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Opinion

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Dear government ... cancel subsidies, raise low salaries

THE spotlight has returned once again to Kuwait's long-standing issue of unchecked public spending, a pattern that has contributed to a growing budget deficit and caused cash shortages several times.

If we take subsidies as an example, we see that they often reflect a troubling level of randomness. A prime example is food supplies, which are distributed with little regulation or scrutiny, as many of the recipients are not genuinely in need of them.

The average citizen with a limited income does not really need this excess of rice, butter, and cheese. What they really need is a salary increase, something that has not happened in over 16 years. In reality, many of those who receive these supplies don't even use them. Some pass them on to their domestic workers, while others sell them on the black market. Large quantities of these subsidized goods are smuggled abroad or end up as animal feed.

When nearly \$24 billion is spent annually on subsidies for various items from car fuel to tea, it is a clear sign of wasteful spending and a lack of foresight, and this does not serve the people.

When accountability is lacking, the availability of funds only fuels the greed of thieves, and further intensifies their appetite for more. The only solution is to cut off this artery of waste so that the state doesn't suffer from public finance anemia and end up being forced to borrow at the expense of future generations.

To this day, future generations have not reaped the benefits of their supposed "future generations fund", as the money from this fund is being spent on development projects in countries around the world except Kuwait. This situation perfectly mirrors the old proverb: "The carpenter's house door is always broken."

On the other hand, who truly

benefits from the cheap electricity tariffs, which lead to a chronic crisis every summer? Is it the low-paid junior employees, or the owners of residential buildings and commercial complexes who offer electricity for free to tenants while pocketing millions of dinars each month without contributing anything to the government?

Don't government institutions, public places, and even mosques, which leave their lights and air conditioning running 24/7, consume the largest share of electricity? Meanwhile, citizens are told to rationalize their consumption.

Who is responsible for this? Isn't it the Council of Ministers, which has yet to regulate these matters, despite the fact that all it would take is a simple administrative decision?

The health sector is one of the areas suffering from random waste. In the past, we were plagued by a group known as "Service MPs" who turned overseas medical treatment into touristic trips for select individuals, all driven by electoral motives.

According to global healthcare indicators, Kuwait today ranks low - 73rd in 2024 - and eighth among Arab countries. Tunisia, Lebanon, and Oman have surpassed Kuwait on this index, despite the Ministry of Health's high budget for the 2025/2026 fiscal year, which amounts to KD 2.7 billion (\$9 billion).

In contrast, the Tunisian Ministry of Health's budget stands at just \$1.25 billion, yet it outperformed Kuwait in healthcare outcomes. Is this reasonable?

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Social Affairs cracks down on unauthorized 'charity' events

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Ministry of Social Affairs has instructed charitable associations and charities to advertise their licensed charitable projects only on their websites or electronic applications (if available).

In a circular, the ministry stressed that advertising on various social media platforms, cooperative societies and similar platforms is prohibited unless written approval is obtained from the ministry and through coordination with the concerned authorities.

It called for the removal of unlicensed advertisements within a maximum period of two weeks from the date of the circular.

The abovementioned entities must

contact the ministry before organizing events or activities in and outside the country -- workshops, lectures, conferences, seminars, Holy Quran recitation sessions, awarding ceremonies, charity markets, exhibitions and others -- at least one week prior to the event or activity, so that the ministry can contact the concerned security authorities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to obtain approval.

It also underscored the importance of contacting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before signing contracts, agreements or cooperation protocols with accredited foreign entities or United Nations organizations and bodies, so it can obtain approval from its foreign affairs counterpart.

It emphasized the need to register in the Safe Traveler System and obtain the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' approval before sending individuals abroad.



Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah supervises an extensive security campaign targeting commercial establishments in residential buildings in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.



188 held in coordinated Jleeb and Salmiya raids

Acting PM leads security blitz

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Under the field leadership and direct supervision of Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah and with the participation of several concerned government agencies, the Criminal Investigations General Department in the Criminal Security Sector at the Interior Ministry carried out an extensive security campaign targeting commercial establishments in residential buildings in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

This campaign resulted in the arrest of 147 violators and wanted persons, in addition to the disconnection of electricity from unlicensed sites.

In a press statement on Saturday, the Public Relations and Security Media Department at the ministry disclosed that Kuwait Fire Force (KFF); Kuwait Municipality; Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy; Ministry of Public Works; Environment Public Authority (EPA); and Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) were involved in the campaign.

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Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah visits Corporal Badr Al-Enezi at the hospital.

Acting PM visits officer injured in line of duty

Acting Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah visited on Saturday Corporal Badr Al-Enezi, who was injured while on duty by a wanted felon.

A statement by the Interior Ministry indicated that Acting Prime Minister commend-

ed the officer for his brave effort in attempt to apprehend the fugitive, an illegal resident in possession of narcotics and firearms.

The fugitive tried to drive over Corporal Al-Enezi during a checkpoint inspection, the statement concluded. (KUNA)

License to heal? Prove it, says Ministry of Health

New system sniffs out unfit healthcare workers

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Ministry of Health has started a significant upgrade to its verification systems for healthcare professionals who want to be licensed in the country.

This initiative is part of a broader strategy to elevate governance standards and optimize the efficiency of the professional licensing process. The

enhanced verification protocols now incorporate sophisticated electronic systems designed to rigorously scrutinize the academic credentials and practical experience of applicants. The ministry clarified that this upgrade encompasses the modernization of existing systems through the integration of secure electronic technologies, which are engineered to deliver a superior level of accuracy and dependability; thereby, fortifying the integrity of the licensing process.

The comprehensive verification process includes a

meticulous review of academic qualifications, practice certificates, and good conduct records; as well as a thorough scrutiny of criminal records to ensure the suitability of applicants for healthcare roles.

The ministry has underscored that these stringent verification measures extend to all categories of healthcare personnel -- doctors, dentists, nursing technicians and allied health professionals.

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Seven Kuwaiti real estate titans shine on Forbes list

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Forbes has named seven Kuwaitis among the most influential real estate leaders in the Middle East for 2025, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

At the top of the list for Kuwaitis is the CEO of Mabane Real Estate Company Waleed Khaled Alsharian, who ranked 27th overall on the list. Alsharian has led Mabane since 2006, and under his leadership, the company, which has been listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange since 1999, has completed notable projects such as The Avenues, Hilton Garden Inn, and Waldorf Astoria. In 2024, Mabane's assets were valued at around \$5.1 billion, generating revenues of \$431.1 million.

Vice Chairman and CEO of Kuwait Real Estate Company Talal Jassem Al-Bahar ranked second among Kuwaitis and 42nd overall on Forbes' list.



Alsharian

Continued on Page 5



Al-Bahar



Al-Essa



Marafie



Alnafisi



Al-Mashaan



Al-Terkait

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART), in coordination with the General Traffic Department, has announced a partial closure of the Fourth Ring Road from the King Fahd Intersection Bridge to the Damascus Street Intersection Bridge, leading to the United Nations Roundabout, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PART stated that the closure will begin at dawn on Friday and will continue for one month as part of major road maintenance works.

WASHINGTON: The U.S. Department of Defense said it would pull around a thousand forces out of Syria in the coming months.

In a press statement, the Pentagon's Spokesman Sean Parnell said: "The Secretary of Defense directed the consolidation of U.S. forces in Syria under Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve to select locations in Syria." (KUNA)

8 NBK is the most valuable & strongest banking brand in Kuwait



9 Zain: Kuwait's Fastest Network wins five global awards from Ookla® Speedtest®

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	03:55	Asr	15:22
Sunrise ..	05:18	Maghrib ..	18:17
Zohr	11:47	Isha	19:37

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:
By Day: Rather hot with light to moderate northwesterly wind changing to southeasterly wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h.
By Night: Mild and clouds will increase gradually with light vari-

Weather			
able wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speeds of 06-28 km/h.			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait Airport	33	17	
Abdaly	33	16	
Bubyan	33	19	
Jahra	34	19	
Failaka Island	34	21	
Salmiyah	31	23	
Ahmadi	28	19	
Jal Aliyah	33	16	
Nuwaisib	31	18	
Wafra	33	16	

Crown Prince, PM extend congratulations

Kuwait's HH Amir congratulates Zimbabwe on Independence Day

KUWAIT CITY, April 19, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Friday a cable of congratulations to President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished President Mnangagwa lasting good health, and Zimbabwe and its friendly people further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent Friday a cable of congratulations to President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa on the occasion of his country's Independence Day, wishing him good health.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent Friday a cable of congratulations to President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

Kuwaiti poet Al-Adwani chosen as 2025 Arab Cultural Symbol

RABAT, April 19, (KUNA): The Arab League of Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) announced that late Kuwaiti poet Ahmad Al-Adwani was chosen as the 2025 Arab cultural symbol coinciding with Kuwait's celebration as the capital of Arab Culture and Media this year.

During a function -- held on the sideline of the 30th Edition of the International Book and Publishing Fair in Rabat -- Kuwait National Council for

Culture, Arts and Letters' (NC-CAL) Acting Assistant Secretary General for Antiquities and Museums Mohammad bin Redha told KUNA that choosing Al-Adwani was an honor for Kuwait, saying that this gesture commemorated the legacy of the late Kuwaiti poet.

The official reminisced over the late poet's contributions to the cultural movement in Kuwait and the Arab world, affirming that all his efforts would live on for years to come.



KUNA photo
Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah during his meeting with Tajikistan's First Deputy Foreign Minister.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister receives letter from Tajik's First Deputy FM

KUWAIT CITY, April 19, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya received a letter on Thursday from his Tajik counterpart, Sirojiddin Muhriddin, which highlighted the strong bilateral ties between the two countries and discussed various mutual interests.

The letter was delivered by Tajikistan's First Deputy Foreign Minister, Ambassador Ismatullo Nasredin, during his meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who hosted him on his official visit to Kuwait.

KSAV takes strong stand against violence, pushes policy reforms

Ali Al-Ali re-elected as president, reinforces commitment

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Kuwait Society Against Violence (KSAV) held its ordinary General Assembly earlier this week; with KSAV President Attorney Ali Al-Ali, representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs, members of KSAV and various stakeholders in attendance.

During the session, participants ratified the administrative and financial reports of KSAV and reviewed recent achievements and initiatives.

Ali Al-Ali was unanimously re-elected as president for a second consecutive term.

On the sidelines of the assembly, Al-Ali underscored the growing impact of KSAV even if it was established just recently; emphasizing its efforts in raising awareness and combating violence in the country.

"Despite being young, the Society has managed to assert its presence and collaborate effectively with State institutions to address violence. This has been achieved through a growing portfolio of activities and impactful media campaigns," he revealed.

He also cited the role of KSAV in advocating for legislative reforms, while affirming the development and promotion of draft laws and policy proposals aimed at addressing violence through preventive measures and systemic change.

He said "KSAV has positioned itself as a bridge between civil rights organizations and the wider community; focusing on individuals facing discrimination or violence, or whose rights have been compromised. The organization's mission centers on educating the public, support for victims and spreading a culture of equality. It has organized a wide range of seminars, workshops and events for different demographic groups -- children, youths, women and men -- with the goal of raising awareness about violence and methods of prevention. It also offers psychological, social and legal support services to victims; aiding in recovery and reintegration. It supports scientific research and encourages collaboration between academic institutions



Al-Seyassah photo
Photo during the Kuwait Society Against Violence's General Assembly.

and civil society to develop national policies and programs to curb violence. It is working hard to build partnerships with governmental bodies and international organizations to expand its reach and effectiveness."

Talking about the rise in violent incidents, including those occurring in public spaces and even hospitals, Al-Ali described the situation as alarming. "The societal alarm bell is ringing. Violence has reached places meant to be sanctuaries, like hospitals; thereby, undermining safety and trust."

He stressed that security measures alone are insufficient and called for a comprehensive national strategy backed by behavioral, psychological and social research. "We must deal with the roots -- addiction, family breakdown and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic," he asserted.

To counter what he described as "alien" behavior in Kuwaiti society, Al-Ali advocated for initiatives that promote dialogue, understanding and social harmony. "Through education and awareness, we can create a safer society rooted in mutual respect and compassion," he added.

Speaking at the assembly, KSAV Vice Presi-

dent Sheikh Saleh Al-Nahham highlighted the role of family, education and social environment in shaping behavior. "Real strength lies in self-restraint and forgiveness," he said; underscoring the need to address behavioral issues stemming from unstable family backgrounds and negative social influences.

He warned that violence among students -- from vandalism to physical altercations -- reflects deeper issues, including the absence of strong role models and the harmful effects of social media. He stressed the importance of promoting tolerance and urged families to actively engage in guiding their children.

In conclusion, Al-Nahham linked issues such as marital instability and drug use, calling on the Ministry of Interior to require drug screening and background checks for marriage applicants to safeguard family foundations.

The assembly also affirmed the commitment of KSAV to address the issue of violence through awareness, advocacy and collaborative policymaking--an approach that its leaders believe is crucial for long-term societal stability.

MoCI refers 26 employees to retirement

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel has referred for retirement 26 employees who met the eligibility requirements in this regard, based on the directives of the Council of Ministers

and the Public Institution for Social Security.

According to informed sources, the list includes four directors, 22 supervisors, and one department head from various sectors of the ministry. This step is aimed at implementing the law and injecting fresh talents into the national workforce.

Ali Al-Sabah Military College welcomes new officer cadets

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Ali Al-Sabah Military College Thursday afternoon received the new highly qualified officer cadets of Batch 24 to begin their military service, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The college has completed all necessary preparations to receive and enroll

the new batch in the college for the academic year, and wished them success in their journey to serve the nation.

It is worth noting that the program consists of two semesters, during which cadets undergo intensive training in both military and academic disciplines.



Al-Seyassah photo
Ali Al-Sabah Military College receives the 24th batch of new officer cadets.

MoH to hold third Kuwait Int'l Family Medicine Conference from April 24-26

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Ministry of Health has announced that it will organize the 3rd Kuwait International Family Medicine Conference from April 24 to 26 at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, under the patronage of Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, reports Al-Jarida daily.

President of the Kuwait Association of Family Medicine and General Practitioners and President of the Gulf Society of Family Medicine Dr. Mohammad Al-Azmi stated that the conference will be held under the theme "Excellence in Care". It will bring together 50 local and international experts and specialists in family medicine and primary healthcare.

Dr. Al-Azmi explained that the conference reflects support for New Kuwait 2035 vision and is in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. It will shed light on the vital role of family physicians in improving individual and community health, as well as enhancing the quality and efficiency of healthcare services, an aspiration shared by all. This scientific gathering represents an important strategic initiative to advance the field of family medicine in Kuwait and the Gulf region. It aims to strengthen the principles of prevention and integrated care, while also promoting innovation, scientific research, and the empowerment of physicians to stay abreast of

the latest advancements in global medical practices.

The conference will include more than 30 specialized scientific sessions, along with 10 interactive and high-quality workshops designed to enhance the clinical and practical skills of participating physicians.

Dr. Al-Azmi said, "The conference will also include a special space for innovation and scientific research. Three scientific poster competitions will be organized. Prizes will be awarded to the top three posters and research papers in each competition, with the aim of encouraging young researchers and supporting a spirit of scientific excellence within the medical community."

MoSA conducts mock emergency evacuation drill

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Ministry of Social Affairs conducted a simulated evacuation drill at the new

Juvenile Care Complex, with active participation from both residents and staff, reports Al-Seyassah daily.



MoSA photo
Group photo during the simulated evacuation drill.

The ministry explained that the drill was aimed at raising awareness about emergency procedures and improving the ability to respond rapidly, properly, and effectively to emergencies.

The drill was organized under the supervision of the Social Welfare Sector's Emergency Team, with the cooperation of the General Directorate of Civil Defense, the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), and the Emergency Medical Services Department.

It included simulated emergency scenarios for testing the readiness of both residents and staff and ensuring their full understanding of the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency.

The ministry affirmed that the drill is part of its ongoing efforts to promote a culture of safety and ensure that its facilities are well-prepared to handle emergencies with high efficiency.

Other Voices

Fundamentalists and Maryam Al-Asturlabi

By Ahmad alsarraf

IN a diwaniya gathering, some members asked an experienced friend to explain the meaning of "mixed feelings." He gave them an example: imagine someone who deeply dislikes his boss. One day, that boss asks to borrow his new car for a short test drive. The boss takes the car and doesn't return on time. Eventually, the person gets a call from the police saying the car was involved in a traffic accident. At that moment, the person had mixed feelings. On one hand, he hopes his car isn't damaged, and on the other hand, he secretly hopes the boss was badly hurt.

These same mixed feelings have long plagued many, if not all, fundamentalists and others for hundreds of years when it comes to their views on the great scientists of the Islamic State, such as Ibn Sina, al-Razi, al-Farabi, Ibn al-Haytham, al-Kindi, Ibn Rushd, and others.

Unlike many religious scholars of their time, these scientists represented the enlightened, progressive face of Islamic civilization. For generations, they have stood as symbols of what can be achieved when freedom of thought, research, and expression is allowed to flourish. They are a lasting source of pride and a reminder of the heights a society can reach when it embraces knowledge and innovation.

Of course, these people stand in stark contrast to many clerics or traditional scholars. On one hand, they embody the noble face of Islamic history, having served for decades as a source of pride and a shining example of what can be achieved when a society values freedom in work, research, action, and speech.

However, on the other hand, these same scholars have long been viewed with suspicion and mixed feelings by fundamentalists due to their progressive stances, views on religious doctrine, their insistence on working in an environment of freedom, and their opposition to rigid stereotypes. Almost all of them have been declared as infidels.

The tragic fate of most of these scholars was heinous murder. Despite their great contributions to human civilization, their intellectual and scientific works were



alsarraf

destroyed, lost, or burned. The contradictory attitudes toward them ranging from admiration, respect, and appreciation to contempt, excommunication, and even murder serve as a stark example of the mixed feelings.

It is regrettable that fundamentalist forces have succeeded in erasing most of these scholars' biographies from curricula and textbooks in many Arab and some Islamic countries. The practice of naming schools, universities, institutes, and streets after them has completely ceased.

This disregard has sometimes extended to dismissing the contributions of women in science. A prime example of this is the story of the scientist Maryam al-Ijlaiya, also known as Mariam al-Asturlabi, who is credited with inventing the astrolabe. She was a Syrian woman from Aleppo who lived in the 10th century AD, which marked the Islamic Golden Era of the Middle Ages.

Maryam al-Asturlabi was known for her exceptional skill in designing and manufacturing astrolabes, which are complex astronomical instruments used for navigation and timekeeping. She was the daughter of al-Ujaili, a renowned astrolabe maker, and likely learned the craft from her father, eventually mastering it.

Sayf al-Dawla, the ruler of Aleppo, was the first to acknowledge her expertise, and offered her a position at Court. Maryam al-Asturlabi is one of the few female Muslim scientists and craftsmen whose work made great contributions to the advancement of astronomical knowledge and the development of scientific instruments in the Islamic world. Her contributions remain an important part of the history of Islamic astronomy and instrument-making.

The claim circulating in a WhatsApp clip that NASA installed a statue of Maryam al-Asturlabi in front of its headquarters in recognition of her achievements is completely false.

Despite the high-quality production of the clip, which showed a statue of Maryam in front of the building, the information is misleading. It is unclear who benefits from spreading such false stories. NASA does not place statues of historical figures outside its facilities, though it does acknowledge the contributions of Maryam and others to astronomy and space sciences. However, this recognition does not translate into the installation of a statue in front of NASA's headquarters.

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diwaniyaديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Every cloud holds a silver lining...
Embracing life's unexpected gifts

"Once upon a time, there was an old man who owned a single, beloved horse. One day, the horse ran away. His neighbors came to offer their condolences over what they called "bad luck." Without hesitation, the old man calmly replied, "How do you know it's bad luck?" A few days later, the horse returned, this time bringing with it a group of wild horses. The neighbors returned to congratulate him on his "good luck." Again, the old man simply said, "How do you know it's good luck?" Not long after, his son was trying to tame one of the wild horses when he fell and broke his leg. Once more, the neighbors gathered to offer sympathy, calling it bad luck. But the old man, unfazed, replied, "Who's to say it's bad luck?" A few weeks later, war was declared, and the state conscripted the village's young men. However, the man's son was exempted from fighting due to his broken leg. Many of the young men who were sent to war lost their lives", columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.



Al-Dawas

"An American man was fired from his job at a company, leaving him feeling hopeless and frustrated. With no other source of income, he and his wife were left in a tough situation. What should he do? He decided to mortgage his house, take up work as a construction worker, and specialize in building small businesses. This man was Wallace Johnson, the founder of the Holiday Inn hotel chain.

"In his memoirs, he wrote, "If I knew now where the boss who fired me lived, I would express my deep gratitude for what he did. At the time, I was devastated and couldn't understand why it had happened. Now, I realize that God closed one door to open a far better one for me and my family."

"Every cloud has a silver lining. In 2015, a man was attacked by a shark while swimming off an American beach. During his treatment, a doctor discovered a tumor on his kidney, along with early-stage cancer. The man later said, "The shark attack saved my life."

"I remember a story of an incident in an Arab country. A small plane was flying from one region to another in the same country. One of the passengers arrived late and caused a scene at the airport, loudly complaining that the plane left without him. Later, a storm erupted, and the plane crashed, killing everyone on board. The passenger was left astonished, as he realized he had been given a second chance at life.

"What may seem harmful can, in fact, be beneficial, even on the political level. When America defeated Japan in World War II in 1945, harsh measures, both military and otherwise, were imposed on Japan. However, the Japanese leaders showed remarkable foresight and wisdom in accepting these difficulties. While the measures closed doors for Japan and prevented it from rearming itself and making political decisions, it opened up opportunities for industrial and scientific progress. As a result, the crisis Japan faced after its defeat in 1945 paved the way for the country to rise from the ashes of war and become one of the world's great economic powers.

"Similarly, when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, it opened up markets throughout Europe to investors.

"During the October 1973 War, Arabs raised the price of oil significantly, which undeniably impacted the global economy. However, this prompted Western countries to begin exploring alternative energy sources, leading to the discovery and development of so-

lar panels and the adoption of hydrogen gas for car engines.

"All countries go through phases similar to the four stages of the economic business cycle: recession, recovery, prosperity, and then recession again. This means that periods of damage and hardship are often temporary, and improvements in conditions may sometimes be followed by new challenges.

"As a result, the future of Arab countries looks promising, even if they are currently experiencing a phase of recession."

□ □ □

"Kuwait has long been a pioneer in the field of culture and the arts, with Kuwaiti theater enjoying a prominent presence since the 1960s. More than just a means of entertainment, theater in Kuwait has served as a powerful tool for expressing societal issues, and as a platform that captures the pulse of the people and their aspirations", Major General **Eng. Faisal Musaed Al-Jazzaf** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Kuwaiti theater has produced timeless plays that have left an indelible mark on our memories. It resonated deeply with audiences and transcended both time and geographical boundaries to reach the entire Arab world.

"However, in recent years, Kuwaiti theater has experienced a noticeable decline, particularly in terms of script quality, dialogue, artistic value, and the strength of its societal message. Current productions, especially those targeted at children, often suffer from weak performances and poor vocabulary, which harms the artistic legacy created by the talented figures who have once elevated Kuwait's name on the international stage.

"What is happening today is a decline that is not in line with the rich legacy of our theatrical history, and it cannot be overlooked. Therefore, the relevant authorities must take a strong stance on the quality of what is presented on stage. Only plays that elevate public taste and convey meaningful messages should be allowed, rather than those driven solely by commercial gain.

"Preserving the identity of Kuwaiti theater is a must, as theater is not merely a form of entertainment, but it is also a powerful medium for delivering messages with a profound sense of responsibility.

"I would like to commend the tireless efforts of Musaed Al-Zamel in the Arts Sector of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters and his dedication to restoring balance to serious theater, providing opportunities for young talented artists, and enhancing the social role of theater.

"When theater loses its message, it loses one of the most important pillars of cultural awareness in society.

"**Note:** The new traffic law, set to take effect on April 22, is an important step towards protecting lives and promoting the rule of law, particularly in curbing the widespread issue of reckless and disorderly driving that has become a troubling trend.

"I pray to God Almighty to protect Kuwait and its people under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah (May God protect and preserve them).

"May God have mercy on our righteous martyrs."

— **Compiled by Mahmoud Attiyye/ Simi K. Kutty**



Photo during the basics training course.

KFF photo

KFF concludes training course for Kuwait Industries Union workers

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Specialized Training Center of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) concluded a Fire Prevention and Fighting Basics training course for employees of the Kuwait Industries Union on

Wednesday morning.

According to a press release issued by KFF, the course aims at preventing fire incidents and training participants on the proper use of various types of fire extinguishers.

Sheikh Hamoud praises schools' educational excellence

Ahmadi governor patronizes cybersecurity lecture

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Under the patronage of Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, a lecture on cybersecurity was held at Maryam Bint Othman Elementary School for Girls in Ali Sabah Al-Salem on Thursday, April 17.

According to a press release issued by Ahmadi Governorate, Colonel Dr. Hamad Rashid Al-Atal, Head of the Department at the General Administration of Residency Affairs at the Ministry of Interior, delivered the lecture.

The event was attended by Adel Al-Mayas, Acting Supervisor of the Educational Stage and First Supervisor of Social Studies at the Ahmadi Educational Zone, along with a number of supervisors, principals, and assistant principals from various schools in the Ahmadi Educational Zone. The event was supervised by the school's principal, Noura Saad Al-Hajri.

The governor praised the schools in Ahmadi Governorate



Ahmadi Governorate photo
Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamoud Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah during his visit at Elementary School in Ali Sabah Al-Salem.

for their overall excellence among all schools in Kuwait.

He also commended Maryam Bint Othman School for organizing the lecture, which focused on

the important role of cybersecurity and ways to combat cybercrime, in cooperation with the relevant authorities at the Ministry of Interior.

During the lecture, Colonel Dr. Al-Atal highlighted Kuwait's commitment to combating cybercrime, highlighting the huge increase in cybercrime rates in recent years, which have now surpassed the number of traditional and ordinary crimes.

Al-Atal emphasized the dangers of cybercrime to both individuals and institutions, and discussed effective ways to confront and protect against it, especially considering the difficulty in detecting such crimes, which are transcontinental in nature.

After the lecture, the governor toured the exhibition held on the sidelines of the event, which was organized with the participation of female students.

The exhibition also showcased artistic performances by students from Dhirar bin Al-Azwar School.

In the end, the governor expressed his gratitude to the event organizers, as well as the participating teachers and students.

Detention extended until May

Man accused of wife's killing faces premeditated charges

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The detention renewal judge decided to extend until May 4 the detention of the man accused of premeditatedly killing his wife in Mutlaa desert on the first day of Eid Al-Fitr.

In Thursday's session, the lawyer representing the heirs of the deceased, Attorney Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan, appeared before the detention renewal judge and filed a civil suit demanding compensation of KD 5,001 from the accused.

Earlier, the Public Prosecution charged the defendant with premeditated murder of his wife on March 30, 2025. The case was filed at Mutlaa Police Station in Jahra Governorate.

Case files indicate, the defendant intentionally killed his wife. When he captured her and forcibly entered her vehicle, he drove to an unknown location and stabbed her once with the weapon, which was stuck on her chest; causing the injuries described in the autopsy report and led to her death.



Photo from the event.

KFF photo

KFF joins safety exhibit at Arab Open University

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Public Relations and Media Department of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) participated in the Health, Security, and Safety Exhibition at the Arab Open University from April 16 to 17.

According to a press release issued by KFF, this participation was aimed at promoting a better educational future, creating a safer environment, and enhancing community security.

News in Brief

Nationality fraud case resurfaces after 30 yrs

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Nationality detectives have uncovered new secrets in a decades-old forgery case, details that the forgers thought were buried deep within official records, reports Al-Rai daily.

The case dates back to the early 1990s, when a Kuwaiti woman married a Gulf citizen, and the couple had a son. The father obtained official identification documents for the child from his Gulf country. Simultaneously, the child's mother conspired with her Kuwaiti father to fraudulently register the boy under her father's file, and falsely list him as his son rather than his grandson, which made the mother appear, on paper, as the child's sister.

As a result, the child held valid identification documents from both Kuwait and the Gulf state, enabling him to enjoy the rights and privileges of both nationalities.

□ □ □
Court rejects lawsuit: The Family Court of Appeals dismissed a lawsuit filed by a Kuwaiti citizen who wanted to revoke his ex-wife's custody of their children on the ground that she is pursuing university studies abroad, reports Al-Anba daily.

The court ruled that the mother's travel for higher education does not justify custody revocation, pointing out that she has not been negligent in carrying out her parental duties.

Judges confirmed that she continued to protect the interests of the children, including their education and insurance coverage, and maintained regular contact through modern communication methods.

In its decision, the court stated that studying abroad is not a valid legal reason to revoke custody as long as the parent fulfills responsibilities and protects the child's welfare.

□ □ □

Bedoun arrested: The Ministry of Interior announced that Ahmadi support patrol force arrested an illegal resident (Bedoun) for deliberately running over a security officer near the Fintas Police Station early Thursday morning and then fleeing the scene, reports Al-Seyassah daily.



MoJ photo
Kuwait's MoJ Undersecretary, Tareq Al-Asfour with Regional Director of UNODC Hatem Ali during the meeting.

Kuwait, UNODC boost anti-trafficking efforts

Joint co-op strengthened

KUWAIT CITY, April 19, (KUNA): Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Justice and Deputy Chairman of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Tareq Al-Asfour and Regional Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in GCC countries Hatem Ali discussed joint cooperation on Thursday.

Both sides underlined willing-

ness to combat drugs and crimes by means of sharing knowledge and expertise and organizing training programs and courses that cope with international advancements and attaining integration in institutional performance, the Ministry of Justice said in a press release.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in GCC countries seeks to promote cooperation with Kuwaiti state bodies concerned in a bid to contribute to bolstering its regional role and providing national staff with experience and modern equipment in line with relevant agreements and commitments, it said.

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Municipality weighs amendments on nursery licensing and exhibition fees

Legal committee to review e-violation platform

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Legal and Financial Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Fahad Al-Abduljader, will hold its eighth meeting for the third legislative round on Monday.

The agenda includes the response of the executive authority to the query of council member Walid Al-Dagher about the operation of private institutes and nurseries in private residential areas.

In its response, the Kuwait Municipality

clarified that according to Article Three of Law No. 22/2014, which governs private nurseries; licenses may be granted for nurseries to operate in private, investment and commercial residential properties, provided all the relevant regulations are followed.

The committee will also review responses to the proposals submitted by Al-Abduljader. These proposals include the establishment of an electronic platform for reporting municipal violations, as well as amendments to certain fees

stipulated in Advertisement Regulation No. 599/2023 and Temporary Exhibition Regulation No. 930/2019.

On the proposal of Al-Abduljader to offer more flexibility in exhibition durations -- allowing optional timeframes ranging from one week to one month; the Municipality expressed no objection, indicating that fees will be adjusted proportionally based on the chosen duration.

The Municipality also confirmed its support for the idea of eliminating insurance fees for temporary exhibitions, as per the recommendation of Al-Abduljader.

Furthermore, it agreed to increase fines for violations specified in articles 11 through 14 of the Temporary Exhibition Regulation.



Al-Abduljader

Kuwait FM chairs Al-Sumait Prize for African Development board meeting

KUWAIT CITY, April 19, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Sumait Prize for African Development Abdullah Al-Yahya on Thursday chaired the board's 10th meeting.

The meeting focused on the criteria of nomination, registration and winning, along with other topics put on the agenda as part of Kuwait's support for organizations working in Africa in return for exemplary and effective services, projects and programs in the award's domains involving education, health and food security.



Farwaniya Governor chaired a large-scale joint coordination meeting with officials from various government agencies.

Empowering Kuwaitis with real-time financial insights

CINET launches smart app for instant credit access

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Reflecting its commitment to innovation and financial empowerment; Kuwait Credit Information Network (CINET) has officially launched its new smart application, reports Al-Jarida daily.

This new smart application is designed to provide users with secure, real-time access to their credit records and insights.

The move is in line with the strategy of CINET to drive digital transformation, improve financial literacy, and establish itself as the leading data center in the country.

The application features a sleek and modern interface built with accessibility in mind; offering individuals and businesses a seamless experience to track, understand and manage their financial data. The main features include instant access to credit ratings and full credit reports, a comprehensive breakdown of credit facilities such as loans and credit cards – both open and closed accounts; as well as advanced analytical tools that allow for performance comparisons and demographic benchmarking.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CINET Mai Al-Awaish revealed “this launch marks a major milestone in our journey to provide individuals with the tools they need to make informed financial decisions. We are committed to adopting the latest technologies and smart solutions to raise the financial awareness of users and provide a transparent, user-centric experience.”

The launch is part of the contribution of CINET to the ‘Let Us Be Aware’ campaign – a national financial education initiative spearheaded by the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association.

Al-Awaish reiterated the role of CINET as a key partner in fostering a more financially literate society. She announced that the company recently recorded its highest net profits to date—a testament to its strong financial standing and effective growth strategy.

Latifa Al-Musallam, Director of Digital Transformation and Innovation at CINET, explained “our aim is to make credit information readily accessible and free for users. The application allows individuals to review their credit performance, monitor current obligations, and understand their credit rating, which is a critical factor that financial institutions rely on when evaluating loan and credit applications.”

Al-Musallam also revealed that upcoming updates to the app will include features such as a ‘Credit Inquiry Freeze’ option and more sophisticated smart analytics; giving users even greater clarity and control over their financial data.

CINET emphasized that this initiative is part of a larger awareness campaign launched over multiple platforms to educate the public on the importance of credit ratings and responsible borrowing.

Looking ahead, Al-Awaish stated that the company intends to raise capital to support its goal of expanding service offerings and delivering integrated credit and risk management solutions in different sectors.

She asserted “our ambition goes beyond addressing today’s financial needs. We aim to anticipate future challenges and become a strategic partner in the economic progress of Kuwait, offering innovative solutions that deliver long-term value.”

Multi-agency coordination intensifies

Farwaniya Governor leads urgent talks for swift solutions in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah chaired a large-scale joint coordination meeting on Wednesday morning with officials from various government agencies.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the meeting was aimed at discussing ways to enhance cooperation and develop urgent plans to tackle the issues in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, and the rest of the Farwaniya Governorate.

The meeting was attended by several important officials including:

- Director General of Farwaniya Security Command Brigadier General Muhammad Mutlaq Al-Mutairi,
- Director General of Farwaniya and Mubarak Al-Kabeer municipalities Eng. Nawaf Al-Kandari,
- Commander of Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area Brigadier General Ayed Al-Subaie,
- Director of Farwaniya Investigations Colonel Ahmed Al-Yassin,
- Assistant Director of Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) in Farwaniya Brigadier General Muhammad Bu Humaid,
- Director of the Inspection and Control Department Nada Al-Dabashi,
- Director of the Roads and Networks Maintenance Department at the Ministry of Public Works ; Eng. Fawaz Al-Shammari,
- Director of the Public Relations Department at the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) Muhammad Al-Muzaini,
- Head of the Violators’ Apprehension Department Lieutenant Colonel Ali Al-

Hayyan,

- Head of the Inspection Department at the Environment Public Authority Talal Al-Mutairi,
- Head of the Administrative Support Department at KFF in Farwaniya Lieutenant Colonel Fahd Al-Mutairi,
- Head of the Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Investigations Department Lieutenant Colonel Abdulwahab bin Salam.

The meeting included a presentation on the plans and visions, as well as the latest efforts of security agencies and other concerned entities to resolve the crisis in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, following the recent field visit by the Governor of Farwaniya and government agencies.

Discussions focused on identifying the quickest and most effective solutions to the problems in Farwaniya Governorate and improving conditions for its residents.

Sheikh Athbi affirmed the importance of combining efforts and enhancing coordination among relevant authorities to ensure the development of public facilities and the provision of quality services.

He reiterated that Farwaniya Governorate would spare no effort in actively following up and coordinating with all relevant parties to achieve the desired outcomes.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the visiting officials expressed their gratitude to the governor for his commitment to deal with security concerns, advancing infrastructure development, and supporting ongoing cooperation between state agencies.

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Female students with revoked citizenship urged to reactivate suspended allowances

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Deanship of Admission and Registration at the colleges and institutes of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) has called on female students whose social allowances were suspended following the

revocation of their Kuwaiti citizenship granted under Article 8 to visit the Deanship in Adailiya during official working hours to reactivate their suspended allowances, starting from Sunday, April 20, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Sign up by June 29 for May-June exams

KU opens registration for aptitude test

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Office of the Assistant Vice President for Evaluation and Measurement at Kuwait University has announced the opening of online registration for the upcoming academic aptitude tests; which will take place as previously scheduled on these Saturdays — May 10, May 31 and June 28.

Registration will start at 10:00 am on May 27 and will continue until June 29; or until all available seats are filled, whichever comes first.

The office urged all Grade 12 students (or their equivalent) and high school graduates interested in taking the tests to register through the official online registration

portal. Applicants are advised to carefully verify their personal information and follow all instructions provided during the registration process.

Registration during the first two days will be limited to Kuwaitis and the children of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis.

Students whose information is not in the system should use the ‘Create a New User’ option to complete their registration. All examinees must review and comply with the test-day instructions listed on their admission card.

The office emphasized that registration fees are non-refundable under any circumstances and encouraged early registration due to the limited number of seats for each test date.

Employees concerned over possible cuts

Retirement applications surge in ministries

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The rate of retirement applications has increased by approximately 25 percent in a few ministries in recent weeks compared to previous months. This surge in applications reportedly began after the Eid al-Fitr holidays and includes employees at various levels, including supervisors, department heads, and managers, reports Al-Rai daily quoting informed sources.

While the retirement requests did not cite specific reasons, sources linked it to growing concerns over potential changes to the terms and conditions for disbursing cash allowances for unused accumulated leave. There is speculation that the maximum allowable cash compensation at the end of service could be reduced to just 90 days.

They highlighted increasing discussion about possible changes to the calculation of end-of-service gratuities and the introduction of lower payout limits, though no official announcements have been made confirming such changes.

The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry have

received approximately 55 retirement referral applications in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, other entities, such as the Public Institution for Social Security, have reported a noticeable increase in employee inquiries regarding retirement procedures and the calculation of benefits should they choose to retire now.

The sources clarified that early retirement does not entail any significant financial loss for the employee. On the contrary, it relieves long-serving staff from workplace obligations, including attendance requirements and the recently expanded fingerprint system, which now requires three daily scans.

They explained that the retirement applications submitted in various ministries were spread out among employees from different departments, with no particular sector showing a higher concentration than others. This suggests that the primary factor behind this activity is the approaching retirement date, coupled with a desire to avoid any potential changes in the calculation of accumulated leave balances.

Gaza crisis, economic shifts top agenda

Kuwait joins Arab Labor meet in Cairo

CAIRO, April 19, (KUNA): The 51st Arab Labor Conference commenced on Saturday in Cairo, organized by the Arab Labor Organization (ALO), with the participation of representatives from 21 countries, including Kuwait.

The Egyptian Minister of Labor Mr. Mohammad Gibran spoke on behalf of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi at the opening of the conference, affirming Egypt's commitment to supporting the Arab labor movement and promoting the stability and development of all Arab nations.

ALO Director-General Fayez Al-Mutairi emphasized that economic diversification is now a strategic imperative to strengthen Arab economies amid ongoing crises, including climate change, digital transformation, and geopolitical instability.

This session marks a milestone as it coincides with the ALO's 60th anniversary, giving it symbolic significance to reflect on the past, work in the present, and plan for future, Al-Mutairi said. He also re-emphasized commitment to supporting workers across the Arab world.

Al-Mutairi stressed that Gaza is enduring one of the most brutal wars in modern history, with its people and workers facing a systematic campaign of destruction for over a year and a half aimed at erasing all signs of life by the occupation forces.

Continued from Page 1

Dear government ...

There should be real health insurance, not just a formal one, that covers all Kuwaiti citizens and residents, including visitors who pay the insurance premium along with their visa fees, as is done in Schengen countries.

This ongoing waste does not end here. There are also exceptional salaries, a practice unique to Kuwait. While it is positive that the government is reconsidering these exceptional salaries, it must also work on eliminating the issue of random recruitment, which some former MPs used to promote and it contributed to the growing deficit in the public budget.

All of this reduces the chances for increasing the gross domestic product, which requires strategic processes to eliminate waste and redirect resources into the industrial and agricultural sectors, as well as infrastructure development. If KD one billion were allocated annually to raise the salaries of low-income earners, rather than being wasted on random subsidies, it would benefit the public budget, and Kuwait would not need to resort to borrowing.

Seven Kuwaiti

Kuwait Real Estate Company was the first real estate firm to be listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange in 1984. As of 2024, the company's assets were valued at \$1.4 billion, with profits reaching \$41.5 million.

Vice Chairman and CEO of National Real Estate Company Faisal Jameel Al-Essa ranked third among Kuwaitis and 44th on the list. Al-Essa has led the company since 2018. In the first nine months of 2024, National Real Estate Company reported revenues of \$56.8 million, with assets totaling \$1.8 billion as of September 2024.

CEO of Commercial Real Estate Company Abdulmutaleb Marafie ranked fourth among Kuwaitis and 51st overall on the Forbes' list. The company owns major projects in Kuwait, including the Al-Tijaria Tower and the Symphony Style Hotel and

New system

By implementing these rigorous checks, the ministry aims to uphold the credibility of the healthcare workforce and improve the quality of services provided to patients.

Through this progressive initiative, the ministry aspires to spread the culture of transparency and attract highly qualified talent to the healthcare sector. This strategic move aligns with the nation's vision to advance the standard of healthcare and attain the highest level of professional competence.

188 held

The department said that within five days, 40 violating properties were identified, 89 citations were issued for unlicensed commercial activities, 147 wanted individuals and violators were

arrested including one person wanted by law in a theft case, 29 absconders, and 117 violators of the Residency and Labor laws. All of those arrested were referred to the competent authorities for legal action.

The department also confirmed the disconnection of electricity from unlicensed sites, while citations and warnings were issued in coordination with the participating agencies. It added that electricity will be cut immediately from violating sites to guarantee public safety and avoid the risks posed by unlicensed activities in residential areas.

Moreover, a similar campaign carried out in Salmiya on Friday resulted in the issuance of 2,841 traffic tickets for various violations, arrest of 41 wanted individuals and one person in possession of alcoholic beverages.

All field departments within the Traffic Affairs and Operations Sector participated in the security campaign, such as the General Traffic Department, Rescue Police General Department, Central Operations General Department and the Private Security Sector.

Female police also played an active role, contributing to enhancing the effectiveness of the campaign and achieving its security objectives.

The arrested individuals during the campaign included 15 who violated the Residency and Labor laws, five absconders, 17 wanted by law, one for the possession of alcoholic drinks, one for involvement in a criminal activity and three who failed to present a valid identification document; while nine vehicles and motorcycles wanted by the judiciary were impounded along with three motorcycles whose riders committed traffic violations.

The ministry confirmed the continuation of such field campaigns in cooperation with relevant authorities, as part of a comprehensive plan to curb violations and transgressions that pose a threat to lives and properties. It urged everyone to cooperate with security personnel and report any illegal behavior by calling emergency number 112.

KFAED boosts Egypt key sectors with \$3.6b loans

Cooperation model for Arab development

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Acting Director General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) Walid Shamlan Al-Bahar praised the fund's long-standing cooperation with Egypt, which began in 1964 when KFAED provided its first loan of \$31.4 million to help finance the Suez Canal development project, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Al-Bahar explained that the development of relations between KFAED and Egypt over the years stands as an exemplary model of Arab cooperation in economic and social development.

KFAED has provided Egypt with approximately 54 loans to date, totaling around \$3.6 billion, that contribute to the development of vital sectors such as health, transportation, agriculture, electricity, petroleum, water, and sanitation.



Ministry of Defense photo
Deputy Chief of Staff pays an inspection visit to the Medical Service Authority.

Air Vice Marshal Al-Sabah tours key facilities

Army deputy deputy chief praises medical authority

KUWAIT CITY, April 19, (KUNA): Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Air Vice Marshal Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah praised the efforts of the Medical Service Authority members and the qualitative leap achieved by the authority.

In a press statement on Saturday, the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army said that the Air Vice Marshal made an inspection visit to the authority, during which he was briefed on its most prominent achievements and development projects.

The Deputy Chief of Staff also conducted a field tour of several medical departments at Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital, visited medical equipment warehouses, and discussed mechanisms for supporting and updating medical inventory and ensuring the sustainability of technical readiness across the authority's various facilities.

He praised the role of Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital in providing the best services and medical care, pointing to its pivotal role in providing medical support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He called for maintaining their excellence and constantly striving to improve the healthcare system and provide the best possible care for patients.

The Deputy Chief of Staff was received by Head of the Medical Services Authority Major General Dr. Waleed Malallah and a number of the authority's officers.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning



The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning would like to announce the tender for the following works :

Tender Title	Tender No.	Tender Bond	Documentation Fee	Closing Date & Time	
Completion of Construction of 507 Villas & Its Associated External Works in Village A2 & A3 Madinat Al Hidd Housing Project in the Kingdom of Bahrain funded through the Kuwait Grant under the GCC Development Program to the Kingdom of Bahrain.	HP / 02/ 24	BD 30,000/-	BD 100/-	Wednesday, 25 th June, 2025	1:30 PM (Bahrain local time)

- Suitably eligible and qualified contractors are invited to participate in the above-mentioned Tender Package. Eligibility to participate shall be given to Kuwaiti Grade 'A' Contractor registered with the Kuwaiti Central Tender Committee; and Contractors registered in Bahrain either a Housing or a Building Contractor in a Joint Venture with any Kuwaiti Eligible Contractor. Full details of the tenderer's eligibility and qualification criteria are provided in the Invitation for Qualification document.
- This is a public tender whereby the qualification of tenderers is combined with the submission of their technical and financial proposals. Full details are provided in the Invitation for Qualification Document no. QD-EHH-HP-2024 attached to the tender package. This tender is a two-envelope tender and the qualification & technical bids will be opened first and the financial bid of technically qualified tenderers only will be opened later.
- This tender is advertised through the Bahrain Tender Board E-Tendering System and eligible contractors who wish to participate for above mentioned Project shall have to purchase and download the Documents online through the Bahrain Tender Board's portal <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.bh>. The tender documents shall be available for purchase and download beginning from Wednesday,16th April 2025 up to Wednesday,11th June 2025.
- Contractors who are not yet registered in the Bahrain Tender Board's e-tendering system shall be required to register through the below-mentioned link. Details of registration are provided online at the Bahrain Tender Board website. For technical assistance please contact the Tender Board through email address helpdesk@tenderboard.gov.bh or call on Tel No. + 973 - 17566666.
- <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.bh/Tenders/registerUser>
- The completed Tender which comprise of the Application for Qualification, Technical and Financial Proposal documents shall be submitted online in accordance with the Instruction to Tender and the E-Tendering Guidelines of the Bahrain Tender Board. The Tenderer should include and enclose in his offer the Tender Bond for the amount specified above. The Tender Bond should be in the form and manner as prescribed in the tender document valid for 180 days from the closing date.
- This Tender is in accordance with the provision of the Kingdom of Bahrain's Law Regulating Government Tenders & Purchases No. (36) of 2002 and Its Implementing Regulations issued by Decree No. (37) of 2002; and is subjected to the Unified Rules for Giving Priority to National Products and Products of a National Origin (Article 8, Prime Ministerial Edict No. 21 of 1987).

For any query regarding the invitation, please contact:
Cost Engineering Section, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, P.O. Box 5802, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, Tel. No.: **+97317533000** - ext.519,
Email: **Chandramohanan.Krishnapilla@housing.gov.bh**.

• This advertisement shall be a supplementary to the Tender Documents.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning



The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning would like to announce the tender for the following works:

Tender Title	Tender No.	Tender Bond	Documentation Fee	Closing Date & Time	
Contract Management & Site Supervision for Construction and Completion of 507 Villa in Madinat Al Hidd - Village A2 & A3 in Kingdom of Bahrain funded through the Kuwait Grant under the GCC Development Program to the Kingdom of Bahrain	HP / 03/ 24	BD 10,000/-	BD 100/-	Wednesday, 25 th June, 2025	1:30 PM (Bahrain local time)

- Suitably eligible and qualified consultants are invited to participate in the Tender. Eligibility to participate shall be given to Kuwaiti Category A Consultants registered with the Kuwaiti Central Tender Committee; and Consultants registered in Bahrain should be licensed as Category A with the Council for Regulating the Practice of Engineering Professions (CRPEP), Kingdom of Bahrain in a Joint Venture with any Kuwaiti Eligible Consultant. Full details of the tenderer's eligibility and qualification criteria are provided in the Invitation for Qualification document.
- This is a public tender whereby the qualification of tenderers is combined with the submission of their technical and financial proposals. Full details are provided in the Invitation for Qualification Document no. QD/EHH/S-HP/2024 attached to the tender package. This tender is a two-envelope tender and the qualification & technical bids will be opened first and the financial bid of technically qualified tenderers only will be opened later.
- This tender is advertised through the Bahrain Tender Board E-Tendering System and eligible consultants who wish to participate for above mentioned Project shall have to purchase and download the Documents online through the Bahrain Tender Board's portal <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.bh>. The tender documents shall be available for purchase and download beginning from Wednesday,16th April 2025 up to Wednesday,11th June 2025.
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Email: **Chandramohanan.Krishnapilla@housing.gov.bh**.

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Abrego Garcia case is about far more than one man: Hollen

US Supreme Court blocks, for now, new deportations under 18th century wartime law

WASHINGTON, April 19, (AP): The Supreme Court on Saturday blocked, for now, the deportations of any Venezuelans held in northern Texas under an 18th century wartime law.

In a brief order, the court directed the Trump administration not to remove Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet Detention Center “until further order of this court.”

Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissented.

The high court acted in an emergency appeal from the American Civil Liberties Union contending that immigration authorities appeared to be moving to restart removals under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798. The Supreme Court had said earlier in April that deportations could proceed only if those about to be removed had a chance to argue their case in court and were given “a reasonable time” to contest their pending removals.

“We are deeply relieved that the Court has temporarily blocked the removals. These individuals were in imminent danger of spending the rest of their lives in a brutal Salvadoran

prison without ever having had any due process,” ACLU lawyer Lee Gelert said in an email.

On Friday, two federal judges refused to step in as lawyers for the men launched a desperate legal campaign to prevent their deportation, even as one judge said the case raised legitimate concerns. Early Saturday, the 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals also refused to issue an order protecting the detainees from being deported.

The administration is expected to return to the Supreme Court quickly in an effort to persuade the justices to lift their temporary order.

The ACLU had already sued to block deportations of two Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet facility and sought an order barring removals of any immigrants in the region under the Alien Enemies Act.

In an emergency filing early Friday, the ACLU warned that immigration authorities were accusing other Venezuelan men held there of being members of the Tren de Aragua gang, which would make them subject to President Donald Trump’s use of the act.



Venezuelan migrants deported from the United States arrive at Simon Bolivar International Airport in Maiquetia, Venezuela on March 30. (AP)

The act has only been invoked three previous times in US history, most recently during World War II to hold Japanese-American civilians in internment camps. The Trump administration contended it gave them

power to swiftly remove immigrants they identified as members of the gang, regardless of their immigration status.

Following the unanimous high court order on April 9, federal judges

in Colorado, New York and southern Texas promptly issued orders barring removal of detainees under the AEA until the administration provides a process for them to make claims in court.

But there had been no such order issued in the area of Texas that covers Bluebonnet, which is located 24 miles north of Abilene in the far northern end of the state.

US District Judge James Wesley Hendrix, a Trump appointee, this week declined to bar the administration from removing the two men identified in the ACLU lawsuit because Immigration and Customs Enforcement filed sworn declarations that they would not be immediately deported. He also balked at issuing a broader order prohibiting removal of all Venezuelans in the area under the act because he said removals hadn’t started yet.

Donald Trump’s disregard of the American judicial system as well, **Sen Chris Van Hollen** said Friday as he returned from a three-day trip to El Salvador to press for the detained man’s release.

Speaking to reporters just after landing back in the United States, Van Hollen offered few answers about what will come next in Abrego Garcia’s case. But the Maryland Democrat said that he and others will keep speaking out after the Trump administration defied court orders to facilitate his return to the United States and insisted that he would stay in El Salvador - even as officials acknowledged an “error” in deporting him.

“It’s about protecting the constitutional rights of everybody who resides in the United States,” Van Hollen said at Washington Dulles International Airport at a news conference with Abrego Garcia’s supporters behind him. “It’s very clear that the president, Trump administration, are blatantly, flagrantly disagreeing with, defying the order from the Supreme Court.”



Emergency crews respond after a plane crashed into the Platte River killing several people on April 18, in Fremont, Neb. (AP)

Nebraska plane crash kills 3

Three people died when a small airplane crashed into a river in eastern Nebraska Friday night, authorities said.

The plane was traveling along the Platte River and crashed into the water south of Fremont at 8:15 pm, Sgt Brie Frank of the Dodge County Sheriff’s Office said during a news conference.

The bodies of three people were

recovered, Frank confirmed.

Authorities did not immediately release the identities of the deceased.

The sheriff’s office said the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board will oversee the investigation near Fremont, located about 37 miles (59.5 kilometers) west of Omaha. (AP)

PARIS, April 19, (AP): US President Donald Trump on Friday said negotiations between Ukraine and Russia are “coming to a head” and insisted that neither side is “playing” him in his push to end the grinding war.

Trump spoke shortly after Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned that the US may “move on” from trying to secure a Russia-Ukraine peace deal if there is no progress in the coming days, after months of efforts have failed to bring an end to the fighting.

“Now, if for some reason, one of the two parties makes it very difficult, we’re just going to say you’re foolish. You are fools, you horrible people,” Trump said. “And we’re going to just take a pass. But hopefully, we won’t have to do that.”

Rubio’s dour assessment came after landmark talks in Paris among US, Ukrainian and European officials produced outlines for steps toward peace and appeared to make some long-awaited progress. Another meeting is expected next week in London, and Rubio suggested it could be decisive in determining whether the Trump administration continues its involvement.

Putin announces Easter ceasefire in Kyiv

Trump says Ukraine-Russia talks ‘coming to a head’



US President Donald Trump, (right), meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G-20 Summit in Hamburg on July 7, 2017. (AP)

“We are now reaching a point where we need to decide whether this is even possible or not,” Rubio told reporters in Paris. “Because if it’s not, then I think we’re just going to move on. It’s not our war. We have other priorities to focus on.”

He said the US administration wants

to decide “in a matter of days.”

The State Department said Rubio issued the same warning in a phone call Friday with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, telling him that “if a clear path to peace does not emerge soon, the United States will step back from efforts to broker peace.” Trump said “Marco is

right” that the dynamic of the negotiations must change, but stopped short of saying he’s ready to walk away.

“Well, I don’t want to say that,” Trump said. “But we want to see it end.”

Also:

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a temporary Easter ceasefire in **Ukraine**, the Kremlin said Saturday.

According to the Kremlin, the ceasefire will last from 6 pm Moscow time (1500 GMT) on Saturday to midnight (2100 GMT) following Easter Sunday.

“Guided by humanitarian considerations, today from 18:00 to 00:00 from Sunday to Monday, the Russian side declares an Easter truce. I order that all military actions be stopped for this period,” Putin said at a meeting with Chief of the General Staff **Valery Gerasimov**, the Kremlin’s Press Service quoted him as saying.

“We assume that the Ukrainian side will follow our example. At the same time, our troops must be ready to repel possible violations of the truce and provocations from the enemy, any of its aggressive actions,” Putin said.



View of the Monte Faito cable car departure station in Castellammare di Stabia near Naples, southern Italy, on April 18, with the cabin from which nine passengers were rescued when the traction cable broke Thursday, killing four people in another cabin that fell further up the mountain. Inset: Rescuers on the site where a cable car carrying tourists south of Naples. (AP)

Cable car accident in southern Italy kills 4

Three tourists, including a British couple, were among four people who were killed when a mountain cable car plunged into a ravine south of Naples, officials confirmed Saturday.

Britain’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said in a statement that it is “supporting the families of a British couple who have died in Italy and are in touch with the local authorities.”

On Friday, a day after the accident, a spokesperson for the mayor of Vico Equense had said that the pair were siblings, but confirmed Saturday that that was based on bad information.

An Israeli woman was the third foreign victim to be identified following Thursday’s accident.

The fourth victim was the Italian driver of the cable car. A fifth tourist, said to be the brother of the Israeli victim, is in a stable but critical condition at a Naples hospital, officials said.

Initial reports suggested that a traction cable may have snapped as the cable car ascended Monte Faito, in the town of Castellammare di Stabia. The cable car plunged into a ravine after stopping very close to the station at the top of the peak, at around 1,050 meters (3,400 feet). (AP)

Romania’s presidential election redo high-stakes test of its democracy

BUCHAREST, Romania, April 19, (AP): Romania’s presidential election redo next month will be a high-stakes test for the European Union member’s democracy after last year’s annulled vote triggered the country’s deepest political crisis since 1989.

Romania’s Constitutional Court annulled the election on Dec. 6 after the far-right outsider Calin Georgescu topped first-round polls. The decision followed allegations of electoral violations and a Russian campaign promoting Georgescu, who is now under investigation and barred from the rerun. Moscow has denied it meddled.

“What happened last year was very serious and ... at that time, completely anti-democratic,” Elena Lasconi, who came second to enter the runoff last year and is participating in the new election, told The Associated Press. “It was not justified, in my opinion.”

Once a communist state until the end of the Cold War, Romania has spent decades trying to build strong democratic institutions. But last year’s annulled election shattered public trust - and it could take years to repair the damage.

“I think the public trust in political parties, in public institutions, in the state generally was quite low,” says Septimius Parvu, coordinator of the electoral program at Expert Forum, a pro-democracy think-tank. “This dislocated even more the



Crin Antonescu, presidential candidate for the ruling coalition, made of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the Liberal Party (PNL) and the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), waves after registering his bid with the electoral authority in Bucharest, Romania on March 9. (AP)

trust. It created an earthquake which would ... leave marks in the longer term on the trust in democracy.”

Career diplomat becomes face of Trump ‘America First’ agenda at UN

UNITED NATIONS, April 19, (AP): The highest-ranking US representative now at the United Nations told Congress two years ago that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was “unprovoked” and “unjustified,” urging UN members to condemn Moscow’s aggression and demand an end to the war.

In February, it was the same career diplomat, Dorothy Shea, who voiced the Trump administration’s extraordinary decision to split with European allies and refuse to back a UN resolution blaming Russia for its invasion on the third anniversary of the war.

While it is typical for diplomats to stay on as US presidents - and their political parties - change, Shea’s interim role has unexpectedly made her a face of the stunning US transition on the world stage, with President Donald Trump’s “America First” approach increasingly upending the post-World War II international order.

Shea will be in place longer than expected after Trump’s unusual decision last month to withdraw his nominee for UN ambassador, Rep Elise Stefanik, from consideration because of a slim Republican House majority.

“I would say (Shea’s) position is unique. It is probably particularly unique in that because of the extraordinary change, not just from one administration to another, but really an era of US foreign policy, even when there were nuanced differences,” said Phillip Reeker, the former acting assistant secretary of state for Europe. “The change in the vote that took place at the UN on the Russia-Ukraine war was really an inflection point in U.S. policy.”

On Feb. 24, the US joined Russia in voting against a European-backed Ukrainian resolution demanding an immediate withdrawal of Moscow’s forces. A dueling US resolution noted “the tragic loss of life” and called for “a swift end to the conflict,” but it didn’t mention Moscow’s aggression as the Trump administration opened negotiations with Russia on a ceasefire.

“Continuing to engage in rhetorical rivalries in New York may make diplomats feel vindicated, but it will not save souls on the battlefield,” Shea, 59, said at the time. “Let us prove to ourselves and to our citizens that we can come together and agree on the most basic principles. Let us show



United States UN Ambassador Dorothy Shea addresses the United Nations Security Council on March 24. (AP)

one another that the bold vision of peace that once pulled us out of hell can prevail.”

The message was a shocking retreat for the U.S. in the 193-member UN General Assembly, whose resolutions are not legally binding but are seen as a barometer of world opinion. It also reinforced the fears of some allies about what a second Trump presidency could mean for longstanding transatlantic partnerships - and whether the US could remain a bulwark against aggressors like Russia.

For Shea, it was another day at work. She has spent the last 30-plus years serving as a diplomat under both Republican and Democratic presidents - from Bill Clinton to Trump - carrying out their policies even if they were a departure from longstanding U.S. positions.

“I don’t know what her personal views are on things. But administrations change, policies change. And your job as a diplomat is to advocate for those policies,” said a former colleague and deputy US ambassador, Robert Wood, who recently retired.

The US mission to the UN declined to comment.

Dutch leader of party in ruling coalition quits politics

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, April 19, (AP): Dutch centre-right leader Pieter Omtzigt announced Friday evening he is quitting both the fragile four-party ruling coalition and national politics.

Citing his mental health, the 51-year-old said in a social media video that he is unable to recover from burnout in the current political climate.

“It was a huge honor and privilege to be a member of parliament for more than 21 years,” Omtzigt said in the surprise move. “But the toll has been quite high. That is why I am choosing to put my family first for the first time and to choose my own health.”

His New Social Contract party, founded just two years ago, is the fourth largest in the Dutch parliament and formed part of the ruling coalition after months of negotiations last year.

The government seemed on the brink of collapse over spring budget talks this week. In the previous nine months, it has nearly toppled after the resignation of the finance state secretary over what she saw as denigrating comments on immigrants and the refusal of the immigration minister to



Pieter Omtzigt, leader of the recently formed Dutch political party New Social Contract prepares to cast his ballot at the Museumfabriek, or Museum Factory, in Enschede, Netherlands on Nov 22, 2023. (AP)

sign off on honors for volunteers who worked with refugees.

Known for his sharp tongue and the hard-right leader Geert Wilders, who helms the largest party in parliament, was considered too controversial to lead the country but often dominates political negotiations.

Omtzigt leaves the party in the hands of his deputy Nicolien van Vroonhoven, who took over in September when he was on medical leave. His fall departure was the second time he had stepped back from his duties for his mental health.

Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof wished Omtzigt well. “The Hague is losing a passionate and dedicated MP, a true representative of the people. I thank him for his efforts and our collaboration in recent times,” Schoof said on social media.

A former member of the center-right Christian Democrats, Omtzigt’s new New Social Contract party immediately rocketed up opinion polls thanks to his reputation as a tireless crusader for whistleblowers and victims of government scandals.

INTERNATIONAL

Cambodia welcomes Japan navy ships to naval base that US suspects for China’s special use

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, April 19, (AP): Two Japanese naval ships docked Saturday at Cambodia’s Ream Naval Base, whose recently completed Chinese-funded upgrade has heightened US concerns that it will be used as a strategic outpost for China’s navy in the Gulf of Thailand.

The visit by the two minesweepers, the 141-meter (463-foot) -long Bungo and the 67-meter (219-foot) -long Etajima, part of the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force, marks the first foreign navy visit since the base’s expansion project was completed earlier this month.

Tokyo has developed increasingly close ties with Cambodia in recent years, seeking to offset China’s influence in the region, and Cambodia invited it to make the renovated port’s first port call, widely seen as an attempt to allay Washington’s concerns.

Both Japanese ships, making a four-day port call with a total of 170 sailors, docked at the base’s new pier, where Cambodian officials, including Rear Adm. Mean Savoeun, deputy commander of the base, held a welcome ceremony.

Concerns about China’s activities at the Ream base emerged in 2019 following a Wall Street Journal report alleging a draft agreement that would grant China 30-year use of the base for military personnel, weapon storage, and warship berthing. The US government has publicly and repeatedly aired its concerns.

China and Cambodia have close political, military, and

economic ties. They commenced the port project in 2022, which included the demolition of previous naval structures built by the US at the base.

Cambodia has stated that warships from all friendly countries are welcome to dock at the new pier, provided they meet certain conditions. When Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani announced the planned visit on Tuesday, he said Japan’s port call symbolizes friendship with Cambodia and is key to regional stability and peace.

He stated that the visit would help ensure Cambodia has an open and transparent naval port, while noting the concerns over China’s growing efforts to secure overseas outposts for military expansion.

The port call came just one day after Chinese President Xi Jinping concluded a two-day state visit to Cambodia aimed at further strengthening China’s strong ties with its closest ally in Southeast Asia.

A statement on Saturday from Japan’s embassy in Cambodia stated that the two vessels are on a mission that began in January to visit 11 countries across Africa, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia. The port call in Cambodia is considered a “historically significant event for Japan-Cambodia relations,” it said.

The embassy emphasized that the journey of the Japanese vessels “underlines the importance of freedom of navigation, free and open international order based on international law, and its development.”



In this photo released by Cambodia’s Ream Naval Base, two Japanese warship dock at a naval base’s pier during a four-day visit at the Ream Naval Base in Sihanoukville, southwestern of Phnom Penh, Cambodia on April 19. (AP)

‘Taiwan was taking lessons from Ukraine in its defense against Russia’

US lawmakers’ bipartisan Taiwan visit signals support despite harsh words from Trump

TAIPEI, Taiwan, April 19, (AP): US Republican and Democratic lawmakers made their first trip to Taiwan under the new Trump administration a bipartisan one, aiming to show both Taiwan and China that US support for Taiwan’s defense remains broad, despite the harsh words and heightened tariffs President Donald Trump has imposed for the Taiwanese.

Taiwan’s leaders, in turn, have assured the Republican US administration that they have taken in Trump’s complaints and are acting on them.

Many Asia-Pacific nations are eschewing the retaliatory criticism and tariffs of some of the US’s European allies after Trump earlier this month slapped broad tariffs on many countries around the world, including a 32% one for Taiwan.

Despite that hit, conversations in Taiwan this week were “optimistic and forward-looking,” said Democratic Sen Chris Coons, who was visiting Taipei alongside two Republican senators. “I’m optimistic that we’re going to see a strong next chapter in US-Taiwan relations,” he said.

The Taiwanese have said they are working fast to strike new trade and investment deals that suit the Trump administration, on top of the advanced-semiconductor giant’s \$100 billion investment this year alone in chip production in the US.

The US lawmakers also said that Taiwan was taking lessons from Ukraine in its defense against Russia and criticism from Trump, and is investing fast to make their military stronger, nimble and less dependent on the US as the island’s strongest deterrent against China. That includes seeking investment with Americans on drone warfare.

Sens Pete Ricketts and Coons, the ranking Republican and Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s East Asia subcommittee, spoke ahead of scheduled talks Friday with President Lai Ching-te, Defense Minister Wellington Koo and national security adviser Joseph Wu. Republican Sen. Ted Budd also is on the trip.

In remarks carried by the official Central News Agency, Lai called for a “secure and sustainable economic and trade partnership” between the two sides. That would involve building “non-red supply chains,” for manufacturing that exclude Chinese involvement in order to “meet geopolitical and climate change challeng-



US Senator Pete Ricketts, (right), and Chris Coons are interviewed by the Associated Press in Taipei, Taiwan on April 17. (AP)

es,” the agency quoted Lai as saying at the Presidential Office Building.

Such an approach would involve considerable challenges since producers of Taiwanese items sold in the US such as phones and electronics are mainly assembled in China.

The mission comes at a time when an economy-shaking trade war between the

US and China has some warning that China could strike out at Taiwan, a self-governed island with a vibrant democracy and the world’s top production of the most advanced semiconductors. China claims Taiwan as its territory, to be retaken by force if necessary.

Trump has repeatedly accused Taiwan of “stealing” the United States’ computer chip industry. His criticism of Taiwan, and his insistence last year that “Taiwan should pay us” for its defense, have heightened concern that the US, Taiwan’s strongest military partner, might decide not to get too involved if China were ever to attack Taiwan.

The 32% tariffs on Taiwan included in Trump’s sweeping new tariffs on trade partners this month surprised many Taiwanese, who thought that their government had shown itself a true ally to Washington.

“Look past the rhetoric and look at the action,” Ricketts said, repeating a watchword of the Republicans on Trump’s statements.

After saying he was in no rush to finish trade deals, the president said he thought he could wrap up talks “over the next three or four weeks.”

Another key Asian US partner, Japan, held its first round of tariff talks between top negotiators in Washington Friday, where both sides agreed to try to reach an agreement as quickly as possible and hold a second round of meetings later this month. However, experts say reaching a full range of agreements with the dozens of nations now waiting on the Trump administration could take months or longer.

Ricketts cited the priority that Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has placed on helping the Asia-Pacific secure itself against China. That included making the region one of the first he visited in office, Ricketts said.

Ricketts said Taiwan’s leaders already had reached out to Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick for negotiations, moving quickly in the 90-day pause that Trump announced before the United States starts enforcing the new tariffs on most countries.

Lai, Taiwan’s president, has pledged to increase Taiwan’s military spending to 3% of its gross domestic product, up from about 2.5%, bringing it up to nearly a fifth of its overall budget.

Ex-prez Kabila returns to Congo from exile, arrives in eastern city of Goma

KINSHASA, Congo, April 19, (AP): Former Congolese President Joseph Kabila, accused by the government of supporting rebels in the country’s east, returned to Congo from self-imposed exile on Friday, arriving in the rebel-held eastern city of Goma, two of the ex-president’s associates and a rebel official said.

Kabila, who left Congo in 2023, came to Goma “to participate in peace efforts” in the conflict-hit east where Rwanda-backed M23 rebels have seized large swaths of territory, including the strategic eastern city, said a close aide of the former president.

Another associate of Kabila’s and a senior M23 official also confirmed the former president’s return. The three spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media on the topic.

Congo’s decades-long conflict escalated in January, when the rebels advanced and seized Goma, followed by the town of Bukavu, which they took in February. The fighting has killed some 3,000 people and worsened what was already one of the world’s largest humanitarian crises, with around 7 million people displaced.

Kabila seeks “to take part in efforts to find peace in the country,” his aide said. “Everyone is talking about Congo without the Congolese ... this is not normal.”

The former president is expected to address Goma residents at some point, according to his associate, who accompanied Kabila on the trip.



M23 rebels enter the centre of east Congo’s second-largest city, Bukavu, and take control of the South Kivu province administrative office on Feb 16. (AP)

It was not immediately clear how long Kabila would remain in Goma or what his plans were.

Kabila’s long-expected return is seen as controversial, with some analysts saying his presence in Goma could worsen tensions between the rebels and the Congolese government, especially amid ongoing efforts to negotiate a ceasefire.

Representatives of Congo’s government and M23 rebels met in Qatar earlier this month as the Gulf Arab state leads renewed efforts to get both parties to return to dialogue and recommit themselves to a peace deal they each accuse the other of violating.

Christian Moleka, a political sci-

entist at the Congolese think tank Dypol, said it was likely to have a “detonating effect on Congolese politics,” and strengthen the accusations by “those who believe that there is a connection between him and the M23 rebellion.”

Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi last year accused Kabila of backing the rebels and “preparing an insurrection” with them, a claim Kabila denies.

Kabila led Congo from 2011 to 2019, taking office at the age of 29 and extending his mandate by delaying elections for two years after his term was ended in 2017. His father, former President Laurent Kabila, was assassinated in 2001.

Bangladesh and Pakistan resume talks after 15 years, seek to mend strained ties

DHAKA, Bangladesh, April 19, (AP): Foreign ministry officials from Bangladesh’s interim government and Pakistan resumed talks after a 15-year gap, as the two South Asian Muslim-majority nations attempted to ease strained relations.

Under former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was ousted in August in a students-led mass uprising, Bangladesh expanded relations with neighboring India in every sector.

But ties with India have become increasingly tense. Bangladesh’s interim leader, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, has criticized India for sheltering Hasina in the country and sought her extradition without any positive response from India.

Yunus has meanwhile sought to improve relations with Pakistan, India’s rival. In recent months he met Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif several times, and a high-level Bangladeshi military delegation made a rare visit to Pakistan in January and held talks with Pakistan’s army chief General Asim Munir. In February, Bangladesh’s navy took part in a multinational maritime exercise organized by Pakistan off the Karachi coast.

After Hasina’s exit, Bangladesh and Pakistan resumed direct trading for the first time in years. Direct flights between the countries are expected to resume soon and visa procedures have been eased while India stopped visas for Bangladeshis, except for medical emergencies.

Earlier this month, India cancelled a transshipment facility that allowed Bangladesh to export its primarily garment products to third countries using Indian airports and other Indian infrastructure.

The move is expected to impact Bangladesh’s roughly \$39 billion annual readymade garment exports by increasing trade costs with the European Union, Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar. Bangladesh is the world’s second largest garment producer after China.

After Thursday’s talks in Dhaka between Bangladesh’s Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin and his Pakistani counterpart, Uddin said Bangladesh raised historically “unsettled issues” with Pakistan, including a formal public apology for atrocities allegedly committed by Pakistani troops in 1971 during Bangladesh’s war of independence.

India helped Bangladesh win independence through a nine-month war against then West Pakistan, now Pakistan. Hasina’s Awami League party regularly criticizes Pakistan for alleged atrocities during the war, when Bangladesh says about 3 million people were killed and about 200,000 women were raped by Pakistani soldiers. Pakistan rejects the claims and has never officially apologized.



Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Md. Jashim Uddin, (right), shakes hands with Pakistan Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch as they pose for a photograph during their bilateral meeting in Dhaka on April 17. (AP)

Local media reported earlier that Yunus’ government was preparing to formally raise its demand for \$4.52 billion in financial compensation from Pakistan.

Uddin said the issue of the compensation was raised in Thursday’s meeting.

“These issues need to be resolved for having a solid foundation of our relations,” Uddin said Thursday. The two sides also discussed expansion of trade and commerce and increasing cooperation in agriculture and other sectors, he added.

Yunus’ office said in a statement late Thursday that he held a separate meeting with the Pakistani foreign secretary and emphasized “strengthening ties with Pakistan to boost mutual cooperation and explore trade and business potentials.”

“There are certain hurdles. We have to find ways to overcome those and move forward,” Yunus told Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch.

The last such consultation between the two countries was held in Islamabad in 2010 after Hasina came to power in a 2008 election with a landslide victory.

Baloch said Bangladesh and Pakistan must find ways to “harness the potentials between the two countries,” the statement said.

Africa

Thiam nominated to run in election: Tidjane Thiam, a former Credit Suisse CEO, won a near-unanimous vote to represent the Democratic Party of Ivory Coast in an upcoming presidential election, the party announced.

Thiam won 99.5% of the vote and ran unopposed for the nomination. He is the current president of the party. He previously resigned from his position as CEO of Credit Suisse after a corporate espionage scandal rocked the company. An external report found that Thiam had no knowledge of the espionage.

It isn’t known who will run against him, but the current president, Alassane Ouattara, has indicated that he may run again. Ouattara won in 2020 after a disputed election left dozens dead and opposition candidates boycotted the election.

Ivory Coast is set to hold the vote in October. (AP)

■ ■ ■

UNSC condemns attacks on IDP camps: The UN Security Council (UNSC) expressed deep concern over



Thiam

escalating violence, including in and around El Fasher, North Darfur.

In a press release late Thursday, the UNSC strongly condemned the repeated attacks on Al-Fasher as well as on Zamzam and Abu Shouk camps for internally displaced persons (IDP) in recent days by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The UNSC members expressed deep concern at reports that RSF attacks had resulted in the deaths of at least 400 civilians, including children and at least 11 aid workers, calling for RSF to be held accountable for these attacks.

Recalling resolution 2736 (2024), the members reiterated their demand that RSF halt the siege of Al-Fasher and their call for an immediate halt to the fighting and for de-escalation in and around Al-Fasher.

They called on the parties to the conflict to protect civilians and comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, and fulfil resolution 2736 (2024), as well as abide by their commitments under the Jeddah Declaration.

They also called for RSF as well as all perpetrators of attacks on civilians, and human rights violations and abuses, in Sudan to be held accountable.

They called upon all parties to the conflict to respect and protect humanitarian personnel, their premises and assets in accordance with their obligations under international law. (KUNA)

Crews restore power to nearly all customers in Puerto Rico

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, April 19, (AP): Power was restored to more than 98% of customers Friday after an island-wide blackout hit Puerto earlier this week, authorities said.

More than 1.45 million customers had electricity less than 48 hours after the outage hit, according to Luma Energy, which oversees the transmission and distribution of power on the island.

Luma warned that “some customers may continue to experience temporary outages due to limited generation.”

Gov. Jenniffer González said that all those affected by the blackout had power restored, and that the more than 21,400 customers without electricity on Friday was a result of other unidentified issues.

“Obviously, Luma still has work to do,” she said. “It is a shame for our people ... that we have such an insufficient, mediocre system.”

Normally, a couple thousand customers are temporarily without power every week in Puerto Rico for various reasons.

González noted that more than 98% of customers also had water.

“We have overcome, thank God, a great crisis this week,” she said.



Generators line the sidewalk of a commercial street in Barrio Obrero as shops try to remain open during a prolonged power outage in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on April 17. (AP)

Other Voices

Steel tariffs raise drilling costs

Oil prices hover around \$67-68 amid global trade uncertainties

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

OIL prices are currently hovering around \$67- \$68 per barrel, despite weak global demand and ongoing uncertainties in the global trade market. The main factor contributing to this is the impact of President Trump’s global tariffs, which are affecting consumers worldwide.

The level of tariff increases has shocked the global economy, though it remains uncertain whether the current U.S. administration will maintain its stance or implement a three-month pause.

The question here is: how long will global trade remain in such a state of unpredictable turmoil? How will the global economy navigate through these uncertainties? A global recession seems inevitable, and its effects are being felt in all countries.

How will the world economy be reshaped post-recession? It may possibly lead to new mechanisms for global restructuring and sharing, with perhaps a new economic and trade alliance.

Will China dominate the global economy? How will other countries fit into a new economic structure and alliance outside of the US? Or will the US be part of this new order? After such a turbulent experience with unpredictable tariffs being imposed without proper foresight or long-term strategy, who will want to partner with America? These actions have caused panic in the global economy, causing market chaos with little to no warning. In just 24 hours, the global markets were thrown into turmoil, with stock markets nearly paralyzed and all eyes glued to the screens, unsure of how to react.



Al-Harami

As a result, oil companies are scaling back their long-term projects and slowing down drilling activities. Shale drillers, in particular, are reducing operations. These same companies, which helped the US become one of the largest oil producers in the world with over 13.5 million barrels of crude oil production, are now facing challenges. With the current US oil price at \$63 per barrel, shale producers cannot continue searching for new oil reserves. Their internal economics require a price range of \$60-\$70 per barrel to be viable.

Adding to the difficulties, the price of steel has risen by 25 percent due to new tariffs, and a 10 percent levy on other drilling equipment is further raising costs. As a result, the break-even point is being pushed above \$70 per barrel. If prices don’t rise to this level, new wells will not be drilled, leading to further cost-cutting and job reductions.

We then enter the same cycle, where both major oil companies and smaller local producers struggle to sustain operations amidst low oil prices. The conversation shifts back to the boardroom, where decisions are made regarding future plans, with an eye on potential optimistic scenarios for oil prices. At the same time, companies must navigate hard challenges, including adjusting to new figures, dealing with tariffs, and cutting costs. The important question remains: how to weather this storm and for how long?

Oil-producing countries, too, will soon face the reality of meeting with global financial institutions to borrow billions to cover their massive annual budget deficits. For some of these nations, this will be their first experience with deficit financing.

Oil prices are up but demand is definitely down. It is now time to save... and to save wisely.



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Late tax payments face penalties

Finance ministry warns companies over delayed income tax payments

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Ministry of Finance has issued a firm reminder to companies delaying their income tax payments; urging them to expedite settlement to avoid fines, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Citing Article Eight of the Income Tax Decree, the ministry reiterated that late payments are subject to a penalty of one percent for every 30 days—or part thereof—of delay.

In a recent communication sent to a defaulting company, the ministry highlighted the consequences of failing to comply with tax regulations. It also cited Article 24 of the Executive Regulations, stating the companies have a maximum of 60 days from the date of receiving a tax assessment letter to file objections. After this period, objections will not be considered.

The ministry explained that upon reviewing the company’s tax return, it was determined that the company failed to maintain proper accounting books and records as required by the provisions of Income Tax Decree No. 3/1955, its amendment Law No. 2/2008, and Article 15 of the Executive Regulations. As a result, the ministry opted not to acknowledge the reported financial results of the company; and instead estimated its taxable profit at 30 percent of its revenues.

Based on Article 19 of the Executive Regulations, the Tax Administration is authorized to assess taxes on an estimated basis in cases where determining the actual net income is not feasible. These scenarios include failure to submit the tax return or its attachments, missed deadlines, or the absence of required records and documentation after two formal warnings. The same applies if a taxpayer refuses to provide requested information or submits inaccurate or misleading documentation.

The ministry stressed that adherence to tax obligations is critical, warning that non-compliance not only results in fines but also subjects companies to estimated assessments which may significantly increase their tax liabilities.

Kuwaiti companies shine in Iraq’s agricultural, food industries week

BAGHDAD, April 19, (KUNA): Kuwaiti companies have marked a notable presence at the Agriculture and Food Industries Week Exhibition held at the International Fairgrounds in Baghdad.

The Kuwaiti pavilion featured an attractive design and diverse exhibits, showcasing food products that reflect the quality of Kuwaiti industry and attracting the attention of visitors and investors alike.

This participation came within the

framework of strengthening economic relations between Kuwait and participating countries, as well as creating good marketing opportunities for Kuwaiti products, which boast high-quality specifications, in regional markets.

Kuwait’s participation in the exhibition, which opened last Tuesday and lasts until April 20, was under the support of the Public Authority for Industry, which promotes export industrial companies and enhances their competitiveness.



KUNA photos
Agriculture and Food Industries Week Exhibition held at the Baghdad International Fairgrounds in Baghdad.

According to Brand Finance’s report 2025

NBK is the most valuable & strongest banking brand in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) ranked as the most valuable and strongest banking brand in Kuwait for 2025, according to Brand Finance’s annual report.

Brand Finance’s 2025 report highlighted NBK’s success in widening the gap with its competitors in Kuwait in terms of brand value and strength. The bank’s brand value surged by 22%, reaching US\$1.738 billion, up from US\$1.428 billion in 2024, placing it tenth among the most valuable banking brands in the Middle East. Its Brand Strength Index (BSI) also improved to 83.3 points, up from 81.2 points in 2024. NBK continues to lead in Kuwait as the strongest banking brand for the fourteenth consecutive year and ranks third among the strongest banking brands in the region.

Globally, NBK secured the 154th spot on Brand Finance’s 2025 list of the world’s 500 most valuable banking brands, climbing 12 places from its 2024 ranking. The bank also ranked 61st worldwide in brand strength, reinforcing its position among the strongest banking brands regionally and internationally. This recognition reflects NBK’s solid financial performance and growth prospects, assessed based on key criteria such as profitability margins and revenue.

This strong brand rating underscores the trust NBK enjoys among customers and shareholders, reinforcing its distinguished reputation locally, regionally, and globally. It also reflects the bank’s solid financial performance, its expanding geographic footprint across 13 countries on four continents, and its strategic presence – key factors that drive shareholder returns and enhance its offerings to deliver best-in-class banking products and services.

This rating further highlights the success of NBK’s strategic approach in reinforcing its identity and enhancing its brand strength.

Brand Finance is the world’s leading independent brand valuation and strategy consultancy. Headquartered in London, the firm has offices in over 20 countries.

The company’s trademark valuation is based on rigorous criteria, including the scale of operations, geographical reach, global and regional reputation, brand classification, and intellectual property.

NBK remains firmly committed to maintaining its leadership position and securing the highest credit ratings among all banks in the region, as affirmed by the consensus of renowned credit rating agencies: Moody’s, Standard & Poor’s, and Fitch.

The Bank holds long-term ratings of A1 from Moody’s, A+ from Fitch Ratings, and A from Standard & Poor’s, underpinned by its robust capitalization, consistent performance growth, high asset quality, cautious lending policies, effective risk management, and experienced and stable leadership.

NBK’s standing among the safest banks in the world underscores the strength of its brand, as the bank continues to expand and foster innovation. It remains committed to enhancing its presence in key regional markets by offering innovative banking services tailored to meet its customers’ needs, irrespective of their geographic location. According to Global Finance’s 2024 list of the 100 safest banks in the world, NBK was the sole Kuwaiti bank featured, securing the 83rd position globally. This achievement highlights the strong global confidence in the bank.



NBK headquarters.

Brand Value - Kuwait

Rank		Brand		Value (USD Million)	
2025	2024			2025	2024
1	1	البنكي NBK		1,738	1,428
2	2	KFH		1,293	1,387
3	3	بنك الكويت الوطني		363	329
4	4	بنك الخليج BANK GULF BANK		244	229
5	5	بنك الكويت الوطني		222	199
6	7	بنك الكويت الوطني		199	162
7	6	بنك الكويت الوطني		159	174

Brand Strength - Kuwait

Rank		Brand		Strength	
2025	2024			2025	2024
1	1	البنكي NBK		83	81
2	2	KFH		79	80
3	3	بنك الكويت الوطني		70	72
4	4	بنك الخليج BANK GULF BANK		69	70
5	5	بنك الكويت الوطني		68	69
6	7	بنك الكويت الوطني		57	58
7	6	بنك الكويت الوطني		51	63

Brand Value - Middle East

Rank		Brand		Value (USD Million)	
2025	2024			2025	2024
39	39	QNB		8,358	8,404
51	53	بنك الكويت الوطني		7,516	6,401
69	74	SNB		5,280	4,425
83	80	بنك الكويت الوطني		4,543	3,870
84	82	FAB		4,512	3,846
102	109	بنك الكويت الوطني		3,339	2,855
120	132	بنك الكويت الوطني		2,527	2,061
136	129	بنك الكويت الوطني		2,083	2,285
150	164	بنك الكويت الوطني		1,762	1,449
154	166	بنك الكويت الوطني		1,738	1,428
190	170	KFH		1,293	1,387

Brand Strength - Middle East

Rank		Brand		Strength	
2025	2024			2025	2024
36	21	بنك الكويت الوطني		87.9	86.5
42	24	QNB		86.3	85.9
61	50	البنكي NBK		83.3	81.2
65	46	بنك الكويت الوطني		82.4	82.4
68	95	بنك الكويت الوطني		81.5	78.2
71	100	بنك الكويت الوطني		81.0	77.9
74	172	SNB		80.5	72.5
85	70	KFH		78.7	79.7
93	166	بنك الكويت الوطني		77.6	73.3
101	123	بنك الكويت الوطني		76.7	76.3

Brand Ratings

Private equity targets growth in non-public companies

Alternative investments offer portfolio diversification beyond stocks & bonds

By NBK Wealth

Individual and institutional investors are familiar with traditional assets like stocks and bonds, which have long been the cornerstone of investment strategies. These assets are well-established, easily accessible, highly regulated, relatively liquid, and have an extensive historical track-record that investors often rely on.

Alternative investments, on the other hand, refer to non-traditional investments that are not publicly traded on an exchange. They are unconstrained strategies or assets that invest in both public and private markets, providing an attractive source of alpha, income, and diversification that would complement traditional stocks and bonds investments.

Alternative strategies encompass a broad range of investment vehicles, such as private equity, private credit, hedge funds, real estate, and infrastructure. These investments can present appealing opportunities and deliver substantial diversification advantages to a portfolio.

Types of alternatives

There is a wide range of alternative asset classes, each with their own benefits, risks, and characteristics:

■ **Private equity:** is an alternative asset class that involves investing in companies that are not publicly traded on stock exchanges. This investment strategy includes pooling investors’ capital in a fund structure to invest in private companies with the goal of enhancing their value and realizing profits upon exit.

■ **Private credit:** refers to privately negotiated loans between a borrower and a non-bank lender. This strategy involves providing debt financing to companies, often in the form of direct loans, with the goal of generating attractive risk-adjusted returns through interest payments, and potential for profit upon loan repayment or exit.

■ **Hedge funds:** are private, unconstrained investment vehicles that utilize both long and short positions, often with leverage. A long position involves buying an asset in anticipation of price appreciation, while a short position profits from a price decline.

■ **Real estate:** a multi-faceted asset class, with investors typically gaining exposure through public markets via Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) listed on exchanges or through private markets via direct investments or funds.

■ **Infrastructure:** is an alternative asset class focused on investing in physical assets that provide essential services to society such as water utilities, power networks, airports, and public transportation systems.

Finding the right mix of alternatives

Alternative investments are key to enhancing portfolio performance, boosting returns, reducing volatility, and providing diversification beyond traditional stocks and bonds. It is important, however, to understand the specifics of each alternative asset class and find the right mix as each has its own characteristic and can serve a different role in a portfolio.

The appropriate amount of allocation will depend on several factors, including the investors’ investment objectives, the size of any existing allocation to alternatives, time horizon, and risk tolerance.

Given the broad spectrum of alternative asset classes, each with its unique benefits and risks, it’s important not to treat them as a single portfolio building block. Investors should collaborate with experienced financial advisors to find the right alternative strategy or blend of strategies that meets their portfolio needs.

Traditional vs. alternative investments

Characteristic	Traditional Investments	Alternative Investments
Liquidity	o Highly liquid, easily traded with minimal fees.	o Often illiquid, with higher fees due to complexity, active management, and longer investment horizons.
Structure	o Publicly traded on exchange platforms	o Private investment vehicles that invest in assets in both private and public markets
Accessibility	o Easily accessible to retail investors	o Primarily accessible to institutional investors or UHNWI ^(*) , depending on the structure and strategy
Regulation	o Highly regulated by government agencies and financial bodies.	o Less regulated, with fewer disclosure requirements.
Investment Horizon	o Varies, depending on asset class and investor objectives.	o Typically long-term, focusing on growth potential over extended periods.

(*) UHNWI – Ultra High Net-Worth Individuals



NBK Wealth logo.

folio needs.

Benefits and considerations

Alternative investments can offer significant diversification benefits, thus reducing volatility and overall portfolio risk when combined with traditional asset classes. They also provide potential for superior returns, and grant access to investment opportunities. Assets like real estate and infrastructure hedge against inflation, while private debt generates steady income. Hedge funds offer diversification through varied strategies, and private equity offers high growth potential with investments in private companies, often yielding substantial long-term returns.

However, alternative investments come with risks. They tend to be illiquid, locking up capital for extended periods, and their valuations can be difficult due to limited data, requiring thorough due diligence. These investments also often require substantial capital commitments, making them more accessible to institutional investors or high-net-worth individuals. Additionally, they typically have higher fees due to active management and specialized strategies.

The future of alternatives

The alternative assets industry has experienced robust growth in recent years. With dry powder (capital raised but yet to be deployed) reaching record highs, the sector is positioned for continued expansion. Investors’ interest in alternatives increased over time as they seek higher returns, diversification, and in some cases protection against inflation. This growing demand underscores the increasingly prominent role that alternative assets play in investors’ portfolios.



Key takeaways

■ **Unlocking the power of alternatives:** Alternative investments offer valuable diversification benefits and the potential for higher returns. However, they come with challenges such as limited liquidity and higher fees compared to traditional assets.

■ **Access to investment opportunities:** Alternative investments are key in enhancing portfolio risk-adjusted returns by providing access to investment opportunities that are not typically available in public markets, allowing investors to diversify beyond traditional stocks and bonds.

■ **Guiding your investments:** Collaborating with experienced financial advisors is essential when selecting the right mix of alternative strategies. Allocating to alternatives requires a thorough understanding of the underlying assets and careful consideration of an investor’s objectives, time horizon, and risk tolerance.

■ **The future of alternative assets:** The alternative assets industry is set for continued growth as investors increasingly seek higher returns, better diversification, and, in some cases, protection against inflation.

Fastest Mobile Network, Best 5G Gaming Experience, Best 5G Video Experience, Best Mobile Network, & Fastest Fixed Network

Zain: Kuwait’s Fastest Network wins five global awards from Ookla® Speedtest®

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Zain has added another illustrious chapter to its success story, reaffirming its leadership in Kuwait’s telecom and ICT sector, becoming the first and only company in the country to win five global awards in a single year from Ookla® Speedtest® – the world’s leading platform for network intelligence, testing, and analytics. These awards recognize Zain’s performance for the third and fourth quarters of 2024.

Zain secured the titles of Fastest Mobile Network, Best 5G Gaming Experience, Best 5G Video Experience, Best Mobile Network, and Fastest Fixed Internet, after achieving the highest scores in Ookla’s analyses, based on hundreds of thousands of consumer-initiated tests across Kuwait. These tests covered all major telecom networks nationwide during the evaluation period, with Zain emerging as the clear leader in every category – cementing its position at the top across multiple performance fronts.

This achievement highlights Zain’s leadership and commitment to investing in cutting-edge technologies, empowering the digital lifestyles of the largest customer base in Kuwait. It builds on the success story Zain began when it became the first operator to commercially launch 5G in Kuwait in 2019. Zain remains steadfast in investing heavily in its digital infrastructure to deliver the latest solutions and services that meet the aspirations of its customers.

On this occasion, **Nawaf Al-Gharabally**, CEO of Zain Kuwait, stated: “We are proud to write a new chapter in Zain’s ongoing success story. This unprecedented achievement reaffirms what we always claim: Zain is Kuwait’s fastest and leading network. We have once again proven our market leadership, strengthening our top position in a fiercely competitive and operationally demanding market.”

He added: “This accomplishment is the result of the dedication and creativity of our national workforce, whom we are immensely proud of. It is also a direct translation of our new 4WARD strategy – ‘Progress with Purpose,’ through which we look to maximize our full potential as a customer-centric, future-proof, and impactful leading regional TechCo. These awards also serve as a clear endorsement from our customers, as they are primarily based on user-initiated tests, making this recognition all the more meaningful.”

Al-Gharabally continued: “This success goes beyond operational and technical excellence. Our continued investment in employee development and human capital is a key pillar in realizing our vision and maintaining our leadership. Our unwavering focus on enhancing the customer experience and placing them at the heart of everything we do has directly contributed to strengthening our brand position, and it is recognitions like these that reflect our efforts.”

He further noted: “At Zain, we see ourselves as a responsible organization, enthusiastically contributing to Kuwait’s vision of building a robust digital infrastructure and advancing the nation’s developmental goals. We affirm our full technical, operational, and commercial readiness to launch the next generation of 5G (5.5G). The coming phase requires total readiness, and



Nawaf Al-Gharabally, CEO of Zain Kuwait



Stephen Bye, President and CEO of Ookla

- **Nawaf Al-Gharabally:** “The next phase demands full readiness for the launch of 5.5G, and we view this achievement as a steppingstone toward this major transformation.”
- **Stephen Bye:** “This recognition is a testament to Zain’s industry-leading performance, validated by Ookla’s proven methodology.”
- Speedtest® is the global go-to platform for consumers seeking network intelligence and telecom insights.
- Zain achieved the highest scores in Q3 and Q4 2024 across all five categories.

we view this achievement as a steppingstone toward this major transformation.”

Stephen Bye, President and CEO of Ookla, a division of Ziff Davis, commented: “We are proud to recognize Zain for winning the Speedtest Award for ‘Fastest Mobile Network,’ ‘Best 5G Gaming Experience,’ ‘Best 5G Video Experience,’ ‘Best Mobile Network,’ and ‘Fastest Fixed Internet’ in Kuwait for Q3 and Q4 of 2024. This recognition is a testament to Zain’s industry leadership performance, as validated by Ookla’s trusted methodology.”

Ookla® is a global leader in connectivity intelligence, providing consumers, businesses, and organizations with data-driven insights to improve network performance and connected experiences. Ookla helps its clients efficiently solve their biggest connectivity challenges and drive innovation forward.

Ookla is a division of Ziff Davis (NASDAQ: ZD), a vertically focused digital media and internet company whose portfolio includes leading brands across technology, entertainment, shopping, health, cy-

bersecurity, and martech sectors. Ookla’s world-renowned brands include Speedtest®, Dwnetector®, Ekahau®, RootMetrics®, and more.

For the full details of Ookla’s methodology, visit: Speedtest.net/awards.

Fastest Mobile Network

Ookla compared over 700,000 consumer-initiated speed tests in Kuwait via its leading Speedtest® platform, widely recognized globally, through iOS and Android apps, covering all major networks in the country during the award period.

Zain outperformed all other networks with a Speed Score™ of 273.37, featuring a median download speed of 263.71 Mbps and a median upload speed of 27.11 Mbps. The final result was calculated based on several scientific benchmarks, with a focus on download and median speeds — the metrics that matter most to consumers daily.

As Kuwait’s fastest mobile network, Zain enables its customers to download content faster, stream videos seamless-

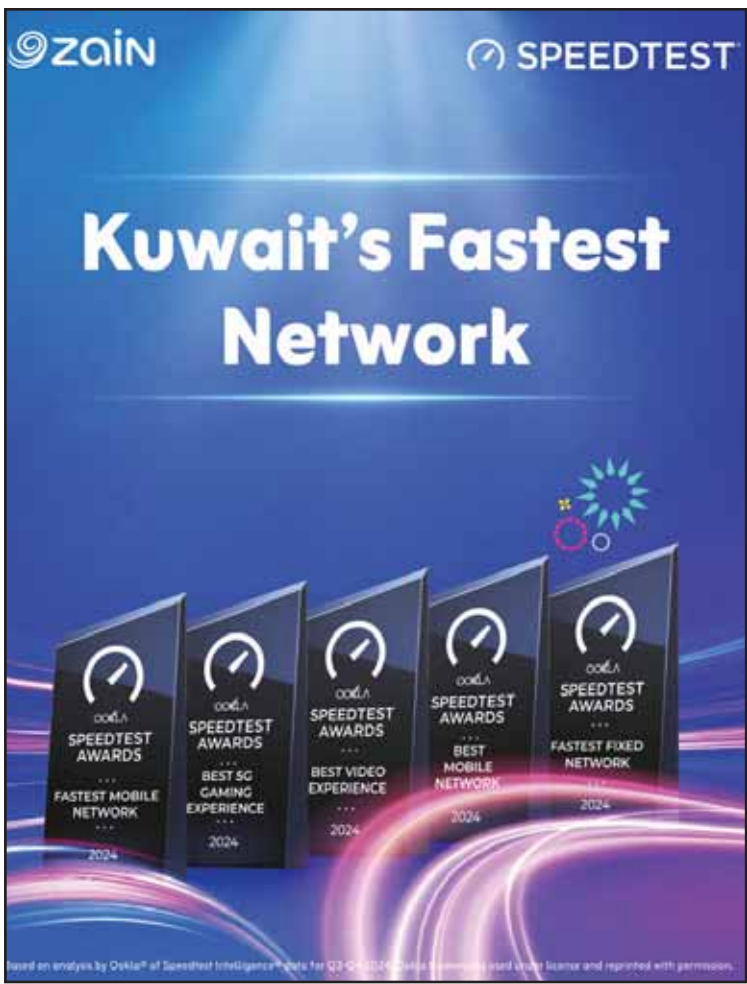
ly, and browse the web without lag, anytime and anywhere on their smartphones. These ultra-high speeds ensure that customers can rely on their mobile network for a premium, stable connection on the go, enhancing their productivity and keeping them connected to what matters most.

Fastest Fixed Internet

Ookla compared over two million consumer-initiated tests of fixed network speeds in Kuwait across its various Speedtest® platforms, including tests conducted over smartphones connected to Wi-Fi networks.

Zain outperformed all other networks with a Speed Score™ of 197.72, achieving top download speeds of 531.21 Mbps and top upload speeds of 85.18 Mbps. The final result was calculated based on several scientific benchmarks, with a focus on download and median speeds — essential factors for daily consumer use.

Fixed networks offer ultra-fast speeds and low latency, making them ideal for gaming enthusiasts. Zain’s advanced



Zain Ookla Awards 2025.

network provides a variety of packages tailored to this customer segment, ensuring the best experience. The company also offers a wide range of gaming products, from high-end PCs to original accessories and more.

By delivering Kuwait’s fastest fixed Internet, Zain provides households with ultra-fast connectivity, ideal for remote work, streaming high-definition content, online gaming, and all daily digital needs. This superiority ensures Zain’s customers enjoy smooth, reliable home internet, even during peak usage times.

Best 5G Video Experience

Ookla compared thousands of tests across its Speedtest® platform on 5G networks, with Zain outperforming all other networks, scoring 85.77 in the video test. The final result was based on video streaming performance indicators, measuring several key performance metrics during high-resolution video playback.

Zain offers its customers the largest entertainment content library through its strategic partnerships with leading

entertainment platforms in the Middle East and globally, providing thousands of hours of entertainment and sports content over Kuwait’s largest network — ensuring the best viewing experience for users to enjoy their favorite content anytime and anywhere.

Zain’s customers benefit from the best 5G video experience, enjoying ultra-HD streaming with instant playback and zero buffering. This video streaming quality means users can enjoy digital entertainment on the go with the same smoothness as home connections. With Zain’s advanced 5G network, customers get an unprecedented entertainment experience, reflecting the outstanding capabilities of the infrastructure the company has heavily invested in.

Best 5G Gaming Experience

Ookla compared thousands of tests across its Speedtest® platform on 5G networks, with Zain outperforming all other networks, scoring 84.99 in the gaming test. The final result was based on gaming performance indicators, including latency and jitter measurements from real-world game servers, alongside user-generated performance metrics.

Zain delivers the best 5G gaming experience for mobile gaming enthusiasts, thanks to its extremely high speeds and ultra-low latency. This means gamers can enjoy immersive, responsive gameplay with instant reaction times, even in competitive games requiring direct online interaction.

This achievement highlights Zain’s deep understanding of the gaming community’s needs, providing them with a competitive edge and seamless, uninterrupted gaming — making Zain the preferred choice for serious gamers.

Best Mobile Network

As the recipient of the Best Mobile Network award, Zain offers wide and reliable coverage backed by top speeds and consistent performance at all times. This level of service ensures customers enjoy an unparalleled mobile experience, with stable connectivity, excellent call quality, and the highest internet speeds nationwide. Zain’s customers benefit from a unique experience that combines speed, reliability, and continuity, anywhere across Kuwait.



Zain’s team receives the awards at MWC Barcelona.

Service designed to cater to business owners and entrepreneurs

Burgan Bank launches SoftPOS digital payment solution

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Burgan Bank has announced the launch of its new digital payment solution, SoftPOS by KNET, designed to cater to business owners and entrepreneurs. The service enables merchants to accept payments directly through an innovative smartphone application, without the need for traditional POS hardware.

On this occasion, Mr. Abdullah Hussain Al Maqseed, Executive Manager – Merchant Acquiring stated: “The launch of SoftPOS reflects Burgan Bank’s continued commitment to introducing innovative digital payment solutions that meet the evolving needs of the local market and support Kuwait’s transition toward a cashless society, in line with the Kuwait Vision 2035.”

Al Maqseed explained that this new solution allows merchants and Business owners to accept payments using only their Android smart devices through the ‘tap-to-pay’ feature, which eliminates the need for physical POS terminals. This makes it ideal for mobile businesses and small-scale merchants such as delivery services, kiosks, salons, tailors, Taxis and pop-up vendors.

The SoftPOS by KNET is considered a cost-effective alternative to traditional POS terminals, helping businesses reduce operational expenses while offering a faster, more streamlined customer experience. The solution also ensures a high level of security through end-to-end encryption and is fully compliant with global payment



Expanding on its far-reaching digital transformation strategy.



Mr. Abdullah Hussain Al Maqseed, Executive Manager – Merchant Acquiring at Burgan Bank

standards.

This solution can be activated on multiple smart devices for the same merchant, providing enhanced flexibility in managing sales operations across different locations or mobile setups. He reaffirmed the bank’s commitment to delivering cutting-edge digital banking solutions that support business growth and adapt to the fast-paced nature of today’s economy.

Mr. Abdullah concluded his statement by inviting business owners to take advantage of this innovative solution, reaffirming that Burgan Bank will continue investing in financial technology to enrich the customer experience and empower Kuwait’s commercial sector across all segments.

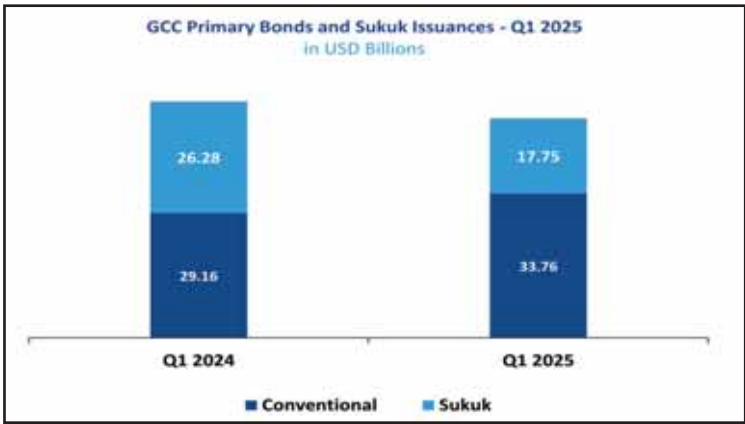
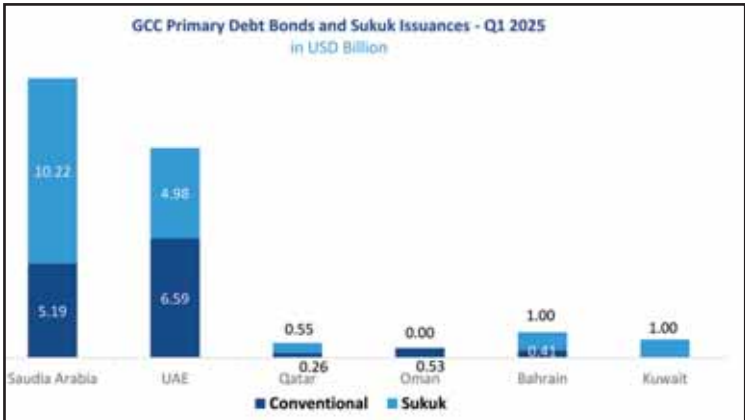
Kuwaiti issuances record a 40.7% increase from the same quarter last year

Markaz Report: GCC fixed income market sees \$51.51 bln in primary issuances during Q1 2025 representing a 7% decrease from last year

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: In its Fixed Income Report, Kuwait Financial Centre “Markaz” states that primary debt issuances of Bonds and Sukuk in the Gulf Cooperation Council (“GCC”) Countries amounted to USD 51.51 billion through 125 issuances during Q1 2025, a 7.1% decrease from the same quarter last year, where issuances in Q1 2024 amounted to USD 55.50 billion.

Issuances by Geography: Saudi-based issuances led the GCC during Q1 2025, raising USD 31.01 billion through 46 issuances, down from USD 38.55 billion in Q1 2024 a decrease of 19.6%, and representing 60.2% of issuances during the year. UAE-based issuances ranked second, with USD 10.17 billion through 29 issues, representing 19.7% of the market, an increase of 61.6% from the same quarter last year. Qatari entities were the third largest issuers in terms of value, with USD 7.14 billion issued through 38 issuances, representing 13.9% of the issuances over the quarter. Bahraini issuers follow, with a total issuance size of USD 1.53 billion through 2 issuances, a 44.5% decrease from the same quarter last year. Kuwaiti issuances recorded a 40.7% increase from the same quarter last year, recording a total value of USD 1.41 billion through 9 issuances. Omani entities recorded the lowest value of issuances during the year, with USD 260million raised through 1 issuance, representing 0.5% of the total value of issuances.

Sovereign vs. Corporate: Total



GCC corporate primary issuances increased by 45.3% from Q1 2024, amounting to USD 32.12 billion raised, compared to USD 22.11 bil-

lion raised in Q1 2024. Corporate issuances represented 62.4% of total issuances for the first quarter of 2025, contrasting with the preference



Markaz logo

of issuances in Q1 2024 where more sovereign entities raised capital (Corporate issuances Q1 2024: 39.9%). Government related corporate entities raised a total of USD 6.8 billion in Q1 2025, representing 21.2% of all corporate issuances. Total GCC sovereign primary issuances decreased by 41.8% in Q1 2025, raising USD 19.39 billion throughout the year, representing 37.6% of total issuances.

Conventional vs. Sukuk: Conventional issuances increased by 15.8% in Q1 2025 compared to Q1 2024, raising a total of USD 33.76 billion for the quarter. Sukuk issuances decreased by 32.5% in Q1 2025, resulting in a total value of USD 17.75 billion for the quarter. As for issuer preferences, Q1 2025 saw an increased appetite for conventional bond issuances in the GCC, representing 65.5% of total issuances for the quarter. This follows the same trend as in Q1 2024, where conventional bonds also represented the bulk of issuances, with 52.6% of all issuances in Q1 2024 being conventional bonds.

Sector Segmentation: The Financial sector led the bond and sukuk issuances in Q1 2025, with total value of USD 22.0 billion through 100 issuances representing 42.8% of total is-

suances. Government issuances follow, with USD 19.4 billion through 12 issuances, representing 37.6% of total issuances. This represents an increase for the financial sector (23.6%) and a decrease for government issuances (-41.8%) when compared to the same period last year. The real estate sector follows, with USD 4.3 billion through 5 issuances representing 8.3% of total issuances, with the remaining sectors together representing a small portion of total issuance (11.34%).

Maturity Profile: In Q1 2025, primary issuances with less than 5-year tenors represented 53.1% of GCC debt capital markets with a total value amounting to USD 27.4 billion through 99 issuances. Primary issuances with 5–10-year tenors followed, raising USD 18.4 billion through 20 issuances, representing 35.8% of total issuances. Primary issuances with 10–30-year tenors represented 1.6% of GCC debt capital markets with a total value of USD 809 million through 1 issuance during the quarter. One issuance also came in with a maturity greater than (“GT”) 30 years, with a value of USD 1 billion. Finally, perpetual issuances saw an increase in both the size and number of issuances when compared to Q1 2024, with a total value of USD 3.9 billion through 4 issuances.

Issue Size Profile: During Q1 2025, GCC primary issuances ranged in size from USD 2.0 million to USD 5.0 billion. Issuances with issue size of USD 1 billion or greater raised the largest amount, totaling USD 31.9 billion

through 18 issuances and representing 61.9% of the total amount issued in the GCC. Issuances sized between USD 500 million and USD 1 billion followed, with a total issuance size of USD 14.4 billion through 22 issuances. The highest number of issuances was under USD 100 million issue size, where there were 65 issuances that raised a total amount of USD 1.9 billion during Q1 2025.

Currency Profile: US Dollar-denominated issuances led the GCC Bonds and Sukuk primary market in Q1 2025, raising a total of USD 44.9 billion through 92 issuances, representing a substantial 87.2% of the total value raised in primary issuances during the year. The second largest issue currency was the Euro, where Euro denominated issuances raised a total of USD 3.0 billion through 4 issuances. As for currencies bucketed under “Other” which totaled USD 1.0 billion, the Hong Kong Dollar (HKD) represented 0.83% of total issuances with a total value of USD 428 million through 12 issuances.

Rating: In terms of value, a total of 85.8% of GCC Conventional and Sukuk bonds were rated in Q1 2025 by at least one of the following rating agencies: Standard & Poor’s, Moody’s, Fitch and Capital Intelligence, an increase from Q1 2024 (57.8% of all issuances rated). Issuances rated within the Investment Grade accounted for 81.4% of the total issuances during the year, while Sub-Investment Grade accounted for 4.4% of rated bonds.

Sell-off in dollar raises specter of trust in US under Trump

Dominance allows DC to push around other countries

NEW YORK, April 19, (AP): Among the threats tariffs pose to the U.S. economy, none may be as strange as the sell-off in the dollar.

Currencies rise and fall all the time because of inflation fears, central bank moves and other factors. But economists worry that the recent drop in the dollar is so dramatic that it reflects something more ominous as President Donald Trump tries to reshape global trade: a loss of confidence in the U.S.

The dollar’s dominance in cross-border trade and as a safe haven has been nurtured by administrations of both parties for decades because it helps keep U.S. borrowing costs down and allows Washington to project power abroad - enormous advantages that could possibly disappear if faith in the U.S. was damaged.

“Global trust and reliance on the dollar was built up over a half century or more,” says University of California, Berkeley, economist Barry Eichengreen. “But it can be lost in the blink of an eye.”

Since mid-January, the dollar has fallen 9% against a basket of currencies, a rare and steep decline, to its lowest level in three years.

Many investors spooked by Trump don’t think the dollar will be pushed quickly from its position as the world’s reserve currency, instead expecting more of a slow decline. But even that is scary enough, given the benefits that

would be lost.

With much of world’s goods exchanged in dollars, demand for the currency has stayed strong even as the U.S. has doubled federal debt in a dozen years and does other things that would normally send investors fleeing. That has allowed the U.S. government, consumers and businesses to borrow at unnaturally low rates, which has helped speed economic growth and lift standards of living.

Dollar dominance also allows the U.S. to push around other countries like Venezuela, Iran and Russia by locking them out of a currency they need to buy and sell with others.

Now that “exorbitant privilege,” as economists call it, is suddenly at risk.

“The safe haven properties of the dollar are being eroded,” said Deutsche Bank in a note to clients earlier this month warning of a “confidence crisis.” Added a more circumspect report by Capital Economics, “It is no longer hyperbole to say that the dollar’s reserve status and broader dominant role is at least somewhat in question.”

Traditionally, the dollar would strengthen as tariffs sink demand for foreign products.

But the dollar not only failed to strengthen this time, it fell, puzzling economists and hurting consumers. The dollar lost more than 5% against the euro and pound, and 6% against the yen since early April.

As any American traveler abroad knows, you can buy more with a stronger dollar and less with a weaker

one. Now the price of French wine and South Korean electronics and a host of other imports could cost more not only due to tariffs but a weaker currency, too.

And any loss of safe-haven status could hit U.S. consumers in another way: Higher rates for mortgages and car financing deals as lenders demand more interest for the added risk.

More worrisome is possible higher interest rates on the ballooning U.S. federal debt, which is already at a risky 120% of U.S. annual economic output.

“Most countries with that debt to GDP would cause a major crisis and the only reason we get away with it is that the world needs dollars to trade with,” says Benn Steil, an economist at the Council on Foreign Relations. “At some point people are going to look seriously at alternatives to the dollar.”

They already have, with a little help from a U.S. economic rival.

China has been striking yuan-only trading deals with Brazil for agricultural products, Russia for oil and South Korea for other goods for years. It has also been making loans in yuan to central banks desperate for cash in Argentina, Pakistan and other countries, replacing the dollar as the emergency funder of last resort.

Another possible U.S. alternative in future years if their market grows: cryptocurrencies.

Said BlackRock Chairman Larry Fink in his annual shareholder letter about dollar dominance, “If deficits keep ballooning, America risks losing that position to digital assets like Bitcoin.”

Company approves 15% cash dividend and 5% bonus shares

Salhia Real Estate posts KWD 12.6 million profit

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly of Salhia Real Estate Company was held on Thursday, April 17, 2025, with an attendance quorum of 84.87%. The General Assembly approved the Board of Directors’ recommendations to distribute a cash dividend of 15% (15 fils per share) and a bonus share dividend of 5%.



The Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly of Salhia Real Estate Company in progress.

Company (a 99.92% subsidiary of Salhia Real Estate Company) signed a settlement agreement with the main contractor of the subsidiary’s project. The settlement resulted in a profit of KWD 3,355,667 for Assima Real Estate Company.

The Salhia Complex Expansion Project

Regarding the Salhia Complex Expansion Project (formerly Anwar Al-Sabah Properties), Al-Khatrash stated that Salhia Real Estate Company took practical steps over the past year after receiving the project land and completing the demolition of the Anwar Al-Sabah buildings. The Company began contacting the relevant authorities to issue the necessary government licenses and approvals. It also began preparing studies and development plans for the project in collaboration with the best international and local consulting and engineering firms and offices specialized in this field.

The project is distinguished by its prime and strategic location, spanning a total land area of 9,284 square meters, in addition to its significant development potential and flexibility. It comprises four commercial plots located in the Qibla area, surrounded by state-owned land and lands totaling approximately 10,000 square meters, used for parking and open spaces. It is bordered on three sides by streets: Fahad Al Salem Street, Abdulaziz Al Sager Street, and Mohammed Thnayyan Al Ghanem Street. Adjacent to the project are the Salhia Complex and the JW Marriott Hotel. An internal street separates it from the Salhia Plaza and the multi-story Salhia Parking Building.

Development of the Salhia Mall and the JW Marriott Hotel

Following the completion of developing the Salhia Mall and the opening of that phase, extending to the new main entrance from Abdulaziz Al-Sager Street, and the completion of the installation of the new facades of the mall, work is still underway on the development of the JW Marriott Hotel adjacent to the Salhia Complex, with the aim to conclude a renovation that resonates with Salhia’s brand name and reflects the luxurious and sophisticated outlook synonymous with the Salhia. Such work is carried out

according to an agreed-upon framework to ensure high-quality and rational execution that ensures completion at the determined timeline.

KPI UK Joint Venture

KPI Property Investments Limited (KPI) was established in the United Kingdom in 1998 as a joint venture between Salhia Real Estate Company and St Modwen Properties Plc, a UK-based real estate development and investment company. The joint venture’s objective was to acquire investment properties with the opportunity to renovate and develop them, and capitalize on their growth through sale.

At its peak, the joint venture owned assets worth over £500 million (KWD 200 million). Subsequently, the joint venture gradually sold its remaining assets, with the last three major properties sold in 2024 for a total value of £46 million (KWD 18 million). Currently, KPI no longer owns any properties and will be liquidated in 2025.

Salhia Real Estate Company’s shares are listed on the Premier Market of the Kuwait Stock Exchange.

Financial Performance Summary

Regarding the financial performance summary for 2024, the Company achieved a profit of KWD 12.6 million, with earnings per share of 22 Fils, compared to the previous year, when profits amounted to KWD 16 million, with earnings per share of 27.8 Fils. The Company’s profits were affected by higher depreciation, amortization, and financing costs, as well as unusual gains from the recovery of insurance claims related to the previous year. The Company achieved profits that year from the sale of an investment property and profits from settling a contract with a contractor.

The Company’s total assets increased by 13% to KWD 517.7 million in 2024, compared to KWD 458 million. Equity reached KWD 182.6 million, compared to KWD 179.7 million, a growth rate of approximately 2% over the previous year. Meanwhile, total liabilities increased to KWD 335 million in 2024, compared to KWD 278 million in the previous year, to cover the financing costs of the Assima Project.

Chinese factories seek to expand their business outside US following Trump tariffs

DONGGUAN, China, April 19, (AP): Massive aluminum sheets hang in Danny Lau’s factory as workers bustled about painting them with oil coating in China’s southern industrial city of Dongguan.

The Hong Kong businessman set up this factory in mainland China in the 1990s, taking advantage of lower manufacturing costs. While the factory has soldiered through past economic turmoil, Lau said the escalating trade war has proved to be “most difficult.”

“We didn’t expect that our orders would suffer so heavily,” Lau said.

During U.S. President Donald Trump’s first term, the factory was hit with a 25% tariff. After Trump returned to the White House this year, tariffs escalated further, with the U.S. imposing sweeping 145% tariffs and China raising its tariffs to 125%. For Lau’s aluminum-coating factory, he said it amounted to a 75% tariff on his products.

One third of clients for Lau’s Kam Pin Industrial are from the U.S. One U.S. client said they would keep buying materials from Lau for an ongoing project because they couldn’t find

another supplier, but they will need to reconsider whether to source from him for the next project. A few clients told him the chances of continuing business with him are slim. “Prospects are grim,” he said.

Since late 2024, Lau’s company has started exploring opportunities in new markets, anticipating Trump’s increasing tariffs. Recently, he visited a few Middle Eastern countries. While other Chinese exporters have begun diversifying their markets since Trump’s first term, Lau found the U.S. market difficult to replace.

Pop superstar's wild ride continues

Katy Perry gears up for sci-fi inspired world tour

ONTARIO, Calif., April 19, (AP): In less than a year, Katy Perry has released an album, campaigned for Vice President Kamala Harris and, just this week, flown to space. As she heads to Mexico City to kick off a world tour on Wednesday, the pop superstar shows no intention of slowing down.

"I'm always open and I say, 'Why not?' and 'Let's just try,'" she told The Associated Press recently at her Southern California rehearsal space. "The power of your thoughts are so incredible because everything starts with a thought. I had this thought, 'I want to go on tour.' And here we are."

With that openness to try comes accepting that not every endeavor will be a victory. Her September album, "143," was critically panned, and she was simultaneously criticized for reuniting with embattled producer Dr. Luke. Celebrities like Olivia Munn and Emily Ratajkowski critiqued the spaceflight's use of resources as superfluous and indulgent. And Harris ultimately lost the November election to President Donald Trump.

But Perry's longevity and the scale of her fame since her 2008 breakout hit, "I Kissed a Girl," are attributable at least in part to her willingness to get back up in the wake of a setback, as she belts in her 2013 empowerment anthem, "Roar."

"I can control what I can control," she said.

That mantra has been refined over the past 15 years through her practice of Transcendental Meditation. The meditation technique has been embraced by a handful of celebrities, including - perhaps most zealously - the late David Lynch, whom Perry credits with spreading the practice and its message.

"That changed my life. And I've gone on a long inner space journey to untangle some wires, to answer some questions, to become more grounded, to find the power within myself," she said.

Spiritual

Perry is fascinated by all things spiritual, casually weaving into conversation references to astrology, the enneagram and cardology, which purports to impart mystical insights into an individual's personality through playing cards. Perry also credits having her daughter, Daisy, with propelling her along a journey of self-discovery and enhancing her "feminine divine."

"Being a mother just makes you level up with that type of power," she said. "I think I've just grown into the strong woman that I've always dreamed of and idolized."

That journey has informed her approach to music and performing, down to the narrative of her sci-fi themed "Lifetimes Tour." Citing films like "Blade Runner" and

"The Fifth Element" as visual and thematic inspirations, Perry will play a video game character who faces off against evil forces.

"It's really about believing in yourself and leading with love. Those are always my messages, no matter how I wrap it or whatever tour I bring. It's love and empowerment," she said. "When I can lead by example, it just ripples."

Perry's tour of more than 80 performances will primarily be a career-spanning showcase of past hits, but with a dance-infused flare to some of the traditional pop songs. "I tell everybody they have to wear some sensible shoes," she explained.

In the nearly two decades since Perry emerged as a pop star, she has made tongue in cheek lyricism - in line with her "very sarcastic" sense of humor - and catchy messages of empowerment a signature of her songs. Critical reception to her more recent albums has been less than enthusiastic, but that hasn't stopped the 40-year-old from going all out for this tour, calling it "Disneyland on wheels."

"I feel a responsibility to my audience who have really been with me on this ride during this whole lifetime to give them that feeling that they had when they first heard 'Teenage Dream,'" she said.



Katy Perry appears at an 'American Idol' Season 22 Top 10 tastemaker event in Los Angeles on April 22, 2024. (AP)

Classic sequel

Khalifa brings the 'Juice' back

NEW YORK, April 19, (AP): Who understood the cool kids better than **Wiz Khalifa**? In 2010, the easygoing Pittsburgh rapper released his breakout mixtape "Kush + Orange Juice," crafting the ideal soundtrack for stylish stoners - breezy songs about girls and weed broadcast through his generously enunciated flow.

For those paying attention, mass commercial appeal was all but assured. Just five years later he'd release the diamond-selling "See You Again" with singer Charlie Puth for the "Furious 7" film, one of the biggest songs of the decade.

"A lot of artists who, you know, stick to what originally made them, them - they don't get the opportunity to make a hit song like that," he told The Associated Press.

"So, I really feel blessed and grateful to have songs like that under my belt."

Now, a decade from "See You Again" and 15 years removed from "Kush + Orange Juice," he's gearing up to release a sequel, "Kush + Orange Juice 2," out Friday. Leading up to the album, Khalifa started dropping freestyles - a nostalgic return to his early career days, the era where discovering hot new records meant scouring rap blogs and SoundCloud. Listeners ate it up.

"It's just something I just kept doing for my fans and for the people who support me," he said of the freestyles. "That really sparked the fire and just let me know that there was a demand for that again."

Khalifa was already working on "Kush + Orange Juice 2" when he started releasing the freestyles, but the interest from his fans certainly helped embolden the project. He wanted to tap into the feel-good nature of the original.

"The excitement for it came from what the music actually does for people or what it reminds them of," he explained. "I think they get a feeling of some of the best times and some of the most fun and important times. And if you want that now, then you're gonna turn my music on and I'm gonna give you something new for you to have those same experiences."

And there are similarities: The radio skit of the first mixtape endures on the second, but most importantly, there is a shared lackadaisical cool - from the smooth melodicism of "5 Star" to the anthemic "Khalifa's Home" - accomplished with the help of some robust features: Gunna, Don Toliver, DJ Quick, Juicy J, Ty Dolla Sign, Terrace Martin, Curren\$y and more.

"Everyone who's involved with it... they're really close to what the origin of the actual 'Kush + Orange Juice' story. So, it just makes sense, and it just makes the story even bigger," he says.

In a song near the end of the new album, "Super Duper High Outro," Khalifa suggests there may be a third installment in the "Kush + Orange Juice" series. "If we wanna do number three, we'll do number three," he says on the track. "I'll see y'all in 10 years, man."

"We'll keep it going," he says of the series. "Just keep it going nonstop."

But for now, he wants people to connect with "Kush + Orange Juice 2" like they did with the first one.

"I just hope that they need this in their life, and that this is the perfect thing to come at the perfect time," he says of the album. It certainly doesn't hurt that it's releasing 4/20 weekend.

Music

Singer steps back into the light

Keri Hilson breaks her 15-year silence with 'We Need to Talk'

NEW YORK, April 19, (AP): The last time Keri Hilson put out an album, Barack Obama was in the second year of his first term as US president, the iPad was released and Instagram was brand new.

"On some days, I'm like that was just a blink away. But for the most part, yeah, it feels like a long time because I've been waiting. I felt stagnant, I felt stuck for a while, and conflicted," said the two-time Grammy-nominated artist. "I'm very much approaching this like I'm starting over because that's how it feels to me. I've lived nine lives since I last released ... I'm a whole different person."

Hilson, the 42-year-old R&B star known for late 2000s hits like "Knock You Down," featuring Kanye West and Ne-Yo, and "Pretty Girl Rock," released "We Need To Talk: Love" on Friday. It's her third album, following 2010's "No Boys Allowed," and is the first of a trilogy set for release this year. Led by the sultry single "Bae," the nine-track album delves into romance and introspection.

Resolved

"I feel resolved, both with the art and within about stepping back into the light. So, I think that resolve kind of had to be found before I felt confident enough to release the body of work and also unleash myself to the world again," explained Hilson, who said she's never stopped recording. "There were songs in my past that I felt were political moves, songs I didn't really love that I had to sing ... I didn't want to feel like that this time around."

One of those songs was a leaked remix to her popular 2009 single "Turnin Me On" featuring Lil Wayne, which peaked at No. 15 on the Billboard Hot 100. Lyrics included a diss fans perceived to be aimed at Beyoncé.

Hilson, who had yet to drop her introductory album, "In A Perfect World," which debuted at No. 4 on the Billboard Top 200 and No. 1 on Top R&B albums, claimed that she was forced to sing the lines, "She can sing / But she need to move it to the left, left," assumed to reference Beyoncé's "Irreplaceable." She says she was threatened her album might not be released if she refused.

Last week, Hilson trended on social media following an interview with iHeartMedia's "The Breakfast Club" after recalling the incident. While she has talked about it several times in the past, during that interview, the singer publicly named those involved, including producer Polow Da Don who she was signed to. She did not name singer-songwriter Ester Dean. However, after social media users tagged Dean



Keri Hilson poses for a portrait on Tuesday, April 8, in New York. (AP)

in posts, she later identified herself.

The ending of a decade-long relationship, a lack of control over her career and the intense, never-ending backlash from the BeyHive triggered depression and led to her retreat from music.

During her time away, the Georgia native embarked on a journey of healing that included therapy, journaling and spiritual retreats.

"There were some perspectives that I needed to uncover ... untruths, beliefs that I kind of picked up or inherited about myself," said Hilson, who shifted to acting.

Her comeback has included very selective press, avoiding what she describes as "new media" outlets such as social media-driven platforms, saying monetization can reward the promotion of gossip or incentivize the creation of lies. The salacious blog culture of the 2010s was a driving force in fanning the flames of her perceived beef with Beyoncé, who has never publicly commented on the situation.

Hilson "can definitely operate and navigate within the realm of R&B. She has a fan base," said Keithan Samuels, founder of the popular website RatedRnB.com. "Her core fan base has matured ... she can navigate within this new era of R&B where there's a lot of diversity and sound."

Crafted with unofficial writing camps and records created throughout the years, "We Need To Talk: Love" finds Hilson delivering vulnerable and flirty lyrics over a wide range of R&B sounds. Writing on all but one song, she avoided current R&B trends that developed during her absence, citing individuality as a key to her early success. She also believes algorithms have

created a culture of musical homogeneity, rather than creativity.

There are quintessential "Ms. Keri Baby" songs like the fun, Pop&B styled "Somethin (Bout U)," but there's also the introspective "Naked (Love)," and "Say It," in which she expresses, "I won't say I love you / 'til you say you love me."

"I'm very 'girl boss' in my life, right? When it comes to relationships, I prefer to be a lady. I prefer to be approached. ... I prefer for the man to say 'I love you' first. I just prefer for a man to lead," said Hilson. "I'm really a damsel - without the distress."

The bedroom mood is set on the sexy slow jam "Scream," while the bright "Whatever" floats with beautiful stacked harmonies.

"I feel like it's something I would have written for Whitney. And I actually wrote a song for Whitney that she never was able to record," said Hilson, who began her career as an in-demand writer whose credits include songs for Chris Brown, Mary J. Blige, Jennifer Lopez and Britney Spears. "This reminds me of a Whitney Houston record, where I think she would be now."

Samuels of RatedRnB.com says this project is evident of the newfound control Hilson has over her career.

"It's definitely not, to me, an attempt to have this commercial comeback ... it feels more personal," said Samuels. "The other two albums, I feel like were more catered to what was current then."

Variety

MAMMOTH LAKES, Calif.: Oscar-nominated actor **Haley Joel Osment** has been charged with public intoxication and cocaine possession after his arrest earlier this month at a Northern California ski resort.

The Mono County District Attorney's office announced the misdemeanor charges Thursday against the 37-year-old actor, who starred as a child in movies "The Sixth Sense" and "A.I."

Osment was arrested April 8 at the Mammoth Mountain ski resort on suspicion of public intoxication, District Attorney David Anderson said in a news release.

The actor is due to be arraigned on July 7.

His representative did not immediately return a message seeking comment on the charges Thursday. (AP)

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LOS ANGELES: Joseph Seiders, drummer for Canadian indie rock band has been arrested and charged with possessing child sex abuse materials, authorities said.

Seiders, 44, is accused of recording young boys with his phone at a Chick-fil-A restaurant bathroom in Palm Desert, California, according to the local sheriff's department. The city of about 50,000 is in the Coachella Valley.

Law enforcement responded to a report April 7 of suspicious activity at the fast food restaurant. An 11-year-old boy told them a man recorded him while he was using the bathroom there.

Two days later, officers received another report at Chick-fil-A and took Seiders into custody. They searched his home and found evidence connecting him to the two incidents. His charges include possession of child sex abuse materials, molesting a child, and invasion of privacy, the sheriff's department said. (AP)

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NEW YORK: The sex trafficking trial of Sean "Diddy" Combs will proceed as scheduled in early May despite his lawyer's claims that they need an extra two months to prepare, a judge said Friday.

Judge Arun Subramanian said at a Manhattan federal court hearing that the hip-hop mogul's trial, projected to last from eight to 10 weeks, will start May 5.

Lawyers for the entertainer had requested a two-month delay, citing a need for more time to gather information about trial witnesses and to cope with late additions to the indictment against their client. (AP)

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NEW YORK: Harvey Weinstein has been moved to a New York City hospital after a judge approved the ailing ex-studio boss's request to stay there rather than in jail when he's not in court for his #MeToo retrial.

Judge Paul Goetz late Thursday ordered that Weinstein be immediately relocated from the city's notorious Rikers Island jail complex to the prison ward at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan so he can receive necessary medical treatment.

Weinstein's lawyers lobbied for the move as jury selection got underway this week.

They argued in court papers that being locked up in a sometimes freezing jail cell was exacerbating the Oscar-winning producer's health issues, which include chronic myeloid leukemia, diabetes and walking difficulties that require a wheelchair to get in and out of court.

Goetz's order will remain in effect at least until next Thursday, when he is set to hold a hearing to discuss the matter further. (AP)



Actor Pedro Pascal, (left), and Sigourney Weaver, (right), with director Jon Favreau interact with 'Grogu,' a movie character, during a fan convention called the Star Wars Celebration Japan in Chiba, near Tokyo, April 18. (AP)



A Star Wars supporter poses for a photo during a fan convention called the Star Wars Celebration Japan in Chiba, near Tokyo, April 18. (AP)



Actor Ryan Gosling waves at audience members during a fan convention called the Star Wars Celebration in Chiba, near Tokyo, Friday, April 18. (AP)

‘Star Wars’ fans ignite ‘the force’ in Japan as new film is announced

The Force was with many Japanese, as well as visitors from abroad, at a “Star Wars” event on Friday where Lucasfilm announced that the next installation in the franchise will hit theaters in May 2027 starring Ryan Gosling.

Appearing on stage before a lightsaber-waving crowd at Makuhari Messe center outside Tokyo, Gosling showed a photo of his childhood bedsheets, plastered with illustrations from the space epic created by George Lucas.

“I guess I was dreaming about ‘Star Wars’ even before I saw the film,” Gosling said.

Shawn Levy, who will direct the movie, told the crowd

that “Star Wars: Starfighter” will not be a prequel or a sequel, but a new standalone adventure with new characters set several years after “Episode Nine.” Filming starts later this year, he said.

Levy, who also directed the 2006 film “The Pink Panther” and the recent Netflix series “Stranger Things,” said little else, noting: “I can’t say much about it because I understand the rules.”

Only the title was shown on a giant screen, although that was enough for the crowd to burst into cheers.

The event, called Star Wars Celebration, which runs through Sunday, is full of “Star Wars”-themed merchandise including T-shirts, toys, books, manga comics, AC

chargers, cellphone covers, autographs, posters and more.

The Lego booth featured a man wearing the ominous black mask and cloak of Darth Vader, made out of Legos. The deep-breathing villain also appeared as traditional Japanese lacquerware decorating earphones in a limited edition of 10, each selling for 990,000 yen (\$7,000). Darth Vader T-shirts were more affordable at 8,000 yen (\$56).

“It makes me so happy to think everyone here loves ‘Star Wars,’” said Yoshiaki Takahashi, 26, who was holding a remote-controlled R2-D2 miniature robot.

“I love the directing, the sound of the gun and the

lightsaber, but above all the story, with great fight scenes and, of course, human drama,” he added.

Another Japanese man, who said he goes only by Hiro, was dressed as the “Star Wars” character Mandalorian, in a detailed costume he made himself, complete with a plastic sword and armor.

Also present were “Star Wars” fans from around the world, including a robed Raul Herrera, a computer science teacher from Chile, who was there with friends.

“All of them,” said Herrera, when asked which ‘Star Wars’ films he’d seen. “The sense of commitment of the characters, I really like it.” (AP)

Overtourism

Venice expands day-tripper tax

VENICE, Italy, April 19, (AP): Venice is charging day-trippers to the famed canal city an arrivals tax for the second year starting Friday, a measure aimed at combating the kind of overtourism that put the city’s UNESCO World Cultural Heritage status at risk.

A UNESCO body decided against putting Venice on its list of cultural heritage sites deemed in danger after the tax was announced. But opponents of the day-tripper fee say it has done nothing to discourage tourists from visiting Venice even on high-traffic days.

Here’s a look at Venice’s battle with overtourism by the numbers:

The fee charged to visitors who are not overnighting in Venice to enter its historic center during the second year of the day-tripper tax. Visitors who download a QR code at least three days in advance will pay 5 euros (\$5.69) - the same amount charged last year throughout the pilot program.

Required

But those who make last-minute plans pay double. The QR code is required from 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. and is checked at entry points to the city, including the Santa Lucia train station, the Piazzale Roma bus depot and the Tronchetto parking garage.

The number of days this year that day visitors to Venice will be charged a fee to enter the historic center. They include mostly weekends and holidays from April 18 to July 27. That is up from 29 last year. The new calendar covers entire weeks over key holidays and extends the weekend period to include Fridays.

That is the amount Venice took in during a 2024 pilot program for the tax. The city’s top budget official, Michele Zuin, said last year the running costs for the new system ran to 2.7 million euros, overshooting the total fees collected. This year, Zuin projects a surplus of about 1 million euros to 1.5 million euros, which will be used to offset the cost of trash collection and other services for residents.

Registered

The number of day-trippers who paid the tax in 2024. Officials said that 12,744 day-trippers paid to enter the city on Friday - 7,173 at the higher 10-euro rate. They were among the 77,000 who have registered so far to enter the city this year. Another 117,000 have registered for exemptions, which apply to anyone born in Venice, those paying property taxes in the city, studying or working in the historic center, or living in the wider Veneto region, among others.

The average number of daily visitors on the first 11 days of 2024 that Venice charged day-trippers. That’s about 10,000 people more than the number of tourists recorded on each of the three important holidays during the previous year. City council member Giovanni Andrea Martini, an opponent of the measure, said the figures show the project has not deterred visitors.

The number of official residents in Venice’s historic center composed of over 100 islands connected by footbridges and traversed by its famed canals. The population peaked at 174,000 in 1951, when Venice was home to thriving industries.

Fashion



Models walk the runway at the Ralph Lauren Fall 2025 presentation on Thursday, April 17, in New York. (AP)



NEW YORK, April 19, (AP): Ralph Lauren, known for staging elaborate runway shows in sumptuous settings like the horse-drawn carriages or amid his vintage car collection, took it down a notch for a more intimate show Thursday in a Manhattan gallery space.

As celebrities like Anne Hathaway, Michelle Williams, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Ariana DeBose and many others watched from the front row, Lauren presented a fall collection dubbed “The Modern Romantics,” heavy on high ruffled necks, classics like buttery leather in everything from aviator jackets to bustiers, and soft cashmere. Evening looks were long and lacy.

Lauren’s models first appeared atop a balcony, then each descended a grand staircase to walk the runway. The venue, now the Jack Shainman Gallery, was built in 1898 in the Italian Renaissance Revival style.

For the New York-based crowd, it was much less of a journey than Lauren’s last show in the Hamptons on Long Island, which took some guests four hours from Manhattan in busy traffic.

Lauren himself appeared at the end of the show to wave - from the top of the balcony.

Lauren said he was celebrating “The Modern Romantics,” an aesthetic he described as “self-assured and unbound by rules.”

Strutting the runway, the models displayed looks that began

with a classic Lauren combination of black trousers, a high-necked ruffled white shirt, and an aviator jacket in brown distressed leather.

That was followed by a filmy white midi-dress paired with a thick black leather belt, and tall black leather boots.

A black leather bustier was paired with a long camel wool skirt, and white lace ruffled shirts popped up in different ensembles - with a long camel coat, or a puffy brown cardigan. There were also white lace neckties. There were velvet jackets, including in a deep shade of purple.

Outfits segued into evening with long, silky or strappy gowns, one in a white crochet theme, another in sumptuous black lace. There was a black halter gown in tiers of ruffles spiraling around the body.

Hathaway, Williams and Watts sat together in the front row, each

in a Lauren-style trench or wrap coat. Hathaway, her hair pulled back in a tight ponytail, paired her coat with a pair of tan-colored jeans, embroidered with sequins and strategically shredded.

DeBose wore a smart gray suit that would go perfectly with next month’s Met Gala dress code: “Tailored For You.” Louis-Dreyfus wore a cropped leather jacket in light brown, with white trousers.

Also attending were Sadie Sink, Sarah Catherine Hook, Eiza Gonzalez, Andra Day, Kacey Musgraves and Ella Hunt, among others.

“I thought it was very much his sensibility and what he believes,” Anna Wintour, the influential Vogue editor, said after the show, noting that Lauren’s fashion transcended trends. “He’s a designer that never looks to the left or to the right. He’s just very clear in what he wants to say and what his customer wants, and that’s one of the reasons he’s so unbelievably successful.”

Sarah Catherine Hook, who appeared in the recently concluded third season of “The White Lotus,” said she liked the collection’s ephemeral feel.

“I love anything timeless and I feel like this is the most timeless you could possibly get,” Hook said. “I love the masculine-feminine mix of it and this is my first time getting to wear a necktie, so I’m feeling pretty chic today.”



From left: Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Eiza Gonzalez and Sadie Sink arrive at the Ralph Lauren Fall 2025 presentation on Thursday, April 17, in New York. (AP)

Prevent burnout

Mental health leaves are helping employees heal

NEW YORK, April 19, (AP): Her first panic attack came at a company-wide meeting, right before her scheduled presentation. Carolina Lasso had given many similar talks about her marketing team's accomplishments. When her name was called this time, she couldn't speak.

"I felt a knot in my throat," Lasso said. "My head, it felt like it was inside a bubble. I couldn't hear, I couldn't see, and it felt like an eternity. It was just a few seconds, but it was so profound, and in a way earth-shattering to me."

Lasso was struggling after a cross-country move followed by a divorce. Her boss suggested a mental health leave, a possibility she didn't know existed. She worried whether taking time off would affect how her team viewed her or cost her a future promotion, but in the end she did.

"I'm thankful for that opportunity to take the time to heal," Lasso, 43, said. "Many people feel guilty when they take a leave of absence when it's mental health-related. ... There is some extra weight that we carry on our shoulders, as if it had been our fault."

Despite a fear of repercussions, more adults are recognizing that stepping back from work to deal with emotional burdens or psychological conditions that get in the way of their lives is a necessary choice, one that a growing number of employers recognize.

ComPsych Corp., a provider of employee mental health programs and absence management services, encourages its business clients to make the well-being of workers a priority before individuals get to a breaking point while also having processes in place for those who require leaves of absence.

"Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, collectively we've just been in this constant state of turmoil," Jennifer Bird-sall, the senior clinical director at ComPsych, said. "We just have had this barrage of change and uncertainty."

Depression, anxiety and adjustment disorder, which involves excessive reactions to stress, were the top three diagnoses of employees who took mental health leaves in the past two years among clients of Alight, a Chicago-based technology company which administers leaves and benefits for large employers.

Schedule

A mental health leave can last weeks or months. In some cases, workers get approval to work a reduced schedule or to take short periods of time off when needed, using an approach called "intermittent leave."

At most U.S. organizations with 50 or more employees, people can request leaves through the Family and Medical Leave Act. The federal law entitles workers with serious health conditions to paid or unpaid leaves of up to 12 weeks, depending on state and local laws.

Some employers require people to use sick days or accumulated vacation days to continue receiving a paycheck while out. For longer leaves, workers can access short-term disability plans, if their employer offers one.

Lasso's leave lasted six months, and included therapy and travel to India for additional treatment. She returned to her job but decided after a year to leave for good. She later launched a business to train

people on fostering a more humane work culture.

A mental health leave is "not only OK, but it can really unlock new possibilities once we have the time to do the work - therapy, medication, whatever it is - and have enough distance from work to be able to reconnect with ourselves," Lasso said.

A social stigma around mental health challenges causes many people to avoid seeking treatment or requesting a leave of absence. Newton Cheng, director of health and performance at Google, hopes to change that by sharing his own struggles.

His first self-disclosure happened during the pandemic, when a senior manager invited employees at a meeting to share how they were doing. When it was his turn, Cheng started crying.

He explained he was struggling to live up to his expectations of himself as a father and didn't know how to turn things around.

Struggles

"It was just totally horrifying to me because, one, I had just cried in front of my coworkers and I was definitely taught as a professional - and as a man - you do not do that," Cheng recalled. "And then two, I had never really articulated and said out loud those words. I hadn't even allowed myself to think that. But now they're out there and I had to face them."

Colleagues responded by relaying their own struggles, but Cheng's difficulties continued. By February 2021, he couldn't get out of bed because he felt paralyzed by dread, he said. A therapist said he was showing symptoms of major depression and anxiety.

"I just realized, 'I'm struggling a lot and this goes pretty deep. I don't think I can keep just putting duct tape on this. I probably need to take some leave,'" Cheng recalled.

Hoping his decision would benefit others, he announced to 200 people at a conference that he planned to take mental health leave. Instead of derailing the gathering as he feared, his honesty inspired fellow conference attendees to open up.

"It was like a fireworks show," Cheng said. "They're like, 'Wow, I can't believe he did that.' Then they forgot about me. But the tone was set. It was like 'Oh, this is what we're doing. Let me talk about what's going on with me, too.'"

While balancing classes and a full-time job during her last year of college, Rosalie Mae began struggling to get out of bed and crying uncontrollably. Yet she felt like she had "to keep it together" to avoid burdening her colleagues at the University of Utah bookstore, where Mae worked as an accounting clerk.

Then she found herself calling a suicide hotline. "Once it reached that point, I knew, especially at the urging of my husband, we need to do something more," Mae, 24, said.

In her case, that meant taking a five-week work leave to put her own health and well-being first. She recommends the same for others who find themselves in a similar position.

"Taking a mental health leave is not necessarily a cure-all, but it is important to give yourself a break and allow yourself to regroup, make a plan of how to proceed and take the steps to work towards feeling better," Mae said.

Experts link sleep loss to youth mental health crisis

Schools teach teens how to sleep better

MANSFIELD, Ohio, April 19, (AP): The topic of a new course at Mansfield Senior High School is one that teenagers across the country are having trouble with: How to Get to Sleep.

One ninth grader in the class says his method is to scroll through TikTok until he nods off. Another teen says she often falls asleep while on a late-night group chat with friends. Not everyone takes part in class discussions on a recent Friday; some students are slumped over their desks napping.

Sleep training is no longer just for newborns. Some schools are taking it upon themselves to teach teenagers how to get a good night's sleep.

"It might sound odd to say that kids in high school have to learn the skills to sleep," says Mansfield health teacher Tony Davis, who has incorporated a newly released sleep curriculum into a state-required high school health class. "But you'd be shocked how many just don't know how to sleep."

Adolescents burning the midnight oil is nothing new; teens are biologically programmed to stay up later as their circadian rhythms shift with puberty. But studies show teenagers are more sleep deprived than ever, and experts believe it could be playing a role in the youth mental health crisis and other problems plaguing schools, including behavioral and attendance issues.

Exhausted

"Walk into any high school in America and you will see kids asleep. Whether it's on a desk, outside on the ground or on a bench, or on a couch the school has allotted for naps - because they are exhausted," says Denise Pope, a senior lecturer at Stanford Graduate School of Education. Pope has surveyed high school students for more than a decade and leads parent sessions for schools around California on the importance of teen sleep. "Sleep is directly connected with mental health. There is not going to be anyone who argues with that."



Mansfield Senior High School senior Talitha Cameron, 18, listens during her health class on sleep, in Mansfield, Ohio, Dec. 6, 2024. (AP)

Adolescents need between eight and 10 hours of sleep each night for their developing brains and bodies. But nearly 80% of teens get less than that, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which has tracked a steady decline in teen sleep since 2007. Today, most teens average 6 hours of sleep.

Research increasingly shows how tightly sleep is linked to mood, mental health and self-harm. Depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts and behavior go up as sleep goes down. Multiple studies also show links between insufficient sleep and sports injuries and athletic performance, teen driving accidents, and risky sexual behavior and substance use, due in part to impaired judgment when the brain is sleepy.

For years, sleep experts have sounded an alarm about an adolescent sleep crisis, joined by the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the CDC and others. As a result, some school districts have shifted to later start times. Two states - California and Florida - have passed laws that require high schools to start

no earlier than 8:30 a.m. But simply telling a teenager to get to bed earlier doesn't always work, as any parent can attest: They need to be convinced.

Intervention

That's why Mansfield City Schools, a district of 3,000 students in north-central Ohio, is staging what it calls "a sleep intervention."

The district's high school is piloting the new curriculum, "Sleep to Be a Better You," hoping to improve academic success and reduce chronic absences, when a student misses more than 10% of the school year. The rate of students missing that much class has decreased from 44% in 2021 but is still high at 32%, says Kari Cawrse, the district's attendance coordinator. Surveys of parents and students highlighted widespread problems with sleep, and an intractable cycle of kids going to bed late, oversleeping, missing the school bus and staying home.

The students in Davis' classroom shared insights into why it's hard to get a good night's sleep. An in-class

survey of the 90 students across Davis' five classes found over 60% use their phone as an alarm clock. Over 50% go to sleep while looking at their phones. Experts have urged parents for years to get phones out of the bedroom at night, but national surveys show most teens keep their mobile phones within reach - and many fall asleep holding their devices.

During the six-part course, students are asked to keep daily sleep logs for six weeks and rate their mood and energy levels.

Habits

Freshman Nathan Baker assumed he knew how to sleep, but realizes he had it all wrong. Bedtime meant settling into bed with his phone, watching videos on YouTube or Snapchat Spotlight and often staying up past midnight. On a good night, he got five hours of sleep. He'd feel so drained by midday that he'd get home and sleep for hours, not realizing it was disrupting his nighttime sleep.

"Bad habits definitely start around middle school, with all the stress and drama," Baker says. He has taken the tips he learned in sleep class and been amazed at the results. He now has a sleep routine that starts around 7 or 8 p.m.: He puts away his phone for the night and avoids evening snacks, which can disrupt the body's circadian rhythm. He tries for a regular bedtime of 10 p.m., making sure to close his curtains and turn off the TV. He likes listening to music to fall asleep but has switched from his previous playlist of rousing hip hop to calmer R&B or jazz, on a stereo instead of his phone.

"I feel a lot better. I'm coming to school with a smile on my face," says Baker, who is now averaging seven hours' sleep each night. "Life is so much more simple."

There are scientific reasons for that. Studies with MRI scans show the brain is under stress when sleep-deprived and functions differently.

'Ditch the screens before bed'

Beat teen sleep struggles with these expert tips

NEW YORK, April 19, (AP): Navigating bedtime with a teenager is, in many homes, a nightly battle with a constant refrain: Get off your phone! Go to bed!

Research shows that today's teenagers are more sleep-deprived than ever before. Adolescents need between eight and 10 hours of sleep, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But nearly 80% of American teenagers aren't getting that, and experts say it's affecting important areas like mental health and school attendance.

Bedtime routines aren't just for toddlers. Teenagers need them too, says Denise Pope, an expert on child development and a senior lecturer at Stanford University's Graduate School of Education.

Experts in adolescent sleep say a few small changes to how parents and teens approach sleep can make a dramatic difference.

The first step to setting up a better bedtime routine is dealing with technology.

■ Separate children from their devices at night. Phones, tablets, streaming services and video games aren't the only things keeping kids up at night, but experts agree they are a major factor in delaying sleep.

"Get the temptation out of the bedroom," Pope says. If the phone is within arm's reach, it's hard to ignore when notifications buzz. Many teens say they fall asleep while scrolling, or reach for their phone if they have trouble sleeping, and end up scrolling

for hours.

■ Be prepared for excuses. "My phone is my alarm clock" is something a lot of parents hear. The solution: Buy an alarm clock.

■ Put screens away an hour before bedtime. Exposure to light prevents the release of melatonin, the hormone released by the brain that makes us feel drowsy.

Then, replace screens with a new wind-down routine.

■ Try to get to bed around the same time each night and start winding down at least 30 minutes before. During that time, silence notifications, take a warm shower, read a book. To get an idea of what your teen's bedtime should be, try an online "bedtime calculator," such as the one from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

■ Avoid caffeine and energy drinks in the afternoon and evening.

■ The best sleep environment is a cool, dark, quiet room. In noisy households, earplugs and a sleep mask can help. If a bedroom is too warm, it can affect getting to sleep and staying asleep, says adolescent sleep expert Kyla Wahlstrom.

Some of the telltale evidence of sleep deprivation: being irritable, grumpy, short-tempered, emotionally fragile, unmotivated, impulsive and more likely to see the world and oneself through a negative lens. A sleep-deprived teen also may fall asleep during the daytime, in the car or in class.

"We often blame adolescents for being lazy or unruly or having bad

behavior, much of which could be attributed to the fact that they are chronically sleep-deprived," says Wendy Troxel, a clinical psychologist who has conducted numerous studies on adolescent sleep.

How do you tell the difference between a sleepy teen and a cranky-but-well-rested one?

■ One key sign is what sleep expert Joanna Fong-Isariyawongse calls "zombie mornings."

"If your teen hits snooze five times, takes forever to get out of bed, asks you for a big cup of coffee first thing in the morning, most likely they are running on empty," says Fong-Isariyawongse, a neurologist at the University of Pittsburgh.

■ Extreme mood swings are another sign. Sleep is critical for emotional processing, which is why sleep-deprived teens are more likely to be irritable, anxious or depressed.

■ A sleep-deprived teen may fall behind in school, because sleep is essential for learning and memory consolidation.

■ Teens who sleep less are more likely to make bad choices when it comes to drug or alcohol use, drowsy or reckless driving and risky sexual behavior.

■ Does your teen sleep until lunchtime on weekends? "Most likely they are not getting enough sleep during the week," says Fong-Isariyawongse. It's fine to sleep in a bit, but try to limit it to a couple hours. Otherwise, it throws off the body clock and makes it harder to wake up when the new school week

begins.

Explain to your teens why sleep matters, and that it's not just nagging parents who say so. The data on mental health and sleep is vast.

■ Many studies show that depression, anxiety and the risk of suicidal thinking go up as sleep goes down.

■ Beyond mood, sleep deprivation affects physical and athletic ability. That's why several NFL and NBA teams have hired sleep coaches. Teens who are sleep-deprived sustain more physical injuries, because they take more risks, their judgment is impaired, and reflexes and reaction times are not as fast. Teens who get more sleep perform better in sports, and when they do get injuries, they have a quicker recovery time.

■ More teenage car accidents come from drowsy driving than driving under the influence of alcohol, studies show. Teens who say they get less than eight hours of sleep a night are more likely to text while driving, not wear a seat belt, drink and drive - or get in a car with a driver who has been drinking.

As any parent knows, telling their teenager to go to sleep does not always work. You need to get their buy-in.

"Kids need to be educated about sleep, and their brain health and emotional health, and how it all ties together," says Wahlstrom. "Tell your kids, 'You'll do better in school, better in sports, you'll look better after a good night's sleep.' Because until they want to help themselves, they won't do it."

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Some runners say politics will keep them home

Boston Marathon and city insist all are welcome

BOSTON, April 19, (AP): The Boston Marathon and Mayor Michelle Wu insisted on Friday that international runners and other foreign visitors remain welcome in the city and said there is no evidence that travel for this year's race has fallen off in the face of increased border scrutiny.

"Regardless of what's happening at other levels, and particularly now at the federal level, in Boston we welcome everyone," Wu said at a public safety media briefing not far from the finish line. "We seek to be a home for everyone."

A cherished event for runners and spectators alike, staged on the state holiday of Patriots' Day commemorating the battles of Lexington and Concord that sparked the American Revolution 250 years ago, the Boston Marathon is the world's oldest and most prestigious annual long-distance race.

It has taken on even greater significance - and popularity - since 2013, when two pressure-cooker bombs exploded near the finish line, killing three people and wounding hundreds more. (Allen Davis, the assistant special agent in charge of the FBI's Boston office, said at the briefing that there were "no credible or specific threats" to Monday's race.)

This year's marathon has more than 30,000 entrants from 128 countries. Boston Athletic Association President Jack Fleming said the 129th edition of the race was full - thousands more are turned away - and there's been no indication that those registered are staying home.

"We have a lot of demand this year, as we do every year," he said.

But as U.S. officials track plummeting tourism numbers, with many would-be visitors angered by President Donald Trump's tariffs and rhetoric and alarmed by stories about tourists being arrested at the border, reports say at least some potential marathon attendees have decided to skip the race.

Canadians have been especially put off by Trump's talk of making the country the 51st U.S. state. Paula Roberts-Banks, a writer and photographer from Rosseau, Ontario, who has run Boston 12 times, wrote in Canadian Running magazine that she earned a coveted bib for this year's race but decided not to run because she has "soured" on the U.S.

"I simply don't want to go there," she said. "It feels like a breakup."

British runner Calli Hauger-Thacker, a 2024 Olympian who is entered in the women's professional field, said she has never experienced a problem coming to the U.S. but she worries now that that might change.

"It does scare me traveling a little bit, at the moment," she said, adding that she is married to an American and has a visa. "I hope it's enough for them to not flag me or anything coming in and out of the States."

Most of the 31,941 entrants in Monday's race were required to qualify at another marathon, and many of them view running Boston as a lifelong athletic goal. Still, about 10% of the field typically does not toe the starting line in Hopkinton for reasons that range from injuries to weather to the 2010 eruption of a volcano in Iceland that halted flights and prevented hundreds of Europeans from traveling to Boston.

In last year's field of 29,333 entrants, there were 2,838 who failed to start. Race officials say they will not know how many no-shows there are this year until Monday; even then, they won't know why.

"We do not have data as to why people may or may not be coming to Boston," Fleming said. "At the BAA, our goal is to create a marathon experience that is very welcoming and joyous. Every year, we focus on that goal and we are confident that we have done everything in our power to achieve that this year."

Wu said she hoped visitors would look past the geopolitical climate and "participate in this very, very important global tradition that should transcend politics and should transcend the issues of the day."

And that's just what Australian Patrick Tiernan plans to do.

"There are some unfortunate situations going on in the U.S. right now, but I don't think that should have to taint what's happening here, and the history of this race," said the two-time Olympian, who was an NCAA cross country champion at Villanova. "I think everybody's very excited to be here and excited to compete on Monday."



A wave of runners set out from the start of the Boston Marathon, April 15, 2024, in Hopkinton, Mass. (AP)

Bengaluru suffers another home defeat



Punjab Kings' Nehal Wadhwa plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Punjab Kings at Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru, India. (AP)

Light drizzle reduces game to 14 overs

BENGALURU, India, April 19, (AP): Punjab Kings kept Royal Challengers Bengaluru winless at home in a rain-shortened Indian Premier League game.

Light drizzle reduced the Twenty20 game to 14 overs a side and Bengaluru was in danger of being bowled out for its lowest IPL total of 49 before Tim David's 26-ball unbeaten 50 lifted the home team to 95-9.

Punjab stuttered briefly until Nehal Wadhwa smacked three sixes and three boundaries and carried Punjab to 98-5 in 12.1 overs for a five-wicket win.

With a fifth win in seven games, Punjab was second in the table on run rate.

Bengaluru was fourth thanks to four away wins. But it has still to win at home.

Punjab fast bowlers Arshdeep Singh, Marco Jansen and Xavier Bartlett shared five wickets between them. Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal bagged 2-11 following 4-28 against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Arshdeep made the first inroads

with his short balls when Phil Salt (4) and Virat Kohli (1) fell to pulls.

Wicketkeeper Josh Inglis sprinted to square leg and made a scintillating diving catch to get Salt, and Jansen grabbed a sharp catch of Kohli at mid-on.



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Tim David runs to complete his fifty runs during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Punjab Kings at Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru, India. (AP)

Captain Rajat Patidar, one of the only two Bengaluru batters to reach double figures, passed 1,000 runs in the IPL but holed out to long-on as he tried to loft Chahal.

South African left-arm Jansen sliced through the middle order with 2-10 as Bengaluru slipped to 42-7 in the eighth over.

David smashed spinner Harpreet Brar (2-25) for three successive sixes in the last over and completed his half-century with two runs off the final ball after the leg-spinner overstepped and conceded a no-ball.

Brar was on a hat trick when he dismissed Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Yash Dayal but Hazlewood prevented the hat trick and David counterattacked in the final over.

Hazlewood and Bhuvneshwar Kumar removed the Punjab openers inside the four-over powerplay as the fast bowlers prospered in damp conditions.

Captain Shreyas Iyer and Inglis added a quiet 20 runs before Hazlewood returned and gave Bengaluru a glimmer of hope with two brilliant short balls.

Hazlewood got the thick outside edge of Iyer's drive, and two balls later Inglis sliced a catch to third man as Punjab slipped to 53-4 in eight overs.

But Wadhwa successfully took on leg-spinner Suyash Sharma to lead the charge, and Marcus Stoinis finished off the game with a six off Dayal.

Wrexham slips to third place after draw with Bristol

Burnley, Leeds record narrow wins, move one step closer to Premier League return

LONDON, April 19, (AP): Leeds and Burnley remain favourites to secure promotion to the Premier League after both teams won again to remain tied on points at the top of the Championship table.

Burnley won at nine-man Watford 2-1 and Leeds, which leads the league on goal difference, beat Oxford United 1-0. With three rounds remaining, both clubs are five points clear of third-placed Sheffield United, which beat Cardiff 2-0.

The top two gain automatic promotion to the Premier League and the next four go into the play-offs.

Wrexham's bid for a third straight promotion took a hit when the popular Welsh team drew with Bristol 1-1 and slipped one spot into third place.

Wrexham is battling for the second automatic promotion berth alongside Birmingham, which has already clinched the League One title and elevation into the second-tier Championship next season.

Wycombe leapfrogged Wrexham by beating Bolton 2-0 on Friday for its third straight victory and a one-point advantage over Wrexham in the standings with three games left.

The top two teams earn automatic promotion

and the next four enter a playoff for one final promotion spot.

Playing in front of celebrity co-owner Rob McElhenney, Wrexham needed a 76th-minute equalizer from Matty James to offset Taylor Moore's first-half opener at the Racecourse Ground.

Wrexham has settled for draws in three of its past four games, and won the other one.

Just two years ago, the team was playing in the fifth-tier National League but has surged through England's soccer pyramid thanks to the injection of cash from McElhenney and Ryan Reynolds.

'President of basketball ops'

GM extends contract with Lakers, gets additional title

EL SEGUNDO, Calif., April 19, (AP): General manager Rob Pelinka has received a contract extension from the Los Angeles Lakers less than three months after he acquired Luka Doncic.

Owner Jeanie Buss also announced Friday that Pelinka received a promotion in his second title, moving from vice president of basketball operations to president of basketball operations.

The Lakers announced no details of the extension for Pelinka, the longtime player agent who joined the Lakers' front office in February 2017.

Pelinka has notably swung two blockbuster trades in the past six years. He acquired Anthony Davis from New Orleans in 2019, and he traded Davis in a package for Doncic last February.

The seismic deal for Doncic is widely perceived as a major victory for Pelinka and the Lakers, who managed the nearly impossible feat of acquiring a young superstar at the start of his prime. Pelinka's hiring of rookie head coach JJ Redick last summer has also been praised, with Redick showing a quick acumen for the job while leading the Lakers to 50 victories and the Pacific Division title this season.

The Lakers won the 2020 championship in the Florida bubble two years after LeBron James chose the team as his next destination, and they reached the 2023 Western Conference finals. They're back in the playoffs this season as the No. 3 seed, opening the first round against Minnesota on Saturday.

"For eight seasons, I have relied on Rob's vision and leadership to do what's best for the Lakers organization," Buss said in a statement. "I value his partnership and professionalism and believe in his ability to deliver championship-caliber basketball for Los Angeles and Lakers fans everywhere."

When he first joined the Lakers' front office, Pelinka was the general manager reporting to Magic Johnson, who abruptly quit his job in 2019 and criticized Pelinka on the way out. Pelinka, who formed a tight bond with Buss while he represented Lakers superstar Kobe Bryant, was named the Lakers' vice president of basketball operations in 2020.

Arab Handball Cup 2024 logo unveiled

Kuwait welcomes new coach Aron



Saiwan and Al-Zaabi receive the coach of Kuwait handball team.

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The newly appointed head coach of the national handball team, Icelandic Aron Kristiansson, arrived in Kuwait. Faisal Saywan, the Director of National Teams, and Abdulaziz Al-Zaabi, the team's administrator, welcomed him.

Kristiansson was hired by the Handball Federation after the contract of the former Algerian coach, Said Hejazi, expired. Hejazi had returned to coach the Kuwait Club handball team. Kristiansson's first challenge will be the 10th Arab Cup for men's national teams, which Kuwait will host from May 4 to 12, coinciding with the International Handball Federation Week.

In preparation for the tournament, the team is set to enter an internal training camp in the coming days.

In related news, the Arab Handball Federation unveiled the logo for the Arab Cup, which showcases a half-handball surrounded by the colors of the Kuwaiti flag. The tournament's draw will be conducted via videoconference on April 26.

Nine teams will compete in the Arab Handball Cup at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sports Complex, including host Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE.

This year's Arab Handball Cup marks a return after a long hiatus, with the last edition held in 2002. Egypt won the first two editions (1975 and 1977), followed by Kuwait (1979 and 1988), Tunisia (1986 and 1993), Saudi Arabia (1998), Algeria (2000), and Bahrain (2002). The Arab Handball Federation, established in 1975 and based in Riyadh, now includes 16 Arab federations.

Meanwhile, in the Premier League, Kuwait Club strengthened its position at the top of the standings with a 39-30 win over Burgan in the fifth round. Sulaibikhat also marked their first Premier League victory, overcoming Al-Arabi 33-27. Salmiya handed Kazma their second defeat, winning 24-20.

The standings now show Kuwait Club leading with a perfect score of 36 points, followed by Burgan with 29 points, Kazma with 25, Salmiya with 21, and Sulaibikhat in fifth with 18 points, ahead of Al-Arabi on goal difference.



The Arab Handball Cup logo.

Kuwaiti athletes win double gold at International Jiu-Jitsu Championship



KUNA photo
Gold medalists Zaid and Abdulaziz Al-Sulaitin after the victory ceremony.

ABU DHABI, April 19, (KUNA): Kuwaiti brothers Zaid and Abdulaziz Al-Sulaitin delivered outstanding performances at the UAE International Professional Jiu-Jitsu Open Championship, held in Abu Dhabi on Saturday, each clinching a gold medal in their respective categories. Zaid Al-Sulaitin secured the gold in the under-14, 41 kg division, showcasing exceptional technical skill and dominance throughout his matches. He outperformed strong contenders from the UAE, Jordan, Iran, and Lebanon to take the top podium spot.

His younger brother, Abdulaziz Al-Sulaitin, triumphed in the under-12, 30 kg division. Displaying remarkable determination and strength, he overcame tough competition from Britain, Yemen, Egypt, the UAE, and Oman to win gold.

Their victories highlight Kuwait's growing presence in international jiu-jitsu and reflect the promising future of young Kuwaiti athletes on the global stage.

Tennis action 'heats up' as Kuwait Open gets underway



A player returns a shot to an opponent during the Kuwait Open.

KUWAIT CITY, April 19, (KUNA): The 2025 Kuwait Open Tennis Championship officially kicked off at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex, featuring over 300 players from Kuwait, the Arab region, and beyond.

Organized by the Kuwait Tennis Federation, the tournament runs through April 24 and includes three competition categories: men's singles, under-14 junior singles, and under-10 junior singles, according to Federation President Abdul Ridha Al-Gharib.

Al-Gharib emphasized that the championship offers valuable opportunities for players to gain match experience and elevate their performance through high-level competition. He also invited tennis fans to attend the matches and enjoy the exciting atmosphere at the Federation's courts.

Kuwait's Makhseed wins Qatar Drift Championship



KUNA photo
Kuwaiti champion Ali Makhseed.

DOHA, April 19, (KUNA): Kuwaiti racer Ali Makhseed clinched the 2024-2025 Qatar Drift Championship title after securing first place in the fifth and final round of the competition held Saturday in Doha.

Makhseed delivered an impressive performance throughout the championship, claiming victories in the first, fourth, and final rounds to secure the overall title.

The Qatar Drift Championship, which began last October, featured five rounds of intense competition among top regional drivers.

Grizzlies set up 1st-round playoff series with Thunder

Herro scores 30 points to lead Heat past Hawks in OT

MEMPHIS, Tenn., April 19, (AP): Ja Morant shrugged off a sprained right ankle to score 22 points and add nine assists and the Memphis Grizzlies beat the Dallas Mavericks 120-106 on Friday night to advance to the NBA playoffs.

Memphis secured the Western Conference's eighth seed and will open against top-seeded Oklahoma City in a best-of-seven series beginning Sunday on the Thunder's home court.

Morant was injured Tuesday night at Golden State in the Grizzlies' play-in opener and was questionable to play Friday.

"The doctors gave me all the help I needed in the simplest terms," said Morant, whose availability wasn't certain until about 30 minutes before tipoff. "I wanted to be on the floor. I wanted to play this game and get the win."

Jaren Jackson Jr. led Memphis with 24 points, and Desmond Bane had 22.

Anthony Davis led Dallas with 40 points and nine rebounds. Klay Thompson had 18 points.

Davis limped off in the fourth quarter with what appeared to be a right calf injury. He returned briefly, but didn't finish the game. He sat in the locker room after the game with a wrap and an ice bag on the leg. Davis said he tried to fight through the injury, knowing it was a win-or-go-home situation.

"We had our chances. Obviously, a tough loss," Davis said.

Memphis saw a 25-point first-half lead melting away in the third quarter as the Mavericks crafted a 27-12 run spanning halftime. That brought the Mavericks' deficit to single digits midway through the third.

The Grizzlies stretched the lead back to 96-80 heading into the final quarter and Dallas never threatened the rest of the way.



Miami Heat guard Tyler Herro (14) dribbles the ball against Atlanta Hawks forward Georges Niang (20) in the second half of an NBA Play-In Tournament basketball game in Atlanta. (AP)

Dallas, which beat Sacramento 120-106 on Wednesday night to earn a spot against the Grizzlies, didn't seem to have the same spark to start the game, never leading against Memphis.

Zach Edey had 15 points and 11 rebounds for Memphis, and Scotty Pippen Jr. scored 13 points.

Memphis lost all four games against Oklahoma City during the regular season, all by double digits. Jackson said the Grizzlies are looking at a different situation in the first

round.

"A series is a series," Jackson said. "You've got to stay level-headed. Whether you win a game or lose a game, it really doesn't matter until it's over."

Like Memphis, the Mavericks limped into the end of the season, going 7-15 since March 1. In the midst of it, they also lost Kyrie Irving to left knee surgery after dealing with a trade that brought Davis to Dallas and sent Luka Doncic to the Lakers.

"An incredible season, but the

change (trading Doncic for AD) and injuries, some would say we shouldn't even be there," Mavericks coach Jason Kidd said. "So give those guys in that locker room a lot of credit."

After making NBA Play-In Tournament history by winning two road games, the Miami Heat won't be afraid of facing No. 1 seed Cleveland in the playoffs.

Tyler Herro scored 30 points while sinking two 3-pointers in overtime and the Heat regrouped after losing

an early lead to beat the Atlanta Hawks 123-114 on Friday night.

Miami will play at Cleveland on Sunday night in the opening game of the first round of the Eastern Conference playoffs.

"I know how badly our group wanted to get into this thing," Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said. "I could see it in their eyes and feel it in their heart."

Davion Mitchell scored only seven points in regulation before adding three 3-pointers in overtime for

Miami.

The Heat became the first No. 10 seed in either conference to make the playoffs since the current play-in format was launched in the 2020-21 season. Miami also became the first play-in team to advance with two road wins.

"We did it the hard way. We're battle-tested," said Miami's Hayward Highsmith, who had 12 points and 10 rebounds. "We can go anywhere and beat anybody."

Asked about the challenge of facing Cleveland, Spoelstra said, "I'm so grateful we're in the playoffs. We're the first team to do it, and why not, to take on two road games."

Added Highsmith: "We fought to get into the playoffs. Now what we're in, we're not going to go out soft." Trae Young's lay-in with 1.3 seconds remaining in regulation tied the game at 106, forcing the overtime. Young scored 29 points with 11 assists. Onyeka Okongwu had 28 points with 12 rebounds.

"Not making the playoffs is a failure to me," Young said.

Miami started strong, scoring the game's first 10 points and leading by 17 points at 45-28 in the second period.

The Hawks tied the game for the first time at 88 on a layup by Terance Mann. Young's 3-pointer gave Atlanta its first lead at 91-88 with 7:36 remaining.

Atlanta led 93-92 before Okongwu hit a 3-pointer. Following a steal by Dyson Daniels, Okongwu's jam extended the lead to 98-92.

Heat forward Nikola Jovic, who had been out since Feb. 23 with a broken right hand, was available but did not play. Guard Pelle Larsson (ankle) also was available for the first time since April 7.

After setting season lows with four 3-pointers made and 21 attempted against Orlando in the first play-in game, coach Quin Snyder said his players "have got to be more willing to take contested 3s."

The Hawks responded by attempting 21 3s in just the first half against Miami, while making five. For the game, Atlanta made 16 of 47 3s.

Dumornay scores winning goal

Lyon weathers Arsenal second-half fightback

LONDON, April 19, (AP): Lyon weathered a second-half fightback by Arsenal to claim a 2-1 away win in the first leg of the Women's Champions League semifinals on Saturday, putting the record eight-time champions on course for another title match.

Melchie Dumornay, Lyon's 21-year-old star forward from Haiti, surged through the Arsenal defense to slot home a low finish in the 82nd minute at Emirates Stadium in London

and secure the team's ninth straight victory in the Champions League this season.

Lyon - unbeaten in all competitions this campaign - was hanging on at that time, with Mariona Caldentey having converted a penalty four minutes earlier to cap a resurgence by Arsenal after halftime. The spot kick was awarded after Lyon goalkeeper Christiane Endler punched Arsenal captain Leah Williamson in the back of the head while attempting

to clear an inswinging corner, with the VAR intervening to spot the foul.

There was also a video review for the 17th-minute opener scored by France winger Kadidiatou Diani, who was initially given offside after driving home a shot - only for that to be overturned after a VAR check.

The second leg will be in Lyon on April 27, with the French team seeking to reach the final for a record 12th time in its bid for a ninth title - and first since 2022.

"It's a stage of the competition when it's all about results," said Lyon coach Joe Montemurro, who was previously in charge at Arsenal.

"You have to find a way and suffer - sometimes, the football isn't the best, but we have a strong team of characters who have the ability to find a way in these special moments."

Defending champion Barcelona plays Chelsea in the other semifinal, with the first leg in Spain on Sunday.

Arsenal is the only English team to win the Women's Champions League. That was in 2007 and the club hasn't reached the final since.

Dumornay impressed for Lyon throughout, striking the crossbar with a 40-meter shot in the 33rd minute before eventually finding the target to halt Arsenal's second-half momentum and bolster her reputation as one of the world's best young players.

"We had some really good spells," Arsenal striker Alessia Russo said, "but they are very, very clinical up top."

The result strengthened the chances of a Lyon vs. Barcelona final for the fourth time in the last seven seasons.



Lyon's Ellie Carpenter vies for the ball with Arsenal's Mariona Caldentey, left, during the women's Champions League semifinals, first leg, soccer match between Arsenal FC and Olympique Lyonnais at the Arsenal Stadium, in London. (AP)

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Bayern's Serge Gnabry controls the ball in front of Heidenheim's Jan Schaeppner during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Heidenheim and Bayern Munich in Heidenheim, Germany. (AP)

Sports



Sheikh Khaled with Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah

Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr and Minister Al-Huwailah discuss family role in supporting young athletes

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The President of the Kuwaiti and Asian Aquatics Federations, Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr Al-Sabah, met the Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah.

According to a press release, they engaged in a friendly exchange of ideas on various topics related to local sports, particularly on enhancing the role of families in supporting their children's athletic pursuits and encouraging

them to engage in physical activities.

Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr expressed his satisfaction with the meeting, highlighting the shared understanding of the importance of continuing efforts to raise family awareness and provide athletes with the psychological and moral support they need in coordination with relevant sports authorities.

They also highlighted the importance of encouraging all fam-

ily members to engage in sports, due to their positive impact on public health and their role in preventing negative behaviours, especially in light of growing societal pressures that may lead youth astray.

Sheikh Khaled Al-Badr affirmed that the reform and development efforts led by the wise political leadership must be supported by continuous, serious, and sincere efforts from all members of society to preserve

family cohesion.

He noted that the family is the true foundation for raising a generation that is fully aware of its rights and responsibilities under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Kuwait wins gold, silver at Asian Junior Athletics Championship

RIYADH, April 19, (KUNA): Kuwait continued its strong showing at the 6th Asian Junior Athletics Championship in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, with two podium finishes.

Kuwaiti high jumper Mohammad Al-Duaij claimed the gold medal after clearing a height of 2.005 meters in an impressive performance that secured top honors in the event, the Kuwait Olympic Committee announced in a statement.

Meanwhile, fellow Kuwaiti athlete Abdullah Faisal earned the silver medal in the 800-meter race, clocking a time of 1 minute and 53.33 seconds.



KUNA photos
Mohammed Al-Duaij celebrates after winning high jump gold medal at the Asian Junior Athletics Championships in Dammam.



Abdul Latif Faisal, silver medalist in the 800m.

Behbehani stars for Kuwait

LUXEMBOURG, April 19, (KUNA): The Kuwait Gymnastics Federation announced Friday that national team gymnast captured gold and silver medals at the 2025 Luxembourg Open.

Behbehani secured the gold medal in the individual parallel bars event and added a silver in the vault (jumping table) competition, the Federation said in a statement.

Kuwait Gymnastics Federation Secretary General Abdul Latif Murad noted that Behbehani's participation in the tournament is part of a comprehensive training

and preparation plan developed in coordination with the Kuwait Olympic Committee. The goal is to gear up for upcoming international championships.

Murad explained that the year-long preparation program includes intensive training camps and participation in various global tournaments to enhance the athlete's skills across all apparatuses. He also commended Behbehani's performance and extended his appreciation to the Public Authority for Sports and the Kuwait Olympic Committee for their continued support.



KUNA photo
Abdullah Behbehani celebrates with gold and silver medals.

Kuwait wraps up champ'ship with silver in mixed team trap shooting



KUNA photo
The Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer with members of the Kuwaiti national shooting team after the awarding ceremony.

Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor praises impressive performance of Kuwaiti athletes

KUWAIT CITY, April 19, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti national team claimed the silver medal in the trap shooting event at the conclusion of the His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Grand Shooting Championship.

The week-long tournament brought together 220 shooters representing 18 countries, and was held at the Sheikh Sabah

Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Ranges, under the supervision of the Kuwait Shooting Federation.

Kuwait's duo, Nasser Al-Meqled and Sarah Al-Hawal, earned silver in the trap mixed team event, finishing just behind the gold medal-winning team from Turkiye. Their performance brought Kuwait's overall medal tally in the championship to four – one gold and three silvers. Italy and Morocco shared third place, securing bronze.

Following the award ceremony, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Badr Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah praised the impressive performance of the Kuwaiti athletes, highlighting

the high level of competition throughout the tournament.

Chairman of the Organizing Committee, Duaij Al-Otaibi, extended his appreciation to His Highness the Amir for his continued support of the sport, which has helped elevate Kuwait's position in regional and international shooting competitions.

Al-Otaibi also emphasized the success of this year's edition, noting that the championship has been officially recognized on the calendar of the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF). He added that the attendance of ISSF Secretary General Alessandro Nicotra di San Giacomo at the opening ceremony further reflected the event's growing prestige.

Ancelotti to decide Real future at end of season

MADRID, April 19, (AP): Carlo Ancelotti has eluded speaking about his future after recent reports that again linked the Real Madrid coach with a move to Brazil's national team.

The veteran Italian manager was asked several times by reporters on Saturday at a pre-game press conference if he would leave the Spanish giant this summer, and each time he responded that he didn't want to speak about it.

"At the end of the season we will speak about this with the club," he said more than once.

The 65-year-old Ancelotti is under contract with Madrid through June 2026.

Speculation regarding his career plans has once again spiked after Madrid's exit from the Champions League this week. Britain's Sky Sports has reported that he will step down following the Copa

del Rey final against Barcelona on April 26.

Besides the Copa del Rey, Madrid is still in the fight to defend its La Liga title and is also to play in the Club World Cup this summer.

Madrid is in second place behind Barcelona in the league. It hosts fourth-place Athletic Bilbao on Sunday.

Brazil has reportedly been after Ancelotti since last year as it seeks an elite coach for the 2026 World Cup. Brazil fired Dorival Júnior as coach last month.

Ancelotti is the only coach to have won the Champions League five times - three times with Madrid (2014, 2022, 2024) and twice with AC Milan (2003, 2007).

He is also the only coach to have steered teams to domestic league titles in Spain, England, Italy, Germany and France.



Real Madrid's head coach Carlo Ancelotti gives instructions from the side line during the Champions League quarterfinal first leg soccer match between Arsenal and Real Madrid at the Emirates Stadium in London. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Bayern closes in on title: Harry Kane scored his 60th Bundesliga goal in his 60th game to help Bayern Munich defeat Heidenheim 4-0 and close in on regaining the title on Saturday.

Kane scored the opening goal with a low shot from just outside the penalty area in the 13th minute and nears what would be the first major team trophy of a career filled with individual scoring accolades.

Kane is the fastest player to 60 goals in Bundesliga history, beating Erling Haaland's mark of 65 games with Borussia Dortmund.

Bayern moves nine points clear of second-placed Bayer Leverkusen, which plays St. Pauli on Sunday. Four games remain after this week.

Bayern had a 2-0 lead before collapsing to lose 3-2 the last time it played in Heidenheim. It was a telling moment as Bayern surrendered the Bundesliga title last season to Leverkusen. (AP)