic of the prophets and righteous people, as they faced trials and tribulations with hearts filled with certainty that relief from Allah was near.

He said Prophet Mohammad was the most optimistic of people, even in the most difficult situation. "He constantly brought good tidings to his companions, instilling in them hope and confidence in Allah's victory. This is what Muslims should emulate in their lives," he asserted.

He called on worshippers to adhere to supplication, ask for forgiveness, believe that ease comes after hardship, and that Almighty Allah does not let down those who turn to Him sincerely and faithfully.

Educational districts complaints on e-platforms keep on piling up

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The average number of complaints submitted through the 'Sahel' and 'Tawasul' platforms in various educational districts exceeded 1,500 per education district.

This number increases daily, putting more pressure on the departments dealing with such a massive volume of complaints that include administrative, educational and personal issues.

Sources from the educational sector revealed that most of the complaints are from schools, many of which are related to disputes within the workplace, particularly between female employees. "This transforms some personal disputes into formal complaints requiring administrative intervention," sources added.

Sources said the department directors in the educational districts open the 'Tawasul' platform through the Kuwait Mobile app daily in order to retrieve com-

plaints and classify them according to importance. Sources disclosed some cases are dealt with in the educational district; while others are submitted to the Education Ministry, particularly those related to promotions or financial and administrative rights.

Sources confirmed that some educational districts formed special task forces to handle complaints more efficiently. "This ensures prompt response to comments and resolves issues in schools and among staff. It aims to reduce pressure on departments dealing with the complaints," sources revealed.

Sources indicated that the educational districts are continuously monitoring these complaints and are keen on developing mechanisms for handling the complaints.

Sources affirmed this move will strengthen communication between educational administrations and field workers; while ensuring that non-essential complaints do not become an obstacle to work in the educational districts.

Non-stop medical care eyed for citizens, residents

47 health clinics to stay open during Eid holidays: MoH

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Ministry of Health has announced a comprehensive operational plan for primary healthcare centers during the Eid Al-Fitr holiday in 2025. The plan includes the operation of 47 health centers in various regions of the country for ensuring continuous healthcare services around the clock and providing medical care to both citizens and residents without interruption throughout the holiday, reports Al-Anba daily.

The ministry explained that the plan includes a large number of centers operating 24 hours a day, while

others will operate from 7:00 am until midnight. Also, one center will operate from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm to meet the diverse needs of patients and reduce pressure on emergency departments in hospitals.

In the Capital Health Zone, six centers will be operational, including Ali Sabah Al-Salem Center in Sulaibikhat, Abdulrahman Al-Zaid Center in Khaitan, and Abdullah Al-Abd Al-Hadi Center in Granada, all of which will operate around the clock. Three additional centers will operate from 7:00 am to midnight, which are Hassan Al-Dehani Cen-

ter in Adailiya, Abdulaziz Hussein Center in Mishref, and Abdullah Al-Othman Center in Mirqab.

In the Hawally Health Zone, six centers will be operational, including Rumaithiya and Salwa specialized centers, which will operate 24 hours a day. The remaining centers, such as West Salmiya, West Salwa, West Mishref, and Mahmoud Haji Haidar Center in Bayan will operate until midnight.

In the Farwaniya Health Zone, nine centers will be operational, including the South Firdous, West Andalus, and Ardiya centers, which

will provide services throughout the day. Also, Khaitan, Abdullah Mubarak, South Ardiya, South Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Sabah Al-Nasser, and Al-Raqi centers will operate until midnight.

The Ahmadi Health Zone will have the largest number of centers operating during the holiday, with a total of 12 centers, all functioning 24 hours a day. These include the West Sabahiya, Sabah Al-Ahmad A, Fahahel, Wafra, Al-Egaila, Masayel, Al-Zohor, Ahmadi, Fintas, Industrial Ports, South Sabahiya, and the Women's Center in Ali Sabah Al-Salem.

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True national identity only guarantees country's unity

"THE words that affirmed Kuwait's return to its people and its original inhabitants undoubtedly came directly from the leader of decisiveness, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In his speech on the special occasion of the last ten days of Ramadan, he emphasized that national unity cannot be achieved without consolidating national identity until Kuwait returns to its original inhabitants," columnist **Tariq Idris** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.



Tariq Idris

"This is the noble will of the Amir of decisiveness and the new era. He supported national identity and paved the way for Kuwait's return to the correct democratic path, ensuring that the aspirations of the nation and its people are fulfilled.

"This positive national outlook was clearly evident in the inspiring speech delivered by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in which he announced the strengthening of national identity and the removal of suspicions, so that, with God's help, we may consolidate our national unity and democratic authenticity.

"Undoubtedly, this message reflected the goals, aspirations, and approach of the new era and its wise leadership. Therefore, we must all embrace the principles of this noble national initiative, which the Leader of Resolve sought to consolidate by preserving our national identity without compromise.

"From this moment on, we must work in accordance with this new vision of political leadership to protect our national identity and unity in their truest form. This vision echoes Amir's words in promising to return Kuwait to its authentic people, and practicing democracy rooted in principles established by statesmen with their genuine national values. This pledge was made by the people of Kuwait, under Amir Sabah the First, when they pledged their loyalty, obedience, and defense of Kuwait. Successive generations of Kuwaitis have upheld this firm covenant.

"His Highness the Amir's speech renews the ruler's confidence in these authentic people, who have honored the trust placed upon them by their ancestors and rulers, and strengthens their eternal motto: "Kuwait is one family, with a strong national leadership and a genuine people".

"Amir's speech also presented a clear vision for Kuwait's future. I hope it will be included in school curricula so that we can instill a spirit of optimism, pride, and appreciation for the wise leadership that has firmly embedded unity and national identity in our hearts. I ask Allah to help us carry this sincere message, just as our ancestors and fathers, rulers and ruled, carried it 400 years ago, and preserve it from tampering so that we, in turn, can pass it on to future generations.

"This page, God willing, will remain firmly in our hearts as a part of the new era under the leadership of His Highness the Amir of Resolution, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the faithful Crown Prince, and their wise government.

"May Allah protect our Kuwait, our leadership, and our people from all harm and misfortune, and may Kuwait, its rulers and people, and all who live in it, remain well, healthy, and prosperous every year."

Also:

"At a time clashes began on the border between Israeli forces and unknown individuals on the Lebanese side, the US envoy to the Middle East is spreading information that Lebanon may sign a peace agreement with Israel and Syria," Journalist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"One might consider the news of normalization to be eye-catching, but the reality is not so. Lebanon and Syria share borders with Israel, and the border is a trilateral issue that concerns all of them.

"There are disputed or different border villages between Syria and Lebanon, as well as between Lebanon and Israel. Perhaps, the issue of villages and borders is the most contentious issue between the three countries. Lebanon has always claimed to be the last Arab country to normalize relations with Israel, but in recent months, things have not been the same as they were years ago.

"Hezbollah used to be a barrier to any agreement or normalization. After the assassination of Commander Hassan Nasrallah and his deputy Hashem Al-Moussawi, there is no alternative to fill the void left by the two slain leaders. As for Naim Qassem, in my opinion, he is merely a front for peacemaking, outside of the bravado and bickering that Nasrallah was known for.

"As for the party's representative and guardian, Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, who is in his 80s, we must not remove him from his civilian role as a political -- not military, revolutionary and resistance leader.

"The chaotic bickering that occurred a few days ago, and the party's declaration of non-responsibility confirm that someone care about the continuation of the situation on the border.

"Lebanon's path to peace is neither strange nor surprising. Newly elected President Joseph Aoun speaks more about peace than war. The reality, especially for the ordinary citizen struggling to find a livelihood for himself and his family, is that he will only strive for peace and security in a country exhausted by war.

"But what about Kuwait, which has shackled itself to a decision or law that is now a thing of the past and is considered obsolete by the statute of limitations, in a case neither of its making nor of its ability to resolve. As much as the people of the cause are increasing their dinars and dollars, we see those with religious inclinations leaning toward war and opposing normalization.

"These people may be driven more by religious considerations than by war, bloodshed, victims and losses -- as the case today in Gaza, whose people have lost and gained neither grapes nor watermelons. Instead, they are threatened with expulsion from Gaza and the establishment of Trump's tourist State.

"Lebanon and Syria are the last brave ones who will go for peace, not as a defeat, but as a victory for national interests, with shared borders, shared oil fields; and most importantly, peace and national security.

"Doesn't all of this deserve peace for people who have suffered for more than half a century from wars, both internal and external, as well as displacement and migration?"

"The question is: Will Kuwait remain outside the fold, bound by its own handiwork?"



Brigadier General Ahmad Nasser Abdullah and a team of officers during their visit to Capital fire station.



KFF use such buggies in case of inaccessible spots at the blaze site. KFF photos

KFF ensures safety of mosques, places of worship

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Based on the directives of Chief of Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi, the Director of the Central Operations Department Brigadier General Ahmad Nasser Abdullah and a team of officers responsible for the security of mosques and places of worship conducted an

inspection tour of the fire stations in all governorates.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the aim of the tour was to assess the preparedness and safety measures within and around places of worship to ensure the protection of worshippers during the last ten days of the holy month of

Ramadan.

This visit is part of the KFF's comprehensive plans, in collaboration with various government sectors, to ensure that buildings, facilities, mosques, and worshipping places meet safety and fire prevention standards, protect lives and properties, and uphold community security.

Continuous use of single cutting board can be harmful to health

Eating fish in Ramadan doesn't make one thirsty: expert

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Nutritionist **Nawal Al-Jazzaf** has warned against using cutting boards made from materials that degrade with frequent use because they can attract bacteria and microbes, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

This warning is part of an awareness campaign launched by the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), which provides tips for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Al-Jazzaf explained that cutting boards come in various materials such as wood, metal and compressed plastic. She recommended having a separate cutting board for each type of food and ensuring that frequent use does not cause the material to break down and harbor harmful microbes.

She also advised using cutting boards made from 18/10 stainless steel and cleaning them

with a solution of diluted chlorine or vinegar mixed with water.

In another part of the awareness campaign, Al-Jazzaf addressed the misconception some people have about eating fish during Ramadan, believing it makes one thirsty. She affirmed that fish has numerous health benefits, not only as a source of animal protein but also as one of the most easily digestible proteins suitable for all age groups, including children over one year old.

She clarified that many people reduce their fish consumption during Ramadan due to concerns about thirst. She recommended grilling fish as the best cooking method, while highlighting that fish is rich in Omega-3 fatty acids which are also found in other foods like

maize and squid. These nutrients help protect the heart from atherosclerosis, strengthen memory, and may prevent Alzheimer's and dementia, she added.

□ □ □

Mubarakiya fish shops shut: Head of the Mubarakiya Inspection Center at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Mohammad Ahmad Al-Kandari announced the closure of 11 fish shops in Mubarakiya under the Capital Inspection Department, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

He explained that the closure was due to the display of spoiled fish unfit for human consumption. The fish on display had deteriorated in color, shape, and smell.

Al-Kandari affirmed the commitment of PAFN to ensuring consumer safety, providing safe food, and holding accountable those who compromise food quality and cause harm to consumers.



Al-Jazzaf

Video clip leads to arrest of drifters endangering lives

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Traffic and Operations Sector of the Ministry of Interior arrested eight reckless drivers who

were captured in videos that are circulating on social media in which they were seen engaging in dangerous behavior on the

roads in various areas of Kuwait in a manner that posed a threat to their lives and the lives of others during the recent rainstorm in Kuwait, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The Ministry of Interior stated that the arrests were made based on the directives of Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef.

It explained that search and investigation operations began immediately after the videos were shared. The Security Control Department of the General Traffic Department arrested the reckless drivers by monitoring the

circulating videos or identifying them in the field while they engaged in reckless behavior on the roads. Legal measures

were taken against them, including impounding their vehicles for several months and referring them to the Central Prison after the necessary legal proceedings were filed.



Sheikh Fahad



Some of the drifters and their cars in police custody.



Marijuana packed in tea bags seized by airport customs. Mol photo

Marijuana found in tea bags; 2 held at airport

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Customs officers at Kuwait International Airport successfully intercepted an attempt to smuggle marijuana through flights arriving from African countries, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

The customs administration reported that inspectors became suspicious of the first passenger.

Upon searching their luggage, officers discovered tea bags filled with marijuana.

In a separate case, a second passenger was apprehended after customs officials found bags of marijuana cleverly concealed in his pants. Both individuals were handed over to the appropriate authorities for further investigation.

KFF retrieve body

Man meets fiery death in airport road mishap

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: An individual burnt to death in a traffic accident that occurred on Airport Road on Tuesday evening.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait Fire Force, Firefighters from Subhan Fire Station rushed to the location after receiving information that a vehicle burst into flames after colliding with another vehicle.

They extinguished the flames and handled the situation. The body of the deceased was handed over to the relevant authorities.

Man encounters fake lawsuit

'Never signed contract with company'

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: An investigator at a police station in the Capital has summoned the director of a contracting company -- an expatriate -- for questioning in connection with a forgery charge, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

A security source revealed that a man in his 50s filed a report after discovering that a lawsuit was filed against him. The lawsuit alleged that he failed to comply with the terms of a contract with a contracting company, valued at KD17,000. The man claimed that the company forged his signature on the contract, which he insisted he has no knowledge of.

When questioned about his relationship with the company, the man explained that he only contacted the company for construction work; but had never signed any contract with them.

The disputed contract has been forwarded to forensic experts for exami-

nation to verify the authenticity of the signature and confirm the validity of the man's claim.

□ □ □

Easy to get bike license: The official gazette 'Kuwait Alyoum' has published Minister of Interior's Resolution No. 348/2025, which amends some provisions of ministerial Resolution No. 81/1976, concerning the traffic law regulations to cancel the clause related to the conditions for issuing a motorcycle license, and make it unconditional, reports **Al-Jarida** daily.

Article 1 of the resolution removes Clause F in Article 87 of the ministerial Resolution No. 81/1976. Article 2 stipulates that the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior is responsible for implementing this resolution, which will take effect from the date of its publication in the official gazette.



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PAHW applications exceed available units

Expansion of Naeem Housing sought

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Municipal Council member Abdullah Al-Hathal Al-Enezi on Tuesday submitted a proposal to expand the site of the Naeem Housing Project (low-cost housing) to accommodate the number of applications submitted to the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW).

In the preamble to his proposal, Al-Enezi cited Law No. 33/2016 regard-

ing the Kuwait Municipality; while pointing out the current housing problem.

Al-Enezi said the project is located 45 kilometers from Kuwait City and 16 kilometers from Jahra, indicating that the proposed expansion of the housing area was previously built by the authority to replace Sulaibiya and Taima. He added the project targets several groups, primarily Kuwaiti women who meet the conditions stipulated in the housing welfare regulations.

He further clarified that "this proposal stems from the concern for public interest and the need to find solutions to the housing problems. After conducting a thorough research, it became clear that the number of female citizens who submitted a housing grant application to PAHW has reached 13,058. Since the number of housing units in the aforementioned project is only 9,800; it is not sufficient to meet the demand; hence, the need to expand it."

Al-Mishari calls for unified efforts in housing projects

Minister urges timely execution

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mishari stressed the need to unify efforts in implementing all services related to housing projects to ensure their completion with the highest sustainability standards and to accelerate the pace of implementation in compliance with royal directives.

Minister Al-Mishari made this statement in a press release on Tuesday following the first meeting of the government coordination committee tasked with overseeing the implementation of services related to housing projects. He emphasized the importance of supporting the state's financial sustainability while also fulfilling families' aspirations to live in cities with integrated services and the highest standards of quality of life.

He noted that the Council of Ministers is directly monitoring the work of agencies involved in housing projects and providing them with the necessary support to ensure they meet their obligations.

Al-Mishari underscored the importance of government agencies adhering to project timetables and performance indicators to ensure timely and efficient execution. He explained that an agency's efficiency is measured by its ability to adhere to the plans and schedules it has submitted.



KUNA photo Minister of Housing Abdullatif Al-Mishari and Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan during the first meeting of the government coordination committee to follow up on the implementation of services related to housing projects.

Similarly, Minister of Public Works and Chairperson of the Public Services Committee at the Cabinet, Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, highlighted the significance of joint government coordination among relevant authorities to eliminate any obstacles hindering the implementation of current and future housing projects.

Al-Mashaan pointed out that ministers conduct monthly reviews to monitor project progress and collaborate with the government coordination committee to submit reports to the Cabinet every three months.

12 classrooms to aid displaced students

Kuwait's Insan Charity opens Aisha Fakhro Education Center in Yemen

ADEN, March 26 (KUNA): Kuwait's Insan Charity Society inaugurated the Aisha Fakhro Primary and Secondary Education Center on Tuesday in Yemen's Marib Governorate as part of the Kuwait is by Your Side campaign in its 10th year. The center consists of 12 fully equipped classrooms.

The Kafel Development Foundation stated in a press release that the project was implemented in the Al-Wadi district of Marib Governorate, which is experiencing severe overcrowding due to thousands of displaced families. The initiative aims to ease pressure on other schools and provide a suitable learning environment.

The foundation added that the project includes 12 classrooms for primary and secondary education, two residential apartments, a mosque, a schoolyard, and all necessary furniture and accessories to ensure a proper educational setting.

Deputy Director of the Education Office in Marib, Abdulaziz Al-Bakri, expressed his gratitude to Kuwait for its generous support of the Yemeni people during the inauguration ceremony.

For his part, the Director General of the Planning and International Cooperation Office in Marib, Saleh Al-Saqqa, emphasized that this initiative



KUNA photo Aisha Fakhro Educational Center meets the needs of hundreds of displaced students in Yemen's Marib Governorate.

is a testament to Kuwait's qualitative educational projects. He highlighted Kuwait's role—through its institutions and people—in supporting infrastructure and development, ultimately benefiting Yemenis.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General of the Kafel Development Foundation, Mohammed Makharash, noted that this project is part of a series of

ambitious initiatives undertaken by Kuwait's Insan Charity Society to support the education sector across various Yemeni governorates.

Makharash further stated that the project represents a significant advancement in the region's educational system, helping to address school overcrowding and enhancing students' access to quality education.

Energy Ministry requests approval for GCCIA power import for summer prep

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has referred the request to sign a contract for importing electricity from the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) for the months of April and May to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for review, audit and approval; say sources who revealed the request was made on Monday.

Sources said the ministry is requesting electricity import from GCCIA during the abovementioned period despite the lower load rates due to the drop in temperatures.

Sources clarified this is to enable the ministry to perform the necessary maintenance on the generation units, ensure they are fully prepared to handle the loads of the coming summer, and address any production shortfalls that may result from increased demand.

Sources indicated that the ministry asked SAB to approve the import

of electrical energy from GCCIA for the months of March and April, but the approval was given on March 16 to sign a contract for the import of 300 megawatts for March only at a cost of \$10.814 million (equivalent to KD3.330 million).

For the month of April, SAB asked the ministry to re-submit the request to obtain its approval after estimating the required quantity according to the ministry's response dated March 6, provided the submission is done before starting the import.

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MoCI Assistant Undersecretary roles end

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel issued an administrative decision on Tuesday to terminate the assignments of assistant undersecretaries at the ministry, in a move aimed at introducing a new generation of efficient and young leaders, in line with the comprehensive development phase the ministry is currently undergoing, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the Ministry of Commerce and Industry explained that the decision aims to improve services and enhance the efficiency of the ministry's sectors. It was based on a comprehensive evaluation of the ministry's administrative and functional performance, and the need to inject new talent into the organizational structure.

Farwaniya Governor, PAAAFR officials discuss green development projects

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Governor of Farwaniya Sheikh Adhbi Al-Nasser Al-Adhbi Al-Sabah received in his office acting Director General of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Salem Al-Hai, and other senior officials Hamad Al-Hajji, Hamad Al-Khudair and Hamad Al-Dalak.



Farwaniya Governorate photo of Sheikh Adhbi Al-Nasser Al-Adhbi Al-Sabah with Salem Al-Hai, acting Director General PAAAFR, and other senior officials Hamad Al-Hajji, Hamad Al-Khudair and Hamad Al-Dalak.

During the meeting, the governor congratulated Al-Hai on his new position, wishing him success in his duties.

The officials discussed ways to coordinate efforts to achieve sustainable development; common issues related to developing agricultural services in the governorate, particularly those related to recreational and beautification, such as planting trees and plants along the roads

and in public squares; ways to overcome obstacles to the completion of all projects and plans anticipated by the residents of the governorate, especially in new areas; and protection of landscaping facilities from neglect.

The governor praised the tireless efforts of all officials at PAAAFR in developing and main-

taining landscapes. At the conclusion of the meeting, Al-Hai expressed his thanks and appreciation to Sheikh Adhbi Al-Nasser for the warm welcome and his continued support of the efforts of the authority; stressing that this cooperation contributes to improving the services provided to the residents of the governorate.

Non-Kuwaiti contracts end by March 2025

Kuwaitization policy in full swing

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) continues to implement the Kuwaitization policy in all government agencies, in accordance with Civil Service Council's Resolution No. 11/2017. As part of this policy, the contracts of non-Kuwaiti employees holding positions that are not rare will not be renewed, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to informed sources, this policy mandates that contracts for non-Kuwaiti employees in positions that are not rare will not be renewed after March 31, 2025. However, the number of such employees is limited, and their retention was intended to help qualify Kuwaiti nationals as part of a strategic plan to enhance national competencies in various fields.

Furthermore, Resolution No. 11/2017 covers job groups with 100% Kuwaitization and others with a rate ranging between 70 percent and 98 percent.

The job groups covered by 100% Kuwaitization are:

- Information systems and technology
- Maritime
- Arts, media, and public relations
- Development, administrative follow-up, and statistics
- Administrative support

The job groups with Kuwaitization rates ranging between 70 percent and 98 percent are:

- Criminal Evidence, Prevention, and Rescue: 98 percent
- Social Services, Education, and Sports: 97 percent
- Engineering: 97 percent
- Sciences: 95 percent
- Finance, Economics, and Commerce: 95 percent
- Law, Politics, and Islamic Affairs: 88 percent
- Crafts: 80 percent
- Services: 85 percent
- Livestock, Agriculture, and Aquatic Resources: 75 percent
- Teaching, Education, and Training: 70 percent

Meanwhile, for an employee who has shifted to the evening shift to return to the morning shift, one condition must be met - approval from the relevant government agency.

If the employee does not obtain this approval, they will be required to continue working the evening shift for at least seven consecutive months. This time period is designed to benefit the employee by ensuring they receive the necessary performance report.

The sources indicated that the number of employees wishing to return from the evening shift to the morning shift is minimal, if not zero, as all employees who transitioned to the evening shift did so voluntarily, in line with their personal circumstances.

Move likely to face swift challenges

President Trump signs sweeping executive action to overhaul elections in US

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): US President Donald Trump has signed a sweeping executive action to overhaul elections in the US, including requiring documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote in federal elections and demanding that all ballots be received by Election Day.

The order says the US has failed "to enforce basic and necessary election protections" and calls on states to work with federal agencies to share voter lists and prosecute election crimes. It threatens to pull federal funding from states where election officials don't comply.

The move, which is likely to face swift challenges because states have broad authority to set their own election rules, is consistent with Trump's long history of railing against election processes. He often claims elections are being rigged, even before the results are known, and has waged battles against certain voting methods since he lost the 2020 election to Democrat Joe Biden and falsely blamed it on widespread fraud.

Trump has focused particularly on mail voting, arguing without evidence that it's insecure and invites fraud even as he has shifted his position on the issue given its popularity with voters, including Republicans. While fraud

occurs, it's rare, limited in scope and gets prosecuted.

The order's documentary proof of citizenship requirement signals that the president is not waiting for congressional Republicans to pass their long-anticipated Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act, or SAVE Act, which has aimed to do the same thing.

Republicans have defended that measure as necessary to restore public confidence in elections. Voting in federal elections by noncitizens is already illegal and can result in felony charges and deportation.

Voting rights groups have expressed concerns that the requirement could disenfranchise people. An estimated 9% of U.S. citizens of voting age, or 21.3 million people, do not have proof of citizenship readily available, according to a 2023 report by the Brennan Center for Justice and other groups.

There are also concerns that married women who have changed their names will encounter trouble when trying to register because their birth certificates list their maiden names. Such hiccups happened in recent town elections in New Hampshire, which has a new state law requiring proof of citizenship to register to vote.



Supervisor of the Checklist for the State of New Hampshire Leslie Dombroski, (left), registers Elise Collins, 18, to vote in Derry, NH on March 11. (AP)

Trump's order directs federal agencies including the Department of Homeland Security, the Social Security Administration and the State Department to share with election officials federal data that could help them identify noncitizens on their rolls.

It also says the attorney general should "prioritize enforcement of federal election integrity laws" in states that don't share information about suspected election crimes with the federal government.

The order aims to require votes to

be "cast and received" by Election Day and says federal funding should be conditional on state compliance. Currently, 18 states and Puerto Rico accept mailed ballots received after Election Day as long as they are postmarked on or before that date, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Trump's order is likely to face legal challenges, given that the Constitution gives authority over elections to the states. While Congress has the power to regulate voting - and has done so to pass such laws as the Voting Rights Act - the Constitution makes clear that states have primary authority to set the "times, places and manner" for elections.

Colorado's Democratic secretary of state, Jena Griswold, called the order an "unlawful" weaponization of the federal government and said Trump is "trying to make it harder for voters to fight back at the ballot box."

Democratic Rep. Joe Morelle of New York, the ranking member of the House committee that oversees elections, said the executive order "is not just misguided - it is immoral and illegal."

At least one Democratic attorney on Tuesday threatened legal action. Marc Elias, who has been the subject of

Trump's ire, said in a social media post: "This will not stand. We will sue."

The executive branch does have some authority over elections, said Justin Levitt, a constitutional law expert and former White House senior policy adviser during the Biden administration. He said some federal agencies provide election support, including the US Election Assistance Commission, which distributes federal grant money to states and runs a voluntary certification program for voting systems. The US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency helps election officials protect their systems.

Former President Biden issued an executive order in 2021 directing federal agencies to take steps to boost voter registration, which drew complaints from Republicans who called it federal overreach. Trump has rescinded that order.

Trump's order calls on the Election Assistance Commission to amend voting system guidelines to protect election integrity, including guidance that voting systems should not use a ballot that uses a barcode or QR code in the vote counting process. It said the commission should condition the funding it distributes to states on those new guidelines.

Dems keep majority control of Pennsylvania House after poll

HARRISBURG, Pa., March 26, (AP): Democrat **Dan Goughnour** handily won a special election in western Pennsylvania on Tuesday, keeping majority control of the state House in his party's hands by a single seat.

Goughnour beat Republican Chuck Davis in a district in the Mon Valley region southeast of Pittsburgh, winning a seat that became vacant in January with the death of Democratic state Rep. Matthew Gergely.

In a second legislative special election Tuesday, in a suburban and farming part of Lancaster County, Democrat James Andrew Malone, the mayor of 4,500-population East Petersburg, was clinging to a narrow lead over Republican Lancaster County Commissioner Josh Parsons. A Democratic flip of that district, if it occurs, would be a major upset but would not alter Republican control of the state Senate.

As of late Tuesday, the race was too early to call. With 99% of the estimated vote counted, Malone led Parsons by 482 votes, or 0.89% of nearly 54,000 ballots cast, with an unknown number of provisional ballots left to be counted.

Parsons posted on social media late Tuesday that he was "disappointed in the numbers" and that "it appears we will come up a little short."

Malone told WGAL-TV the national political environment was a factor.

"Everyday voters are not liking what they're seeing in the federal level. They don't like the chaos," Malone said.

No matter the result, the Senate will remain comfortably in Republican control, and the chief executive is Gov. Josh Shapiro, a rising star among Democrats who is seen as a potential 2028 presidential candidate. The partisan divide and power sharing in Harrisburg - a dynamic that has prevailed for much of the past two decades - has prevented major changes in state law.

After the House race was called, Goughnour said, "It's overwhelming, but I feel good." He said his goal was to "maintain common sense in Harrisburg" and give his district a strong voice.



Goughnour

'Ukraine ready to observe ceasefire against energy targets'

US says it brokered deal to end fighting in Black Sea

KYIV, Ukraine, March 26, (AP): Ukraine is ready to proceed with a ceasefire prohibiting attacks on energy infrastructure, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, in line with a deal that was brokered by the United States during three days of negotiations with Ukrainian and Russian officials in the Saudi capital.

Speaking in a video address late Tuesday, Zelenskyy said Ukraine had agreed with US negotiators "that a ceasefire for energy infrastructure can start today." But, he warned, any strikes on Ukraine's energy facilities by Moscow would draw "strong retaliation."

The comments underscored the tenuous agreements that came out of the three days of separate US-Ukrainian and US-Russian talks in Riyadh. Washington said it had agreed with the warring parties to implement a pause on attacks on energy infrastructure as well as taking steps to ensure safe navigation for ships in the Black Sea.

Those talks were part of a broader effort by President Donald Trump's administration toward a limited, 30-day ceasefire that Moscow and Kyiv agreed to in principle last week, but has thus far failed to materialize as both sides continue to launch drone and rocket attacks against the other.

While Zelenskyy on Tuesday



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks during a briefing in Kyiv, Ukraine on March 25. (AP)

thanked the US for its efforts to strike an agreement, questions remained over some key details, and a comprehensive peace deal to end the three-year war still looked distant.

On Tuesday, the White House said in separate statements that the sides had "agreed to ensure safe navigation, eliminate the use of force, and prevent the use of commercial vessels for military purposes in the Black Sea."

Details of the prospective deal were not released, but it appeared to mark another attempt to ensure safe Black Sea shipping after a 2022 agreement that was brokered by the U.N. and Turkey but halted by Russia the next year.

After the White House issued its statement Tuesday, the Kremlin warned that a potential Black Sea deal could only be implemented after sanctions against the Russian Agricultural

Bank and other financial organizations involved in food and fertilizer trade are lifted and their access to the SWIFT system of international payments is ensured.

Zelenskyy on Tuesday evening reacted to those demands, casting them as an example of Moscow "manipulating, twisting agreements, and lying" about the terms of the agreement.

"There are absolutely clear statements that have been published by the White House, everyone can see what is stated there," Zelenskyy said. "And there is something that the Kremlin is lying about again: that supposedly the (ceasefire) in the Black Sea depends on the issue of sanctions."

In an apparent reference to Moscow's demands, the White House said Tuesday the U.S. "will help restore Russia's access to the world market for agricultural and fertilizer exports, lower maritime insurance costs, and enhance access to ports and payment systems for such transactions."

When asked about when Washington might help Moscow achieve those ambitions, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday that contacts between Russia and the US "continue quite intensively," and that authorities are "satisfied with how pragmatic, constructive and productive our dialogue is."

Change in itinerary for JD Vance brings cautious relief for Greenland, Denmark

WASHINGTON, March 26, (AP): Greenland and Denmark appeared cautiously relieved early Wednesday by the news that US Vice President JD Vance and his wife are changing their itinerary for their visit to Greenland Friday, reducing the likelihood that they will cross paths with residents angered by the Trump administration's attempts to annex the vast Arctic island, a semi-autonomous Danish territory.

The couple will now visit the US Space Force outpost at Pituffik, on the

northwest coast of Greenland, instead of Usha Vance's previously announced solo trip to the Avannaata Qimussersu dogsl race in Sisimiut.

President Donald Trump irked much of Europe by suggesting that the United States should in some form control the self-governing, mineral-rich territory of Denmark, a US ally and NATO member. As the nautical gateway to the Arctic and North Atlantic approaches to North America, Greenland has broader strategic value

as both China and Russia seek access to its waterways and natural resources.

The vice president's decision to visit a US military base in Greenland has removed the risk of violating potential diplomatic taboos by sending a delegation to another country without an official invitation. Yet Vance has also criticized longstanding European allies for relying on military support from the United States, openly antagonizing partners in ways that have generated concerns about the reliability of the US.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen told Danish broadcaster DR Wednesday that the Vances' updated travel plans are a good thing. The minister said the change was a de-escalation, even as he said the Americans are treating it as the opposite, with Vance suggesting in an online video that global security is at stake.

Rasmus Jarlov, a Danish lawmaker and spokesperson on Greenlandic Affairs for the Conservatives, wrote on X that the new schedule means the Vances will avoid any confrontations with Greenlanders. Jarlov noted that, after all, a vice president visiting an American military base is not controversial.

Vance is allowed to visit the space base, said Marc Jacobsen, a professor at the Royal Danish Defense College, because of a 1951 agreement between Denmark and the U.S. regarding the defense of Greenland.



Indonesia's Foreign Minister Sugiono, (left), sits with France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot, right, during their bilateral meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia on March 26. (AP)

France, Indonesia vow to boost safety in Indo-Pacific

France and Indonesia's top diplomats inked Wednesday a new maritime security project aiming "to ensure peace and safety" at sea in the Indo-Pacific region.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot's visit to Jakarta, his second stop in his four-day Asia tour after Singapore, comes amid ongoing trade tensions between the European Union and Beijing.

He told reporters on Wednesday that the Indo-Pacific Port Security

Project "is close to my heart," promising France's support.

Neither he nor his Indonesian counterpart Sugiono shared what the project will entail.

Earlier this month, during a discussion of the project at the Ottawa Conference on Security and Defence, Indonesia's naval chief of staff, Admiral Muhammad Ali, said it would address various maritime security challenges, including piracy, terrorism, and illegal activities at sea, and would likely involve col-

laboration among countries in the Indo-Pacific.

Sugiono, who like many Indonesians uses a single name, said the "maritime collaboration is important to realize a stable, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific."

Barrot said the project will support Indonesia as the world's largest archipelago nation with more than 17,000 islands, with a focus on two Indonesian ports in Jakarta and Surabaya cities "in their sustainability and security." (AP)



US Vice President JD Vance, (in foreground at right), speaks during a cabinet meeting at the White House in Washington on March 24. (AP)

Authoritarian leader of Belarus sworn for 7th term, tells critics 'you have no future'

TALLINN, Estonia, March 26, (AP): Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko was sworn in Tuesday to a seventh term, and he mocked those who derided him as "Europe's last dictator" by saying his country has more democracy "than those who cast themselves as its models."

"Half of the world is dreaming about our 'dictatorship,' the dictatorship of real business and interests of our people," Lukashenko, 70, said in his inauguration speech at the Independence Palace in the capital of Minsk.

Hundreds of opposition supporters living abroad held anti-Lukashenko rallies Tuesday to mark the anniversary of Belarus' short-lived independence in 1918 following the collapse of the Russian Empire.

Lukashenko marked three decades in power last year, and his political opponents have denounced the tightly orchestrated Jan. 26 election as a farce. The Belarus Central Election Commis-

sion declared he won with nearly 87% of the vote after a campaign in which four token challengers on the ballot all praised his rule.

Opposition members have been imprisoned or exiled abroad by Lukashenko's unrelenting crackdown on dissent and free speech.



In this photo released by Belarus' Presidential Press Service, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko takes his oath of office during his inauguration ceremony at the Palace of the Independence in Minsk, Belarus on March 25. (AP)

Russia convicts 23 Ukrainians

MOSCOW, March 26, (AP): Russia on Wednesday convicted 23 captured Ukrainians on terrorism charges stemming from the fighting in Ukraine in a trial that Kyiv denounced as a sham and a violation of international law.

The defendants included 14 current or former fighters of the elite Azov brigade, which Russia designated a terrorist group, and nine women and one man who worked as cooks or support personnel, according to Russian media reports and rights activists. Twelve defendants were not in court - 11 had returned to Ukraine in two prisoner exchanges and were convicted in absentia. One more died in custody last year, and the case against him had been closed.



Lawyers of Ukrainians captured by Russia during hostilities in Ukraine sit in front of the defendant's cage during a hearing at the Southern District Military Court in Rostov-on-Don, Russia on March 26. (AP)

In an interview with The Banker Magazine

AlShamlan: Favorable economic laws drive growth in capital expenditure & major development plans

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, **Khaled Yousef AlShamlan** said that rooted in genuine economic drivers, Kuwait Finance House Group's sustainable financial growth stems from its diversified activities, and the innovative products and services. KFH Group's strategic positioning in key regional and global markets provides a robust platform for high-value profit streams. The Group's presence in Kuwait, Bahrain, the UK, Egypt, Germany, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia is enhanced by a strategy of integration and harmony, which optimizes the ability to generate profits from diverse market performance.

It serves to note that KFH recorded strong financial performance during 2024 where it reported historic net profit of KD 601.8 million, which is the highest in the Kuwaiti banking sector. Net financing income reached around KD 1.15 billion; an increase of nearly 18.7%. Total operating income reached over KD 1.6 billion, an increase of 11.6%. Net operating income reached over KD 1 billion, an increase of 9%. KFH tops all Banks and all listed companies on Boursa Kuwait with a market capitalization of over KD 13 billion.

Supportive economic regulations

In an interview with The Banker Magazine, AlShamlan added that the Gulf Cooperation Council's economic upswing, fueled by increased capital expenditure and large-scale projects, will undoubtedly drive expansion in financing portfolios and boost returns, while favorable discount rate movements will further stimulate financing.

Financing and Liquidity Law

AlShamlan emphasized that positive developments in Kuwait's economic regulation strengthen the overall economy. He noted that the Financing and Liquidity Law (Public Debt) directly impacts the economy and the banking sector by enhancing financial stability and increasing confidence among both local and international investors and creditors. This law, which grants the government to

issue up to KD 30 billion in debt instruments over a 50-year period, enables the government to tap local and international capital markets.

He explained that this will improve the government's ability to meet its future financial obligations, ensuring sustainable public spending and supporting the state's development plans through investments in infrastructure, construction, and value-added projects. This will positively influence Kuwaiti banks, improving their liquidity management and fostering general economic development.

Mortgage law

AlShamlan highlighted the importance of the upcoming mortgage law, even though its specifics remain undisclosed. He explained it will introduce new financing options to improve liquidity and, as previously announced, will be part of a broader legislative package – including the Real Estate Developer Law – designed to address the private housing shortage. "When finalized, the new mortgage law would positively impact the banking sector in general."

Tam Digital Bank

AlShamlan said that KFH is leveraging cutting-edge technologies like robotics and AI to streamline back-office operations, utilizing big data analytics for informed business decisions. These advancements showcase KFH's commitment to harnessing frontier and emerging technologies for comprehensive digital transformation.

"tam Bank is part of our offerings. It is the first Sharia-compliant digital bank in Kuwait. The core vision and strategy of tam is revolving around the concept of "Beyond Banking" by mixing banking services and social media experience within the same application," he added. "Our success in digital innovation can be measured by the reach and impact of our services and the expansion of our market share and the value to our customers. Our advanced and sophisticated technological infrastructure supports the implementation of such initiatives, both within the Kuwaiti market and across other markets where the Group



Khaled Yousef AlShamlan

operates."

KFH Egypt

Meanwhile, AlShamlan said: "The Egyptian market offers a range of Islamic banking products and investment structures. However, we see a continued demand for the development and innovation of Sharia-compliant products across various sectors in Egypt, including retail, corporate, and SMEs. Our top priority in Egypt is to meet this demand and increase our customer base by offering innovative Sharia-compliant financial products and services, fostering sustainable growth and enhancing customer experience. "Moreover, the presence of KFH, the largest Islamic bank in Kuwait, in the Egyptian market will definitely add value to the customers and to the banking industry as a whole," he explained.

Green Sukuk

"Sustainability and ESG considerations have become increasingly central to KFH's operations. We in KFH imbedded ESG factors into our core strategies and decision-making processes. Green Sukuk are poised to shape the future of Islamic finance," AlShamlan highlighted. "KFH intends to actively contribute to the green Sukuk market's development by promoting their adoption as a key financing instrument. Is-



KFH Headquarters.

suer decisions are pivotal in defining the nature of these Sukuk, making it crucial for companies and governments to prioritize them as a primary financing instrument," he revealed.

"Building on its leadership and strong performance in the Sukuk sector, KFH, through its investment arm KFH Capital, participated in and arranged several Sukuk issuances. Notably, a growing portion of these were green Sukuk, demonstrating significant progress towards sustainable financing," AlShamlan concluded.

Bank announces holiday closures, branch timings for Eid

ABK extends Eid greetings to Kuwait's leadership and people

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) extends its greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, as well as the government, people, and residents of Kuwait on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr, hoping it bestows an abundance of blessings.

ABK disclosed that its branches will be

closed from Sunday, 30 March 2025 till Tuesday, 1 April 2025 to resume operations on Wednesday, 2 April 2025, if Eid begins on Sunday, March 30 2025.

If the Eid begins on Monday, March 31 2025, the bank will be closed from Sunday, March 30, 2025, until Wednesday, 2 April 2025 to resume operations on Thursday, 3 April 2025. Except Ministry Complex and Liberation Tower branches.

During this time, ABK's branch in Al Khiran Mall will be open to serve customers from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The Bank has also confirmed its full operational readiness to serve customers 24/7 via its various digital platforms throughout the holiday. This includes Online Banking via eahli.com, Mobile Banking through the ABK app, as well as the Bank's call center Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 and its ATM network.



ABK extends Eid Al-Fitr greetings.

Burgan Bank shares travel safety tips for secure banking during Eid

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: For the fifth consecutive year, Burgan Bank upholds its committed support for the "Let's Be Aware" (Diraya) financial literacy and banking awareness campaign, launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) with the support of Kuwaiti banks. As part of its active contribution to the campaign during the festive season of Eid Al-Fitr, the Bank published a series of awareness tips across its social channels and website, underscoring the shared responsibility of achieving the highest degrees of banking safety, especially while traveling.

The Bank's latest awareness campaign covered a wide range of tips for travelers on how to use their bank cards securely while enjoying the exclusive benefits that Burgan offers its various customer segments. The campaign also included vital warnings about the risks of falling victim to scamming attempts as a result of not following the safety precautions.

On this note, **Ms. Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah**, Senior Manager – Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank, said: "The travel season is always met with great enthusiasm for all the fun and memorable experiences it promises. Just as many travelers go to extra lengths to plan the details of their trips with delicate care, it is equally important to take all safety measures that guarantee secure overseas transactions. Our latest Diraya campaign was designed to ensure that our customers and community members are updated with all the precautionary measures they need during their travels abroad."

Among the first tips the campaign underscored was the importance of downloading the Burgan Mobile application and activating the SMS no-



Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager – Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank.

tifications service, which instantly updates the customers on their card transactions. In addition, customers were advised to memorize or save their passwords and PINs separately from bank cards or mobile phones and not to share them with anyone.

The campaign also highlighted the danger of sharing the one-time password (OTP), confirming that the Bank representatives would never ask customers to reveal any bank-related information or personal data, such as the username, password, or bank card information via email, SMS, WhatsApp, or phone.

As for securing bank accounts from the danger of being hacked, Burgan strongly advised customers to refrain from connecting to public Wi-Fi networks or signing in to their bank accounts from public devices, which can pose a great security risk. The Bank also advised customers to check their bank cards' expiry date and credit limit before traveling. Furthermore, customers were recommended to pay in the



Diraya logo

travel destination's local currency during their trips abroad.

Other fraud risks that customers were cautioned about included checking for any foreign devices attached to ATMs and covering the keypad while inserting their PIN. In case of facing any trouble, the Bank advised customers to contact the Burgan customer service call center immediately.

Upon returning from their travels, Burgan Bank advised customers to change their bank card PIN and thoroughly check that their card spending activity matches their receipts, urging them to report any discrepancies or unfamiliar transactions found.

It serves to note that Burgan Bank's efforts to spread vital financial literacy awareness tips on its social media accounts align with its comprehensive social responsibility program. In addition to its year-long awareness campaign, the Bank continues to fortify its data protection and cybersecurity systems, guaranteeing top protection for the customers' assets against breach or theft.

Bank resumes normal operations on April 2

Warba Bank ensures 24/7 banking services during Eid Al-Fitr holiday

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: On the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr, Warba Bank reaffirms its commitment to serving its valued customers by continuing to offer banking services throughout the official holiday period, from Sunday, March 30, to Tuesday, April 1, 2025. Services will be available 24/7 at the bank's branch at Kuwait International Airport T4, ensuring uninterrupted access to essential banking transactions within Kuwait.

In addition, Warba Bank's comprehensive suite of digital services remains fully operational through its mobile application and online platforms. Customers can also reach the bank's call center at 1825555 from within Kuwait, or +965 2228 8888 from abroad. For added convenience, WhatsApp support is available at +965 5162 5555, and customers may also stay updated through the bank's official social media channels.

Commenting on the occasion, **Abdullah Nasser Al-Shuail**, Senior Director of the Branches and Private Banking at Warba Bank, said: "We extend our warmest congratulations and wishes to His Highness the Emir, His Highness the Crown Prince, and the people and government of Kuwait on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr. We wish everyone a joyful and blessed Eid."

At Warba Bank, we remain committed to being close to our customers, even during official holi-



Abdullah Nasser Al-Shuail

days, by ensuring the availability of our digital and branch services. Our 24/7 airport branch ensures access for all, whether customers are traveling or staying in Kuwait during the holiday."

Al-Shuail added that Warba Bank customers enjoy a seamless digital banking experience that allows them to manage accounts, transfer funds, pay bills and complete other transactions with ease and security via the bank's app. He reaffirmed the bank's dedication to providing Sharia-compliant, innovative banking solutions that align with customer expectations.

In accordance with the circular issued by the Kuwait Banking Association, all Warba Bank branches will resume normal operations on Wednesday, April 2, 2025, and will be fully prepared to serve customers across all locations.

- 24/7 customer service available via the airport branch, call center, and WhatsApp
- Full access to electronic services through the website and mobile app

A Vision Centered on Customer Service

Warba Bank actively invests in programs and initiatives that contribute to preserving Kuwait's cultural heritage, fostering national pride, and strengthening community bonds. This approach reflects the bank's broader commitment to providing innovative, ethical, and inclusive banking services that resonate with the values of the society it serves.

It is worth noting that Warba Bank has achieved remarkable success in a short period, establishing itself as a leader in Islamic digital banking services. With one of the largest shareholder bases among local banks, Warba is positioned to serve all segments of society. This continued success reinforces Warba Bank's role as a trusted partner that integrates innovation with social responsibility to deliver top-tier financial products and services.

Books

Nunez, Enright among \$175K literary prize winners

Singer Cherry, medic Clarke vie for nonfiction award

LONDON, March 26, (AP): A moving memoir by Swedish singer Neneh Cherry and the gripping story of a heart transplant by British doctor Rachel Clarke are among finalists for the Women's Prize for Nonfiction, set up to help fix the gender imbalance in nonfiction publishing.

Cherry's "A Thousand Threads" and Clarke's "The Story of a Heart" are on a six-book shortlist for the 30,000 pound (\$39,000) prize.

The other contenders include two books about nature and the environment: "Raising Hare" by British writer Chloe Dalton, and "What the Wild Sea Can Be" by U.K. biologist Helen Scales.

Also on the list are "Agent Zo," British historian Clare Mulley's biography of a World War II resistance fighter, and China-born British lawmaker Yuan Yang's "Private Revolutions," which explores the lives of young women in modern-day China.

British journalist Kavita Puri, who is chairing the panel of judges, said the "eclectic" list includes "narratives that honor the natural

world and its bond with humanity, meticulously researched stories of women challenging power and books that illuminate complex subjects with authority, nuance and originality."

The award is a sister to the 30-year-old Women's Prize for Fiction and is open to female English-language writers from any country in any nonfiction genre. It was established last year in response to statistics showing men in the U.K. buy more nonfiction than women - and write more prize-winning nonfiction books.

The company Nielsen Book Research found in 2019 that while women bought 59% of all the books sold in the U.K., men accounted for just over half of adult nonfiction purchases.

The inaugural winner was Canadian author-activist Naomi Klein for "Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World."

Winners of both nonfiction and fiction prizes will be announced June 12 at a ceremony in London.

Meanwhile, National Book Award winner Sigrid Nunez and



Neneh Cherry poses for photographers upon arrival at the Burberry Spring Summer 2024 fashion show on Monday, Sept. 18, 2023 in London. (AP)

Booker Prize winner Anne Enright are among eight recipients of literary honors that include a \$175,000 cash award. The Windham-Campbell Prizes are given

each year for literary achievement and to enable writers to work independently.

Other winners announced Tuesday include legal scholar Patricia Williams, dramatists Roy Williams and Matilda Feyiyai Ibini, poets Anthony V. Capildeo and Tongo Eisen-Martin and essayist Rana Dasgupta.

Based at Yale University, the prizes were established in 1913 by the writer Donald Windham, who drew upon family stocks inherited from his late friend Sandy Campbell. Previous winners include Percival Everett, Ling Ma and Vivian Gornick.

Windham died in 2010.

"It was the late Donald Windham's wish in establishing these prizes to call attention to literary achievement and provide writers with time, space and freedom," prize director Michael Kelleher said in a statement. "This mission remains at the heart of the Windham-Campbell Prizes, and in today's world it is more vital than ever to recognize and support the crucial work and wisdom that writers share with us all."

Television



Chase Sui Wonders, (from left), Kathryn Hahn, Seth Rogen, Ike Barinholtz and Catherine O'Hara, cast members in the Apple TV+ series 'The Studio,' pose together on Thursday, March 20, in Los Angeles. (AP)

A satirical glimpse at Hollywood's power games

'The Studio' redefines modern Hollywood

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): The studio head has historically been seen as a fearsome and all-powerful figure, capable of ending a career with the snap of a finger or changing lives with an impulsive greenlight. In "The Studio," though, Seth Rogen's studio chief is more Selina Meyer ("Veep") than Louis B. Mayer.

As much as Rogen's Matt Remick, head of the fictional Continental Studios, sits in a sought-after seat of power, he's helpless against larger trends in the film industry. He wants to be making "Chinatown," but instead his most important task is getting a Kool-Aid movie off the ground. Bryan Cranston's Continental chief executive asks: Can he do this? "Oh, yeah!"

"As pitiful as it is, the conflict that my character lives and breathes every second of his life is one a lot of people with his job are facing in real life," Rogen says. "They love movies. They're also responsible to a very specific bottom line and they have to defend the choice they make to a board of people who don't give a s--- about movies."

"The Studio," the 10-episode series debuting Wednesday on Apple TV+, may be the definitive portrait of contemporary Hollywood. If movies like "Singin' in the Rain" and "The Player" captured the movie industry in full swagger, "The Studio" belongs to a more desperate chapter where even the all-powerful feel impotent. Studio heads, too, must tolerate conversations with people who haven't been to the movies in ages, but who loved "The Bear."

In a recent interview, Rogen and Goldberg, the longtime writing, producing and directing duo behind "Superbad," "Pineapple Express" and "This Is the End," said "The Studio" isn't quite a Hollywood postmortem, no matter how much Cranston's

CinemaCon-set finale verges toward "Weekend at Bernie's" territory.

"We're people who have been given great lives from this industry who, in general, though it's been very frustrating, have gotten to do what they want," Rogen says. "The show is very specifically written from the perspective of people that think things can work out in Hollywood."

There always is, and probably always will be, reason for optimism in Hollywood. The next big hit is perpetually just around the corner. But as audiences have become increasingly distracted by streaming, TikTok and video games, the film industry - or at least the major studio version of it - has turned into an IP-factory, hoping that franchises, superheroes and horror can sustain itself.

There's still time for a turnaround (there's that optimism again), but ticket sales in 2025 are down 6.9%

from last year and 38.6% from 2019, according to Comscore. The trends are worse if you look at tickets sold rather than dollars earned, since large-format screens beef up ticket prices.

More than that, though, "The Studio" - with a boatload of cameos of everyone from Martin Scorsese to Netflix chief Ted Sarandos to Zoe Kravitz - taps into a deeper demoralization. Flanked by a team of executives (Kathryn Hahn, Ike Barinholtz, Chase Sui Wonders), Remick finds himself - when not directly obstructing filmmakers he adores, like Scorsese and Sarah Polley - beset with questions over whether they've cast a racist Kool-Aid movie, if their "Smile" knockoff "Wink" can work or how to sell a movie with zombie diarrhea.

Matthew Belloni, the former editor of The Hollywood Reporter and founding partner of the media company Puck, appears as himself in the series.

He says that there's truth underlying almost every scene in the "The Studio," "for better and mostly worse."

"It captures the existential dread that seems to permeate every conversation," says Belloni. "People recognize that the glory days of Hollywood are over and the whole concept of what Hollywood even means is being redefined. And that has caused everybody in town to go completely crazy. This show captures that craziness very, very well."

"The Studio" isn't the first time Rogen and Goldberg have had a role in revealing the inner workings of a Hollywood studio. When their 2014 North Korean comedy "The Interview" led to the hacking of Sony Pictures, the studio's private correspondence landed on the internet.

"Without 'The Interview,' a show like this would have been much harder for us to write," Rogen says, chuckling. "We got to the CEO-level of problem."

Those problems ultimately included Sony Pictures co-chair Amy Pascal stepping down. Pascal, who has since been a highly successful producer, has remained a mentor to Rogen and Goldberg. In "The Studio," she's fictionalized by Catherine O'Hara as a savvy producer and Remick's former boss.

"One of the biggest misconceptions people seem to have with Hollywood is that it's run by people who only care about money and don't at all care about film," Rogen says.

"There's a few of those people," Goldberg chimes in.

"They are out there, for sure," continues Rogen. "But in general, the people who have ascended to Amy's level to run studios are people who love movies and can sit in a room with the greatest filmmakers on earth and have an on-the-level conversation about filmmaking."



Kenny Chesney performs during the iHeartRadio Music Awards, on Monday, March 17, 2025 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Record producer Tony Brown speaks at the Americana Honors & Awards show Sept. 22, 2021, in Nashville, Tenn. (AP)



In this Oct. 16, 1992, file photo, singers June Carter Cash and husband Johnny Cash perform at New York's Madison Square Garden. (AP)

Country icons recognized

Carter, Chesney, Brown set to join Hall of Fame

NASHVILLE, Tenn., March 26, (AP): June Carter, Kenny Chesney and Tony Brown have been invited to join the Country Music Hall of Fame.

The Country Music Association announced the new 2025 inductees on Tuesday in Nashville, Tennessee.

Carter, the Grammy-winning member of one of country music's pioneering families and the wife of country giant Johnny Cash, joins as this year's veteran era artist. Chesney, who has won the CMA Awards entertainer of the year four times, joins as the modern era artist. And Brown, a Nashville producer who has supervised a wide array of best-selling hits by Vince Gill, Reba McEntire, George Strait and many others, will join the non-performer category.

The three will be formally inducted during a ceremony in the fall.

Tuesday's celebratory ceremony focused on their contributions to country music over the decades, highlighting their influence, even when they were overlooked at times.

"Johnny once said that his wife was one of the most neglected artists in country music," said country singer Vince Gill, who introduced the inductees. He said Cash worried that his wife's contributions would "under-recognized simply because she's my wife."

Accomplishments

"That changes as she takes her rightful place among family, friends and legends in the Country Music Hall of Fame," Gill said.

Some of Carter's accomplishments include writing more than 100 songs, including co-writing "Ring of Fire," a top hit for Cash. The two married in 1968 and recorded several Grammy-award winning hits like "Jackson" and "If I Were a Carpenter."

But Carter had been singing since she was 10, long before marrying Cash. Her mother, Maybelle Carter, was in the Carter Family music act with her cousin Sara Carter and Sara's husband, A.P. Carter. The family act broke up, but mother and daughters June,

Helen and Anita continued on as Mother Maybelle & the Carter Sisters, with little June playing autoharp.

The Carters went on to become staples of the Grand Ole Opry country music show in Nashville.

Carlene Carter described her mother as a "force of nature" who was "anchored in love."

"Anything that's good about me is because of that mom," said Carlene Carter, who continued in the family business as a country singer and songwriter.

Inducted

Chesney, who grew up in eastern Tennessee, told the crowd on Tuesday that if someone had said he would one day be inducted into the same Hall of Fame class as June Carter Cash, he would have called it "unbelievable."

Chesney's career includes 16 platinum albums and more than 50 Top Ten country hits. After receiving a standing ovation, he said he was just hoping to spread love and positivity through his music.

"I had a really big dream and I'm still pushing that dream as far as I can," Chesney said. "I just wanted to record and write songs that reflected the lives of a lot of people that came to our shows."

For Brown, getting the call about his induction into the Hall of Fame almost knocked him over. He called it one of the biggest accomplishments of his career.

Every year, the Country Music Hall of Fame chooses just three inductees, one of which rotates between songwriters, recording/touring musicians and non-performers.

Brown backed Elvis Presley until his death in 1977, then played with Emmylou Harris & The Hot Band, as well as Rodney Crowell & The Cherry Bombs. But he's being honored more for his production work, as president of MCA Nashville, with RCA Records and eventually as co-founder of Universal South Records.

"You make records and you make some money, but this is better than money," Brown said. "This is about making an impact."

SPORTS



Al-Ittihad player dribbles the ball past Al-Qadsiya player.

Al-Qadsiya Asian Champions League hopes hang in the balance after loss to Al-Ittihad

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Al-Qadsiya basketball team faced its second defeat against Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad Club, losing 88-74 in the third match of the Asian Gulf Zone (Super League) title competition. The match took place at the Basketball Association Hall in the Sheikh Saad Al-

Abdullah Complex. Al-Ittihad secured qualification by winning two of the three playoff matches, as per the tournament's rules.

Despite the setback, Al-Qadsiya still has a chance to advance to the Asian Champions League quarter-finals. It must defeat Bahrain's Manama in its upcoming match on April 7 in Bahrain to secure the eighth and final spot in the Asian League.

Meanwhile, Al-Ittihad will face Shabab Al-Ahli from the Emirates in a playoff series for the Gulf Super League title. The series will follow a best-of-three format, with matches scheduled for April 8, 15, and 22. The winner will advance to the quarter-finals of the Asian Champions League, ensuring both Al-Ittihad and Shabab Al-Ahli a place in the prestigious competition.

Nigeria's qualifying hopes dealt major late blow; Egypt, Morocco move closer

Congo moves top of Group B on 13 points, one ahead of unbeaten Senegal



Tanzania's Mudathiri Yahya Abbas, left, is challenged by Morocco's Youssef En-Nesyri during the World Cup Group E qualifying soccer match between Morocco and Tanzania at the Stade municipal d'Oujda, Morocco. (AP)

CAIRO, March 26, (AP): Nigeria conceded a last-minute goal in a major blow to its World Cup qualifying hopes, when Egypt and Morocco all but booked their places at next year's tournament.

Zizo's goal was enough for unbeaten Egypt's 1-0 win over Sierra Leone in Cairo, while Morocco looks assured of qualifying with a nine-point lead over its rivals after a 2-0 win over Tanzania.

Real Madrid's Brahim Díaz scored a penalty after Nayef Aguerd broke the deadlock on a rebound for Morocco's fifth win from five games in Group E.

Zizo struck just before the break for Egypt to maintain a five-point lead over Burkina Faso, which had defeated Guinea-Bissau 2-1 on Monday in Group A.

Zimbabwe's Tawanda Chirewa scored in the final minute to silence the home fans in Uyo, Nigeria as the visitors claimed a 1-1 draw.

Nigeria star Victor Osimhen put the Super Eagles on course to claim just their second win in Group C after Friday's 2-0 victory over Rwanda had rekindled Nigeria's qualification hopes.

But the 21-year-old Chirewa, a late substitute, equalized in the 90th to earn Zimbabwe's draw.

Meanwhile, South Africa defeated Benin 2-0 to consolidate the top spot. Bafana Bafana leads with 13 points from six rounds, five clear of Rwanda (which drew with Lesotho 1-1) and Benin. Nigeria stayed fourth in the group with just seven points.

Only the nine group winners secure automatic qualification. The four best-placed runners-up will compete to be the African contender in FIFA's six-country playoff for the last two qualification spots at the World Cup next year in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Wolfsburg forward Mohammed Amoura scored a hat trick as Algeria defeated Mozambique 5-1 to open a three-point lead over the visitors in Group G. Guinea's qualification hopes are all but over after a 1-0 loss to Uganda, the team's third defeat leaving it eight points behind Algeria in fifth.

Cape Verde remained top of Group D with a 2-1 win in Angola, though Cameroon responded with Vincent Aboubakar scoring twice in a 3-1 win over Libya. Cape Verde stayed a point ahead of Cameroon.

Sudan lost control of Group B with David Sebit scoring in stoppage time to earn South Sudan a 1-1 draw.

It allowed both Congo and Senegal to take advantage, which they did with 2-0 wins over Mauritania and Togo, respectively.

Congo moved top of Group B on 13 points,

one ahead of unbeaten Senegal and Sudan. Sudan dropped to third on goal difference.

Ghana moved atop Group I by scoring a total of eight goals in back-to-back wins over Chad and Madagascar, helping ease the disappointment of failing to qualify for the Africa Cup of Nations in November.

Otto Addo's team eased to a 5-0 rout of Chad in Accra on Friday, then enjoyed a 3-0 win over Madagascar on Monday to seize control of the group.

Comoros, the surprise early leader, stayed three points behind Ghana on Tuesday with a 1-0 win over Chad.

Ivory Coast needed goalkeeper Yahia Fofana at his best as it held on for a 1-0 win over Gambia on Monday to stay a point above Gabon atop Group F.

Sébastien Haller's early goal was enough for the Elephants to win in Abidjan, keeping the team top after Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang had scored twice for Gabon to beat Kenya 2-1.

Ivory Coast, the reigning Africa Cup champion, had previously beaten Burundi 1-0 in Morocco on Friday, while Gabon had a 3-0 win over the Seychelles on Thursday.

Tunisia consolidated top spot in Group H on Monday with two late goals to beat Malawi 2-0.

Four rounds of qualifiers remain.

\$125 million up for grabs

FIFA reveals \$1 bln prize pool for Club World Cup

ZURICH, March 26, (AP): The winner of FIFA's first 32-team Club World Cup in the United States could earn \$125 million as details of a \$1 billion prize money fund were finally published Wednesday.

FIFA said it allocated \$525 million in guaranteed fees for teams taking part in the June 14- July 13 tournament, ranging from \$38.19 million to the top-ranked European team - likely Real Madrid

- to \$3.58 million for the Oceania representative Auckland City.

A further \$475 million is earned by results in the 63 games, with \$2 million paid for winning group stage games, \$7.5 million for playing in the round of 16 and \$40 million to the team that wins the final at MetLife Stadium near New York.

The golden trophy has been sitting in the Oval Office at the White House this month after FIFA

President Gianni Infantino delivered it to President Donald Trump.

The prize fund was delayed until a global broadcast deal was belatedly agreed in December with streaming service DAZN, which then got a major investment from a state-backed sports agency in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia was also confirmed in December by FIFA as the host of the men's 2034 World Cup. Each of the 12 European teams in the Club World Cup lineup will be paid at least \$12.81 million as an entry fee. Payments will be decided by "a ranking based on sporting and commercial criteria," FIFA said, without providing details.

Manchester City, Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain, and Chelsea also qualified by either winning a Champions League title from 2021 to 2024 or having consistent results in the competition over those four seasons.

Countries were capped at two entries unless they had three Champions League winners. Salzburg of Austria qualified for the final European team, despite never advancing beyond the round of 16, because higher-ranked clubs like Liverpool and Barcelona were blocked by the country cap.

The six South American teams each will get a \$15.21 million entry fee.

Teams from Africa, Asia and the CONCACAF region of North America - including Lionel Messi's Inter Miami, despite not winning the MLS Cup title last season - each will get \$9.55 million for playing.

Leon of Mexico is currently contesting its removal from the competition by FIFA because it is in shared ownership with Pachuca, which also qualified.

FIFA aims to pay \$250 million to clubs worldwide who did not qualify for the tournament. It is unclear how many clubs will be paid or how much they will get.



Atletico Madrid's Pablo Barrios fights for the ball with Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe during the Champions League round of 16. (AP)

Preliminary round of the Volleyball League wraps up

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The preliminary round of the Volleyball League wraps up today with a key match between Kazma and Qadsia at 9:00 pm at the Kuwait Volleyball Association's Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Halls Complex in Sabah Al-Salem. In a previous match, Al-Arabi triumphed over Al-Nasr with a dominant 3-0 victory (25-17, 25-8, 25-16).

Kuwait Club leads the standings with 28 points, followed by Kazma and Al-Shabab (24), Qadsia (22),

Al-Arabi (18), Burgan (16), Al-Nasr (11), Sulaibikhat (9), Yarmouk (5), Al-Tadamon (3), and Al-Sahel (2).

The top six teams—Kuwait Club, Kazma, Al-Shabab, Qadsia, Al-Arabi, and Burgan—have secured their spots in the Premier League, which will commence on April 13. The league will be contested on a home-and-away basis, followed by a "golden square" featuring the top four teams, with the first facing the fourth and the second facing the third.

Meanwhile, Al-Nasr, Al-Sulaibikhat, Al-Yarmouk, Al-Tadamon, and Al-Sahel will compete in the first division across three stages.



Players battling for the ball.

New Zealand beats Pakistan by 8 wickets with 10 overs to spare

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, March 26, (AP): Jimmy Neesham took 5-22 and Tim Seifert blasted 97 from 38 balls as New Zealand beat Pakistan by eight wickets with 10 overs to spare in the fifth Twenty20 international Wednesday. New Zealand completed a 4-1 series win.

Neesham became the fourth New Zealander - after Tim Southee, Lockie Ferguson and Adam Milne - to take five wickets in T20 internationals as the Blackcaps restricted Pakistan to 128-9 after winning the toss.

Seifert and Finn Allen then launched New Zealand's run chase at an astonishing pace, rushing to 45-0 after three overs, to 50 from 22 balls and finally to 82-0 at the end of the six over power play.

While Allen was left almost a spectator, Seifert raced to his 10th T20 half century from 23 balls with five sixes and five fours. The pair put on 93 for the first wicket in 6.2 overs before Allen was out for 27 from 12 balls.

Seifert carried on at an unbroken pace, hitting 10 sixes and six fours and finishing the New Zealand run chase with four sixes in the 10th over.

"After I nearly got hit in the head by that first ball, I thought there's only one way to play," Seifert said. "One thing I'm proud of is that I came into the series and played the way I wanted to play."

"The wickets were very bouncy and to be able to play as I wanted to play is the thing I'm most proud of."

In contrast, Pakistan was 27-3 after the power play and 52-4 at the midpoint of their innings, struggling against the bounce produced by the New Zealand bowlers.

Opener Hasan Nawaz was out for a duck, continuing an extraordinary start to his international career. In his five T20 matches so far, he has made 0, 0, 105 not out, 1 and 0.

Captain Salman Ali Agha made 51 from 39 balls and put on 54 for the sixth wicket with Shadab Khan who hit 28 from 20 balls.

Shadab was out in contentious circumstances. Neesham lost control of the first ball of the 17th over which the umpire ruled was four wides. Shadab believed and replays suggested the ball had missed the pitch and therefore was a no-ball.

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Egypt's Mohamed Salah, right, is challenged for the ball by Sierra Leone's Alhassan Koroma at a World Cup 2026 qualifying soccer match at Cairo International Stadium. Egypt won 1-0. (AP)
— See Page 15

Sports

Kuwait's World Cup hopes in jeopardy

Al-Hajri attributes loss to exhaustion

By Khaled Al-Enezi and Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Kuwait is "logically" out of contention for a third or fourth-place finish – which would secure a spot in the 2026 World Cup playoffs – but a "mathematical" possibility, albeit highly improbable, still remains after 1-0 loss to Oman.

To keep its slim hopes alive, the Blues must win both of their remaining matches in June against Palestine and South Korea, while relying on Oman to lose against both Jordan and Palestine.

Currently, South Korea leads the group with 16 points, followed by Jordan (13), Iraq (12), Oman (10), Palestine (6), and Kuwait (5). Given that Kuwait is the only team yet to secure a victory – having settled for five draws and three defeats – its chances now depend on an unlikely series of results.

Despite this, Kuwait's progress under Argentine coach Juan Pizzi has been notable, as the team has begun to develop a clearer identity on the field. However, fans aspire to more than just improvement – they want tangible success and a return to the World Cup, especially with Asia's expanded qualification spots increasing their chances of



Players vie for the ball during World Cup qualifying match between Kuwait and Oman.

competing on the global stage for the first time in 44 years.

Beyond World Cup ambitions, the 2027 Asian Cup looms as a crucial objective. Kuwait must prioritize youth development and establish a well-

structured preparation plan to build a competitive squad capable of delivering strong performances.

The Kuwait Football Association (KFA) expressed its gratitude to the fans for their unwavering support dur-

ing the match against Oman. The association also extended its appreciation to government agencies, including the Ministries of Interior, Health, Municipality and Urban Planning, and Electricity and Water, as well as the Public

Authority for Sports, the General Fire Department, the Union of Cooperative Societies, organizing committees, and volunteers.

The federation emphasized that the team gave its best effort to satisfy its

supporters. Looking ahead, the focus will remain on strengthening the national team and ensuring continued backing to achieve the best possible results.

Assistant Coach Ahmed Abdul Karim apologized to all those who supported the Kuwait in its 2026 World Cup qualifier against Oman, acknowledging the "significant" impact of Yousef Nasser's absence.

In a post-match press conference, after a narrow 1-0 loss to Oman, Abdul Karim explained, "The technical staff tried to adjust by compensating for Nasser's absence and fielding a balanced lineup, but things didn't go as planned for the Blues." He also mentioned that Oman's defense had done a commendable job in shutting down spaces.

Fahad Al-Hajri attributed the loss to "exhaustion and insufficient recovery time." He acknowledged that the team had performed well in the first half but felt fatigue set in due to the short rest after the Iraq match. Al-Hajri also praised Oman's tactical play, particularly their collective movement and ability to close spaces. He thanked both the players and the fans for their continued support.

Oman's coach, Rashid Jaber, commented on the match, saying, "The Blues performed admirably on their home turf in front of their fans. We took control in the second half but squandered several opportunities to seal the win." Jaber added, "qualification is now within reach for all teams, and we must wait for the next two rounds."

Defending champion hands Brazil heaviest qualifying loss

Argentina seals World Cup berth



Argentina's Nicolas Tagliafico scores his side's third goal against Brazil during a World Cup 2026 qualifying soccer match at Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Tuesday, March 25, 2025. (AP)

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, March 26, (AP): Defending champion Argentina had to put the celebrations on hold for a while after securing a place at the 2026 World Cup before kickoff against arch-rival Brazil.

Bolivia's failure to beat Uruguay meant Argentina had enough cushion in South American qualifying to secure one of the continent's six direct spots for the 48-team World Cup set to be co-hosted next year by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

After Bolivia's 0-0 draw with Uruguay at El Alto, Argentina beat Brazil 4-1 in front of 85,000 fans at the Monumental de Nunez Stadium despite Lionel Messi's absence.

Brazil's worst deficit in South American World Cup qualifying history compounded pressure on coach Dorival Júnior, who took over in January of last year.

Brazil is in fourth place in South American qualifying with 21 points, 10 behind Argentina but only two behind second-place Ecuador, which was held to a 0-0 draw by Chile. Third-place Uruguay and fifth-place

Paraguay also have 21 points, and Colombia is one point behind them in sixth. Seventh-place Venezuela has 15 points after a 1-0 win over 9th-place Peru.

Brazil was missing three regular starters - goalkeeper Alisson, defender Gabriel Magalhães, and midfielder Bruno Guimarães - and wasn't really competitive from start to finish.

It's the first time Argentina has won both matches against Brazil in a World Cup qualifying tournament. The home victory was also Argentina's first against the Brazilians since qualifying for the 2006 World Cup.

Argentina has led South American qualifying from the start, with few hiccups and major away wins at Brazil and Uruguay. But coach Lionel Scaloni has not fielded 37-year-old Messi in several games, which still raises doubts about whether the star will play at the World Cup next year.

Messi has an injury to his adductor and was not included in Argentina's squad for the two latest matches.

Argentina scored its two first goals in only 12 minutes of play, both thanks to accurate passing and some clumsy Brazilian defending.

Julián Alvarez netted the first in the 4th minute after Marquinhos, Murillo, and Guilherme Arana failed to reach the ball. The Argentina striker shot between the legs of goalkeeper Bento from close range.

Argentina scored again eight minutes later with Enzo Fernández, once again from close range, after a low cross by Gonzalo Molina.

Brazil got one back via Matheus Cunha in the 26th after a mistake by Cristian Romero, who lost the ball to the Brazilian by the edge of the box. Enzo Fernández found Alexis Mac Allister bursting into the penalty box unmarked 11 minutes later to make it 3-1 to Argentina.

During the break, Brazil sought to get some grip by boosting its presence in the midfield with Joao Gomes and the substitution of Murillo and striker Rodrygo. But it was to no avail, with Giuliano Simeone scoring for Argentina in the 71st minute.

Top six relegation spots up for grabs as the Zain Premier League resumes

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Zain Premier League resumes with a pivotal match between Al-Nasr and Al-Fahaheel at Ali Sabah Al-Salem Stadium, marking the start of the eighteenth and final round.

The round continues tomorrow, Friday, with two key fixtures: Khaitan faces Al-Qadsia, while Kazma takes on Al-Yarmouk. The round will conclude on Saturday, with Kuwait Club playing against Al-Tadamon and Al-Arabi squaring off against Al-Salmiya.

Kuwait Club leads the standings with 44 points, closely followed by Al-Arabi, who trails due to a difference in matches played. Al-Qadsia holds 32 points, Al-Salmiya has 28, Fahaheel is at 25, Al-Tadamon has 20, Kazma sits at 16, Al-Nasr has 12, Khaitan has 11, and Yarmouk rounds out the table with 6 points.

After this round, the top six teams will advance to the single-round "Championship" league, while the bottom four teams will compete in the "Relegation League," also in a single-round format, with two teams set for



A file photo of players challenging for the ball during the Zain Premier League match.

relegation to the First Division.

The league had been paused since February 28th due to Al-Arabi's participation in the AFC Challenge Cup, Al-Qadsia's run in the Gulf Champions League, and Al-Azraq's involvement in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers.

This round is crucial for teams looking to accumulate points and

strengthen their positions before the final stage of the league.

In today's match, Al-Nasr is aiming to avenge its earlier defeat to Al-Fahaheel, who had triumphed 3-1 in the first division. Al-Nasr is hoping for a morale-boosting win before entering the Relegation League, while Al-Fahaheel is determined to secure victory and climb the standings.

Sulaibikhat completes Premier League lineup

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Sulaibikhat handball team secured its place in the Premier League with a commanding 37-26 victory over Yarmouk at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Halls Complex in final round of the 58th "Merged" League. In another notable result, Al-Nasr triumphed 37-32 over Al-Tadamon.

League standings
Kuwait Club 24 points, Kazma 21, Burgan 19, Sulaibikhat 16, Al-Arabi 16, Al-Salmiya 14 (with all points from the preliminary round retained for the Premier League, played over three stages), Al-Nasr 14, Al-Qurain 12, Al-Qadsia 12, Khaitan 8, Fahaheel 8, Al-Tadamon 3, Yarmouk 2, and Al-Sahel 0 (playing in the First Division League over two stages with points retained from the preliminary round).

Sulaibikhat Manager Hussein Saywan extended his congratulations to the club's board of directors and fans on the team's qualification for the Premier League. He expressed gratitude to the management for their unwavering support throughout the season.

"We have a plan in place to prepare the team for the Premier League during the league's suspension for the Arab Cup in May," Saywan said. "An external training camp will be held in Bahrain and Qatar from April



Sulaibikhat player makes a goal attempt against Yarmouk.

24 to May 5, as the league will be paused ten days before the Arab Cup."

Saywan also praised the team's performance in the preliminary

round, highlighting the success of the Cairo training camp before the season, the activation tournament in December, and the hard work of the technical staff and players.