



Join hands, PM tells security forces
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AMIR RECEIVES CALL FROM SAUDI CROWN PRINCE FOLLOWING IRANIAN ATTACK

Kuwait airport's T1, T2 jolted by drone assaults



Left: An incoming projectile explodes over the water as Israel issues a nationwide alert following its strikes on Iran, in Haifa Bay, northern Israel, Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026. Right: People watch as smoke rises on the skyline after an explosion in Tehran, Iran, Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026. (AP)

By **Munif Naif and Marwa Al-Bahravi**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Kuwait's Ministry of Public Works announced on Saturday that a drone targeted the new Kuwait International Airport (T2) project, causing only limited material damage, in light of the developments in the region.

The Ministry of Public Works said in a press release that no injuries were recorded, while the site was evacuated and the necessary precautionary measures were taken by the concerned teams.

Earlier Saturday, the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) announced that a drone targeted Kuwait International Airport, which resulted in minor injuries among a number of workers, in addition to limited material damage in the T1 terminal.

The Public Authority for Civil Aviation spokesman Abdullah Al-Rajhi told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the competent authorities immediately began implementing the approved emergency procedures, as the incident was dealt with and the site was secured. "Assessment, treatment and rearrangement of operations are currently underway to the highest safety standards," he added.

"The situation is under full control by the concerned authorities in the country and the safety of passengers and workers is a top priority," he said.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a phone call Saturday from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who inquired about the well-being of Kuwait, its leadership, and people following the recent Iranian attack on Kuwaiti territory.

During the call, the Saudi Crown Prince strongly condemned the aggression, describing it as a blatant violation of Kuwait's sovereignty, airspace, international law, and the UN Charter. He affirmed Saudi Arabia's full support for Kuwait and readiness to provide all possible assistance to safeguard its sovereignty, security, and stability, emphasizing that Kuwait's security is inseparable from the security and stability of Saudi Arabia.

His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Saudi Crown Prince, wishing him good health and well-being, and extended best wishes for continued security, prosperity, and progress to the Kingdom.

Kuwait's Cabinet on Saturday strongly condemned the brazen Iranian attack targeting Kuwait's airspace and territory, describing it as a blatant violation of the country's sovereignty, international law, and the UN Charter.

In an official statement, the Cabinet affirmed Kuwait's full and inherent right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, stressing that all necessary measures will be taken to protect the country's territory, citizens, and residents, in accordance with the scale of the attack and international law. The statement confirmed that Kuwait's defense systems successfully intercepted the attack following established operational procedures and rules of engagement, emphasizing that the continuation of such aggressive military actions in the region threatens regional security and stability.

The Cabinet also condemned the Iranian attacks against the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, and Jordan, reaffirming Kuwait's full solidarity with these sisterly states and

Tensions spike after US-Israel attacks

Gulf nations neutralize missile waves

MANAMA, Feb 28, (Agencies): Bahrain's National Communication Center confirmed Saturday that the Kingdom intercepted several missiles detected in its airspace.

In a statement, the center said that the Bahrain Defence Force's air defense systems successfully intercepted the missiles.

The competent authorities are closely monitoring developments to ensure the protection of the Kingdom's airspace and safeguard the security and safety of citizens and residents.

The National Communication Center urged the public to obtain information from official sources and refrain from circulating rumors or unverified information, in a manner that supports national security

and stability.

Elsewhere, the UAE Ministry of Defense announced that air defenses successfully intercepted a new wave of Iranian missiles launched toward the country, neutralizing them efficiently with no reported damage.

In a statement carried by Emirates News Agency, the ministry emphasized its full preparedness to respond to any threats, taking all necessary measures to firmly counter actions aimed at undermining the nation's security and stability.

It reiterated that the safety of Emirati citizens, residents, and visitors remains an absolute priority.

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Kuwait University suspends Saturday classes and exams

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Kuwait University announced the cancellation of classes and examinations scheduled for Saturday in all its colleges.

The university stated that the decision was taken in light of the current situation in the country and its national responsibility and commitment to ensure the safety of all members of its community.

It affirmed that it is closely and continuously monitoring developments in coordination with the relevant authorities in the country and will announce any additional measures through its official channels in due course.

The university administration stressed that the safety and well-being of students, faculty members, staff and administrative personnel remain its highest priority, indicating that it spares no effort in implementing the necessary measures to ensure their security and welfare.

- Kuwait downs Iranian missiles, declares radiation level normal
- Kuwait affirms right to self-defense
- MoI confirms security situation stable
- Health Ministry closely monitors situation
- Kuwait closes airspace; Kuwait Airways suspends all flights

support for all measures they take to safeguard their sovereignty, security, and stability.

The Cabinet urged citizens and residents to rely on official sources for information, avoid spreading rumors or unverified news, and follow the guidance issued by relevant authorities. Government platforms will provide continuous updates on the latest developments in the region. On the domestic front, the Cabinet confirmed that Kuwait's strategic stock of essential food supplies remains stable and sufficient, with additional quantities available to cover extended periods.

All goods are adequately available in local markets, and supply chains continue to operate normally without interruption, as part of the government's strategic food security plan.

The Cabinet concluded by invoking divine protection over Kuwait and its people under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

In related news, Ali Al-Salem Air Base was targeted by ballistic missiles, which were successfully intercepted by Kuwait Air Defense early this morning, resulting in debris falling around the base, said official spokesperson for the Kuwait Ministry of Defense, Colonel Saud Al-Atwan.

Colonel Al-Atwan affirmed that the General Staff of the Kuwait Armed Forces continues to carry out its duties in defending Kuwait's sovereignty and responding to any threats to the country's security and stability. He urged citizens and residents to stay away from any debris or remnants from the missile interception, not to touch or move them, and to report immediately to the relevant authorities.

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GCC missile strikes trigger global embassy warnings

By **Fares Ghaleb**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The American Embassy in Kuwait issued a security alert on Saturday, affirming that it continues to closely monitor the ongoing regional tensions.

The embassy confirmed that there has been no change in the number of personnel currently stationed in the country.

Embassy staff were advised to remain vigilant at all times, and the embassy extended this advisory to all American citizens residing in Kuwait.

They are encouraged to continuously assess their personal and family circumstances, stay informed of the latest security guidance and official updates, and make thoughtful, well-informed decisions.

Britain called on its nationals to seek shelter places in the countries of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates due to the recent missile attacks.

In an X statement, the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) said, "Due to reported

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Embassies, diplomatic missions cancel events

By **Fares Ghaleb**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Embassies and diplomatic missions in Kuwait have announced the cancellation and postponement of Ramadan events and gatherings, citing the current situation in the region.

The Embassy of Bahrain in Kuwait decided to cancel its Ramadan reception, scheduled for Monday, until further notice.

The Embassy of India also canceled its Ramadan gathering, which was set to take place at its premises, citing the security conditions in the region.

The Embassy of Oman announced the cancellation of its reception, planned for Saturday evening, due to the current circumstances.

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Burgan Bank celebrates National Day with a campaign honoring actions that shaped the nation

Opinion

■ **Ahmed Al-Jarallah**

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

An ant perishes if it grows wings

IT goes without saying that it is useless for any party to rely on the time factor. Everyone remembers what happened to Japan in World War II including the Japanese kamikaze attacks on neighboring countries, the attack on Pearl Harbor in the United States, and the destruction of the American naval fleet.

However, the end was not what Tokyo wanted. It refused to heed advice and ignored the voice of reason. Japan persisted in its stubbornness until the matter was settled on August 6, 1945, with its surrender after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Technology was not as advanced then as it is today.

Now, social media and the press expose everything instantly, unlike the situation during World War II. Furthermore, Iran today is not like Japan during World War II.

The current Iranian regime has squandered opportunities for decades. Instead of seizing available chances, Iran's leaders chose to bully neighboring countries and the Arab world. They even boasted of controlling four Arab capitals and attempted to influence the culture of these countries, including trying to change their religious beliefs, which were actions that the world could not accept.

As a result, the path taken by the Tehran regime proved detrimental. Iranian leaders ignored voices of reason, both from the Gulf and the international community, particularly as the international community had made clear it would not allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

Despite this, Iran continued its delaying tactics, attempting to outsmart the international community.

Throughout the past five decades, Iran has instigated numerous problems, beginning with the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, which ended with Khomeini's admission of defeat in 1988 when he described accepting UN Security Council Resolution 598, calling for a ceasefire, as "drinking from a poisoned chalice." This was followed by terrorist attacks launched by Iran against neighboring countries.

Meanwhile, the suffering of the Iranian people continued to worsen, as the regime failed to use the country's natural resources to alleviate hardship or improve economic and living conditions.

Instead, Iran directed its national income toward supporting sectarian terrorist groups throughout the Arab world and pursuing harmful activities globally.

Despite this, opportunities have existed for Tehran over the past decades to reach a common understanding.

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Ramadan Timings

Imsak	Sunday	04:55
Iftar	Sunday	17:48
Imsak	Monday	04:54

Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:56	Asr	15:19
Sunrise ..	06:15	Maghrib ..	17:46
Zohr	12:01	Isha	19:03

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speed of 12-45 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Weather

By Night: Rather cold with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas of northwesterly wind to northerly wind, with speeds ranging from 10-40 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	24	16
Abdaly	24	12
Jahra	26	16
Salmiyah	23	17
Jalaliyah	27	11
Nuwaisib	26	15

Join hands, PM tells security forces

Sheikh Ahmad lauds Armed Forces exhibition



KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28, (KUNA): Under the patronage and presence of His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, the opening ceremony of the military exhibition was held Wednesday on the National Day celebrations.

His Highness the Prime Minister viewed an air show performed by the Air Force, the Parachute Jump Team of the Ministry of Defense, the Helicopter Directorate, and Police aircraft of the Ministry of Interior. He also

watched a naval display featuring Army, Police and Fire Force boats, demonstrating the high level of readiness, efficiency, and advanced capabilities of the Armed Forces and various security agencies.

His Highness then toured the military exhibition, which comprises four main sections representing the military and security agencies of the country.

During the tour, he viewed the latest technologies, military and security equipment, and multi-purpose vehicles of the Armed Forces and security agencies, in addition to the services provided by the Emergency Medical Services Department of the Ministry of Health.



HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah patronized the military exhibition held during the National Days holidays.

His Highness, in a press statement, extended warmest congratulations and best wishes to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal



Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and to the Kuwaiti people on the occasion of the 65th National Day and the 35th Liberation Day, praying to Almighty Allah to perpetuate the blessings of security, stability, and prosperity upon our dear homeland under their wise leadership.

His Highness commended the distinguished participation and high level of coordination among the various military and security institutions, which embodies the spirit of cooperation and integration. His Highness praised the significant national role played by all military and security sectors in protecting the homeland and preserving its achievements and affirmed the government's commitment to providing continuous support for

all that enhances defense and security capabilities and consolidates the foundations of security and stability in the country.

The ceremony was attended by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah, Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology and Acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Abdullah Al-Meshari, Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Governor of the Capital Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, and senior commanders of the Army, Police, National Guard, and Fire Force.



His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad and other members of the royal family.

Photos by Rizk Taufiq



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



Editor-in Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times Ahmed Al-Jarallah extends his greetings. Colleague Saud Al-Farhan is also seen.



First Deputy PM Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef with his son Sheikh Bader.



US Charge de Affaires Stephen Butler congratulates.

US congrats Kuwait leaders & citizens on National Days

WASHINGTON, Feb 28, (KUNA): The United States on Wednesday congratulated the State of Kuwait, its leadership, government and people, on the 65th National Day and 35th Liberation Day anniversaries.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement, "On behalf of the United States of America, I congratulate His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah and the Kuwaiti people as they celebrate National Day and Liberation Day."

Rubio described Kuwait as an indispensable partner for decades in promoting regional security and stability across the Middle East.

He commended Kuwait's commitment to regional stability and humanitarian assistance to crisis-affected populations, including the Amir's decision to join the Board of Peace and his pledge to support Gaza's reconstruction.

Rubio affirmed Washington's aspiration to further strengthen US-Kuwait ties across all fields and expand trade and investment for the mutual benefit of both countries.

"As Kuwait celebrates this important milestone, the United States reaffirms its commitment to our enduring friendship and strategic partnership," he added.

Kuwait marks Thursday the 35th anniversary of its liberation, recalling with pride the steadfastness of its people during the Iraqi invasion on August 2, 1990, and international support for its freedom and legitimate leadership.

Despite the hardship endured, Kuwaitis demonstrated loyalty and sacrifice, rejecting aggression and uniting behind their legitimate leadership to defend sovereignty, freedom and independence.

During the occupation, Kuwaitis formed a unified front of resistance, with some taking up arms while others supported the popular resistance. Women played vital roles, including delivering supplies and participating in demonstrations.

Kuwaitis remember their martyrs who gave their lives so the nation could regain its freedom, and the leadership's tireless efforts to rally international backing for Kuwait's legitimate rights until liberation was achieved.

"Ambassador Al-Sabah... tonight Kuwait is free." With these historic words echoing through the halls of the US Congress, President George H.W. Bush marked the successful conclusion of Kuwait's liberation, directing a proud glance at Ambassador Sheikh Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah.

As Bush's statement resonated in Washington, capitals across the globe issued statements praising the resilience of Kuwaiti people and the political and diplomatic lead-

ership of Kuwait, emphasizing the unparalleled international coalition that ended a major modern global crisis.

In a televised address, President Bush described the liberation as a victory for international law, emphasizing that aggression cannot provide political legitimacy and that the international community can act collectively to defend a United Nations member state under attack.

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher hailed Kuwait's liberation as "a day of triumph for justice and the rule of law," commending the resilience of Kuwaitis under occupation, which played a pivotal role in sustaining international support for liberation.

Former French President Francois Mitterrand noted that Kuwait's restored sovereignty reflected the success of collective international will, with respect for recognized borders forming a cornerstone of global stability.

Former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl described the liberation as a confidence-building step for the post-Cold War international order, underlining the critical role of a united Security Council stance.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev welcomed the end of occupation as an important step in reinforcing international law, asserting that multilateral legitimacy remains the safest path to global stability.

Across the Arab world, official statements from Gulf Cooperation Council leaders offered heartfelt congratulations to Kuwait's leadership and people, emphasizing shared destiny and collective defense.

Saudi Arabia's late King Fahad called the liberation "a victory for Arab legitimacy," affirming that Kuwait's security is inseparable from the region's stability.

UAE late President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nehyan congratulated Kuwait and highlighted the achievement as the fruit of Gulf, Arab, and international solidarity, urging a focus on reconstruction and future security.

Qatar's late Amir Sheikh Khalifa Al-Thani welcomed the liberation as a triumph of international legitimacy, stressing continued Gulf coordination in political and military matters.

Oman's late Sultan Qaboos praised the return of Kuwaiti sovereignty, calling for regional stability through cooperation and collective Gulf security.

Bahrain's late Amir Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa described the liberation as a testament to legitimacy and international solidarity.

Egypt's late President Hosni Mubarak highlighted Egypt's contribution to the coalition and said Kuwait's return restored regional balance.

Kuwaitis united in inherited values

'Dar Salwa' receives Ramadan well-wishers

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The Dar Salwa Diwan recently received a large number of well-wishers on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Leading the gathering were His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, with several members of the ruling family, ministers, ambassadors, members of diplomatic missions, and a large number of citizens and expatriates in attendance.

Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and his brothers, Sheikh Sabah and Sheikh Fahad, warmly welcomed the well-wishers. They stressed that Ramadan remains a unifying occasion, spreading the values of communication and tolerance, while strengthening community bonds within the framework of love and harmony.

The large crowd of well-wishers, who filled the Dar Salwa Diwan, reflected a renewed image of social solidarity and national unity, uniting Ku-

waitis around deeply rooted values inherited from their forefathers – a social tradition that expresses the authenticity of the community and adherence to its noble customs.

In a spiritual atmosphere, the attendees offered their congratulations to the leadership, asking Almighty Allah to bring back the holy month to Kuwait and its people with goodness, prosperity and blessings, and to perpetuate the blessings of security and stability upon the nation.

Over 20 convert to Islam daily in Ramadan, says Kuwait IPC

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28, (KUNA): The Islamic Presentation Committee of Al-Najat Charity reported that since the start of Ramadan, more than 20 new converts from various non-Arabic-speaking communities have embraced Islam daily.

Committee Director Qutaiba Al-Zuwaid told KUNA Wednesday that 63 preachers working in 14 languages continue inviting non-Muslims to learn about Islam, describing Ramadan as a

prime opportunity to spread values of tolerance and goodness.

He said from the 29th of the month of Shaban to the first week of Ramadan, over 150 declarations of faith were made both in person and online.

Al-Zuwaid added that the project provides comprehensive tools, including field visits, printed materials, Quran translations, and digital platforms to convey Islam in multiple languages.

Mubarak has carved a niche in hearts, minds of Kuwaitis

"FEBRUARY 25 represents, for Kuwait and Kuwaitis, a memory of liberation etched in their hearts; yet at the same time, it carries profound pain," columnist Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Fate has decreed that this anniversary bears a paradox, blending pride with sorrow. On this day, former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak passed away. He was a man whose name is tied to one of the most difficult and honorable chapters in our modern history.

"When we speak of Mubarak, we are not addressing the internal political affairs of another country, but rather expressing Kuwaiti loyalty to a heroic stance.



Adel Al-Kharafi

"No Kuwaiti can forget Mubarak's role in the historic Arab Summit convened during the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait. With shrewdness and courage, he succeeded in securing the 'green light' for international action to liberate Kuwait. Hosni Mubarak stood as an impenetrable wall against attempts at deception and manipulation practiced by some at the time, including Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri.

"He confronted voices of hatred with true Arab chivalry, ensuring that Kuwait's rightful cause resonated powerfully in international forums.

"It is remarkable that the day of Mubarak's passing coincided with our national holidays, as if fate intended for his name to remain forever linked with the memory of Kuwait's liberation.

"Mubarak's decisive management of that Arab Summit session marked an unforgettable historical moment, along with Kuwait's great leaders, such as Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah (may God have mercy on him) and his team, as they faced treachery with dignity.

"Today, as we raise the flags of joy across the streets of Kuwait, we do not forget to extend our condolences to the honorable Mubarak family and to all who loved him.

"Our affection for Mubarak reflects a defining trait of the Kuwaiti character. We are loyal to those who stand by us in times of hardship.

"Hosni Mubarak has passed on, but his honorable stances toward Kuwait will continue to be remembered and taught to future generations. His memory will live on, returning each year with the sunrise of February 25."



"The world is experiencing an unprecedented wave of technological development, driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications that are permeating everyday life and reshaping work, communication, and knowledge patterns," Kuwaiti writer Sheikh Al-Asfoor wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"This rapid transformation brings new responsibilities for societies and presents social and cultural challenges that require careful preparation and thoughtful management.

"AI is no longer just a tool for assistance, but it has become a powerful force influencing human behavior, affecting education, health, family relationships, and digital identity.

"As its reach expands, pressing questions arise regarding privacy, cybersecurity, the future of work, and the digital divide between generations.

"The direct impact of AI on social relationships is becoming increasingly clear, as communication patterns evolve, family roles shift, and reliance on smart applications to manage daily life grows.

"In this context, the University of Sharjah, in collaboration with the Institute of Applied Research in Humanities and Social Sciences, held a conference last week titled 'The Future of Society in the Age of Artificial Intelligence.' The conference provided an important scientific platform to examine these transformations.

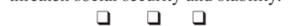
"The conference concluded with several important recommendations, including raising public awareness about the safe use of modern technologies, developing legislation to protect digital privacy, supporting research on the social implications of AI, and integrating digital skills into education to prepare future generations.

"As a team from the Kuwaiti Sociologists Association, we conducted a field study titled 'The Impact of Artificial Intelligence Applications on Family Relationships in Kuwaiti Society.'

"The study identified the most significant challenges posed by the growing use of AI applications on family relationships, including changing patterns of family communication, a rising number of cybersecurity breaches, and the impact of modern technologies on shaping values and roles within the family.

"AI represents a historic opportunity, but it also presents a challenge that requires public awareness and clear policies to ensure that humanity remains at the center of this transformation, without facing consequences that

threaten social security and stability."



"In the hustle and bustle of life and the entanglement of concerns, understanding dims, and religion is often reduced to moments of worship, after which we return to the spiritual aridity that has settled within us and our obliviousness to meaning," Kuwaiti writer Fatima Nasser Al-Muzayel wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Yet the deeper truth, the one not seen with the eye but perceived with insight, is that religion is not merely rituals to be performed, but the impact a person leaves on the hearts of those around them.

"Religion is not a prayer after which the conscience finds rest while malice and hypocrisy remain in the heart, nor is it fasting in which the stomach goes hungry while harmful behavior is indulged.

"It is not a rosary passed between the fingers if the same hand knows the path of harm and betrayal, nor a forehead that touches the ground in reverence while the heart is bloated with arrogance, looking down on others and knowing nothing of humility.

"Religion, in its essence, is the awakening of the conscience. It is to sleep without the burden of guilt, without the memory of a hurt caused without apology. It is to raise your hands in supplication with a heart free from the weight of injustice, understanding that God's presence is not measured by the length of your prayers, but by the sincerity of your justice.

"Religion is honoring your parents when age weighs heavily on their shoulders, not merely when others see you as dutiful. It is giving them the patience they gave you and the tenderness they instilled in your childhood. Honoring parents is not a social obligation, but a subtle test of the purity of one's heart.

"Religion is also a responsibility that extends across generations - to raise your children well, not just to achieve excellence, but to nurture them within a framework of righteousness upbrining that instills respect before judgment and humanity before distinction, an upbrining that is lived, experienced, and gives meaning to their achievements.

"Societies are not built by the exceptional or brilliant minds alone, but by sound upbrining and education that instill humanity in the heart. A child who learns respect as a guiding principle, who prioritizes gentleness over rudeness, and who chooses spontaneity and simplicity over arrogance, not only grows into a virtuous individual but becomes a beacon of light dispelling the darkness along the path.

"The real crisis lies not in the scarcity of worshippers, but in the rarity of those whose worship transforms their character. What value is there in bowing in prayer if it does not correct flawed behavior and refine reprehensible actions? What is the point of fasting if it does not discipline the tongue and restrain harm? Worship that does not cultivate good character is like a tree that is lush in appearance but bears no fruit.

"Religion is ethics" is a phrase often repeated, yet it remains the truth most in need of embodiment. When morality dies, rituals become soulless forms, and outward appearances serve only as a thin veil that fails to conceal the emptiness within. At that point, prayer without conscience is meaningless, as is fasting that leaves wounds in the soul, and thousands of rosaries are in vain if the heart is unjust and ungrateful for the rights of others.

"Perhaps the most beautiful thing a person can achieve is not to be labeled as religious, but to bring a sense of peace to those around them. Their presence should be a source of tranquility, their words comforting, and their actions proof that when faith dwells in the heart, it manifests in the simplest details.

"Religion is not measured by the number of prayers performed, but by the number of hearts we have not wounded. Not by the length of supplications, but by the depth of humanity and compassion. Not by the quantity of words, but by the sincerity of their impact.

"When we understand this, we realize that the path to God is not through outward appearances alone, but through the hearts we mend, the thoughts we heal, and the integrity we uphold in private as well as in public. It passes through our humanity when it is elevated, through the tenderness of our hearts when it overcomes rigidity, and through our consciences when they choose truth, even at a cost.

"The path to God is not a distance traversed on foot, but a state refined by the heart; the more it embraces people with kindness and affection, the closer it draws to God, and the more it alleviates a soul's pain, the brighter its own light shines."

- Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

'Security pillar of stability'



Amiri Diwan photo

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, with the personnel of the Ministry of Interior.

Mol at forefront of enforcing law and order

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, met with personnel of the Ministry of Interior on Tuesday.

Addressing the ministry's staff, His Highness the Amir emphasized that security is the cornerstone of state strength and societal stability, noting that the Ministry of Interior is at the forefront of enforcing law and order.

His Highness commended the dedication and professionalism of personnel across all sectors, highlighting their role in safeguarding the nation, protecting rights, and reinforcing the prestige and authority of the state.

His Highness the Amir also praised the Ministry for recent achievements, including receiving awards from the General Secretariat of Arab Interior Ministers Council for Arab and international cooperation, in recognition of its coordinated efforts in combating narcotics across the region.

Further, His Highness lauded the ministry's coordination with relevant authorities and legislative improvements, including the implementation of a new traffic law and an updated anti-drug law providing a comprehensive regulatory and punitive framework.

Advancements

His Highness highlighted advancements in security systems, such as the launch of AI-based smart patrols, the development of land border surveillance systems, and the operation of remotely controlled maritime vessels within the Coast Guard fleet.

His Highness reaffirmed the Ministry's ongoing support and instructed senior officials to maintain vigilance and field coordination, ensure strict and fair law enforcement, and maintain continuous patrolling to ensure public security and stability.

He also stressed the importance of strength-

ening regional and international partnerships to address shared challenges, improve security coordination, exchange expertise, and support joint Gulf security initiatives.

Moreover, His Highness emphasized institutional development and security governance through workforce training, implementing approved action plans and updated legislation, and improving public services using modern tools and open-door policies.

His Highness the Amir prayed for divine guidance and success for all ministry personnel in serving the nation, and for the continued safety, peace, and prosperity of Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, visited the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF).

Upon arrival, His Highness the Amir was received by First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah and KFF chief Maj. Gen. Talal Al-Roumi.

Addressing the KFF's staff, His Highness the Amir said: "On this blessed night of Ramadan, it's a pleasure for me, His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister to meet the KFF personnel to exchange congratulations of this holy month and Kuwait's national days."

His Highness the Amir expressed appreciation to sincere efforts exerted by the KFF to save lives and protect property to ensure a safe life of society based on loyalty and responsibility.

His Highness the Amir also commended the KFF personnel for continued human development through an education and training system and empowering women.

His Highness the Amir appreciated boosting cooperation between the state's military and security institutions and developing partnerships with public and private bodies.

His Highness the Amir valued the steps made to support the Kuwait's leading status in safety and security fields, praising the "In-

ternational Commander Medal" given by the International Civil Defense Organization to Sheikh Fahad Al-Yusuf.

His Highness the Amir affirmed Kuwait's support for KFF efforts, instructing its officials to expand services and keep pace with urban expansion, keeping at the same time developing human and field potential of the KFF.

Awareness

His Highness the Amir also asked KFF officials and personnel to raise digital awareness and intensify field tours of stores and facilities to spread the culture of protection and safety.

In addition, His Highness the Amir asked the KFF officials to enhance the foreign training program, and regional and international collaboration as well as keep updated on the latest technical and military developments.

His Highness the Amir finally prayed to Allah Almighty to help the KFF personnel achieve their missions and protect the dear homeland.

Meanwhile, Al-Roumi expressed the honor felt by himself and the KFF personnel in welcoming His Highness the Amir.

He said that His Highness the Amir's visit morally supports the KFF and enhances the spirit of responsibility and belonging.

He also voiced pride for His Highness the Amir's instructions given during the last visit that formed a launch of the development path.

The instructions have contributed to raising vigilance and readiness of the staff, which have resulted in the signing of a protocol with the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) on maintaining the country's heritage and property.

Al-Roumi said that the KFF stands on the front line against risks and cooperates with their brothers at military bodies.

Al-Roumi announced the first Artificial Intelligence officer - inaugurating a new phase of digital and technological transformation.

The initiative targets KFF personnel, entrepreneurs, and various segments of society. It is a unique project that incorporates and integrates modern technology, he noted.

Nazaha launches contest on anti-corruption battle

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The Kuwait Authority for Combating Corruption (Nazaha), in coordination with the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), announced the opening of submission for the second competition for research and studies in the field of integrity protection and combating corruption.

In a press statement, Nazaha revealed that the theme of the competition is "Combating Corruption through Non-Judicial Means: A Theoretical Approach and Practical Experiences."

Nazaha announced the conditions for participation in the competition as follows:

- Participants must be citizens of the GCC countries.
- The research must be written in Arabic with correct grammar.
- The research can be conducted by one or two people at most.
- The research must be original, methodologically sound, comprehensive, and contemporary in both subject matter and presentation.
- The research must not have been previously submitted or published in any journal or used to obtain any academic degree.
- The research must be prepared specifically for the competition.
- The research recommendations should be applicable and consistent with GCC regulations.
- The research must adhere to the principles and standards of scientific research, both in terms of form (including an introduction outlining the problem, objectives, methodology, plan and structure, along with source documentation) and content (presenting the topic accurately and clearly, concluding with results and recommendations).
- The research paper must be between 25 and 50 pages long.

Regarding the competition prizes, the Authority indicated that the first place winner will receive 55,000 Saudi Riyals, the second place will receive 45,000 Saudi Riyals, and the third place will receive 35,000 Saudi Riyals.

Deputy Army Chief tours north Kuwait army posts

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Army, Major General (Pilot) Sabah Al-Jaber, conducted an inspection visit on Friday afternoon to army positions in the northern sector to review the progress of work at various units and their field locations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During the visit, Major General Al-Jaber examined the tasks and responsibilities assigned to the units, as well as their level of readiness and discipline in executing their duties. He praised the commitment, discipline, and high morale he witnessed among the personnel.



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Regional, global leaders extend greetings

Kuwait Amir congratulates citizens, residents on Nat'l, Liberation Days

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated citizens and residents on the 65th National Day and the 35th Liberation Day, commending their joy on the twin occasions that embody loyalty and belonging to Kuwait.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

In a statement carried by Kuwait News Agency, His Highness praised the extensive efforts of security bodies at the Ministries of Interior and Defense and the National Guard, along with the contributions of other state institutions in organizing the national celebrations, including the Permanent Committee for Celebrating National Holidays and several ministries and official entities. He also lauded the wide media coverage accompanying the events.

The Amir urged citizens to cherish the blessing of liberation bestowed upon Kuwait, recalling with pride the sacrifices of the martyrs who defended the homeland. He further expressed appreciation to the leaders of Gulf and Arab countries for sharing Kuwait's joy, reflecting the depth of fraternal ties, and prayed for the continued security, stability and prosperity of the nation.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Houssein Taha extended congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and the Kuwaiti leadership and people, affirming the OIC's participation in Kuwait's celebrations.

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Jassem Al-Budaiwi also conveyed his greetings, praising Kuwait's developmental achievements and the strength of its national institutions.

Ministers and senior officials echoed similar sentiments, including Oil Minister Tareq Al-Roumi; Justice Minister Nasser Al-Sumait; Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Minister Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi; Education Minister Sayed Jalal

Al-Tabtabaei; Higher Education and Scientific Research Minister Dr. Nader Al-Jalal; Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi; Public Works Minister Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan; Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Minister Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem; Youth and Sports Minister Dr. Tareq Al-Jalhama; and Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Meshari.

They affirmed that the anniversaries renew values of loyalty and patriotism, commemorate the sacrifices of Kuwait's martyrs, and highlight the nation's steady progress under its wise leadership.

Acting Director General of the Environment Public Authority Nouf Behbahani, UN Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Ghada Al-Tajer, Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society Khaled Al-Maqamis, Chairman of Kuwait Airways Abdulmohsen Al-Faqan, Acting Director General of KUNA Mohammad Al-Mannai, and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Tajikistan Dr. Zubidullo Zubidzoda also extended their congratulations.

Additionally, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization conveyed its greetings, wishing Kuwait continued progress and prosperity on the occasion of its national celebrations.

Well-wishers affirm unity, loyalty under Kuwait's wise leadership

Al-Naqi Diwan celebrates spirit of Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The Al-Naqi Diwan welcomed well-wishers on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan at its headquarters in Mansouriya, amidst an atmosphere of warmth and spirituality, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

A number of senior members of the Al-Sabah Family, along with ministers, ambassadors, members of diplomatic missions, and a large gathering of citizens and expatriates attended the event, expressing their congratulations and blessings on this auspicious occasion.

They prayed that Allah will protect Kuwait and make it a land of peace and security under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In his remarks on this occasion, Mohammad Al-Naqi asserted that Ramadan is an annual opportunity to strengthen the values of compassion, solidarity and kinship. He pointed out that Ramadan gatherings exemplify the authenticity of Kuwaiti society and its adherence to its deeply rooted traditions of communication and brotherhood.

He added that Kuwait will remain an oasis of stability and national unity, thanks to the cohesion of its people and their support for their leadership. He asked Almighty Allah to bring back these blessed days to the country with more goodness and prosperity.



Sheikh Mohammed Al-Khaled and Mohammed Al-Naqi



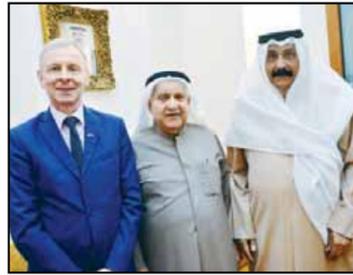
Mohammed Al-Naqi with Saudi Ambassador Prince Sultan bin Saad, Adel Behbehani, Father Anba Bishoy, and Moussa Al-Moussa



Mohammed Al-Naqi with Dr. Abdullah Bishara, Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah, and colleague Saud Al-Farhan.



Sheikh Mubarak Al-Fahad and Mohammed Al-Naqi



Mohammed Al-Naqi with Major General M. Mohammed Al-Saber and Belgian Ambassador Christian Doms.



Mohammed Al-Naqi with Sheikh Ahmed Al-Duaij, Egyptian Ambassador Mohamed Abu Al-Wafa, and Consul Mohamed Mattawa.



Photos by Samer Shaqir
Mohammed Al-Naqi with EU Ambassador Anne Quistinen and her deputy.

Continued from Page 1

Gulf nations

The ministry noted that debris from the intercepted missiles fell across various areas in Abu Dhabi, including Saadiyat Island, Khalifa City, Bani Yas, Mohammed bin Zayed City, and Al-Falah, confirming no injuries in the affected locations.

It condemned the attacks as a blatant violation of national sovereignty and international law, asserting the UAE's full right to take all measures necessary to protect its territory and people while safeguarding its sovereignty, security, and stability.

Earlier, the Ministry of Defense of the UAE reported that the country came under an Iranian ballistic missile attack, which was successfully intercepted by UAE air defenses.

Emirates News Agency added that authorities also dealt with falling debris in a residential area in Abu Dhabi, resulting in some material damage and the death of one individual of Asian nationality.

In Doha, Qatari Ministry of Defense announced Saturday that it successfully intercepted the third wave of attacks targeting several areas across the country.

In a statement, the ministry said all missiles were neutralized immediately upon detection in accordance with pre-approved operational plans.

It emphasized that the Qatari Armed Forces possess full capabilities to protect national security and respond firmly to any external threats, affirming that the security situation remains stable and fully under control.

The ministry urged citizens, residents, and visitors to remain calm, follow official security instructions, and rely solely on verified information from authorized sources, avoiding rumors.

Qatar's Ministry of Interior announced Saturday that the successful interception of attacks targeting the country resulted in no casualties or material damage, according to a preliminary field survey.

In a statement, the ministry affirmed that no human injuries or damage to residential areas were recorded, stressing that the safety of citizens, residents and visitors remains a top priority. It added that response teams are working around the clock to monitor developments.

The ministry urged the public to avoid approaching or handling any unidentified objects or debris and to report them immediately.

It also called on the public not to circulate rumors and to rely solely on official sources for information, noting that competent authorities will provide updates as they become available.

Earlier, Qatar's Ministry of Defense said that, thanks to high readiness, security vigilance and joint coordination among relevant bodies, it successfully repelled a number of attacks targeting the country.

It noted that the threat was dealt with immediately upon detection in accordance with pre-approved security plans, and that all missiles were intercepted before reaching Qatari territory.

In Amman, Jordan Armed Forces announced Saturday that two ballistic missiles targeting the Kingdom were suc-

cessfully intercepted. The Jordan Armed Forces said in a statement carried by Petra that the two ballistic missiles were brought down by Jordanian air defense systems.

Earlier in the day, Petra quoted a military source at the General Command of the Jordan Armed Forces as saying that sounds heard in the skies over several areas of the Kingdom were due to routine sorties carried out by aircraft of the Royal Jordanian Air Force as part of their operational duties.

The source noted that the flights were conducted within the framework of aerial reconnaissance and inspection operations aimed at ensuring the safety and integrity of Jordanian airspace and preventing any attempts of infiltration or unlawful activities.

He affirmed that the Jordan Armed Forces continue to carry out their national duty in protecting the Kingdom's skies and safeguarding its sovereignty with efficiency and competence, urging citizens not to circulate rumors and to rely on official sources for information.

Saudi Arabia strongly condemned what it described as a "blatant Iranian aggression" and a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan.

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kingdom affirmed its full solidarity with the sisterly states and its support for all measures they undertake, stressing its readiness to provide all available capabilities to back them.

Saudi Arabia warned of the grave consequences of continued violations of state sovereignty and breaches of international law principles.

The Kingdom also called on the international community to condemn these "heinous attacks" and to take firm measures to confront Iranian violations that undermine the security and stability of the region.

Kuwait also strongly condemned Iranian attacks targeting the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Jordan, describing them as blatant violations of international law and the United Nations Charter.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed Kuwait's full solidarity with the sisterly states affected by the attacks and reiterated its support for all measures they take to safeguard their sovereignty, security, and stability.

President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola said on Saturday that the attacks carried out by the regime in Iran this morning against the GCC countries are "inexcusable and unjustifiable," warning that they could lead to a spiral of escalation threatening the security of the region and beyond.

In a statement, Metsola reaffirmed that the European Parliament has long called on the Iranian authorities to abandon their nuclear ambitions and to allow the Iranian people to freely choose their own destiny.

She stressed that Iran must refrain from any further escalation or targeting of the Gulf States or European or United States nationals, warning that the continuation of such actions would undermine regional stability and further heighten tensions.



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One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 53.361 / Net
One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 119.173 / Net

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Continued from Page 1

An ant

However, Iran chose intransigence and continued its destructive path instead of pursuing positive and friendly relations with its neighboring countries, which form its strategic and economic sphere.

Today, nations will not stand idly by while Iran attacks their countries. This is a reality for which Tehran is unprepared.

The world will not remain silent about Iranian terrorist activities, especially following the US president's revelation that the Iranian regime is developing weapons and missiles capable of reaching the United States. This indicates that a large number of capitals could fall within the range of Iranian threats.

The time has come to put an end to this bullying. Countries have long tried to avoid confrontation and give negotiations a chance, hoping the disruptive party would cease its harmful behavior.

But when the situation escalates, the only remaining option is drastic measures. In such cases, the strongest prevails. We do not believe the world is weak, nor that Iran is stronger.

An Arabic proverb aptly reflects these circumstances - "If God wants to destroy an ant, He gives it wings."

Rogue drone

He also called on the public to rely on official sources for information and avoid rumors or unverified reports.

The Kuwait National Guard confirmed Saturday that the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Chemical Defense and Radiation Monitoring Center has not detected any increase in radiation levels in Kuwaiti air or water, noting that conditions remain normal.

The Directorate of Moral Guidance told KUNA that the center affirmed that it continues to carry out its duties in cooperation with various state authorities.

Kuwait's Ministry of Interior confirmed that the security situation in the country remains stable and under continuous 24-hour monitoring, supported by a comprehensive system emphasizing high readiness, precise surveillance, and immediate assessment of all developments.

In a press statement Saturday, the ministry said that the level of preparedness has been raised, with preventive measures reinforced and deployment increased at vital sites in full coordination with relevant authorities, ensuring rapid response and the protection of public safety for citizens and residents.

It reassured the public that the situation is secure and stable, with all state institutions working in full coordination and high readiness to maintain security and public calm under all circumstances.

The ministry urged the public to follow official instructions, rely on verified sources, and avoid rumors, warning that legal action will be taken against any misleading information that threatens community security.

The ministry also encouraged immediate reporting of any suspicious activity via the emergency hotline (112), noting that emergency teams operate around the clock to handle reports efficiently and swiftly, and that updates will be provided through official channels as events develop.

Official spokesperson of the Health Ministry Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad announced that "in light of the rapid developments in the region, the ministry is in continuous session as it closely monitors the current situation in the region."

He revealed that "emergency meetings were convened under the chairmanship of Minister of Health Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, with the participation of Undersecretary Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, along with leaders of vital sectors and departments, to review the emergency response plans and elevate preparedness levels in line with the current situation."

He stressed that the national health system, drawing on its accumulated expertise, is operating according to clear and proactive plans. "These include securing and reinforcing the strategic stockpile of medicines, medical supplies and equipment, reviewing supply chains, and ensuring the uninterrupted delivery of healthcare services in all hospitals and specialized centers," he added.

He said the readiness of emergency departments and intensive care units has been confirmed, along with the preparedness of medical and technical personnel to operate in accordance with the highest standards of rapid response.

He disclosed that emergency teams are in continuous session, maintaining coordination with relevant government entities to ensure integrated efforts and swift decision-making whenever required.

He emphasized that operations are being conducted through an institutional framework grounded in early detection, continuous assessment, and proactive readiness for any potential scenario.

He confirmed that no cases have been recorded or received to date, and that, in light of the current developments, the ministry has not received any health-related reports concerning this matter. "Monitoring continues round the clock," he added.

He reiterated that ensuring the health and safety of the community is a national priority and there is no room for compromise. He affirmed that all available resources are being mobilized to guarantee the highest standard of protection and care.

He called on the public to remain calm, rely on official sources for information, and refrain from spreading rumors, underscoring that trust and cooperation are essential under these circumstances.

Kuwait strongly condemned what it described as a "heinous Iranian attack" that targeted Kuwaiti territory earlier in the day, in a blatant violation of Kuwait's sovereignty, airspace, international law and the Charter of the UN.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed Kuwait's full and inherent right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, in response to what it termed this flagrant aggression, in a manner proportionate to the scale and nature of the attack and consistent with international law.

The ministry stressed that Kuwait will take all necessary measures to protect its territory, people and residents, in a way that safeguards its sovereignty, security and stability.

The ministry stressed that Kuwait's air defenses successfully repelled the attack in accordance with approved operational procedures and applicable rules of engagement, warning that the continuation of such aggressive military acts in the region would undermine regional security and stability.

Earlier in the day, the Ministry of Interior activated air raid sirens throughout the country after missiles were detected in the national airspace.

The ministry stated that an intermittent tone signals an imminent danger or disaster, a wavering tone indicates an ongoing or approaching threat, and a continuous tone signifies that the danger has subsided and the situation is safe.

It urged the public to remain calm and composed, to shut off gas and electricity sources, remove all flammable materials and store them in a secure location, avoid using elevators, use emergency exits and stairwells, move to lower floors or basements, and proceed immediately to a designated safe area such as a shelter or bunker.

It advised citizens and expatriates to follow official media channels for instructions and updated civil defense guidance in this situation.

The Kuwait National Guard (KNG) confirmed that its forces are fully carrying out their duties in securing camps and other assigned sites, ensuring the safety and stability of the nation in coordination with the army, police, and the General Fire Force.

In a statement issued by the Directorate of Moral Guidance, the Guard said its personnel maintain a high state of readiness to carry out any assigned mission.

The statement also highlighted the activation of emergency plans and annual training exercises to maintain operational preparedness.

The Public Authority for Civil Aviation announced Saturday closure of airspace due to political and security developments in the region.

Kuwait Airways announced Saturday the postponement of all arrivals and departures at Kuwait International Airport due to current regional developments, citing the safety of passengers and aircraft as a priority.

In a post on X, the airline said flights will be rescheduled at a later date, with new schedules communicated directly to passengers based on the contact information provided in their tickets.

It urged travelers to rely on official Kuwait Airways channels for accurate information.

Passengers can also contact the airline's customer service for inquiries at 171 within Kuwait, or +96524345555 (ext. 171) from abroad.

Additional support is available through the airline's WhatsApp service at +9651802050.

GCC missile

missile attacks, British nationals in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates should immediately shelter in place."

"Remain indoors in a secure location, avoid all travel and follow instructions from the local authorities," it added.

Earlier today, US President Donald Trump announced "major combat operations in Iran," calming that the objective was to protect the American people against Iranian threat.

In view of the missile strikes launched by Iran against several Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, including Kuwait, amid an exchange of fire with the United States on Saturday, a number of embassies advised their citizens to exercise caution.

The Embassy of Canada released a security update regarding developments in the Middle East, warning about the repercussions of escalating regional tensions and urged its citizens in Kuwait to exercise caution.

In its advisory, the embassy stressed that in light of the deteriorating security environment, Canadians in Kuwait should prepare for potential disruptions, including border closures or restrictions, flight cancellations and airspace shutdowns.

It called on its citizens to closely monitor local and international media for evolving developments, strictly adhere to the instructions of local authorities at all times, and consider remaining in their residences until the situation becomes clearer.

The embassy also recommended keeping mobile phones fully charged, maintaining regular contact with family and friends, ensuring sufficient supplies of food, water and medication, and verifying the validity of travel documents.

Also, the Embassy of India issued an advisory to its nationals regarding the security situation in the region.

It called on all Indians in Kuwait to remain alert, follow safety guidelines and official advisories, and exercise caution at all times.

The embassy advised its citizens to monitor official news and announcements issued by the Kuwaiti government for any updates.

It confirmed that it continues to operate as usual and advised the public to await any further official communication.

It added that inquiries may be directed through its community affairs email address or emergency hotline.

Embassies,

Meanwhile, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced the postponement of its Ramadan gathering scheduled for Saturday, indicating a new date will be determined later.

The bank expressed its sincere wishes for the safety and security of Kuwait and its people.

These precautionary measures are taken in view of the situation in the region, as diplomatic missions and international offices have opted to put off official gatherings and celebrations during this period.

Kuwait advances national reforms, foreign priorities

Cabinet greets leadership, citizens on Nat'l Days

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on 65th National Day and 35th Liberation Day.

This came during the cabinet's weekly meeting on Tuesday at Bayan Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Cabinet Affairs Shareedah Al-Muwaisharji said that the cabinet was briefed on the visit of His Highness the Amir, accompanied by the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to the Ministry of Defense.

The cabinet was also briefed on the Amir's visit to the General Command of the National Guard, where he commended its personnel for their achievements. On the occasion of the founding day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on February 22, the cabinet extended congratulations to King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, praising the kingdom's international standing and developmental achievements.



Prime Minister Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, chairs the cabinet's weekly meeting.

Further, the cabinet reviewed actions taken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the submission of a protest note to Iraq over claims affecting Kuwaiti maritime sovereignty, with Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah briefing members on the matter and emphasizing the need for Iraq to respect historical relations and international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Members were also updated on Kuwait's commitment of USD one billion to the Peace Council in Gaza, reaffirming support for the Palestinian people and their rights, and endorsing peace initiatives, including the US President's 20-point plan and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The cabinet reviewed a presentation by Minister of State for Municipality Affairs and Housing Abdullatif Al-Mushari on the establishment of the Urban Planning and Structural Planning Committee to optimize land use, support development projects, and coordinate legislation and regulations for urban planning.

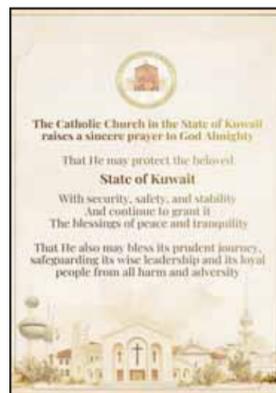
The Cabinet tasked Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulaziz Al-Marzouq to coordinate with relevant ministers and the Cabinet Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive action plan monitoring government projects, financial reforms, governance, and digital services, with monthly reports to the Council.

Catholic Church in Kuwait prays for safety & stability

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The Catholic Church in the State of Kuwait has raised a solemn prayer to God Almighty for the protection and well-being of the country and its people, reaffirming its spiritual solidarity with the nation during a time of heightened uncertainty. The prayer, issued in the name of the Catholic Church in Kuwait, asks that God "protect the beloved State of Kuwait with security, safety, and stability" and continue to grant it "the blessings of peace and tranquility."

The message further implores divine blessing upon Kuwait's "prudent journey," asking that God safeguard its wise leadership and its loyal people from "all harm and adversity." The Church's appeal underscores its appreciation of the country's stability and its commitment to pray for the continued peace and protection of the State of Kuwait.

In an accompanying pastoral message, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia, Bishop Aldo Berardi, O.S.S.T., called on all the faithful of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia to respond to present challenges with



Catholic Church in Kuwait prayer.

calm, unity, and responsibility. "In this time of uncertainty, I ask all the faithful of the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Arabia to remain calm, united in prayer, and attentive to the safety of everyone. Please follow carefully the

instructions of the civil authorities and take all necessary precautions in your homes, workplaces, and parishes," he said.

Bishop Berardi also issued clear guidance to parish leaders across the Vicariate. "I also direct all parish priests and rectors to take appropriate action and to make the necessary decisions, with prudence and responsibility, to ensure the safety of the faithful entrusted to their care. Let us remain united in faith and charity, caring especially for the elderly, the sick, and the vulnerable," he stated. Any potential changes to parish activities, he noted, will be communicated "through official channels."

Concluding his message with a blessing, Bishop Berardi entrusted the faithful and their families to the protection of the Lord and the maternal care of Our Lady of Arabia. "May the Lord protect you and your families, and may Our Lady of Arabia, our mother, watch over us all," he wrote, signing the message. "With my blessing," Aldo BERARDI, O.S.S.T., Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia."



Left: Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Sabah extending Ramadan greetings.



Center: Sheikh Khaled Al-Bader and Nabil Al-Kharafi.



Right: Adel Al-Kharafi with Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled, Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Sheikh Khaled Al-Hamad, and Saud Al-Farjan.



Adel Al-Kharafi with Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad.

Shamiya gathering celebrates Kuwaiti unity and social tradition

Al-Kharafi Diwan welcomes well-wishers for Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The Diwan of Jarallah Al-Kharafi in Shamiya was filled with well-wishers recently, offering their Ramadan greetings, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This scene reflected the deep bonds among the people of Kuwait during religious occasions, as well as other social and national events.

In his welcoming remarks, Adel Al-Kharafi expressed his profound appreciation for the attendees, emphasizing that Ramadan is a chance to strengthen solidarity and cooperation among the citizens.

He stressed the importance of preserving these deeply rooted social customs that solidify the sense of one family and elevate the values of love and cooperation within the Kuwaiti society.



Left: Ahmed Al-Jarallah offers congratulations.

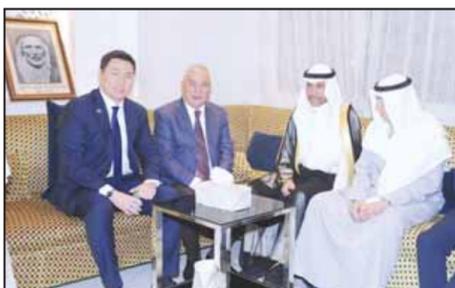


Right: Nabil Al-Kharafi with Minister of Education Dr. Jalal Al-Tabtabaei.

He prayed that Allah will return this blessed month to Kuwait, the Muslim world and the entire world with goodness, prosperity and peace.



Italian Ambassador Lorenzo Moretti and Deputy Military Attaché, Colonel Francesco Tenzilia.



Ambassadors of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan with Marzouq Al-Ghanim.



Adel Al-Kharafi with Sheikh Khalifa Al-Abdullah, Sheikh Ahmed Jaber Al-Abdullah, and Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah.

'Third country' deportation policy unlawful, judge rules

Trump administration detains and questions refugees already admitted to US

ST. PAUL, Minn., Feb 28, (AP): Their family spent years opposing Venezuela's socialist system.

The government retaliated by sending men to beat the father, a state oil company worker whom it accused of being uncooperative. Other relatives were threatened.

The situation became so untenable that the family fled the country for the United States in 2021 after it obtained refugee status, according to one of the daughters, a 24-year-old clothing salesperson who was interviewed by The Associated Press.

The six siblings and their parents settled in Minnesota in 2023, living peacefully until the Trump administration said it was casting new scrutiny on refugees. One priority is those admitted to the US under former President Joe Biden, whom the government accuses of prioritizing quantity over detailed screening and vetting, with an initial focus on 5,600 refugees who settled in Minnesota and are not yet permanent residents, making them particularly vulnerable.

Last month, three masked officers got out of a black SUV with tinted windows outside a St. Paul apartment complex, handcuffed the Venezuelan

woman and her mother and told them their legal status was under review, according to the woman, who asked for anonymity for fear of retaliation.

Overturning years of precedent, immigration authorities have arrested or questioned dozens of refugees in Minnesota, attorneys and advocates say, with more detentions likely to come nationwide.

In January, a federal judge ordered a temporary halt to the arrest and detention of refugees in Minnesota while a lawsuit challenging the "re-vetting" continues. The judge ordered the immediate release of all refugees detained in Minnesota, and those taken to Texas.

Three refugees told The Associated Press that whatever happens, the rounds of inconclusive interviews with immigration authorities well after they thought their status was safe has them questioning their futures in the U.S. and living in constant fear.

The young woman from Venezuela hasn't returned to her job at a clothing factory. A man who fled persecution in Myanmar won't walk on the streets of Minneapolis without a letter from his church appealing for immigrants to "be treated humanely." A Congolese refugee arrested in St. Paul despite her



A US Immigration and Customs Enforcement flight operates out of King County International Airport-Boeing Field on Aug 23, 2025, in Seattle. (AP)

refugee status says "everything that's happened feels like a movie."

Welcoming refugees has been a source of bipartisan agreement in the U.S. since Congress passed the Refugee Act with overwhelming support in 1980.

The act helped make refugee applications some of the immigration

system's most heavily scrutinized. Government decisions that someone was persecuted for who they are or what they believe are rarely second-guessed, and revisiting refugee status that's already been granted is a major blow to legal tradition, advocates say. "They've been heavily vetted and

were admitted by the government with approval," said Beth Oppenheim, chief executive officer of HIAS, a major refugee aid group.

Once a refugee is admitted to the US through the resettlement program, the only way to strip them of their status is to prove that they should never have been admitted, Oppenheim said. That is why the Trump administration is interviewing people again, she said.

Matthew Tragger, a spokesman for US Citizenship and Immigration Services, said in a written statement refugees "are REQUIRED to be subject to a full inspection after a year within the United States."

"This is not novel or discretionary; it is a clear requirement in law," he wrote. While it is correct that refugees must apply for green cards one year after admission - a change of status that brings a renewed layer of scrutiny - the administration is breaking with decades of tradition by revisiting initial decisions to admit people as refugees, and then detaining them while they are under review.

"Arresting, detaining, and rescreening refugees are all new changes which will inflict grave harm on vulnerable populations," said Smita Dazzo, dep-

uty director of U.S. programs at HIAS.

Also:

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration's latest policy of deporting immigrants to "third countries" to which they have no ties is unlawful and must be set aside, a federal judge ruled in a case that already reached the nation's highest court.

US District Judge **Brian E. Murphy** in **Massachusetts** agreed to suspend his decision for 15 days, giving the government time to appeal his latest ruling in the case. Murphy noted that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the administration's favor last year, pausing Murphy's previous decision and clearing the way for a flight carrying several migrants to complete its trip to war-torn **South Sudan**, where they had no ties.

Murphy said migrants challenging the Department of Homeland Security's policy have the right to "meaningful notice" and an opportunity to object before they are removed to a third country. The policy "extinguishes valid challenges to third-country removal by effecting removal before those challenges can be raised," the judge concluded.

America

Clinton testifies on Epstein files: Former US president **Bill Clinton** told members of Congress on Friday that he "did nothing wrong" in his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein and saw no signs of Epstein's abuse as he faced hours of grilling from lawmakers over his connections to the disgraced financier from more than two decades ago.

"I saw nothing, and I did nothing wrong," the former Democratic president said in an opening statement he shared on social media. The closed-door deposition ended after more than six hours of questioning from lawmakers who said he answered every question posed to him.

The deposition in the Clintons' hometown of Chappaqua, New York, marked the first time a former president has been compelled to testify to Congress. It came a day after Clinton's wife, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, sat with lawmakers for her own deposition.

Bill Clinton has also not been accused of any wrongdoing, and Republican members of the House Oversight Committee did not immediately level any accusations against the Clintons as they departed Chappaqua. They planned to review the depositions but said their attention was mostly shifting to other individuals. (AP)



Clinton

Man gets 16½ years in prison: A judge on Friday sentenced to 16½ years in prison a Wisconsin man who forged threats against President Donald Trump as part of a scheme to get the victim in a robbery case against him deported.

A Milwaukee County jury in January convicted 52-year-old Demetric DeShawn Scott of felony identity theft, witness intimidation, bail jumping and reckless endangerment. Judge Kristy Yang sentenced him to a year and six months behind bars on the identity theft count, five years on the intimidation count and 10 years on the endangerment count. She sentenced him to 882 days al-

ready served on the bail jumping charge.

According to court documents, Mexican immigrant Ramon Morales Reyes was riding his bike in Milwaukee in September 2023 when Scott approached him. He kicked Morales Reyes off the bike, stabbed him with a box cutter and then rode away on the bike. Scott was out on bail in a separate burglary case when the incident happened. Yang dismissed that case Friday, online court records show.

Scott was arrested hours after the stabbing. While he was in jail, Scott wrote multiple letters posing as Morales Reyes to state and federal officials threatening to kill Trump at a rally. Federal immigration authorities took Morales Reyes into custody in May after he dropped his daughter off at school.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem blasted his photo on social media, along with an excerpt of a letter he purportedly wrote in English promising to shoot Trump at a rally. The White House and Trump supporters played up his arrest as a major success in the administration's crackdown on immigration.

Investigators determined that Morales Reyes couldn't have written the letters since he doesn't speak English well, can't write in the language and the handwriting in the letters didn't match his. (AP)

'Carvalho paid on leave during probe': Alberto Carvalho, the superintendent of Los Angeles public schools in the nation's second-largest district, was put on paid leave Friday, two days after the FBI served search warrants at his home and the district's headquarters.

Authorities have not provided details of the nature of the investigation involving the district, which serves more than 500,000 students, nor have they accused Carvalho of any wrongdoing.

The Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education unanimously voted to place Carvalho on leave pending the outcome of the investigation after two days of deliberation behind closed doors. The board said in a statement that its decision was intended to minimize any disruption to its mission of teaching students.

Andres Chait, the chief of school operations, was named acting superintendent.

"Our focus remains clear: to ensure stability, continuity, and strong leadership for our students, families, and employees," Chait said in a statement. (AP)

Biden returns to bask in 'thank you' event from S. Carolina Democrats

COLUMBIA, SC, Feb 28, (AP): Joe Biden made a rare public appearance on Friday in South Carolina, basking in the appreciation of Democrats who resuscitated his presidential campaign six years ago. Although Biden faces scorn in many corners for his failed attempt at a second term that preceded Donald Trump's return to the White House, the audience here welcomed him as a political hero.

"Thank you," Biden said to cheers as Rep. Jim Clyburn, his longtime political ally, welcomed him to a stage set up in an art museum in downtown Columbia. "It's good to be back home." Biden swiped at Trump in his remarks, suggesting he may tamper with the fall's midterm campaigns. Biden accused Trump of "trying to steal the election, because he knows he can't win your vote."

"Mark my words," Biden added. "I hope I'm wrong."

The gathering on a rainy night hosted by the state Democratic Party was intended to commemorate the sixth anniversary of Biden's pivotal primary win in the state. Biden's bid for the presidential nomination was faltering until the victory catapulted him to the front of the field. Since leaving office, Biden has largely stepped away



Former US President Joe Biden speaks to the South Carolina Democratic Party on Feb 27, in Columbia, SC. (AP)

from the public eye. His appearance in South Carolina was also a balm after a difficult stretch for Biden. Trump has rolled back many of Biden's policies, and the 83-year-old former president announced in May he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, which had spread to his bone. In October, a spokesperson said the former president had been receiving radiation and hormone therapy.

Biden has referred to South Carolina as a second home state after his native Delaware. He has long vacationed with his family on Kiawah Island, near Charleston. He also spent time there after his son Beau died of cancer.

"Folks, when it mattered, you were there for me," Biden said Friday. "You believed in me... and I believed in you, too."

UK election win for Green Party a nightmare for Labour, Starmer

LONDON, Feb 28, (AP): An emphatic election victory for Britain's environmentalist Green Party is a nightmare for Prime Minister Keir Starmer that raises questions about how long he will continue as leader.

Less than two years after winning power in a landslide, Starmer's center-left Labour Party not only lost a long-time stronghold in its northern England heartlands - it came third, finishing behind both the left-leaning Greens and the hard-right party Reform UK.

Thursday's election in the Gorton and Denton constituency of Greater Manchester was for just one seat out of 650 in the House of Commons. But it's a glimpse into the messy new reality of British politics, and its consequences could be far-reaching.

The result is a heavy blow to Starmer, whose leadership has staggered through a series of crises and suffered a near-death experience earlier this month. Since being elected in July 2024, Starmer has struggled to deliver promised economic growth, repair tar-



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer leaves 10 Downing Street to attend the weekly Prime Ministers' Questions session in parliament in London on Feb 25. (AP)

tered public services and ease the cost of living. His government has been sidetracked by missteps and U-turns over welfare cuts and other unpopular policies. The next national election does not have to be held until 2029, meaning the main threat to Starmer comes from within his own party. Under British rules, the governing party can change prime minister without having to go to voters.

Three weeks ago it looked like that might happen, when indirect fallout from a trove of Jeffrey Epstein files released in the United States caused discontent to boil over. Several Labour lawmakers and the party's leader in Scotland called for Starmer to resign, his chief of staff and communications director quit, and his premiership teetered on the brink.

Starmer vowed to stay, and got a reprieve after potential leadership rivals publicly backed him. But his already precarious position is now even shakier, and he faces peril after May 7 local and regional elections, when Labour is expected to do badly.



Rescuers at work on the scene of a tram derailment in downtown Milan, Italy on Feb 27. (AP)

Milan tram derails and slams into building, killing two

A tram derailed Friday and slammed into a building in the heart of Milan, killing two people and injuring more than two-dozen others, officials said.

The incident, along the central Vittorio Veneto avenue, came as the Italian business capital is hosting its seasonal fashion shows and is in the interim between hosting

the Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games.

The No. 9 tram runs through the heart of Italy's financial capital. It was supposed to have continued straight along Vittorio Veneto and was going at a high speed. But it suddenly swerved at a switch track that is used by another tram line and went off its usual course,

according to video of the crash broadcast by Sky TG24. The video shows the tram nearly flipping onto its side as it takes the curve before slamming to a stop in a building.

Milan Mayor Beppe Sala suggested human error was to blame, saying the driver had apparently failed to switch the tracks to keep the tram going straight. (AP)

After tense United States-Greenland standoff, Denmark calls early election

COPENHAGEN, Denmark, Feb 28, (AP): Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen called an early general election for March 24 as the country digests the recent standoff with U.S. President Donald Trump over his designs on the semiautonomous Danish territory of Greenland.

Frederiksen likely hopes that her handling of the Greenland crisis, in which she appeared straight-talking and tough, will give her a boost with Danish voters.

"It is now up to you, the voters, to decide what direction Denmark will take over the next four years. And I am looking forward to it," Frederiksen, 48, said as she made her announcement in parliament.

Voters in the NATO and European Union member will determine who sits in 179-member parliament, which includes two seats apiece for lawmakers representing Greenland and the kingdom's other semiautonomous territory, the Faroe Islands.

Trump's push for US control of Greenland, which culminated in his short-lived threat last month to impose



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen arrives at the Folketing hall, the Danish parliament, in Copenhagen on Feb 26. (AP)

new tariffs on Denmark and several other European countries, was a major challenge for the Danish government over the past year. Last month, Frederiksen warned that an American takeover of Greenland would amount to

the end of the NATO military alliance.

Polls also show a bump in the popularity of the prime minister's Social Democrats during recent weeks which were dominated by the looming Greenland crisis.

Europe

Norway king discharged from Spanish hospital: King **Harald V** of Norway is being discharged from a hospital in Spain's Canary Islands after treatment for a skin infection that prompted his admission earlier this week, the royal palace said.

The palace said that Harald, who turned 89 last weekend, would be released from the hospital in Tenerife during the course of the day. It said that the king and Queen Sonja will continue their private vacation and no decision has been taken yet on when they will return to Norway.

The king was admitted to the hospital on Tuesday and the king's personal doctor, Bjørn Bendz, traveled to Tenerife on Wednesday. Bendz said he was being treated for a skin infection on one of his legs.

The statement said that Harald responded well and recovered quickly. It said that Bendz will remain in Tenerife for a few days to monitor developments.

Two years ago, the king fell ill during a private vacation with the queen in Malaysia and received a temporary pacemaker there. Harald returned aboard a medical



King Harald

airplane to Norway, where he was fitted with a permanent pacemaker.

Harald has been Norway's monarch since 1991. His hospitalization came at a turbulent time for the Norwegian royal family.

Crown Princess Mette-Marit - married to the heir to the throne, Crown Prince Haakon - has faced renewed scrutiny in recent weeks over her contacts with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Meanwhile, Mette-Marit's son from a previous relationship is currently on trial in Oslo for multiple alleged offenses. (AP)

2 journalists in Belarus convicted: A court in Belarus has convicted two independent journalists on charges of high treason and handed them long prison sentences, the latest move in the government's crackdown on dissent and free speech, a media rights group said Friday.

Uladzimir Yanukevich, 65, who founded and edited the Intex-Press and BAR24 media outlets, was given a 14-year sentence, while his 44-year-old colleague Andrei Pakalenka was handed a 12-year sentence, the rights group said. Their media sites were among the most popular in Belarus.

The Regional Court in Brest, a city on the border with Poland, held the proceedings behind closed doors and details of the charges remain unclear. State television carried a report alleging the journalists had links to the German Embassy. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

S. Korea relaunches truth commission with key focus on adoption fraud

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 28, (AP): South Korea has relaunched a fact-finding commission into its past human rights violations, with a key focus on the extensive fraud and malfeasance that corrupted the nation's historic foreign adoption program.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the third in the country's history, began accepting new cases Thursday, months after the previous one's mandate ended in November with more than 2,100 complaints unresolved.

The new commission will inherit those cases, including 311 submissions by Korean adoptees from the West that were either deferred or incompletely reviewed before the second commission halted a landmark investigation into adoptions in April last year, following internal disputes over which cases warranted recognition as problematic.

Advocates say interest among adoptees is far higher this time, with hundreds already seeking investigations, including many from the United States, who were underrepresented in the previous inquiry even though American parents were by far the biggest recipients of Korean children over the past seven decades.



Peter Møller (second from right), attorney and co-founder of the Danish Korean Rights Group, submits the documents at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Seoul, South Korea, Nov. 15, 2022. (AP)

ents of Korean children over the past seven decades.

But investigators who served on the previous commission said it could take months - possibly until May or June - for the new probes to actually

get underway. The government has yet to appoint a chair to lead the commission, which has not formed investigative teams and will initially be run by civil servants assigned to receive and register cases.

Kim Yo Jong now serves as general affairs director

North Korea's Kim gifts rifles to officials, daughter takes aim after party congress

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 28, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un gifted new sniper rifles to top government and military officials following a weeklong ruling party congress celebrating his leadership, with state media highlighting an image of his teenage daughter taking aim at a shooting range as her increasingly prominent appearances fuel speculation Kim is grooming her as a future leader.

Kim presented the rifles to senior party and military officials on Friday, calling them a sign of his "absolute trust" and gratitude for their commitment over the past five years since the last Workers' Party congress in 2021, North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Saturday.

The report also confirmed Kim's powerful sister, Kim Yo Jong, who in recent years has served as his fierce spokesperson toward Washington and Seoul, now serves as the

general affairs director of the party's central committee following a promotion at the congress. Her new title signals a broader role overseeing the party's internal operations and administrative affairs.

State media photos showed Kim Yo Jong and other top officials aiming the rifles handed out by Kim Jong Un at a shooting range. Kim's young daughter, wearing a brown leather coat similar to her father's, also was seen handling the weapon as smoke rose from the barrel.

Since first appearing in public at a long-range missile test in November 2022, the girl - believed to be named Kim Ju Ae and about 13 years old - has accompanied her father to a growing number of events, including military demonstrations, factory openings and a trip to Beijing in September, where Kim Jong Un held his first summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in six years.



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, Kim Yo Jong, (left), sister of its leader Kim Jong Un, and other senior officials test-fire new sniper rifles at a shooting range in an undisclosed location, North Korea on Feb 27, 2026. (AP)

The party congress, which concluded Wednesday in Pyongyang after seven days, is North Korea's

Asia

2 dead after boat capsizes in Vietnam: A boat carrying 11 spectators to a boat race capsized in Vietnam's central city of Hue on Saturday, leaving a mother and her son dead, local media VnExpress reported.

The tragedy occurred during the fish-worshipping festival in Thai Duong Ha Village, where thousands had gathered to watch the boat race, the report said.

Nine people were brought safely ashore, while a 25-year-old woman and her three-year-old son were confirmed dead.

The boat racing competition was subsequently suspended. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

2 dead in Australia traffic crashes: Two people have died and three more hospitalized following separate traffic collisions on Thursday night and Friday morning in the Australian state of Queensland.

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) said that a 28-year-old male driver was killed and his 26-year-old male passenger hospitalized with serious injuries after a car collided with a power pole in the northern suburbs of Brisbane shortly before 1:30 am local time on Friday.

Hours earlier, the QPS said that emergency services were called to a head-on crash between two utility vehicles on a highway near the small town of Bajool, 480 km northwest of Brisbane, around 8:20 p.m. on Thursday. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

HK wildfire put out with no casualties: The wildfire that broke out in Fanling has been put out with no casualties reported, a spokesperson with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government told Xinhua on Friday.

The wildfire broke out on Thursday afternoon, with a fire front stretching about 100 meters, according to local media. (Xinhua)

□ □ □



Philippine coast guard personnel carry a body bag in Zamboanga City on Jan 26, 2026, after M/V Trisha Kerstin 3, an inter-island cargo and passenger ferry sank. (AP)

PCG completes underwater search of ferry: The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said it has completed a full underwater search of passenger ferry MV Trisha Kerstin 3, which sank off Basilan province on Jan. 26, leaving at least 65 people dead.

The PCG said 27 days of high-risk technical deep-water diving operations near Baluk-Baluk Island in Basilan resulted in the recovery of 22 bodies from the wreck, bringing the confirmed death toll to 65, with 14 passengers still missing. At least 293 people survived the disaster.

Since Jan. 28, Coast Guard divers faced strong underwater currents, near-zero visibility caused by heavy siltation, submerged hazards and structural instability while searching the vessel, said Commodore Rejard Marfe, commander of the Coast Guard District Southwestern Mindanao.

He said divers systematically examined Deck A, Deck B, the car deck and the engine room. The engine room search was carried out despite oil contamination and scattered debris that further reduced visibility. (Xinhua)



Police stands next to a plane that crashed in El Alto, Bolivia on Feb 27, (AP)

15 killed after cargo plane crashes near Bolivia's capital

A cargo plane carrying money crashed Friday near Bolivia's capital, damaging about a dozen vehicles on highway, scattering bills on the ground and leaving at least 15 people dead and others injured, an official said.

Defense Minister Marcelo Salinas said the Hercules C-130 plane was transporting newly printed Bolivian currency when it "landed and veered off the runway" at an airport in El Alto, a city adjacent to the capital of La Paz, before ending up in a nearby field. Firefighters managed to put out the flames that engulfed the aircraft.

Fire chief Pavel Tovar said at least 15 people died but he did not clarify if the dead were in the plane or in the cars on the nearby highway.

Salinas did not specify how many people had been killed in the crash and said the cause was being investigated.

Bolivian Air Force Gen. Sergio Lora said two of the plane's six crew members had not been found as of late Friday, adding that the aircraft was arriving from the eastern city of Santa Cruz.

Images on social media showed debris from the aircraft, destroyed cars and bodies scattered on the road. According to Tovar, at least 15 vehicles were damaged.

The plane, belonging to the Bolivian air force, was transporting money to La Paz and images on social media showed people rushing to collect the bills scattered at the crash site, while police in riot

gear tried to disperse them.

Tovar said the hundreds of people trying to collect the spilled bills were hindering rescue efforts.

More than 500 soldiers and 100 police officers took control of the area to disperse the mob, according to official reports. Police and military personnel burned the cash boxes in the presence of Central Bank President David Espinoza, who said the bills "have no legal value because they never entered circulation," without clarifying what that meant.

Espinoza did not specify the amount of money being transported but he said the banknotes had arrived in Santa Cruz from abroad.

Authorities temporarily suspended all flights to and from the terminal. (AP)

Cuba unveils new details in fatal US boat shooting

HAVANA, Feb 28, (AP): Top officials with Cuba's Ministry of the Interior unveiled for the first time late Friday the items they said were aboard a Florida-flagged speedboat that opened fire against troops in waters off the island's north coast this week, with soldiers responding and killing four suspects.

Officials also revealed to The Associated Press that authorities were able to establish that the 10 Cuban suspects left the U.S. in two boats, but one failed, so they transferred all the supplies to the remaining one and left the other adrift.

The government said the detained suspects revealed those details and stressed that they immediately contacted the U.S. Coast Guard.

Among the items Cuban officials said were aboard the boat: a dozen high-powered weapons, including one with a scope; a big cooler filled with more than 12,800 pieces of ammunition; 11 pistols; heavy-duty boots, helmets with cameras; and camouflage backpacks.

"We were clearly able to assess that we were facing a terrorist action from a boat coming from the United States," 1st Col. Ivey Daniel Carballo of the Cuban Border Guard Troops told the AP.



Weapons that Cuban authorities say were recovered from a speedboat in Cuban waters following a confrontation that left four people dead are displayed during a media presentation in Havana on Feb 27. (AP)

Pakistan kills more than 300 Afghan forces in airstrikes inside Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, Feb 28, (AP): Pakistan's military, backed by artillery and air power, struck more military installations deep inside Afghanistan overnight and into early Saturday, killing over 300 Afghan forces in dayslong border clashes, a government spokesman and officials said.

Pakistani and Afghan forces have targeted each other's military positions since Thursday night, when Afghanistan launched a cross-border attack in response to Pakistani airstrikes in Afghanistan last Sunday. Pakistan said it was targeting the outlawed Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taleban Pakistan, or TTP. The group is separate but closely allied with Afghanistan's ruling Taliban. Afghanistan, however, said only civilians were killed in Sunday's airstrike.

After the Afghan attack, Pakistan's Defense Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif declared Friday: "Our patience has now run out. Now it is open war between us."

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said Saturday that more than 331 Afghan forces had been killed and over 500 others wounded during the ongoing military strikes in Afghanistan. Pakistan destroyed 102 Afghan posts, captured 22 others and destroyed 163 tanks and armored vehicles at 37 locations, he said.

There was no immediate comment from Afghanistan on the Pakistani



Trucks carrying Afghan refugees and their belongings are parked along roadside in a safer place following cross-border clashes between Pakistan and Afghan forces, at near Torkham border crossing point, Pakistan on Feb 28. (AP)

claims. On Friday, Afghan government spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said that Pakistan's claims that more than 100 Afghan forces had been killed were false.

Pakistan's state-run media reported the country's air force carried out strikes targeting key military installations in various areas of eastern Afghanistan.

According to Pakistani authorities, hundreds of residents living near the

northwestern Torkham border crossing had fled. In recent days, Pakistan has also transported dozens of Afghan refugees who had been waiting at Torkham to return home to safety.

Ejaz Ul Haq, an Afghan refugee stranded near the Torkham border with his family, said he could not return to Afghanistan because of the fighting. Many others were struggling to obtain food during the fasting month of Ramadan, he said.

171 bodies found in eastern Congo mass graves

KINSHASA, Congo, Feb 28, (AP): Congolese authorities and a civil society group said that mass graves were found in part of eastern Congo that the M23 rebel group has recently withdrawn from, as fighting in the region escalates despite a US-mediated peace deal.

The governor of South-Kivu province, Jean-Jacques Purusi, said authorities found two mass graves with at least 171 dead bodies in the Kiromoni and Kavimvira neighborhoods on the outskirts of the eastern city of Uvira.

"At this stage, we have identified two sites: one mass grave containing approximately 30 bodies in Kiromoni, not far from the Burundian border on the Congolese side, and another in Kavimvira where 141 bodies were found," Purusi told The Associated Press over the phone.

The Associated Press could not independently verify the claim. M23's spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Executive Secretariat of the Local Network for the Protection of Civilians, a civil society group in the region, said Thursday it wanted to visit the mass graves but was prevented from doing so by the Congolese military.

Information gathered so far indicates that the victims were killed by M23 rebels, said Yves Ramadhani, the group's vice president.



Burundian citizens who work in Uvira, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and could not cross back into their home country due to fighting, cross the border into Burundi on Dec 14, 2025. (AP)

The governor and the civil society group alleged that the rebels killed the individuals because they suspected them of belonging to the Congolese army or a pro-government militia.

Both the Congolese military and M23 have been accused of extrajudicial killings and abuses by rights groups.

M23 had taken control of Uvira in December following a rapid offensive. More than 1,500 people were killed

and about 300,000 displaced, according to regional authorities.

The rebel group later announced it would withdraw from the city, in what it said was a "unilateral trust-building measure" requested by the U.S. to facilitate the peace process.

Congo, the US and UN experts accuse Rwanda of backing M23, which has grown from hundreds of members in 2021 to around 6,500 fighters, according to the U.N.

Kuwait oil price surges to \$69.20 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28, (KUNA): The price of Kuwaiti oil barrel went up by 50 cents to reach USD 69.20 per barrel on Friday, compared with USD 68.70 pb the previous day, said Kuwait Petroleum

Corporation (KPC) on Saturday. In international markets, Brent crude oil price rose by USD 1.73 to USD 72.48 pb, while West Texas crude went up by USD 1.81 to USD 67.02 pb.

Business

The program makes a remarkable progress since its launch in collaboration with Plug and Play Platform

'NBK Ebtakir' marks major milestone as Intrapreneurs complete four-month innovation journey



Najla Al-Sager and NBK officials in a group photo with the program participants.



Najla Al-Sager and Maryam Al-Nasrallah with officials from the Plug and Play Platform.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: National Bank of Kuwait has made remarkable progress in implementing the "NBK Ebtakir" Intrapreneurship program, the first of its kind in Kuwait, which the Bank launched in collaboration with Plug and Play, the world's leading innovation platform.

This program aims to promote a culture of innovation within NBK by enabling employees to turn their creative ideas into solutions that contribute to improving customer experience and developing operational processes.

An Innovative Generation

Since the program was launched, NBK has selected 50 employees from various sectors of the Bank following a fierce competition in which hundreds of applicants took part.

Ten multidisciplinary work teams were formed, each of which began an innovative research and development journey based on global approaches in design thinking, needs analysis, and hypothesis testing.

This diversity has contributed to generating significant momentum within the program, as teams engaged with internal and external clients to identify real challenges and opportunities for which innovative solutions can be developed.

Moreover, the participants followed a series of steps that included intensive training, market discovery, understanding customer needs, and developing initial concepts for solutions.

These stages resulted in in-depth insights that helped teams turn ideas into verifiable and scalable solution models, with a focus on commercial viability and the value of customer experience.

A Presentation to the Executive Committee

The first stage of the program concluded with a Pitch Day, where participants presented their concepts to a management jury comprising leaders from NBK and Plug and Play, where the ten teams presented their initial solution models following a continuous process of development and improvement.

The presentations were characterized by a high level of creativity and earnestness, reflecting the ability of the Bank's employees to adopt innovative tools and approaches and apply them to real challenges within the Bank's services and products.

After careful evaluation, the jury selected five teams to move on to the next stage of the program, the demo stage, which is a crucial step in trans-

Najla Al-Sager:

■ We make sure to empower our employees, so they become active partners in shaping the future of banking services.

■ Our aim is to turn internal innovations into solutions that contribute to improving our customers' experiences.

■ The participating employees presented their creative ideas to the executive committee.

■ 5 teams advance to the Prototyping stage, where they scope and build MVPs, engage internal stakeholders, and prepare to pitch their solutions at Demo Day for potential implementation within NBK.

forming innovative ideas into digital solutions that can be implemented in the field.

The Demo Stage

In the next stage, the qualified teams will work on developing the functional requirements for the solutions, in addition to designing models using the latest digital design tools and adopting flexible work methodologies to ensure gradual development based on user feedback.

This phase aims to reach advanced initial models that are tested in an actual operational environment within the bank.

"NBK Ebtakir" is scheduled to conclude with a presentation day, where teams will showcase their final models before presenting them to NBK employees.

The management will then evaluate scalable solutions for adoption within the Bank's operations, which should play a role in enhancing the impact of internal innovation and paving the way for the adoption of other innovative initiatives in the future.

Instilling the Culture of Innovation

On this occasion, Najla Al-Sager, Head of Talent Management and Learning at NBK, commented: "The NBK Ebtakir program reflects the Bank's commitment to establishing a culture of innovation and leadership, which empowers its employees to be active partners in developing digital solutions and modernizing work patterns".

"Through our collaboration with the global innovation platform Plug and Play," Al-Sager added, "we strive to build a work environment that encourages experimenting and discovering new opportunities, allowing employees to participate in leading the digital transformation within the Bank".

She emphasized that the progress achieved in the "NBK Ebtakir" is a milestone in the Bank's journey towards enhancing institutional innovation, and it reflects NBK's ability to invest in its employees and enable them to contribute to shaping the future of banking services, noting NBK's continuous commitment to developing its human resources and equipping them with the necessary skills and tools to lead innovation and hence reinforce the Bank's leadership in the banking sector both locally and regionally.

Additionally, NBK affirms its unwavering dedication to developing talent in the field of entrepreneurship and strengthening its leadership in the field of financial innovation.

It also continues to invest in its employees through the development of a comprehensive strategy that integrates innovation, digital transformation and skills development, as they represent a fundamental pillar of its sustainable success.

Furthermore, NBK's ongoing efforts to foster creativity and empower talent across all its departments and divisions reflect its commitment to building a future-ready institution capable of meeting evolving customer needs and contributing to the development of the financial system.

In line with its commitment to talent development, NBK continuously invests in comprehensive programs aimed at cultivating leadership, enhancing technical expertise, and instilling a culture of continuous learning.

These initiatives include the NBK Academy, which provides new graduates with essential banking skills, and the NBK Tech Academy, which aims to enhance the digital and technological capabilities of young professionals.

In addition to these programs, NBK also provides specialized training and leadership programs to help employees navigate with confidence in the constantly changing markets and contribute to achieving the Bank's long-term strategic goals.

Therefore, the 'NBK Ebtakir' program continues to build on this rich legacy by empowering employees, fostering a culture of innovation, and ensuring that every employee is an active partner in shaping the future of financial services locally and regionally.

Other Voices

Oil increase amid US-Iran war fears

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

THE different kinds of threats of war in the Arabian Gulf region, with USA threats of attacks on Iran, are causing oil markets to jump and oil prices to become unstable with no clear direction.

It seems oil does not remain at a stable level. Even though oil stocks and tanks are full, the oil markets still do not stay stable. About ten days ago, oil markets were quiet and stable, with oil prices below \$70 a barrel. Now, prices have jumped to \$73 and may go higher, triggered by a simple threat from the USA of possible military actions against Iran.

Oil producers are maximizing their production. Saudi Arabia has pushed its production to above 7.3 million barrels per day, while the Emirates increased its crude oil production to 3.5 million barrels per day, reaching its highest production level. This may be a signal to the world of its new high output.

This new level of crude oil prices provides additional income over the previous level of \$68 per barrel. However, once the threats of war begin to calm down, oil prices are expected to return to their previous stable level below \$70 a barrel.

The recent increase in oil production also indicates that two OPEC countries, mainly Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, have the

capability to raise their crude oil output within a short time. This makes the oil market more comfortable, as it can anticipate that these countries can provide additional volumes of oil on short notice.

With the OPEC+ meeting today to discuss the oil markets, current situations, and evaluate future trends, it appears the organization will pause further increases in production. This follows the November 2025 decision to hold back supply during the first quarter of 2026. There is a likelihood of a token increase of 130,000 barrels per day starting in April.

The group will also consider the potential impact of U.S. threats of war against Iran, with most Gulf states remaining reluctant and unsupportive of such action. They appear firm in their rejection of any act of war.

The other delicate issue that OPEC always faces is the over-production by some of its members who do not fully adhere to their quotas, which happens frequently. There is no effective mechanism to enforce production limits. Most members keep the issue on the agenda, but without strict enforcement. This allows oil prices to remain relatively stable and acceptable to members.

Overall, price levels are under control, and members are reluctantly satisfied, with no other choice. Even though they may be facing deficits in their income and annual budgets, this is the best OPEC+ can hope for at present, leaving the energy markets to do its own magic with oil prices.

OPEC+ is doing what it can, leaving the rest to the markets and speculators.
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Kamel Al-Harami

A structural analysis within Kuwait's business environment

Commercial disagreement as governance failure indicator

By Shaikha Aljulaibi
Attorney

In Kuwait's corporate landscape, legal disputes rarely emerge abruptly. They evolve from internal governance gaps long before reaching a courtroom. The distinction between a commercial disagreement and a legal dispute is not semantic – it reflects two fundamentally different stages of institutional risk exposure. A commercial disagreement remains within managerial control. A legal dispute transfers the matter to formal adjudication, subject to procedural and evidentiary constraints. The critical question is not why disagreements arise, but why certain enterprises fail to contain them within governance mechanisms.

Disagreement as a Structural Weakness Signal

Commercial disagreements frequently originate from:

- Ambiguous allocation of managerial authority
- Undefined financial controls
- Blurred separation between personal and corporate capacity

In this context, the issue is organizational – not merely legal. When contractual frameworks are not translated into operational governance systems, decision-making becomes vulnerable to interpretation and escalation.

The Escalation Trigger

Transformation into a legal dispute typically occurs when:

- Trust collapses
- Decision-making mechanisms stall
- Financial operations are disrupted
- Legal instruments are weaponized

At this point, the disagreement exits managerial space and enters institutional adjudication. Within Kuwait's interconnected commercial ecosystem, litigation produces ripple effects:

- Financial transparency exposure
- Banking complications



Shaikha Aljulaibi

- Valuation instability
- Reputation erosion

The cost of escalation often exceeds the financial claim itself.

The Entrepreneurial Miscalculation

Many founders perceive incorporation documents as regulatory formalities rather than risk governance instruments. This leads to:

- Weak exit mechanisms
- Absence of structured mediation clauses
- Poor conflict-of-interest regulation
- Informal decision documentation

When financial or operational stress emerges, structural fragility becomes evident.

The failure is rarely moral, its architectural

Litigation: Legal Right vs. Strategic Choice

Litigation remains a legitimate enforcement tool. However, strategic analysis requires distinguishing between:

- Legal correctness
- Commercial prudence

An entrepreneur may prevail legally while suffering commercially.

Litigation cost assessment must include:

- Direct expenses
- Management distraction
- Opportunity loss
- Market perception impact
- Strategic Conflict Management

Meanwhile, Institutionally mature enterprises:

- Embed multi-tier dispute resolution clauses
- Implement internal review committees
- Activate mediation before litigation
- Continuously update governance frameworks

Governance does not eliminate conflict; it regulates its trajectory.

Concluding Perspective

Every legal dispute began as a manageable disagreement. The dividing line is institutional maturity. In an increasingly regulated and transparency-driven Kuwaiti market, conflict management is not reactive legal work – it is proactive strategic governance.

'\$30 billion in losses'

The Burgan oil field still reeling from 1991 fires

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: The Burgan oil field continues to suffer from the effects of the largest crime the global oil sector has ever witnessed – the burning of 727 Kuwaiti oil wells by the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Sources revealed that the fires led to a decline in the production of the field, which exceeded 2.3 million barrels per day before the invasion, but has since fallen to less than 1.7 million barrels per day.

Sources pointed out that one of the catastrophic consequences of the fires is the increased water content associated with the oil during extraction operations, a phenomenon that was not present before the Kuwaiti oil wells were set ablaze. They stated that the burning of 80 percent of Kuwait's oil wells resulted in enormous losses that negatively affected the oil infrastructure. They said 10 gathering centers were completely destroyed, with varying degrees of damage from one center to another, indicating that tank farms and booster stations also suffered extensive damage.

Sources cited the destruction of 13 tanks in the southern tank farms and eight in the northern tank farms, while the artificial island facilities were completely destroyed, along with the southern and northern piers.

Sources revealed that the local refineries also suffered extensive and devastating damage, with fires engulfing the main and auxiliary refining units, as well as destroying the refineries' transportation and storage facilities.

Sources indicated that immediately after liberation, Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) conducted a comprehensive study on the damage in all production areas in order to take the necessary measures and lay down crisis management strategies to minimize losses. They said the cost of extinguishing the oil well fires exceeded \$2 billion, while the total losses for the Kuwaiti oil sector reached \$30 billion until operations returned to normal.

They affirmed that KOC played a vital role in extinguishing the oil well fires, disclosing that smoke from the burning wells traveled over 2,000 kilometers, reaching as far as eastern India, while Hawaii in the United States detected soot from the well fires.

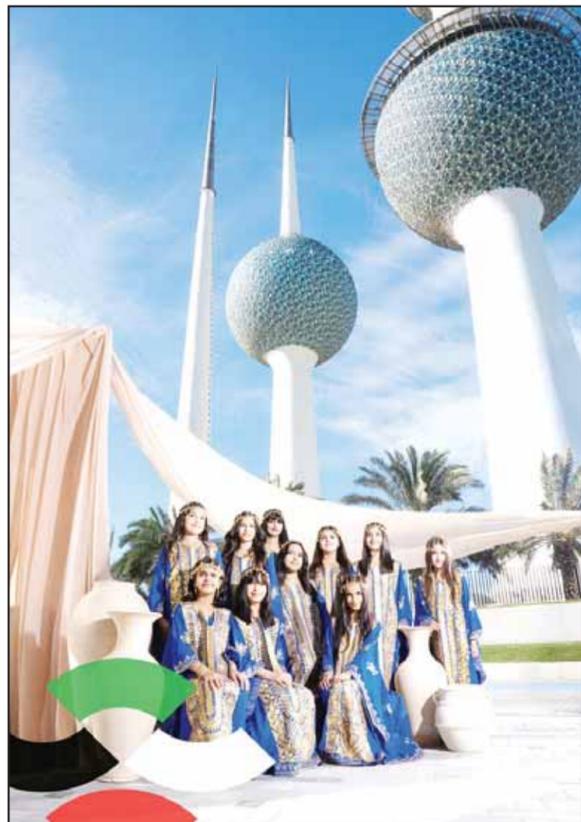
They added the firefighting operations, which began on March 16, 1991, continued for 240 days, ending on Nov 6, 1991. They said more than 10,000 firefighters were involved in extinguishing the oil well fires, in addition to the participation of 10 foreign countries. They indicated that the firefighting teams initially extinguished three oil well fires per day, gradually increasing the number to eight.

Sources affirmed that the Kuwaiti firefighting team displayed remarkable heroism during the oil well firefighting operations, earning them the nickname, "The Wild Cat", from all participating countries due to their rapid movement from one location to another, to extinguish the fires in the shortest possible time.

They pointed out that after extinguishing the last oil well fire, KOC mobilized its personnel to rehabilitate 18 gathering centers and restore oil production lines to their pre-invasion conditions. They also quickly processed about 10 million barrels of oil that had been stagnant in around 240 open lakes.

Bank's people-centric tribute garnered millions of views, reflecting strong national engagement across generations

Burgan Bank celebrates National Day with a campaign honoring actions that shaped the nation



Photos during the campaign.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Building on the recent launch of its brand refresh and the reintroduction of its core brand narrative, 'Driven by You', Burgan Bank recently concluded its 2026 National Day campaign under the title: 'Thank You for the Good That Shaped Our Nation'. The campaign stood as a natural extension of the Bank's renewed identity, placing people at the center of progress, purpose, and national pride.

At its core, the initiative reflected a simple yet powerful belief: Kuwait's story has always been written through action, effort, loyalty, and the individuals whose contributions – quiet or visible – have shaped the nation's path across generations.

As part of the campaign, Burgan Bank presented an original musical mashup inspired by two iconic Kuwaiti works: 'Faz Al Khoufoq', written by Abdullah AlAjeel, and 'Abdi Beha', written by Sultan Abdullah AlSultan. Originally composed by the maestro Ghannam AlDikan and reimagined today by his son, Dr. Sulaiman AlDikan, the piece was thoughtfully adapted to resonate with contemporary audiences. Rather than recreating or directly reusing the original pieces, the mashup serves as a creative homage, capturing their spirit and emotional depth while reinterpreting themes of gratitude, devotion, and belonging for today's audience. The piece serves as a bridge between generations, reflecting how

shared values connect Kuwait's heritage with its present.

In parallel with the artistic release, Burgan Bank translated the campaign into tangible community engagement through a series of activations. Internally, the Bank hosted a dedicated employee gathering designed to celebrate collective contribution, reinforce national pride within the organization, and strengthen the culture of unity that underpins its "Driven by You" slogan. The gathering aimed to recognize employees as active participants in Kuwait's progress, encourage cross-functional connection beyond day-to-day roles, and foster a renewed sense of shared purpose aligned with the Bank's evolving identity. Externally, Burgan Bank organized a public celebration in the historic Souq Al Mubarakiya 'Koushik Mubarak' area, creating an open and inclusive space for families and visitors to engage with the campaign's message. The objective was to connect directly with the wider community, celebrate Kuwait's heritage in one of its most symbolic locations, and reinforce the Bank's role as a national institution rooted in proximity, accessibility, and genuine appreciation for the people it serves.

Through this artistic tribute, Burgan Bank reinforced its people-centric positioning, recognizing collective contribution over individual achievement and expressing national pride through values lived and actions taken. The campaign highlighted the Bank's belief that true progress is sus-

tained not by words alone, but by the consistent efforts of those who contribute to their communities, institutions, and country. It acknowledges those whose actions spoke before recognition, those who built foundations, preserved values, and continue to move Kuwait forward.

The campaign achieved remarkable engagement across digital platforms, surpassing 10 million accumulative views within days of its launch. This strong public response reflects the resonance of the message and underscores the emotional connection the campaign fostered with audiences across generations. The momentum further demonstrates the impact of purpose-driven storytelling rooted in authentic national sentiment.

Burgan Bank emphasized that National Day is not only a celebration of history, but also a reaffirmation of shared responsibility toward the future. The Bank's core brand philosophy, 'Driven by You', reflects its conviction that people remain the true driving force behind advancement, across sectors, generations, and the nation.

With this campaign, Burgan Bank expressed its gratitude to all those whose actions have rained goodness upon Kuwait, both past and present, honoring a legacy of loyalty, effort, and sincere love for our nation.

As Kuwait marks another year of unity and pride, Burgan Bank once again reaffirmed its commitment to supporting progress that is inspired by people and sustained through collective purpose.

Global sukuk issuance rises 13% to \$265 billion in 2025

S&P: Sukuk market growth driven by strong GCC, Malaysia issuance

GLOBAL sukuk issuance increased in 2025 to \$264.8 billion, up from \$234.9 billion in 2024, driven by solid economic growth in core Islamic finance countries, high financing needs, and supportive financing conditions due to globally declining interest rates. The figures are higher than S&P Global Ratings' historical figures as we are now using a broader measure of local currency denominated sukuk issuance. Foreign currency denominated issuances exceeded \$100 billion in 2025, almost double the volume in 2021. Issuance was concentrated in a few countries -- particularly those in the Gulf Cooperation Council and in Malaysia--reflecting activity in the broader Islamic finance industry, but we have observed some interest from non-traditional issuers.

In 2026, barring major volatility in the global capital markets or unexpected spikes in geopolitical risk, we expect issuance to continue increasing, supported by lower oil prices, strong economic performance in some core Islamic finance countries' economies (particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE), and supportive market conditions. Our forecast average Brent oil price of \$60 for 2026 adds revenue-side fiscal pressure in some oil-dependent Islamic finance countries, which, notwithstanding expected production increases, could add to nominal funding requirements, which we expect will be partially met through sukuk issuance. We also expect the market to benefit from lower rates due to a forecast 50 basis points (bps) rate cut by the Federal Reserve in the second half of 2026. We are also keeping an eye on a potential revision of the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) Standard 62, but do not expect it to affect sukuk issuance in 2026.

2025 Was A Good Year For The Sukuk Market

Global sukuk issuance increased 12.7% in 2025 in dollar terms compared with 2024. That gain was underpinned by strong performance from Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, the UAE and Bahrain. Additionally, foreign currency issuance contributed 77.2% of the total increase in total issuance in 2025.

Issuance in 2025 among core Islamic finance sovereigns was underpinned by lower oil prices, which led to stronger financing requirements. Malaysia's place as the largest contributor to issuance growth in 2025 was due to increased issuance in ringgit by government and local corporations, which leveraged the country's broad and deep local capital market, and due to foreign currency issuance from the International Islamic Liquidity Management (IILM) Corporation.

Saudi Arabia was the second largest contributor to the 2025 growth, with \$72.5 billion of sukuk issuance, including \$38 billion in foreign currency--up 35% from 2024. Local currency issuance declined marginally, due to lower local currency issuance by the government and private sector and a greater focus on foreign currency denominated sukuk. Saudi banks also issued more than \$15 billion of sukuk--including almost \$12 billion in foreign currency denominated sukuk--to continue to fund Vision 2030 initiatives.

The UAE also contributed to market expansion with \$22.1 billion in issuance, of which \$19 billion was in foreign currency. UAE banks and

Key Takeaways

- Sukuk issuance will likely continue to increase in 2026, after reaching \$264.8 billion in 2025, supported by declining rates that improve financing conditions in core Islamic finance countries, sustained capital expenditure, notably in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and lower average oil prices that will increase funding needs for some oil dependent countries.
- Major geopolitical risk or a substantial shift in market conditions pose the main downside risks.
- We will be watching for the potential introduction of a new Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) standard, although we don't expect it to affect issuance in 2026.

companies tapped the market to finance growing activity amid a supportive economy. Real estate developers, particularly in Dubai, were among the UAE's top issuers as they sort funds to finance land acquisition and launch new construction projects, amid favorable demand trends. Local currency issuance in the UAE declined in 2025 due to lower federal issuance.

In contrast, Türkiye saw a significant increase in local-currency issuance, driven by sovereign and banks issuances. In November, Turk Telecom became one of the first rated corporates in the country to issue a \$600 million sukuk.

Sukuk issuance year-on-year change by country

Malaysia was the biggest contributor to sukuk issuance growth

Supportive Trends Remain For 2026

We expect sukuk issuance to continue expanding in 2026, with forecast lower oil prices and financing needs in some GCC countries, supportive economic environments in core countries, and the Federal Reserve's expected continuation of monetary easing. Overall, we expect issuance to reach \$270 billion - \$280 billion, including foreign currency issuance of \$100 billion - \$110 billion.

The sukuk market (like the broader Islamic finance industry) remains concentrated among a few issuers, with GCC countries (mainly Saudi Arabia and the UAE) accounting for 45% of issuance volume in 2025, followed by Malaysia. While we do not expect this structure to change significantly, we have seen interest from new issuers, with some successfully entering the market--Egypt issued \$2.5 billion of sukuk in 2025. We expect additional issuers to tap the market in 2026 to further diversify their investor base and secure more competitive pricing than conventional bonds.

Downside risks remain, including the possibility of a major spike in geopolitical risk and/or a substantial shift in market conditions. For example, a sharp market correction in the U.S. could trigger a more conservative view on emerging markets, limiting access to financing, including

for sukuk issuers. Similarly, a major escalation of geopolitical risk in the Gulf region could reduce investors' appetite for sukuk and bond issuances from the region. For now, these remain tail risks and are excluded from our base case scenario.

New Standards Are Unlikely To Affect The Market In 2026

In April 2025, the AAOIFI said its Sharia Board was amending the first published draft version of Standard 62 to take into account industry feedback. The AAOIFI did not specify the likely changes or the timeline, while the process following the amendment is also uncertain. That makes it difficult to assess the implications of adopting the new standard on market performance.

Because the revision process will likely take time, we do not expect it to affect market performance in 2026. A key question remains whether ownership of underlying assets in a sukuk must effectively pass to investors in the case of default and if that might alter recourse mechanisms for sukuk holders.

We continue to believe that appetite for sukuk with real transfer of asset ownership remains limited. This may change with the emergence of the residential mortgage backed sukuk market in Saudi Arabia, following the Saudi Real Estate Refinance Company's initial issuance in August 2025.

The market has also digested the impact of the ruling of the Higher Sharia Authority (HSA) in the UAE, which requires issuers to include an option to transfer asset ownership in a post-default scenario. This change has caused some uncertainty over whether sukuk now qualify as de facto secured instruments in the event of default and whether sukuk holders will benefit from better recovery prospects than conventional bondholders post-default. From a ratings perspective, asset registration is credit neutral because it occurs after the sukuk sponsor has defaulted on its contractual obligations. A new financial law, introduced by the Central Bank of the UAE (CBUAE), exempts Islamic banks and their customers from registering assets bought or sold as part of financing activities or sukuk issuances. However, it is unclear whether this exemption applies only to sukuk issued by regulated financial institutions or if their clients are also exempt.

Sustainable Sukuk: Positioned For Future Growth

Total sustainable sukuk issuance was \$21.5 billion in 2025, up 38% on the \$15.6 billion issued in 2024, according to data from Refinitiv Workspace (see chart 5). Banks, including the Islamic Development Bank, accounted for nearly 50% of this increase, followed by some GCC and Malaysian corporates. Saudi Arabian issuers led sustainable sukuk issuance in 2025, representing over 40%, followed by the UAE and Malaysia. The natural alignment between Islamic finance and sustainability, the Islamic Development Bank's role as a key player in Islamic sustainable financings, and the high financing needs of Saudi banks explain this contribution. Banks use of Additional Tier 1 structures to secure financing and support their capitalization. We expect issuance to accelerate if and when GCC issuers' climate transition efforts accelerate and when regulators offer incentives for sustainable practices.

Retail customers seek share of illegal tariff refunds

Consumers sue FedEx, Ray-Ban maker over tariff refunds

NEW YORK, Feb 28, (AP): At least two retail customers pursuing tariff-related refunds have filed proposed class-action lawsuits in U.S. courts against companies that also sued to recoup costs from the import taxes the U.S. Supreme Court ruled President Donald Trump imposed without the legal authority to do so.

The federal court lawsuits brought against delivery company FedEx and French eyewear company EssilorLuxottica, which makes Ray-Ban sunglasses, seek to ensure that consumers get a share of any refunds the businesses get. More than 1,000 companies, including large corporations like Revlon and Costco, filed suit in the U.S. Court of International Trade to preserve their right to reimbursement.

On Feb. 20, The Supreme Court invalidated tariffs implemented under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA, worth an estimated \$130 billion to \$175 billion. A refund process either through the U.S. Court of International Trade or the U.S. Customs and Border Protection is set to be

worked out in coming days or months as a bevy of lawsuits and claims work their way through government systems. Companies have been filing lawsuits protectively to ensure they receive refunds.

FedEx said in a statement on Thursday that it would return any tariff refund it might get to shippers and customers who had paid them. The complaint filed against FedEx on Friday by Matthew Reiser of Miami states the company's pledge "creates no legally enforceable obligation and is expressly contingent on future government and court guidance that may never materialize."

Reiser claims he paid \$36 in tariffs and customs brokerage and duty advancement fees on tennis shoes shipped via FedEx by Tennis Warehouse Europe, an online retailer based in Schutterwald, Germany.

FedEx did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In a separate proposed class action filed this week, Nathan Ward of New York states that he purchased Ray-Ban sunglasses from ray-ban.com in August 2025 that were priced higher than in the past, reflecting a tariff surcharge.

"Despite seeking an order entitling it to a refund of the duties collected as a result of the subject tariffs, EssilorLuxottica continues to collect and has not refunded the tariff surcharges it collected from consumers," the complaint states.

EssilorLuxottica also did not respond to a request for comment. Barry Appleton, co-director of the Center for International Law at New York Law School, said he expected many more such consumer lawsuits to surface, especially against companies that issued invoices or receipts with itemized tariff charges. The legal viability of the cases is not clear-cut but they put pressure on businesses to share any tax refunds they manage to secure, he said.

"What we are watching is the predictable next chapter of the IEEPA story," Appleton said. "The Supreme Court told the White House it overreached, the major importers lined up for refunds, and now ordinary consumers are asking the obvious question - if those duties were illegal, why shouldn't we get our money back too?"

Wall St sinks as AI 'losers' get hit again

Dow falls 521 points

NEW YORK, Feb 28, (AP): U.S. stocks sank Friday as Wall Street kept punishing companies that could become losers in the artificial-intelligence revolution. A surprisingly discouraging update on inflation also hurt the market, while oil prices climbed with worries about tensions between the United States and Iran.

The S&P 500 fell 0.4% and staggered to the finish of just its second losing month in the last 10. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 521 points, or 1.1%, the Nasdaq composite sank 0.9%.

The losses came as investors returned to knocking down software companies and other businesses they suspect could get supplanted by AI-powered competitors.

Block, the company behind Cash App, Square and other businesses, gave a potential signal of what AI could do after Chair Jack Dorsey said it's cutting its workforce by nearly half. That's even though he said 2025 was a strong year for the company, which is sending more cash to shareholders through stock buybacks.

"Intelligence tools have changed what it means to build and run a company," Dorsey said in a letter to investors while announcing Block's latest profit results. "We're already seeing it internally. A significantly smaller team, using the tools we're building, can do more and do it better."

The co-founder of Twitter also said, "I don't think we're early to this realization. I think most companies are late. Within the next year, I believe the majority of companies will reach the same conclusion and make similar structural changes."

Block is cutting more than 4,000 jobs from its workforce of over 10,000. Its stock jumped 16.8% after making the announcement, while announcing its latest quarterly results.

Capable AI tools that can replace humans could perhaps replace entire companies, or at least eat away at their profit margins. Fears about AI disruption have caused sudden and swift sell-offs for stocks seen as potentially under threat, and they've rolled through industries as different as trucking logistics and legal services.

Salesforce, whose platform helps customers manage their relationships with clients, fell 2.3%. It gave back much of its 4% gain from the day before after reporting a better profit than analysts expected.

The pain has also hit private-equity companies that have bought or lent money to software companies, which need to withstand the AI threat to keep repaying those loans. Apollo Global Management dropped 8.6% for the one of the sharpest

losses in the S&P 500. Blue Owl Capital, which has been a target for investors because of the loans to it's made to the software industry, fell 6%.

Even the companies currently seeing their revenue and profit soar because of AI-related demand are under pressure. Nvidia fell 4.2% and was the heaviest weight on the U.S. stock market. A day earlier, it dropped to its worst loss since last spring even though it reported a better profit than analysts expected and forecast more in revenue for the current quarter.

Rival chip companies also fell. Worries are hurting such companies not only about whether their stock prices rose too high in recent years but also whether the huge spending driving their growth can continue. Can big spenders like Amazon and Alphabet make back all their billions of dollars in AI investments through higher productivity and profits in the future?

On the winning side of Wall Street was Netflix, which climbed 13.8% after walking away from its bid to buy Warner Bros. Discovery's studio and streaming business. That put Skydance-owned Paramount in a position to take over its Hollywood rival.

Paramount Skydance shares jumped 20.8%, while Warner Bros. Discovery fell 2.2%.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 29.98 points to 6,878.88. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 521.28 to 48,977.92, and the Nasdaq composite sank 210.17 to 22,668.21.

Some of the strongest action in financial markets was for oil, where the price for a barrel of benchmark U.S. crude rose 2.8% to settle at \$67.02. It's the latest swing in a market unsettled by tensions between the United States and Iran over Iran's nuclear program.

The U.S. military has already gathered a massive fleet of aircraft and warships in the Middle East, and a conflict could disrupt the global flow of oil and drive prices higher.

Brent crude, the international standard, rose 2.4% to \$72.48 per barrel.

Also hurting the broad market was a report showing that inflation at the U.S. wholesale level was at 2.9% last month, much higher than the 1.6% that economists expected.

That could pressure the Federal Reserve to hold off longer on its cuts to interest rates. Lower rates would give the economy and prices for investments a boost, but they risk worsening inflation at the same time.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury sank to 3.96%. It briefly swiveled higher following the inflation report, but it's down from its 4.02% level late Thursday. Treasury yields often fall when nervousness is high and investors are moving into investments that are considered safer.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed in Europe and Asia. South Korea's Kospi fell 1% from its latest record, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.9% for two of the world's larger moves.

Producer prices rise 2.9%, surprising economists

Wholesale prices surge past expectations

WASHINGTON, Feb 28, (AP): U.S. wholesale prices came in hotter than expected last month.

The Labor Department reported Friday that its producer price index, which measures inflation before it hits consumers, rose 0.5% from December and 2.9% from January 2025. Economists had forecast a 0.3% increase for the month and 1.6% year over year, according to a survey by the data firm FactSet.

Excluding food and energy prices, which bounce around from month to month, so-called core wholesale prices rose 0.8% from December and 3.6% from January 2025 - both higher than forecasters had expected. The year-over-year increase in core prices was the biggest since March of last year.

Driving the increase was an uptick in the wholesale price of services, led by higher profit margins for retailers and wholesalers. The increase suggests that companies are

passing along the cost of President Donald Trump's tariffs to their customers.

"Retailers' tariff bill has come down marginally in the last few months, but they have continued to lift their selling prices," Samuel Tombs, chief U.S. economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, wrote in a commentary.

And core good prices climbed 0.7% from December and 4.2% from January 2025 on hefty increases in the prices of cosmetics, pet food, some metals and metal-cutting machinery.

Energy prices were down as gasoline prices dropped 5.5% from December and 15.7% from a year earlier. Wholesale food prices also fell.

The producer price report comes two weeks after the Labor Department reported that consumer prices rose just 2.4% last month compared to a year earlier, closing in on the Federal Reserve's 2% target.

Economists had worried that Trump's double-digit taxes on imports would drive

inflation higher. Their impact has so far been more modest than expected - although inflation remains higher than the Fed would like.

Wholesale prices can offer an early look at where consumer inflation might be headed. Economists also watch it because some of its components, notably measures of health care and financial services, flow into the Fed's preferred inflation gauge - the personal consumption expenditures, or PCE, price index.

In December, PCE inflation rose faster than economists had forecast, climbing 2.9% from a year earlier - biggest such increase since March 2024.

The Fed cut its benchmark rate three times last year to support a sluggish job market. But it's been reluctant to cut further until it sees what happens to inflation. After Friday's producer price report, economist Ben Ayers of Nationwide said, "we expect the Fed to remain on pause during its upcoming March meeting."

US moves to dismantle oil smuggling

DOJ seeks ownership of seized Venezuelan oil tanker

WASHINGTON, Feb 28, (AP): The Justice Department has filed a complaint to legally take ownership of a sanctioned tanker and nearly 2 million barrels of petroleum seized off the coast of Venezuela in December, another step by President Donald Trump's administration to assert power over the country's oil sector after capturing leader Nicolás Maduro.

It's the first complaint filed by the U.S. to start the legal process to formally take control of one of at least 10 oil tankers intercepted by American authorities since late last year. The U.S. has accused Venezuela of using a shadow fleet of falsely flagged vessels to smuggle illicit crude into global supply chains.

"Under President Trump's leadership, the era of secretly bankrolling regimes that pose clear threats to the United States is over," Attorney General Pam Bondi said in an emailed statement. "This Department of Justice will deploy every legal authority at our disposal to completely dismantle and permanently shutter any operation that defies our laws and fuels chaos across the globe."

The seizure of the vessel, named the Skipper, in December was the Republican administration's first in a series of similar actions and marked a dramatic escalation in Trump's campaign to pressure Maduro by cutting off access to oil revenue that has long been the lifeblood of Venezuela's economy.

Maduro, who called the tanker seizure an "act of international piracy," was arrested



Fishermen pass an oil tanker in the Gulf of Venezuela off the shore of Punta Cardon, Venezuela, Jan. 14, 2026. (AP)

in a U.S. raid last month and was taken to New York to face drug trafficking charges. He has pleaded not guilty, protesting his capture and declaring himself "the president of my country." Following his ouster, several vessels fled the coast of Venezuela in spite of Trump's quarantine on sanctioned oil tankers, and U.S. forces have tracked and interdicted some of them as far away as the Indian Ocean.

The Trump administration has set out to control the production, refining and global distribution of Venezuela's oil and oversee where the revenue

flows. The U.S. has begun lifting broad sanctions to allow foreign companies to operate in Venezuela in a bid to revitalize the ailing oil industry.

A judge in Washington's federal court must sign off on the U.S. government's bid to permanently take ownership of the Skipper and its cargo so the oil can potentially be sold.

The Justice Department alleges the tanker moved oil from Iran and Venezuela throughout the world, flying false flags to hide its illegal activities while providing revenue for Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which the U.S. has

deemed a foreign terrorist organization.

"Because of the coordinated efforts of our prosecutors and law enforcement partners, a ghost tanker that for years secretly moved illicit oil from Iran and Venezuela around the globe has been taken off the seas," Assistant Attorney General A. Tysen Duva, who leads the Justice Department's Criminal Division, said in a statement.

"Today's actions are an important step in making America and the world safer by disrupting the flow of millions of dollars to foreign terrorist organizations," he said.

France calls Mercosur move 'bad surprise'

The EU will 'provisionally implement' a trade deal with South American bloc Mercosur

BRUSSELS, Feb 28, (AP): European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Friday that she will start to "provisionally implement" a massive trade deal with the Mercosur bloc of nations in South America despite not having approval from European Parliament.

The trans-Atlantic trade deal is expected to create one of the world's largest free trade zones covering more than 700 million people. Trade between the two tops 110 billion euro (\$129 billion) and accounts for a quarter of global gross domestic product.

However, the deal has faced heavy criticism from Europe's agriculture sector and environmentalists - and will likely tough resistance by elected representatives in the European Parliament.

For now, von der Leyen's move means she is basically sidestepping those lawmakers.

"When they are ready, we are ready," von der Leyen said, referring to the EU lawmakers without whose approval the agreement cannot be concluded. With backing from Europe leaders, she said the Commission will "provisionally implement the agreement" after Uruguay and Argentina ratified the EU-Mercosur trade deal on Thursday.

French President Emmanuel Macron slammed the move in remarks to reporters in Paris.

"For France, it's a surprise. A bad surprise," he said. "And for the European Parliament, it's bad manners."

Macron said he would work to make sure hard-won protections for farmers and health would be respected in the roll-out.

"We will be uncompromising on the respect for these rules," he said, including heightened surveillance of sensitive sectors, safeguard clauses, mirror clauses notably for pesticides, and tightened sanitary rules in third countries.

"I will never defend a deal that is lax on what we import and tough on what we produce at home, because that is inconsistent toward European consumers, and it is criminal for European sovereignty," Macron said.

The deal comes in the wake of global trade shocks from the tariffs imposed by the United States and the throttling of critical mineral supplies from China that pushed the 27-nation EU to forge a raft of free trade deals across the world.

Both Spain and Germany, backers of the trade deal, praised Leyen's move. German's foreign minister Johann Wadepuhl said in a social media post that with Mercosur deal's implementation, "companies & people from both continents can finally benefit from more prosperity & growth. Germany will work tirelessly to help tap the full potential of this historic agreement."

Carlos Cuerdo, Spain's economy minister, said that "in an increasingly uncertain world, Europe cannot afford to fall behind. The Mercosur agreement is a major step in European Union's roadmap to become more independent and resilient."

Along with Macron's remarks, other critics were also swift to condemn von der Leyen's move.

"Applying the trade deal now, without the Court's opinion and without MEPs' consent, would trample over the democratic processes," said an open

letter signed by 171 environmental, labor and agricultural groups in Europe and South America which called von der Leyen's provisional implementation a "democratic scandal."

"At a time when many in our society feel sidelined and are losing faith in political processes, opting for provisional application would be profoundly anti-democratic and would risk inflaming tensions within EU countries as well as between them."

Von der Leyen is likely to shrug off such criticism as she has in the past to advance a deal she describes as vital for the EU's survival in a newly disordered world.

"This is about resilience, this is about growth, and Europe shaping its own future," von der Leyen said at a news conference. No questions were allowed.

"Our businesses, our workers, and our citizens will reap the benefits, and they should reap them as soon as possible," she added. "Mercosur embodies the spirit in which Europe is acting on the global scene."

She also acknowledged that the "agreement can only be fully concluded once the European Parliament has given its consent" and said the commission would "continue closely with all EU institutions, member states, and stakeholders to ensure a smooth and transparent process."

European lawmakers voted in January to challenge the deal at the European Court of Justice, which could delay it for years or even derail it.

Even without any obstacles from that court or the parliament, the deal could still take months for the deal to go into effect.

News network faces uncertain future amid media shake-up

Paramount jitters: CNN boss tells staff to stay calm

LOS ANGELES, Feb 28, (AP): Word had barely spread about Paramount's apparent victory in the competition to buy Warner Bros. Discovery before CNN chief Mark Thompson wrote to staff members. His message, in effect: Keep calm and carry on.

It's a tall order. The network's future - whether familiar faces stay or go, whether the outlet changes editorial direction - will be watched intently if the corporate deal clears regulatory hurdles and goes through. Anxious observers are left to interpret signals from Paramount's management of CBS News for what it could mean at CNN.

"Despite all the speculation you've read during this process, I'd suggest that you don't jump to conclusions until we know more," Thompson wrote in his internal memo, telling employees to focus on delivering journalism to their customers.

Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav said in a company town hall on Friday that he recognized Paramount's win over Netflix "feels a little whiplashy," according to CNN's Brian Stelter. Zaslav predicted the deal would take six months to close. Paramount leader David Ellison has not commented on the developments or his plans for the network's future. But in an already volatile media environment, the trepidation - if not the outcome itself - stands to be seismic.

CNN originated the concept of 24-hour cable news when Ted Turner started it 45 years ago. Its domestic network is less popular now than two rivals who appeal primarily to specific audiences - Fox News to conservatives and MSNBC, formerly MSNBC, to liberals. President Donald Trump is decidedly not a fan, and his criticism of CNN during his first term badly damaged the network's brand among conservatives.

In December, the president said that CNN spread

"poison and lies," adding that "I think the people who have run CNN for the last long period of time are a disgrace. I think it's imperative that CNN be sold."

Ellison and his billionaire father, Larry, both have ties to Trump. David Ellison sat in the gallery on Tuesday to watch the president deliver his State of the Union address.

Shortly after Paramount took control of CBS News last summer, the company settled a lawsuit filed by Trump against "60 Minutes." The president, who did not appear on the newsmagazine while running for re-election, sat for an interview last fall, and another on the "CBS Evening News" in January.

Opinion

Ellison installed a Republican official as a CBS ombudsman to guard against signs of bias, and his work has been publicly invisible. Bari Weiss, an opinion journalist and founder of the Free Press website, became CBS News editor-in-chief, with her moves scrutinized by outsiders for signs that she was moving the network to the right. She has said she wants to appeal to the nation's broad center. Suspicions by critics fueled the story in December when Weiss ordered a "60 Minutes" story critical of how Trump has deported immigrants held to get more comment from the administration. The story aired a month later.

It's not known whether Ellison will try to merge CBS News and CNN; the idea has been explored a handful of times in the past. The Wall Street Journal reported in December that Ellison assured Trump administration officials that he'd make "sweeping changes" to CNN if he bought it. Paramount did not return calls for comment on Friday.

Trump has, at different junctures, attacked every

single host on CNN's weeknight lineup.

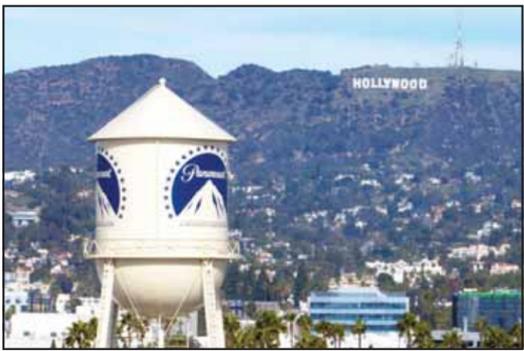
On social media in 2023, he said Erin Burnett reported fake stories about him, suggesting of her show: "Put it to sleep." He has repeatedly slurred Anderson Cooper, who is gay, by referring to him with a woman's first name. Earlier this month, he called Kaitlan Collins "the worst reporter" when she asked him about the Epstein files at the White House. Last year, on social media, he called Abby Phillip "strictly 3rd rate."

Only two weeks ago, Cooper decided to leave "60 Minutes," where he had a job share with CNN, and now he might find himself working with Weiss again. "Since its founding by Ted Turner in 1980, CNN has provided news that viewers can trust," said Tom Johnson, former network president in the 1990s. "News that is accurate and fair. I truly hope the new CNN owner will maintain its journalistic independence and excellence. I am deeply worried that he will not."

Despite the concerns, there are dangers in suggesting that CBS News and Paramount are one-note Trump supporters. "60 Minutes," for example, has continued to do tough stories about administration policies. CBS said it was ending the late-night comedy show of Trump critic Stephen Colbert this May, but Paramount also extended the contracts of Jon Stewart and the "South Park" co-founders on Comedy Central.

Many at CNN had been living in fear for their jobs even before this announcement, said former network correspondent Jim Acosta, who left to start his own online show after sparring with Trump during the president's first administration.

"Trump has cracked the code in how to hurt the media," Acosta said. "This is bigger than just one company. This is deeply un-American."



The Paramount Pictures water tower is seen in Los Angeles, Dec. 18, 2025, with the Hollywood sign in the distance. (AP)

Hollywood at crossroads?

What Paramount-owned Warner means for movies

LOS ANGELES, Feb 28, (AP): Two of Hollywood's oldest studios may be consolidating into one. In a shocking twist after a monthslong bidding war, Paramount has emerged as the apparent victor in the fight to acquire Warner Bros.

Netflix, who backed away from the deal Thursday, had hoped to win the movie studio and its vast film library. Paramount wants it all: Movies, cable networks and news.

Almost 10 years ago, Hollywood's big six became the big five when Disney bought most of 20th Century Fox. Now the big five looks like it's destined to become the big four, including Universal and Sony, and the business of Hollywood moviemaking is one again in a time of profound transition.

Here's what we know, what we don't and some burning questions.

Simply put, it was no longer "financially attractive," the company said. In December, Netflix had reached a deal to acquire some of Warner Bros. Discovery's assets: Their library, movie studio and HBO. Almost immediately Paramount, who months earlier had expressed interest in purchasing Warner Bros., initiated a hostile takeover bid for the whole company, which culminated in a \$31 per share offer this week. Netflix, whose previous offer was \$27.75 per share, declined to counter.

"We believe we would have been strong stewards of Warner Bros. iconic brands," Netflix's co-CEOs Ted Sarandos and Greg Peters said in a joint statement. "But this transaction was always a 'nice to have' at the right price, not a 'must have' at any price."

Warner had repeatedly backed the deal it struck with Netflix right up until Thursday evening, when its board continued to recommend Netflix even while calling Paramount's bid, valued at about \$111 billion including debt, "superior."

David Zaslav, the chief executive of Warner Bros. Discovery, said in a statement that they're excited about, "the potential of a combined Paramount Skydance and Warner Bros. Discovery and can't wait to get started working together telling the stories that move the world."

Paramount Skydance chairman and CEO David Ellison has said that he would like to grow their combined slate to more than 30 movies a year, keeping Paramount and Warner Bros. as stand-alone operations.

Document

In documents filed to the Securities and Exchange Commission last month, Paramount said, "Our priority is to build a vibrant, healthy business and industry - one that supports Hollywood and creative, benefits consumers, encourages competition, and strengthens the overall job market."

They've also said they would look for ways to save some \$6 billion through job cuts in "duplicative operations."

Executives at Paramount have argued that merging with Warner will allow it to compete with bigger rivals particularly in the streaming space and bring larger content libraries for its customers.

Reminiscent of the hours after the Netflix deal was announced in December, there isn't much public chatter from those inside the industry yet, but with several awards shows in the near future, including the Actor Awards Sunday, the relative silence is poised to break soon.

The Paramount news broke as promotion is happening for Warner Bros.' latest movie, "The Bride!" Filmmaker Maggie Gyllenhaal told The Associated Press Friday that she didn't feel prepared to speak to the deal specifically, but she did offer praise for the studio that supported her film.

"I was reading tweets about it as I woke up this morning," Gyllenhaal said. "I don't have a position but I do feel really deeply supported by (Warner Bros. Motion Pictures Chairs) Pam (Abby) and Mike (DeLuca) and I feel that they have been taking a slightly different route than most of the other people around them. They've been supporting films that are actually about something while at the same time, I think, encouraging the filmmakers who are making them to reach as big of an audience as possible. That combination is very specific and very precious."

Warner Bros., among the most filmmaker friendly studios operating, has had a banner year with major blockbusters and critical successes. This year they collected 30 Oscar nominations thanks to "Sinners," "One Battle After Another" and "Weapons." Paramount films received zero.

In 2025, Warner Bros. movies (including "A Minecraft Movie," "Superman" and "Sinners") also accounted for 21% of the domestic box office; Paramount's market share was only 6%, driven largely by "Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning," which didn't even place in the top 10 (it was 11th).

Pledged

In November, Paramount pledged to up its 2026 theatrical output to at least 15 movies. Before the Skydance merger, the studio was more regularly releasing eight movies a year. Though Paramount's less than stellar 2025 has been attributed to the previous regime, Skydance has also not had the smoothest run at the box office, and its biggest hits have centered around Tom Cruise, with "Top Gun: Maverick," its only billion-dollar film, and five "Mission: Impossible." It's attempts to restart the "Terminator" franchise were less successful.

While Warner Bros. has succeeded with a combination of original and franchise films, Paramount's slate is decidedly more franchise heavy with intellectual property like "Transformers," "Scream," "Sonic the Hedgehog," and "Paw Patrol" in their arsenal.

Cinema United, the trade organization representing movie theaters, was vehemently opposed to a Netflix-owned Warner Bros. for fear of what it might mean for movie theaters. Exhibition and box office has not fully recovered since the pandemic - previously the annual domestic box office would regularly surpass \$11 billion. Since 2020, it's only exceeded \$9 billion once.

But consolidation is also a concern. Although Paramount has an established background in theatrical distribution, Cinema United worried about that outcome as well, which they explained in a statement to the Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing in early February, noting that a combination of Paramount and Warner Bros. would consolidate as much as 40% of each year's domestic box office in a single studio.

"We have been clear from the outset about our concerns around consolidation, and nothing that has occurred within the past 36 hours has changed that," said Cinema United's president and CEO Michael O'Leary, in a statement Friday. "Studio consolidation historically leads to fewer movies being made, and at this juncture, there is no reason to believe the outcome here will be any different. We continue to urge regulators to heed the lessons of the past."

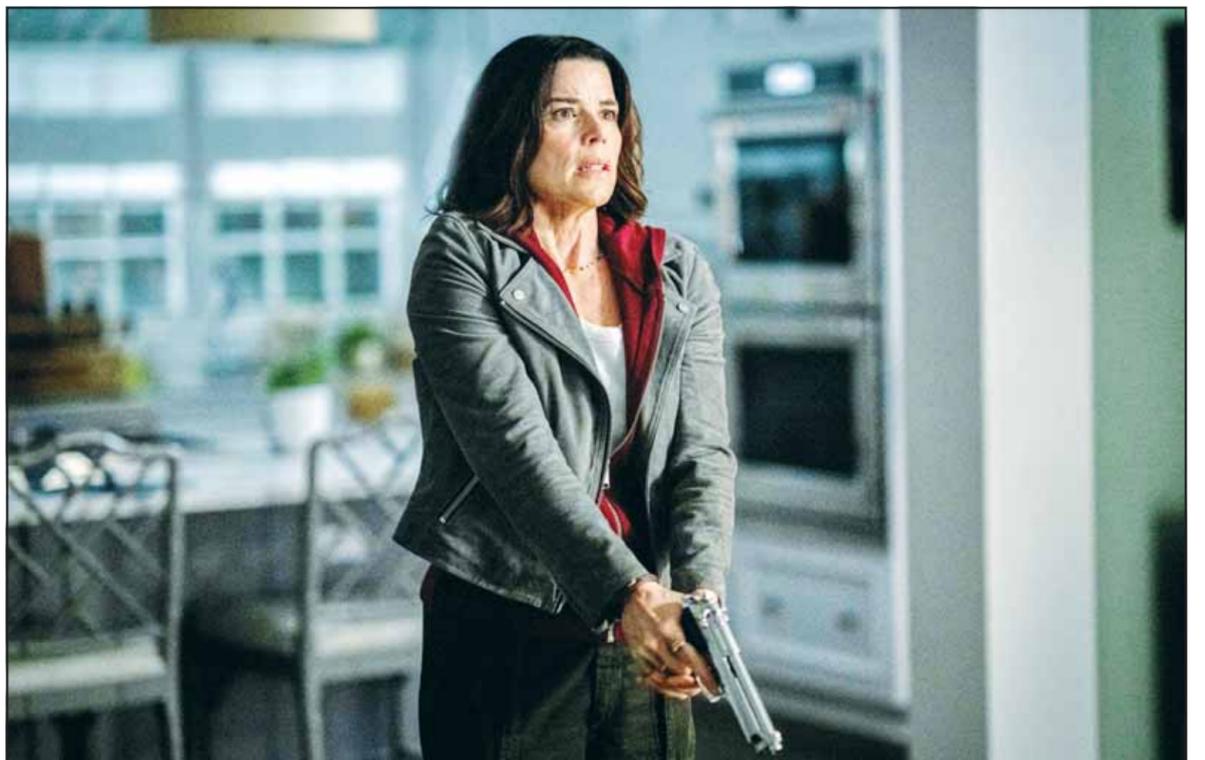
In theory, a guaranteed 30 films a year would be a good thing for movie theaters, assuming they all go to theaters and it's not a combination of theatrical and streaming titles as has happened with a Disney-owned 20th Century Studios. But some are skeptical that will pan out.

Hollywood historian and author Mark Harris wrote on Bluesky that "the idea of a Paramount-WB merger producing 30-40 movies a year is an absurd fiction." He predicted that first Warner Bros. will become the "classy" label within Paramount, "then it will become the specialty or streaming label. Then it will die."

This remains unclear. It's possible there will be a bundling situation as with Disney+ and Hulu. With Paramount taking on billions in debt and equity for this deal to go through, many are wondering what will happen to the two California studio lots, especially in a moment where productions are rarer and rarer in California.

The storied Paramount lot on Melrose in Los Angeles has 30 stages on 65 acres, hosting productions from "Sunset Boulevard" to "Forrest Gump." Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank sits on a 110-acre lot with 31 soundstages and 11 exterior sets, where productions have included "My Fair Lady," "Gilmore Girls" and "Friends." Both are historic sites in their own right. Warner Bros. also has a massive studio in the UK, in Leavesden.

Film



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Neve Campbell in a scene from 'Scream 7.' (AP)

Campbell back in action as Ghostface strikes again

Messy mix of horror and humor in 'Scream 7'

LOS ANGELES, Feb 28, (AP): Early in "Scream 7," in one of those blasts of the franchise's signature, self-mocking irony, Neve Campbell is taunted for sitting out "Scream VI."

"It's not the same without you," she is told.

It's true: Campbell's Sidney Prescott is the plucky heart of this series, the original Scream Queen, the so-called Final Girl, who bites her lip and yet leaps into action when needed. "Scream VI" tried to put defibrillator paddles on the Ghostface killer franchise without Campbell, and it felt like a stutter-step.

So it's a welcome back for Sidney Prescott in this seventh edition, which is a messy mix of horror and humor that's clearly only for "Scream" completists, those hardy folk who refuse logic or vivid filmmaking in their quest to see a dude in a cape and mask stab people.

Sidney is now a mom to a rebellious 17-year-old daughter, a wife to the town's police chief and a cafe owner in the very artificial suburban community of Pine Grove. She has pushed her traumatic past into a memory hole and thus has created a tension with her daughter, played by a very bratty Isabel May. Her calm life is upended when her past comes to find her.

Franchise creator Kevin Williamson returns to direct and co-write the screenplay with series veteran

Guy Busick, but it's all very slack, a ton of B-acting joined by a plot, dialogue and editing that produces less dread than inadvertent humor, slipping over and over in its own puddle of gore.

"Scream 7" mixes old and new franchise characters, adds new horrific ways to die - like being slit open while suspended over a high school theater stage or having your skull impaled on a soda tap - with a desperate search for whoever is doing the killings. It's never who you think it is and you'll never figure this one out, either. "It's always someone you know" is one helpful tip.

Campbell is joined by Courteney Cox, who reprises her role as Gale Weathers, an annoying TV journalist who is the only character to appear in all seven "Scream" films. (Is that really something to boast about?)

Even Cox has some shade to share with Sidney about missing the franchise's last jaunt to New York City in "Scream VI." "You're lucky you sat that one out. It was brutal." Preach, sister. We watched it.

"Scream 7" is all about 2026, embracing deepfake videos, trying to absorb a messy past and deal with helicopter parents. It also embraces such interesting ways to kill people as fire extinguishers to the noggin, meat mallets and a slide across a bar into broken shot glass shards.

At one point, Sidney and her daughter make their way into a well-appointed panic room while the killer is furiously hunting them. They spend less than five minutes there, panting a lot, and then they (checks notes) inexplicably leave - the panic room.

"This isn't going to stop unless I stop it," Sidney says.

While there are nods to other horror movies - "The Texas Chain Saw Massacre" is playing at the local theater and the "Halloween" franchise gets name-checked - "Scream" has always been fun for the way it deconstructs the genre while making a new one. This time, that's just flat.

There's a stab - sorry - at dealing with PTSD, but choosing the "Scream" franchise to discuss generational trauma is a weird vehicle to pick when there's a psychotic, knife-wielding serial killer dropping bodies every few minutes.

Lumbering along while fatally wounded, this is a franchise that doesn't know it is dead, staggering ever onward without an ending in sight. Perhaps Sidney is right: This isn't going to stop unless she stops it.

"Scream 7," a Paramount Pictures release that hit theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for strong bloody violence, gore and language. Running time: 114 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.

Variety

NEW ORLEANS: Actor **Shia LaBeouf** has been charged with battery and is accused of repeatedly using homophobic slurs while hitting multiple people at a New Orleans bar during Mardi Gras, according to a police report.

The New Orleans police report obtained by The Associated Press via a public records request states that LaBeouf, 39, "became irate and aggressive throughout the night" and struck multiple people with a closed fist at the Royal Street Inn & R Bar, near the historic French Quarter.

Jeffrey Damnit, a well-known local entertainer who police identified as Jeffrey Klein in the incident report, said he was one of the people attacked by LaBeouf.

"He hit me, he connected a few times with punches, he pushed me a few times," Damnit said.

LaBeouf "just got nuts" trying to start fights and telling the entertainer and others that he would beat them up, Damnit said. He added that LaBeouf had pushed him from behind at the bar earlier in the night,

shouting homophobic slurs and threatening his life.

Damnit was wearing eye makeup and lipstick and said he believes his appearance motivated LaBeouf's attack.

A video shows a shirtless LaBeouf shoving one person to the ground and hitting another person in the face, "causing his nose to possibly dislocate," according to the police report. (AP)

□ □ □

LOS ANGELES: Singer **FKA twigs** filed a lawsuit Friday alleging that **Shia LaBeouf** was physically and emotionally abusive during their relationship from 2018 to 2019, saying her experience was part of a pattern of terrorizing women for the 34-year-old actor.

"Shia LaBeouf hurts women," the lawsuit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court said in its opening lines. "He uses them. He abuses them, both physically and mentally. He is dangerous."

FKA twigs - a 32-year-old British singer and actress whose legal name is **Tahliah Barnett** - alleges in the lawsuit that LaBeouf left her in a constant state of fear and humiliation, once slammed her into a car, tried to strangle her and knowingly gave her a sexually transmitted disease.

An email sent to a representative seeking comment from LaBeouf was not immediately returned, but in an email to The New York Times the actor said: "I have no excuses for my alcoholism or aggression, only rationalizations. I have been abusive to myself and everyone around me for years. I have a history of

hurting the people closest to me. I'm ashamed of that history and am sorry to those I hurt."

The two met and became a couple after Barnett was cast in "Honey Boy," an autobiographical film about LaBeouf's upbringing as a child actor that portrayed his father as abusive but loving. Barnett had a supporting role alongside LaBeouf. (AP)

□ □ □

LOS ANGELES: The Sundance Film Festival may be starting anew in Boulder, Colorado, next year, but it's sticking with its late January time frame. Festival organizers on Tuesday said the 2027 festival will begin Jan. 21 and run through Jan. 31. They also revealed over a dozen key venues including 11 theaters where premieres will be held.

Some of the official theaters will include the Boulder High School auditorium, the Casey Middle School auditorium, the Cinemark Century Boulder, the Boulder Theater and several University of Colorado Boulder locations like the Macky Auditorium Concert Hall and the Roe Green Theatre. Sundance Film Festival and public programming director Eugene Hernandez said they're working closely with the Colorado community.

"Nestled at the base of Colorado's iconic Flatirons, venues across the city and CU Boulder's campus provide an ideal setting for festivalgoers from across the world to come together, revel in art, spark conversation, and create unforgettable memories," Hernandez said in a statement. (AP)



LaBeouf

Obituaries

Robert Carradine, 'Revenge of the Nerds' star, dies at 71

Neil Sedaka, pop hitmaker of the 1960s and '70s, dies at 86

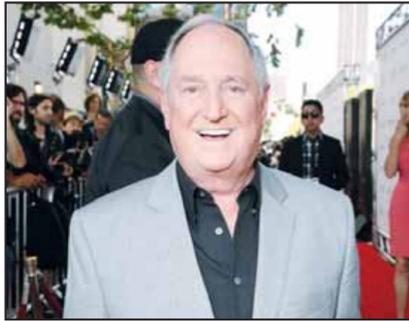
NEW YORK, Feb. 28, (AP) — Neil Sedaka, the hit-making singer-songwriter whose boyish soprano and bright melodies made him a top act in the early years of rock 'n' roll and led to a second round of success in the 1970s, has died.

Sedaka, whose hits included "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do" and "Laughter in the Rain," died Friday at age 86. "Our family is devastated by the sudden passing of our beloved husband, father and grandfather, Neil Sedaka," his family said in a statement. "A true rock and roll legend, an inspiration to millions, but most importantly, at least to those of us who were lucky enough to know him, an incredible human being who will be deeply missed."

No other details of his death were immediately available. A key member of the Brill Building songwriting factory, Sedaka teamed with lyricist and boyhood neighbor Howard Greenfield on songs that reflected the teen innocence of the post-Elvis, pre-Beatles era of the late 1950 and early 1960s, including "Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen," "Calendar Girl" and "Oh! Carol," a lament for his high school sweetheart, Carole King.

After a long dry spell, he reemerged with such smashes as "Laughter in the Rain" and "Bad Blood." The Captain & Tennille's cover of his "Love Will Keep Us Together" was a chart-topper in 1975.

Short and dark-haired, with a big smile and high-pitched voice, he was a Juilliard-trained, Brooklyn-born son of a Jewish taxi driver who began performing as a teen and kept at it for decades.



Neil Sedaka attends the Warner Bros. Premiere of 'Jersey Boys' at the 2014 Los Angeles Film Festival on June 19, 2014, in Los Angeles. (AP)

Sedaka still played dozens of concerts a year well into his 80s. He retained the enthusiasm and broad vocal range of his youth and never tired of the standards he had sung hundreds of times.

"Past 70, Pavarotti told me the vocal cords are not what they used to be. I'm very fortunate that my voice has held," he told The Associated Press in 2012. "It's nice to

be a legend, but it's better to be a working legend."

Sedaka's songs sold millions worldwide and have been covered by a range of performers, from Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra to The 5th Dimension and Nickelback. Sedaka helped propel the career of Connie Francis with "Stupid Cupid" and "Where the Boys Are," the latter for the soundtrack of the movie with the same name. The Captain & Tennille received a best-album Grammy thanks largely to "Love Will Keep Us Together" and included a nod to Sedaka at the end of the song, when Toni Tennille exclaimed "Sedaka's back!"

Sedaka grew up in Brooklyn's Brighton Beach neighborhood, pampered by his grandparents, aunts and mother in a two-bedroom apartment he shared with 11 relatives. He has a street there named in his honor, Neil Sedaka Way.

But his music compensated for his unpopularity as a kid, he once recalled. His talent was recognized by a second-grade teacher who urged his homemaker mother, Eleanor, to buy him a piano. She went to work in a department store to pay for a secondhand upright and managed his career for years, as did his wife, Leba.

Sedaka loved songwriting and never quit, but he craved performing.

"Once a performer, always a performer. It's that adrenaline rush. It's like a natural high when you're in front of an audience, and if you get that standing ovation, it's infectious," he told the AP.

At 16, Sedaka was chosen by Arthur Rubenstein in a contest as the city's best high school piano student and

performed on a classical radio station as a prize. It was the same year he discovered rock 'n' roll, when he performed a song, "Mr. Moon," he had written with Greenfield, his classmate at Abraham Lincoln High School.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Known for both his film and television work, Robert Carradine worked steadily in the industry for over 40 years. Though he collaborated with some of the most respected directors of the day, he never gained the worldwide recognition of his more famous siblings Keith Carradine (also the father of Martha Plimpton) and half-brother David Carradine, who died in 2009.

Robert Carradine, a Los Angeles native and son to character actor John Carradine, was introduced to audiences with roles on the television series "Bonanza" in 1971 and in the John Wayne Western "The Cowboys" in 1972.

Despite his family background, acting wasn't his first calling, though.

"I always had a passion to be a race car driver, and that's what I thought I was going to do, and at some penultimate moment ... I think I was sitting with my brother David when 'The Cowboys' was being cast, and they were interested in David as the bad guy, and he didn't want to be the guy that shot John Wayne in the back," Carradine recalled in a 2013 interview with Popdose. "But he said, 'You know, it is called The Cowboys, and they're meeting all these young guys. Why don't you go in?'"

Fashion



Models wear creations from the Moschino Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Women's collection presented in Milan, Italy, Friday, Feb. 27. (AP)

Primavera show blends art and fashion

Kate Moss closes Demna's first Gucci show

MILAN, Feb. 28, (AP) — Set in the shadow of classical statuary, Demna offered a new vision for Gucci during Milan Fashion Week on Friday starting with a skin-tight white minidress and clean muscle T-shirts showing off the chiseled human form.

He called the looks palette cleansers, and the models moved with morning-after swagger. The bodycon silhouette transitioned into slim trousers and tops for him, leggings and long clingy dresses for her - very much evoking Tom Ford's Gucci heyday.

There were also a couple of nods to more recent Gucci alum Alessandro Michele, Valentino's creative director who had a front-row seat and once collaborated with Demna when he was at Balenciaga. Those tributes included a floral gown, a daysuit with a pussybow and furry slip-on shoes.

Demna is in full embrace of the archetype and his notion of classical sensuality came through in an asymmetrical white dress that draped and opened into a full slit. Some classic Gucci mainstays were in short supply, like overcoats and suits. The collection was

also light on Gucci branding.

Other archetypes, or less flatteringly put stereotypes, included reference to the sciura, or posh Milanesa upper-class women in pretty dresses topped with eco-fur stoles, at odds with the so-called maranza, suburban males known for their long on top, buzz-cut sides hairdos, sagging pants and slouching walk - all on display on the Gucci runway.

Kate Moss closed the show in a glittering evening gown that plunged in the back to reveal a double-G-branded thong. Moss moved sensually down the long, dark runway, soaking in the moment.

Demna titled his first runway show for Gucci "Primavera," Italian for "spring," suggesting both a new season but also taking inspiration from Sandro Botticelli's masterpiece hanging in Florence's Uffizi, and an inspiration for Gucci's floral patterns - seen primarily in the Gucci gown.

The designer took immediate distance from any intellectual parsing of his message, and cut any links between Gucci and high fashion.

In notes, Demna said the collection "is built around a sense of pragmatism." He said he wanted his Gucci "to become lighter, softer, more refined, more elaborate, more emotional, even senseless sometimes. I don't want Gucci to be intellectual, but I want Gucci to be a feeling."

Translation: Gucci is for the masses - at least those who can afford it - and not for the rarified couture world. In that vein, Gucci announced that some of the collection would be available for immediate sale in the see-now, buy-now formula.

"My vision of Gucci is about the coexistence of heritage and fashion ... Gucci only exists when both are in sync," Demna wrote. "This first Gucci show introduces a universe of people, archetypes, consumers and dress codes that will shape my design language moving forward."

Front row guests included Paris Hilton, Nicky Hilton, Donatella Versace and Demi Moore - who arrived in a fitted leather ensemble carrying her dog Pilaf.

Variety

NEW YORK: Ann Godoff, a leading book publisher for more than 30 years with an eye for timely and timeless works from "Alexander Hamilton" and "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil" to current bestsellers by Gisèle Pelicot and California Gov. Gavin Newsom, has died. She was 76.

Godoff died of cancer Tuesday in Albany, New York, according to a statement from Penguin Press, which she had founded in 2003.

"Ann's impact on American book culture over the past four decades is incalculable," Penguin Press publisher Scott Moyers said in a



Godoff

statement. "An editor of immense range in fiction, non-fiction and poetry, Ann shepherded into print innumerable New York Times bestsellers, multiple winners of every major award, and works that have appeared on all manner of best books lists - of the year, the decade, and the century." (AP)

NEW YORK: Sondra Lee, a dancer and actor discovered by the legendary choreographer-director Jerome Robbins and originated the role of Tiger Lily on Broadway in "Peter Pan" and played Minnie Fay in the original production of "Hello, Dolly!" has died. She was 97.

Lee died Monday of natural causes in her New York City apartment, according to her friend and colleague, the Rev. Joshua Ellis, a former Broadway press agent.

After her dancing days, Lee taught at Stella Adler's Conservatory and New York University. She also was a consultant to such films as "Places in the Heart" with Sally Field, "The Last of the Mohicans"

with Daniel Day-Lewis and "The Morning After" starring Jane Fonda, Jeff Bridges and Raul Julia. (AP)

In her 2009 memoir, "I've Slept With Everybody," she recounted meeting Robbins at the Shubert Theatre. She had just missed his audition for "High Button Shoes" and did not know who he was. (AP)

NEW YORK: Former US Open champion Jim Furyk is testing the television waters as the lead analyst in the booth for Golf Channel during its weekday coverage of the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill and The Players Championship.

His stint also includes Golf Channel's two hours of lead-in coverage on the weekend at Bay Hill. "It's probably on a trial basis, see how much I like it, get a feel for it," Furyk said. "With any new endeavor, it's a learning process. There's a feel and flow for how the show is done. I'm focused on doing the best job for two weeks."

Furyk will be in the booth with announcer Terry Gannon at both events. (AP)

Music

Clash to collaboration

AI music startups aim to join 'record labels'

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Feb. 28, (AP) — Suno CEO Mikey Shulman pulls up a chair to the recording studio desk where a research scientist at his artificial intelligence company is creating a new song.

The flute line sounds promising.

The percussion needs work.

Neither of them is playing an instrument. They type some descriptive words - Afrobeat, flute, drums, 90 beats per minute - and out comes an infectious rhythm that lives up the 19th century office building where Suno is headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They toggle some editing tools to refine the new track.

Much like early experiences with ChatGPT or AI text-to-image generators, trying to make an AI-generated song on platforms like Suno or its rival, Udio, can seem a little like magic. It takes no musical skills, practice or emotional wellspring to conjure up a new tune inspired by almost any of the world's musical traditions.

But the process of training AI on beloved musicians of the past and present to produce synthetic approximations of their work has angered the music industry and brought much of its legal power against the two startups.

Now, after their users have flooded the internet with millions of AI-generated songs, some of which have found themselves on streaming services like Spotify, the leaders of Suno and New York-based Udio are trying to negotiate with record labels to secure a foothold in an industry that shunned them.

"We have always thought that working together with the music industry instead of against the music industry is the only way that this works," said Shulman, who co-founded Suno in 2022. "Music is so culturally important that it doesn't make sense to have an AI world and a non-AI world of music."

Sony Music, Universal Music and Warner Records sued the two startups for copyright infringement in 2024, alleging that they were exploiting the recorded works of their artists.

Since then, the pair have strived to make peace with the industry. Suno, now valued at \$2.45 billion, last year struck a settlement with Warner, and Udio has signed licensing agreements with Warner, Universal and independent label Merlin. Only one major label, Sony, has not settled with either startup as the lawsuits move forward in Boston and New York federal courts. Suno also faces legal challenges in Europe brought by groups representing music creators.

The first of the settlement deals, between Udio and Universal, led to an exodus of frustrated Udio users who were blocked from downloading their own AI-generated tracks. But Udio CEO Andrew Sanchez said he's optimistic about what the future will bring as his company adapts its business model to let fans of willing artists use AI to play with and potentially alter their works.

"Having a close relationship with the music industry is elemental to us," Sanchez said in an interview. "Users really want to have an anchor to their favorite artists. They want to have an anchor to their favorite songs."

Many professional musicians are skeptical. Singer-songwriter Tift Merritt, co-chair of the Artists Rights Alliance, recently helped organize a "Stealing Isn't Innovation" campaign by artists - including Cyndi Lauper and Bonnie Raitt - to urge AI companies to pursue licensing deals and partnerships rather than build platforms without regard for copyright law.

"The economy of AI music is built totally on the intellectual property, globally, of musicians everywhere without transparency, consent, or payment. So, I know they value their intellectual property, but ours has been consumed in order to replace us," Merritt said in an interview in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Shulman contends technology "evolves very often faster than the law," and his company tries to be thoughtful about "not breaking the law" but also "deliver products that the world really wants."

When the music industry first confronted Suno over alleged copyright infringement, the company's antagonistic response alienated professionals like Merritt.

Symbolizing the divide was a clip last year in which Shulman was quoted as saying, "it's not really enjoyable" to make music most of the time. Shulman started learning piano at age 4 but later dropped it. He took up bass guitar at 12, playing in rock bands in high school and college. He said that experience gave him some of the best moments of his life.

"You need to get really good at an instrument or really good at a piece of production software," Shulman said on the "The Twenty Minute VC" podcast. "I think the majority of people don't enjoy the majority of the time they spend making music."

"Clearly, I wish I had said different words," Shulman told the AP. The context, he added, was that "to produce perfect music takes a lot of repetitions and not all of those minutes are the most enjoyable bits of making music. On the whole, obviously, music is amazing. I play music every day for fun."



Mikey Shulman, one of the founders of AI music generator startup Suno, (right), and research scientist Christian Steinmetz, collaborate on creating a song, Jan. 13, 2026, in Cambridge, Mass. (AP)

AI poised to transform pediatric diagnosis and treatment

Gene, immunotherapies drive pediatric care improvements in Kuwait

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: President of the Pediatrics Society Dr. Abdullah Shamsah affirmed that the pediatrics field is witnessing rapid developments regionally and internationally, thanks to the advancements in gene, biological and immunotherapies, along with the expansion of the use of artificial intelligence technologies in modern medical practice.

In a press statement during the annual gathering of the Society recently, Shamsah stressed that the Society is active at the local, regional and international levels through its participation in medical conferences and seminars, as well as collaboration with international scientific bodies, most notably the International Pediatric Association, in addition to

the regional and European societies. He said this fosters the exchange of expertise and keeps abreast of the latest developments in the sub-specializations of pediatrics.

He pointed out that the global trend is increasingly leaning towards gene, biological and immunotherapeutic treatments, particularly in the treatment of cancer, blood disorders, immune system diseases, and some rare genetic diseases. He said these developments are considered a qualitative leap compared to traditional treatments.

He asserted that "technology is now an essential element of the healthcare system, with the introduction of artificial intelligence applications in early diagnosis and medical data analysis and their gradual implementation in pediatrics. We anticipate a significant leap in the use of artificial intelligence in pediatrics over the next five years."

On the most common childhood diseases in Kuwait, Shamsah revealed that local disease patterns remain unchanged, ranging from respiratory, digestive and immune system diseases to blood disorders and other seasonal illnesses. He added that respiratory infections increase in winter, while accidents and heat exhaustion rise during summer.

He pointed out that behavioral disorders are considered one of the biggest challenges in pediatrics today, witnessing a remarkable increase both globally and locally. He disclosed that autism spectrum disorder is at the forefront, with statistics indicating that it affects around three out of every 100 children globally and locally. He said this necessitates the improvement of early detection and intervention programs.

Regarding vaccinations, he confirmed that national immunization programs greatly contributed to reducing the spread

of many infectious diseases that posed a threat to children. He cited the global success of vaccines in eradicating or reducing serious diseases, such as polio and measles. He asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the vaccination culture globally, with some communities expressing concerns that led to a relative decline in the uptake of certain vaccines. He underscored the importance of the ongoing awareness campaigns and boosting public trust in scientifically sound preventive programs.

He stressed that pediatrics is a fundamental pillar of any advanced healthcare system, indicating that Kuwait is keen on developing this sector through the expansion of government hospitals and new healthcare projects, reflecting clear governmental support for improving the quality of healthcare in the country.

Plan sparks ethical concerns

FDA to offer staff rewards for speedy 'drug reviews'

WASHINGTON, Feb 28, (AP): The head of the Food and Drug Administration plans to start offering bonus payments to agency drug reviewers who complete their work ahead of schedule, the latest in a flurry of changes to longstanding norms and procedures.

FDA Commissioner Marty Makary described the effort as a pilot program during a staff presentation Thursday, saying the first quarterly bonus payments would start going out to employees around August. The Associated Press obtained slides and a recording of the presentation.

"My job as your commissioner is to be your advocate and to fight for you," Makary told FDA staffers, adding that getting approval for the payments took "some wrangling."

"If you don't like it, we can get rid of it, but usually everybody loves money," Makary said.

The plan raises a number of questions, including exactly how the payments will be distributed across large teams of staffers who typically contribute to drug reviews. Employees who are not directly involved in drug reviews - such as factory inspectors - are not eligible for the payments. The pilot also presents potential ethical dilemmas if FDA reviewers are seen as being rewarded for rushing steps needed to confirm drug safety and effectiveness.

Since the 1990s, the FDA has collected fees from drug companies to help pay for extra staffers to quickly review new prescription drugs and vaccines. Under the agreement with the industry, the FDA has timelines and metrics for completing each review. But the agency has never paid workers directly for meeting or exceeding

those goals.

The bonus program is intended "to recognize and reward staff who find ways to be more efficient delivering high-quality work activities that ultimately benefit patients," according to slides presented to FDA staff.

Senior FDA officials on the call said payments would be based on "weighted time savings" achieved by employees and their teams, as well as ratings-based "work quality and work complexity."

"This program values speed, but never at the expense of quality," states one of the slides.

The announcement comes as the agency loses drug review staff to retirements and resignations following broader layoffs and buy-outs across many other parts of the agency. Agency records show the FDA's drug and biologics centers - which oversee prescription drugs, vaccines and biotech drugs - have lost about 20% of their employees since President Donald Trump took office a year ago.

Additionally, some agency reviewers cannot work on certain projects because they are actively interviewing for jobs in the pharmaceutical industry.

The program could also negatively impact the public perception of the FDA, which has often been viewed as too closely aligned with the drug companies it regulates.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who oversees the agency, has described FDA staffers as "a sock puppet" of industry since becoming the nation's top health official last February.

About 70% of the FDA's drug program is financed by user-fee payments from drug companies submitting their products for review.



The Milky Way: A river of stars stretching across the night sky.

Milky Way galaxy: Mother of Stars and Arabs' glowing river

For ancient Arab travelers, the sky was a faithful guide, and a glowing river of stars stretching across the night, inspired wonder and held a special place in their imagination.

The Milky Way is the galaxy that contains our solar system and Earth. In Arabic, it was named for its resemblance to scattered straw and was also called the "Mother of Stars" because of its vast number of stars, some brighter than others.

The galaxy belongs to the spiral galaxies, and its age is estimated at approximately 13.2 billion years, consisting of four main arms, one of which contains our solar system, all extending around a luminous center.

It has a diameter of 120,000 light-years and contains approximately two hundred billion stars, distributed among clouds of gas and dust within its spiral structure.

Two nearby galactic clouds, the Large and Small Magellanic Clouds, orbit the Milky Way and are visible to

the naked eye from near the equator.

At the heart of this vast structure lies a colossal entity called a supermassive black hole, with a mass exceeding four million solar masses.

Nearby resides another supermassive black hole with a mass of approximately one hundred thousand solar masses.

In recent astronomical developments, a 2023 study revealed that the Milky Way's mass is four to five times less than previously thought.

The galaxy's mass was reassessed and estimated at approximately 200 billion times the mass of the Sun, five times less than previous estimates.

Last year, astronomers were able to reveal the turbulent dynamic environment surrounding the supermassive black hole at the galaxy's center, observing frequent flashes of light interspersed with powerful bursts of energy. (KUNA)

GPs bonuses

UAE moves to end drug monopolies

ABU DHABI, Feb 28, (Agencies): The United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Tuesday introduced a new mechanism requiring pharmaceutical companies to appoint multiple agents for each medical product distributed in the country in a bid to prevent monopolies and strengthen drug security.

The new mechanism, announced by the Emirates Drug Establishment (EDE), replaces the previous single-agent model, seeking to ensure the sustainable availability of medicine and reduce the risk of supply disruptions during emergencies and crises. It is the first of its kind in the UAE healthcare sector.

Saeed bin Mubarak Al Hajeri, Minister of State and Chairman of the Board of Directors of EDE, said that the mechanism is part of efforts to develop a resilient national pharmaceutical ecosystem, enhance supply chain diversification and protect public health.

EDE Director General Fatima Al Kaabi said the move would improve distribution efficiency, support market stability, and strengthen the country's global competitiveness in the pharmaceutical sector.

Weight-loss drugs: England announced on Tuesday that General Practices (GPs) will be offered GBP 3,000 bonuses annually for prescribing patients weight loss drugs to counter "rogue prescribers".

In a statement, Health Secretary Wes Streeting said, "Outside the NHS, we've seen those who can spare the cash buying privately, and the proliferation of rogue prescribers peddling dangerous unlicensed drugs that are putting patients at risk."

He affirmed, "I'm determined that access should be based on need, not ability to pay, adding, "Investing in general practice will help bring this modern medicine to the many, not just the few, and help shift the focus of the NHS from treatment to prevention."

Electrolyte drinks often unnecessary for most people

When and why electrolyte supplements can help

NASHVILLE, Tenn., Feb 28, (AP): Social media is filled with influencers rating electrolyte supplements or even telling followers how to make their own. But experts say many of the claims about the health benefits of these drinks need to be taken with a grain of salt.

Electrolytes are electrically charged substances that help regulate chemical reactions in the body. In the context of hydration, they balance fluid levels inside and outside of cells, said Julia Zumpano, a registered dietitian at the Cleveland Clinic.

We lose some electrolytes through sweat, primarily sodium chloride - which is what is in table salt. Drinking too much plain water when sweating very heavily can dilute the salt in your body even further, throwing things out of balance. Electrolyte drinks and powders are meant to hydrate and replace the lost salt. They often contain other electrolytes like potassium and magnesium. Many also contain some form of sugar.

In general, the kidneys in a healthy person do an excellent job of keeping our electrolytes in balance. Extras simply come out in your urine, said Vanderbilt University nephrologist Hunter Huston, who also consults for a UK-based company that provides electrolyte replacement plans for endurance athletes.

Taking "an electrolyte-enriched drink, just for health purposes, probably isn't doing much," he said.

Today "rapid hydration" and "advanced hydration" drinks are taking off, but who actually benefits from them and when? It was 1965 at the University of Florida and then-assistant Gators football Coach Dwayne Douglas had something on his mind. As Robert Cade, the school's first kidney researcher, later explained, Douglas asked him, "Doctor, why don't football players wee-wee after a game?"

"That question changed our lives," Cade said.

The obvious answer was that the football players couldn't urinate because they were losing so much fluid through sweat. Cade's research team determined a player could lose as much as 18 pounds (8.16 kilograms) during a game. But it wasn't just water the players were losing. They were sweating away sodi-



Electrolyte supplements in Nashville, Tenn., on Tuesday, Feb. 24. (AP)

um and chloride and losing both plasma volume and blood volume. The losses were sapping their strength and stamina.

Cade mixed up a briny solution to replace the water and salt players were losing. Sugar would help the gut absorb the sodium. The first batch made him vomit. Some lemon juice made it taste a little better. It still wasn't delicious, but soon the team's performance improvement could not be ignored - especially in the second half of games when the opposite team's players were starting to wilt in the Florida heat and humidity.

Cade, who died in 2007, said he never dreamed Gatorade would be purchased by regular consumers.

While it seems that everyone is drinking electrolyte supplements these days, not everyone actually needs them.

A good rule of thumb is that if you are exercising for less than two hours, plain water is probably fine, said Vanderbilt's Huston. The average healthy person can tolerate losing around 2% of their body weight in sweat before they really start to feel it, he said. "That's increased thirst, it's fatigue, it cramping."

Everyone is different, though. Some people sweat very heavily or have sweat that is especially salty.

In the world of extreme sports like ultramarathons,

athletes often get professional help to test how much they sweat and get a tailored nutrition plan.

"Most folks that are exercising, that are, say, doing a marathon, are gonna be way past that two hours, and it does then make sense to be thinking about, 'What's going to be my fluid and electrolyte replacement plan?'" Huston said.

Darren Rovell has followed the rise of sports drinks from a niche market to the mainstream. He is the author of "First in Thirst: How Gatorade Turned the Science of Sweat Into a Cultural Phenomenon" and was an investor in the sports drink Bodyarmor.

When he was a runner in high school, he said, they were given Gatorade to drink and told the reason it tasted bad was because it was good for you. "And then at some point in the nineties, it got to be sugary." After PepsiCo purchased the brand in 2001, "that really became the first time where you see Gatorade everywhere in front of your face including in a pizza place, and it starts to be, 'OK. Is this just a different type of soda?'"

Rovell says electrolyte brands market the idea that drinking their products will either make you an athlete or, if you already are an athlete, give you a performance edge.

"It all starts in the aspiration of being better, but you know we do have to check ourselves," he said.

The supplements out today have an incredibly wide variety of electrolyte concentrations, said Patrick Burns, who practices emergency medicine at Stanford Health Care and occasionally runs in ultramarathons. With some having five times the sodium of others, consumers should not assume all supplements are the same.

Burns also warned that people should be careful about supplementing potassium, because it can be dangerous in large amounts.

He noted that many brands now offer zero sugar varieties, even though the glucose in sugar is what allows for rapid absorption of the sodium.

"They're not internally consistent, at all, with what they're trying to sell you," he said. "For optimal absorption, you need some sugar in with your salt."

Botulism outbreak ends

Target will stop selling cereals with synthetic colors by end of May

NEW YORK, Feb 28, (AP): Target will stop selling its entire assortment of cereal with certified synthetic colors by the end of May. The move, announced Friday, underscores the acknowledgment that American consumers and the US government under President Donald Trump are paying attention to what goes into packaged foods.

The Minneapolis-based discounter said it had been phasing out synthetic colors in cereals for several years, and currently nearly 85% of its cereal sales already come from products made without certified synthetic dyes. Some of the artificial food dyes detailed by Target are being reviewed by US Food and Drug Administration like Red No. 40, Yellow No. 5 and 6 and Blue No. 1.

Target said that it has worked with national brands and its private brands to reformulate products as needed. Some

cereals will have updated formulations, and many others already meet its new cereal assortment standard for no certified synthetic colors, the retailer said. "We know consumers are increasingly prioritizing healthier lifestyles, and we're moving quickly to evolve our offerings to meet their needs," said Cara Sylvester, Target's executive vice president and chief merchandising officer, in a statement.

Target said that reformulating its cereal line builds on the foundation Target established in 2019 with the launch of its store label food brand Good & Gather, which is made without artificial flavors and sweeteners, synthetic colors or high fructose corn syrup. The brand has more than 2,500 products across dairy, produce, ready made pastas meat as well as baby and toddler food.

In recent months, major food companies such as Kraft

Heinz, Nestle and Conagra Brands have pledged to eliminate petroleum-based synthetic dyes in coming years.

Also:

ATLANTA: A rare outbreak of infant botulism that sickened dozens of babies who drank recalled ByHeart formula is over, with no new cases reported since mid-December, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday.

In all, 48 babies were sickened since 2023. That's actually down from the previous case count, because three infants were ultimately diagnosed with other illnesses not tied to botulism, health officials said. All of the children who got sick were hospitalized. No deaths have been reported.

It's still unclear exactly how, when or where the organic,

whole-milk powdered baby formula became contaminated with the type of bacteria that can cause serious illness, paralysis and death in children younger than 1, health officials added.

Most of the cases had occurred since August, when officials at California's Infant Botulism Treatment and Prevention program detected an alarming rise in reports of the illness in babies who consumed ByHeart formula.

ByHeart, based in New York, initially recalled two lots of formula in early November, but the company expanded the recall to all products days later. Federal health officials later said they could not rule out contamination of products made since the company first launched in March 2022. Stores nationwide pulled the product, which was advertised as having "next-to-breast milk benefits."



NASA's Artemis II SLS (Space Launch System) moon rocket with the Orion spacecraft ends a ten-hour journey from the launch pad as it enters the Vehicle Assembly Building at the Kennedy Space Center, Wednesday, Feb. 25, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP)

NASA revamps Artemis moon program after Apollo model

NEW YORK, Feb 28, (AP): NASA said Friday it's revamping its Artemis moon exploration program to make it more like the fast-paced Apollo program half a century ago, adding an extra practice flight before attempting a high-risk lunar landing with a crew in two years.

The overhaul in the flight lineup came just two days after NASA's new moon rocket returned to its hangar for more repairs, and a safety panel warned the space agency to scale back its overly ambitious goals for humanity's first lunar landing since 1972.

Artemis II, a lunar fly-around by four astronauts, is off until at least April because of rocket problems.

The follow-up mission, Artemis III, had been targeting a landing near the moon's south pole by another pair of

astronauts in about three years. But with long gaps between flights and concern growing over the readiness of a lunar lander and moonwalking suits, NASA's new administrator Jared Isaacman announced that mission would instead focus on launching a lunar lander into orbit around Earth in 2027 for docking practice by astronauts flying in an Orion capsule.

The new plan calls for a moon landing - potentially even two moon landings - by astronauts in 2028.

"Everybody agrees. This is the only way forward," Isaacman said.

The hydrogen fuel leaks and helium flow problems that struck the Space Launch System rocket on the pad at NASA's Kennedy Space Center earlier this month had also plagued the first Artemis test flight without a crew in 2022.

CONADE trying to convince World Aquatics to move the meet to another city in Mexico

FIFA will visit Mexico to assess World Cup security and mobility: Sheinbaum

MEXICO CITY, Feb 28, (AP) — FIFA representatives will visit Mexico soon to assess security and mobility issues for the World Cup, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said.

The country's ability to co-host the World Cup has been under scrutiny this week following the violence that erupted after the army killed powerful drug lord Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes on Sunday.

The operation and its violent repercussions claimed the lives of 70 people. Cartel members set cars on fire to block streets in states across the country, particularly in Jalisco state, among them Guadalajara which is scheduled to host four World Cup matches.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino told Sheinbaum in a phone call on Thursday that he has "full confidence" in Mexico as a World Cup host.

Sheinbaum backed that up on Friday in her daily briefing.

"He assured me that the World Cup would be held in our country," she said. "We agreed that a FIFA team would definitely come to review several issues. We've been working on this for a long time but the issue of security is particularly important, of course."

Sheinbaum did not provide dates of the visit.

"I told him (Infantino) that Sunday was a special situation and that we have returned to normal, with all the safety measures that have been in place for some time now, so they can rest assured," she said.

Even though Sheinbaum said things were going back to normal, security concerns for Guadalajara remained. World Aquatics canceled a Diving World Cup scheduled for next week near Guadalajara.

Sheinbaum said the government sports authority CONADE was trying to convince World Aquatics to move the meet to another city in Mexico.

"We're working with them to try and get this international tournament back," the president added. "We still have faith that we can get this tournament back."

In regard to mobility, the three cities in Mexico hosting World Cup matches were still trying to resolve issues almost 100 days before the first match on June 11 at Azteca Stadium.

In Mexico City, work was ongoing to improve a light rail line that was the fastest way to head toward Azteca. In Monterrey, the subway train was still being built. The Guadalajara stadium lacks public transportation although it boasts a large open parking lot.

"(Infantino) also asked me to look at the issue of traffic in the three cities in order to guarantee the mobility of all those who will be attending the stadiums and so on, among other issues that we are working on," Sheinbaum said.

'A deal is needed by March 10'

WNBA union demands revenue share, improved housing benefits

NEW YORK, Feb 28, (AP) — The WNBA players' union sent a counterproposal to the league for a new collective bargaining agreement that included some concessions on revenue sharing and housing — two key areas on which the sides differ — according to a person familiar with the negotiations.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the negotiations.

The union's proposal came a week after it received one from the league. The WNBA told the union Monday during a virtual negotiating session that it needs to get a deal in place by March 10 to start the season on time, another person familiar with the discussions told the AP. That person spoke on condition of anonymity Monday because of the sensitive nature of the negotiations.

In the new proposal, the union is asking for 26% of the gross revenue — revenue before expenses — with the salary cap for teams around \$9.5

million in the first year. That number is unchanged from the union's previous offer. The revenue sharing is down from 27.5% from the union's proposal from 10 days ago.

The WNBA had offered more than 70% of net revenue in its last proposal. That would be their take of the profits after expenses are paid. Those expenses would include upgraded facilities, charter flights, five-star hotels, medical services, security and arenas.

The union also tweaked its housing offer. The union is still asking teams to provide housing for all players in the first few years of the deal, but in the latter part of the CBA teams wouldn't have to provide housing for players making at least 75% of the maximum salary.

The league had offered that its teams would pay for all housing this season. Then franchises would pay for housing for players on minimum salary contracts as well as rookies in their first season, the person said.

They'd also pay for the housing of the two developmental players that teams would be allowed to have.

Front Office Sports was the first to report the counterproposal.

If a labor deal is agreed to by March 10, it probably would be signed by the end of the month. Under that timeline, the expansion draft for new franchises in Portland and Toronto would be held sometime between April 1-6, according to a timetable obtained by the AP.

Free agent qualifying offers, including franchise player tags, would be sent out April 7-8. Teams would then have three days to negotiate with the more than 80% of players who are free agents. The signing period would take place from April 12-18.

Training camps would open the next day and the season would be able to start on May 8.

The league and the players have been unable to reach a new collective bargaining agreement since the union opted out of the previous deal, which expired last year.



In this file photo, New York Liberty's Kara Braxton walks on the court at the end Game 1 of an opening-round WNBA basketball playoff series against Connecticut in Uncasville, Conn. (AP)

Australians Green and Lee move into lead after 3 rounds of LPGA Singapore

SINGAPORE, Feb 28, (AP) — Australians Hannah Green and Minjee Lee moved to the top of the leaderboard Saturday to lead by one stroke after three rounds of the HSBC Women's World Championship.

Green, the 2019 Women's PGA Championship winner and who won the Singapore tournament in 2024, shot a 4-under 68 and three-time major winner Lee 69 to post three-round totals of 11-under 205 at the Sentosa Golf Club.

American Angel Yin (68) and Haeran Ryu (70) of South Korea were tied for third in the LPGA tournament.

With the final group on the eighth hole, six players were tied for the lead at 9-under. Yin took the lead for first time with a birdie from off the green on the 10th, displacing her fellow American Austin Kim, who had led after the first two rounds.

Kim had back-to-back bogeys on the seventh and eighth to fall out of the lead, but it could have been worse. After seeing her ball plugged in hazard off the green on the eighth hole and having to return to the fairway to hit her fifth shot, she sank a 20-foot putt for bogey to minimize the damage.

Kim finished with a 73 and was tied for sixth at 8-under, three behind Green and Lee.

"Definitely, there are a lot of bird-

ies to be made but it's very easy to make bogey," Green said. "So I think just limiting as many of those as possible."

"I've been hitting the ball into the greens, so if I can continue to do that, and even though I'm playing with Minjee, we are good friends, I don't want to get too caught up in what her scores are."

Yin said the margins were close in the third round.

"Good golf and good luck. Honestly there's nothing much you can do to it," Yin said. "There's a lot of instances today where it was like one hole, I made this unbelievable up-and-down. That's skill and luck to me. So get lucky and get good."

Lee won her first major in 2021 at the Evian Championship, her second at the U.S. Women's Open in 2022 and her third at last year's Women's PGA Championship.

Top-ranked Jeeno Thitikul, who won last week's tournament in her native Thailand, shot 70 Saturday that left her at 3-under. She was tied with defending champion Lydia Ko and Brooke Henderson, who each shot 71, all eight strokes behind the leading Australians.

The 72-player, no-cut tournament is the second of three stops on the LPGA's early year Asian swing, with the final one next week at Hainan Island, China.



Lee Mi-hyang, of South Korea tees off during the HSBC Women's World Championship at Sentosa Golf Club in Singapore. (AP)

Gilgeous-Alexander scores 36 in return, tempers flare as OKC top Nuggets in OT



Memphis Grizzlies guard Cam Spencer (24) looks to shoot during an NBA basketball game against the Dallas Mavericks in Dallas. (AP)

OKLAHOMA CITY, Feb 28, (AP) — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 36 points in his return after missing nine games with an abdominal strain and the Oklahoma City Thunder defeated the Denver Nuggets 127-121 in overtime in a testy matchup that featured multiple technical fouls and an ejection.

Gilgeous-Alexander, the reigning MVP, didn't play in overtime, but the Thunder still pulled through in the extra period.

Denver's Nikola Jokic, who got into an altercation with Oklahoma City's Lu Dort in the fourth quarter, had 23 points, 17 rebounds and 14 assists. Dort was ejected for a Flagrant 2 foul.

Nuggets guard Jamal Murray, listed as questionable with an illness before the game, led the Nuggets with 39 points.

Gilgeous-Alexander started and drew loud applause when his name was announced in pregame introductions. His first basket came on a driving layup two minutes into the game.

The teams are very familiar with each other — the Thunder defeated the Nuggets 4-3 in the Western Conference semifinals last year. The Thunder won the first two meetings this season and they play twice more.

This matchup was physical from the start. Gilgeous-Alexander was called for an early technical because he threw the ball at Jokic, who made contact with him after play stopped. Denver's bench was called for a technical in the third quarter. There was plenty of talking and shoving throughout.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored 18 points in the first half, but Denver led 59-50 after making 11 of 20 3-pointers before the break.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored 14 points in the third quarter to help the Thunder chip away, but the Nuggets took an 83-77 lead into the fourth.

The Thunder started off hot in the fourth quarter, and Dort's 3-pointer finally put Oklahoma City up 86-85.

A few minutes later, Dort was ejected for a hard foul against Jokic that led to a scum near midcourt and offsetting technicals on Jokic and Oklahoma

Pistons outlast short-handed Cavaliers



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, left, drives past Denver Nuggets guard Julian Strawther, right, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City. (AP)

City's Jaylin Williams.

Pistons 122, Cavaliers 119, OT

In Detroit, Jalen Duren had 33 points and 16 rebounds and the Detroit Pistons outlasted the short-handed Cleveland Cavaliers in a game that was delayed for 18 minutes in the third quarter because of a blaring horn.

During a timeout with Detroit up 65-64, a power surge caused the overhead scoreboard to malfunction, with the horn remaining on after signaling the teams to return to the floor. Eventually, the scoreboard was shut down to stop the horn and a manual airhorn was used when play resumed.

Cade Cunningham had 25 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists for East-leading Detroit before fouling out.

Cleveland — which will host Detroit on Tuesday night — led by nine points with 2:44 left in regulation, and Cunningham fouled out with 1:56 to play, but the Pistons outscored the Cavaliers 16-7 to force overtime.

With Cleveland up 114-111 with 4.7 seconds left in regulation, Jaylon Tyson tried to intentionally foul Daniss Jenkins near halfcourt, but Jenkins was able to shoot and draw three free throws that he made.

In overtime, Cleveland's Evan Mobley missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Jarrett Allen had 25 points and nine rebounds for Cleveland, which played its second straight game without James Harden (thumb) and Donovan Mitchell (groin). Mobley had 23 points and 12 rebounds, and Sam Merrill added 20

points.

Because of the delay and overtime, the game lasted 3 hours, 22 minutes.

Celtics 148, Nets 111

In Boston, Jaylen Brown had 28 points, nine assists and seven rebounds and the Boston Celtics rolled past the Brooklyn Nets.

Nikola Vucevic finished with 28 points and 11 rebounds for his third double-double since joining the Celtics. Payton Pritchard added 22 points for Boston, which has won five of six since returning from the All-Star break.

The Celtics shot a season-high 66.7% from the field and connected on 22 3-pointers. They also got 77 points from their bench.

Michael Porter Jr. finished with 18 points for Brooklyn, which has lost seven straight games.

The Celtics took control in the third quarter, outscoring the Nets 43-26. Brooklyn managed only seven points over the final 6:23 of the period.

Boston shot 15 of 19 from the field with 12 assists in the pivotal quarter and connected 5 of 7 attempts from the 3-point line Boston's lead grew to as many as 41 points in the fourth.

The Celtics shot 62% from the field (24 of 39) and 60% from the 3-point line (12 of 20), yet only led 66-57 at halftime.

The Nets were able to stay close thanks to eighth Boston turnovers, which Brooklyn turned into 12 points. The Celtics had only four turnovers

in the second half.

Knicks 127, Bucks 98

In Milwaukee, Jalen Brunson scored 27 points and OG Anunoby added 24 as the New York Knicks routed the Milwaukee Bucks.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 17 points and 13 rebounds, Landry Shamet added 15 points, Josh Hart finished with 12 and Mikal Bridges and Mohamed Diawara each had 10 for the Knicks, who shot 21 for 42 from 3-point distance.

Myles Turner had 18 of his 19 points in the first half, Kyle Kuzma scored 17, Bobby Portis 14 and Ryan Rollins 13 to pace the Bucks. Milwaukee had won eight of 10 coming in and was playing its fifth game in eight days, including four in a row at home. Kevin Porter Jr. chipped 11 points and 10 assists.

The Bucks entered the game as one of the hottest offensive teams in the league, but it was the Knicks who controlled play early.

New York jumped out to a 38-30 lead after one quarter fueled by 22 points from Brunson, the most by a New York player in any quarter this season. Brunson made 9 of 10 shots, including all three 3-pointers he attempted.

Grizzlies 124, Mavericks 105

In Dallas, Cam Spencer scored 25 points off the bench and Olivier-Maxence Prosper had 16 points and 10 rebounds to lead the Memphis Grizzlies to a 124-105 victory over the Dallas Mavericks. Scotty Pippen Jr. added 15 points and Jaylen Wells and GG Jackson each had 12 to help Memphis snap a three-game skid.

The Grizzlies, who had lost seven of their previous eight, led the entire game and won despite being short-handed with star guard Ja Morant out for a 16th consecutive game with an injured left elbow, and Zach Edey (ankle) and Cedric Coward (knee) also sidelined.

Taj Gibson, signed by Memphis on Thursday to help deal with the absences, wasn't active.

Brandon Williams scored 16 points and had eight rebounds to lead the Mavericks, who have lost seven straight at home. Daniel Gafford added 14 points, Dwight Powell had 13 points and 11 rebounds and Max Christie also scored 13 points.

Rookie Cooper Flagg missed his sixth straight game with a sprained foot.

Hinton hits game-winner as Harvard takes down Princeton

PRINCETON, N.J., Feb 28, (AP) — Robert Hinton scored 15 points, including a go-ahead jumper in the lane with 3.1 seconds left, and Harvard beat Princeton 58-56 on Friday night for its seventh straight road victory.

Hinton shot 7 for 18 from the field for the Crimson (16-10, 9-3 Ivy League). Tey Barbour added 14 points while going 5 of 13 (4 for 11 from 3-point range). Ben Eisendrath shot 5 for 12, including 0 for 6 from beyond the arc to finish with 11 points.

Dalen Davis led the way for the Tigers (8-19, 4-8) with 18 points. Princeton also got 15 points from Jackson Hicke.

Jake Fiegen scored 17 points, including a go-ahead 3-pointer with one second left, and Cornell beat Yale 72-69.

Fiegen also had eight rebounds for the Big Red (13-12, 6-6 Ivy League). Cooper Noard scored 16

points while shooting 6 for 16, including 4 for 12 from beyond the arc, and added six rebounds. Josh Baldwin went 4 of 5 from the field (3 for 4 from 3-point range) to finish with 13 points, while adding six rebounds.

Casey Simmons, Isaac Celislar and Nick Townsend led the way for the Bulldogs (21-5, 9-3) with 14 points apiece. The loss snapped the Bulldogs' five-game winning streak.

Javon Bennett scored 25 points to lead Dayton and Amael L'Etang made two free throws with 17 seconds left as the Flyers took down George Washington 68-66.

Bennett shot 8 of 13 from the field, including 6 for 9 from 3-point range, and went 3 for 4 from the line for the Flyers (20-9, 11-5 Atlantic 10 Conference). Deshayne Montgomery added 11 points while going 4 of 8 from the field. L'Etang had 10 points and shot 2

of 7 from the field and 6 of 6 from the free-throw line.

Rafael Castro led the way for the Revolutionaries (16-13, 7-9) with 16 points and six rebounds. George Washington also got 15 points and seven rebounds from Trey Autry. Jean Aranguren finished with 12 points, six rebounds, five assists and four steals.

Dayton went into the half ahead of George Washington 34-31. Bennett scored 14 points in the half. Bennett scored 11 points in the second half.

TJ Power had 38 points and 12 rebounds to lead Pennsylvania past Dartmouth 80-71.

Michael Zanon scored 10 points, going 3 of 11 from the floor for the Quakers (14-11, 7-5 Ivy League).

Brandon Mitchell-Day finished with 23 points and eight rebounds for the Big Green (11-14, 5-7). Dartmouth also got 18 points and two steals from Cameron McNamee.

Ahmed comes in from the cold to spark England win

Poms dent NZ hopes of reaching semis

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, Feb 28, (AP): England couldn't guarantee Rehan Ahmed will make another appearance in the Twenty20 World Cup after an inspirational debut.

Ahmed played a starring role in his first World Cup match as England dented New Zealand hopes of reaching the semi-finals after a thrilling comeback win by four wickets in the Super Eights.

Ahmed dismissed Rachin Ravindra and Cole McClench to help restrict New Zealand to 159-7, then launched England's fightback with a stunning six off the second ball he faced, in the 18th over.

England was out of the match until Ahmed's six over long-on inspired partner Will Jacks, and they blasted an unbeaten 44 runs in 16 balls for England to win with three balls remaining.

Ahmed was 19 not out off seven balls and Jacks 32 not out off 18, and full of praise for his teammate who was batting for just the ninth time in a T20 for England.

"Rehan played a brilliant innings," Jacks said. "Everyone who came out on that pitch struggled and it took time to get the pace of it, how slow it was, but that six he hit second ball off Glenn Phillips just upped the ante and put them on the back foot."

"I was then able to just play off him there. The game was laid out there for us with the field and the conditions so we tried to utilise that."

England had used only 12 men in its six World Cup matches, playing the same XI for five straight games until Friday when Ahmed, a spin bowling allrounder, replaced Jamie Overton, a fast bowler. The change was dictated by a used, slow pitch.

The 21-year-old Ahmed has mainly been an understudy to Adil Rashid while making landmark appearances. He was the youngest man to debut for England in tests in 2022, and the same in ODIs and T20s the next year.

Asked whether Ahmed will stay in the XI for the semifinal next week, likely in Mumbai, captain Harry Brook said, "There's conversations to be had. We said from the start of the competition we're going to select on conditions. We thought today was the perfect opportunity to bring him in and he did an amazing job."



England's Rehan Ahmed plays a shot during the T20 World Cup cricket match between England and New Zealand in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP)

"We've seen what Rehan can do in the nets. He played beautifully and took the game away from them." Teammate Tom Banton was also impressed.

"I played with him last year at Trent Rockets. I've seen the journey he's come on," Banton said. "He's not been playing which hasn't been easy but to make an impact like that ..."

Espi late show gives Levante priceless victory over Alaves

Bottom club Wolverhampton stuns high-flying Villa

WOLVERHAMPTON, England, Feb 28, (AP): João Gomes scored his first Premier League goal of the season and Rodrigo Gomes added a second in stoppage time to give bottom club Wolverhampton a shock 2-0 win over high-flying Aston Villa.

It was only the second win in the league for a club that remains six points adrift at the bottom of the table and is almost certain to be relegated.

The result was a bitter blow to Villa's Champions League aspirations and a slap in the face for coach Unai Emery, who was bidding to record his 100th victory in charge of the Birmingham club.

Both sides struggled in a four first half but Wolves seized the initiative 16 minutes into the second period when Gomes gave it a surprise lead.

Adam Armstrong deftly cushioned a long pass right into the path of the onrushing Gomes and his superbly struck shot gave Emiliano Martínez no chance.

Villa pushed forward as the game went on and it was caught out in stoppage time when Wolves doubled its lead on the break, Rodrigo Gomes doing the damage.

Villa has won only one of its last five league games. The result leaves it 10 points behind leader Arsenal and five behind second-placed Manchester City, having played a game more than both.

Its next two matches are against the clubs immediately below it in the table, Chelsea and Manchester United.

□ □ □

Carlos Espi scored twice in the dying minutes to give Levante a 2-0 win over Alaves and a vital three points in its fight to avoid relegation from La Liga.

Espi, who came through the youth ranks at the Valencia-based



Aston Villa's Morgan Rogers, left, and Wolverhampton Wanderers' Toti Gomes battle for the ball during their English Premier League soccer match in Wolverhampton, England. (AP)

club, had scored only once all season but tripled his tally with a blistering late show against an Alaves side that played the last half hour with 10 men after Victor Parada was sent off.

Espi's deflected shot in the 88th minute put Levante ahead and he then sparked jubilant scenes with almost the last kick of the game when his assured finish rounded off a counterattack.

"This has been one of my greatest nights," the 20-year old told broadcaster DAZN. "It's incredible."

The result snapped a four-game losing streak for the home side. It remained second from bottom of La Liga but has cut the gap with

the fourth bottom club to four points.

Alaves was 14th but only three points clear of the relegation zone.

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Gaetano Oristanio came on at halftime and scored a late equalizer for Parma against Cagliari in a hard-fought 1-1 home draw in Serie A.

Oristanio's goal seven minutes from time earned Parma a point but its poor home form continued. It has won only two of its last 12 home games and has not won two in a row at Stadio Ennio Tardini since January 2020.

Still, it has taken 10 points from its last 12 and moves into 11th place, a point behind Lazio and a

point ahead of Udinese.

Michael Folorunsho put Cagliari ahead 18 minutes into the second half with a stunning 30-meter strike.

The midfielder on loan from Napoli missed the last 10 games through injury and was introduced just after the hour mark. Two minutes later, he spied Parma goalkeeper Edoardo Corvi off his line and his dipping shot from near the right touchline flew over Corvi's head and into the far corner of the net.

The goal was Cagliari's first since January but leaves it without a win in four games. It sits in 13th spot, six points above the relegation zone.

Aicher dominates super-G, fight for World Cup discipline title heats up

SOLDEU, Andorra, Feb 28, (AP): Emma Aicher dominated the first women's super-G since the Olympics to earn her fifth career World Cup win Saturday as the fight for the season discipline title got fresh impetus.

The German allrounder posted the fastest split times in the first two sections of the Aliga course and became the first skier with multiple super-G wins this season.

"Feels pretty good, to be honest. I had really fun skiing today," said Aicher, who won silver medals in the downhill and the team combined but didn't finish the super-G at the Milan Cortina Games this month.

Aicher finished 0.88 seconds ahead of Alice Robinson of New Zealand. Robinson closed the gap to World Cup super-G leader Sofia Goggia to 20 points with three events left, including one on Sunday on the same hill.

The Italian came 1.32 seconds behind Aicher in sixth.

Robinson, who won the season-opening super-G in Switzerland last December, said she felt "really proud of myself for getting the most out of the sections I knew I could ski fast. It's really nice to be back on the podium."

Corinne Suter, who won Friday's downhill, trailed by 0.98 in third and was the last skier to finish within a second of Aicher's winning time.

Racing in perfect sunny conditions, Aicher had a near-flawless run on the challenging course, where only 37 of the 55 starters managed to complete their run.

Aicher celebrated by pumping her fist after crossing the finish line with a commanding lead, and said she was surprised by her huge advantage of nearly nine-tenths of a second.



Germany's Emma Aicher speeds down the course during a women's World Cup super-G race, in Soldeu, Andorra. (AP)

"It felt good at the top, the flat part. The steep part, the super-G part where the turns were, I mean, it was OK but not ideal," said the German, whose win saw her overtake Lindsey Vonn into third place in the super-G standings, 96 points behind Goggia.

Vonn is out since badly injuring her left leg in a frightening crash in the Olympic downhill.

Two-time Olympic champion Federica Brignone was more than two seconds off the lead.

The Italian, who returned from a broken left leg just before the Milan Cortina Games and then won gold in super-G and giant slalom, skipped Friday's downhill and seemed to struggle with landing the many jumps in the course.

Saturday's race was interrupted following a nasty crash from Ricarda Haaser, who was transported off the hill on a rescue sled. The Austrian ski federation said Haaser fractured the tibial plateau in her left knee and was set to travel back to Austria on Saturday for treatment.

Augsburg goes record-equaling eight straight games unbeaten at home

Lens miss chance to top after draw with in-form Strasbourg

STRASBOURG, France, Feb 28, (AP): Lens missed a chance to top Ligue 1 after it fought back from a goal down to draw at Strasbourg 1-1.

Argentine striker Joaquin Panichelli scored for the third game in a row to put the home side ahead after 18 minutes at Stade de la Meinau.

Panichelli's 14th goal of the season tied him with Mason Greenwood at the top of the Ligue 1 goalscoring chart.

Lens fought back to equalize 17 minutes into the second half through Mamadou Sangare. A corner kick was cleared to Sangare's feet and his first-time drive flew through a forest of legs and into the bottom corner.

It was only the second draw in the league for Lens, which was the better team in the second half but found Strasbourg goalkeeper Mike Pendens in top form.

Strasbourg, meanwhile, climbed into seventh. It has lost only two of its last 14 matches in all competitions.

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Rodrigo Ribeiro scored for

the second game in a row and Alexis Claude-Maurice added a second with the last kick of the game as Augsburg beat Cologne 2-0 in the Bundesliga.

Six days after he scored in a

3-2 win over Wolfsburg. Ribeiro's cute backheel from a cut-back by U.S. defender Noahkai Banks broke the deadlock in the 55th minute.

Claude-Maurice made sure of

the win deep in stoppage time when, with all of the Cologne players in the opposition box for a last-gasp corner, he charged forward and rolled the ball into the empty net.

Augsburg's fifth win in six games left it in ninth place, tied on points with Eintracht Frankfurt, the team above it.

Cologne was missing four players with muscle injuries, a rash of absences that coach Lukas Kwasiuk said was the worst he had ever faced.

The visitor was the more physical of the two sides in a hard-fought first half and was unfortunate not to go in a goal up at the break after Eric Martel's header came back off the crossbar.

But Augsburg - wearing a one-off shirt designed to highlight the city's history - took its chances in the second half as it roared to a club-record-equaling eight consecutive matches unbeaten at home in the Bundesliga.

Cologne has won only one of its last six league games and remained in 12th place.



Augsburg's Robin Fellhauer, right, and Cologne's Said El Mala in action during the German Bundesliga soccer match between FC Augsburg and 1. FC Cologne in Augsburg, Germany. (AP)

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England's Jacob Bethell takes the catch to get dismissed New Zealand's Finn Allen during the T20 World Cup cricket match between England and New Zealand in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (AP) — See Page 15

Sports

Kuwait Club wins 4th Super Cup



Kuwait Club captain hoists the trophy as players celebrate on the podium with officials.

Al-Salmiya claims third place

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

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Kuwait Club was crowned champion of the sixth edition of the Handball Super Cup, securing the title for the fourth time in club history after a 39-33 victory over Burgan at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Indoor Sports Complex.

Al-Salmiya claimed third place with a 36-35

win over Al-Qadisiya in extra time, following a 29-29 draw at the end of regulation.

The medal ceremony was attended by Acting Handball Federation President Shabib Al-Hajri, Secretary General Qaed Al-Adwani, Board Member Talal Al-Otaibi, Kuwait Club President Khaled Al-Ghanem, and Burgan Club President Anwar Al-Otaibi. The officials presented medals to the top three finishers and handed the championship trophy to Kuwait Club captain Abdullah Al-Khamees.

Kuwait Club continues its march toward a

potential 14th consecutive league title, once again confirming its dominance over domestic handball. The team has controlled most local competitions in recent years in what has become an unprecedented era of success.

Powered by Saif Al-Adwani, Saleh Al-Mousawi, and captain Abdullah Al-Khamees, Kuwait Club controlled large stretches of the final. With strong support from Montenegrin professional Vladan and Qatari star Frankis Marzo, the team sealed a six-goal victory to lift the Super Cup trophy.

Kuwait Club and Burgan secure straight-set wins

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Kuwait Club cruised to a 3-0 victory over Al-Arabi in the ninth-round clash of the Volleyball League, while Burgan recorded an identical 3-0 win against Al-Yarmouk.

The result lifted Kuwait Club to 26 points at the top of the standings, as Al-Arabi remained fifth with 15 points. Burgan moved up to sixth place with 14 points, while Al-Yarmouk stayed eighth on six points.

According to the league format, teams compete in a single-round preliminary stage before the top six

advances to the Premier Division. In the final phase, teams play three rounds, with the side achieving the most victories crowned champion. The team finishing first in the preliminary stage is granted an additional win as an advantage in the next round.

Kuwait Club, Al-Qadisiya, Kazma, Al-Sulaibikhat, Al-Arabi, and Burgan have officially qualified for the Premier Division. Meanwhile, Al-Shabab, Al-Yarmouk, Al-Nasr, and Al-Sahel will compete in the First Division.



Kuwait Club player goes for a spike as rivals defend.

Swiss sweep first men's race since Oly

Odermatt closes in on downhill season title

GARMISCH-PARTEN-KIRCHEN, Germany, Feb 28, (AP): Marco Odermatt has taken a giant step towards retaining his World Cup downhill title this season, leading a Swiss sweep Saturday in the first men's race since the Milan Cortina Olympics.

More good news for Odermatt was that his closest challenger, teammate and Olympic gold medalist Franjo von Allmen, was not part of the Swiss trio on the podium.

Odermatt just barely edged out Alexis Monney by 0.04 seconds, with Stefan Rogentin coming 0.98 seconds behind in third. Austria's Vincent Kriechmayr and Italy's Giovanni Franzoni shared fourth.

Von Allmen had costly mistakes halfway through his run down the Kandahar course and finished 1.47 second behind in sixth.

The result means Odermatt increased his lead over von Allmen to 175 points in the season standings with two races remaining. A race win is worth 100 points.

It felt like redemption for Odermatt, who arrived at the Olympics as a gold-medal favourite in the downhill but finished fourth.

"It was certainly a bit of a revenge today, too," said Odermatt, who won the World Cup downhill title the past two seasons and is also a strong favourite to win his fifth straight overall Crystal Globe this year.

The fascinating duel between close friends Odermatt and von Allmen has dominated the downhill season.

Odermatt started his campaign with back-to-back wins and later added a victory at the

classic Wengen event, but von Allmen hit back with two wins, including the last race before the Olympics a month ago in Crans-Montana, where Odermatt failed to make the podium.

On Saturday, though, von Allmen could not keep up with his rival.

"I was a little bit too direct, also not central with my body, sat down in the back, and was pretty tired. In the end, too direct and not smooth enough," said von Allmen, who was one of Alpine skiing's stars of the Olympics with three golds from the downhill, super-G and team combined.

Odermatt's 54th career win put him level with Austrian great Hermann Maier in third position on the men's World Cup winners list. Only Ingemar Stenmark (86 wins) and Marcel Hirscher (67) won more races.

The overall record is held by American standout Mikaela Shiffrin with 108 World Cup wins.

"My idol always was Didier Cuche when I was a kid," Odermatt said. "But it's incredible to get level with Hermann."

Several skiers sat out the race a day after they crashed in the final training session Friday, most notably France's Nils Alphon and Finland's Elian Lehto.

The French ski federation said Alphon sustained a right shoulder and rib injury and would be out for at least three weeks. Lehto suffered "injuries to the chest area and lower limb that require hospital monitoring" but "are not life-threatening," the Finnish ski federation said on Instagram.

A super-G on the same hill is scheduled for Sunday.

Kuwait Club and Al-Qadsia advance in Amir Cup, as regional challenges await

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 28: Kuwait Club leaves for Muscat this evening to prepare for Wednesday's first-leg encounter against Al-Shabab in the quarterfinals of the AFC Challenge League. The return leg is set for March 11.

Kuwait Club travels in high spirits after maintaining its Amir Cup title defense with a commanding 3-0 victory over Al-Nasr at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium, securing a place in the semifinals.

Taha Khenissi struck twice — converting a penalty in the 27th minute before adding a second in the 61st — while Amr Abdel Fattah quickly followed with a third goal to seal the result. Kuwait Club will now await the winner of the clash between Al-Qadsia and Al-Fahaheel in the semi-final round.

Head coach Nebojša Jovović said his side achieved its objective without complications, dismissing criticism over the recent Super Cup loss and highlighting Kuwait's sustained dominance at the top of domestic competitions over the past year.

Meanwhile, Al-Qadsia secured its spot in the Amir Cup quarterfinals after a 2-0 win against Burgan in a postponed preliminary-round fixture at Jaber Al-Mubarak Stadium.

Khaled Ibrahim opened the scoring in the 29th minute, and Neskens Kebano doubled the lead in the 61st



Players battling for the ball during the Amir Cup match.

to confirm progression.

Al-Qadsia now shifts focus to its upcoming GCC Champions League semifinal first leg against Al-Rayyan on Wednesday, with the return leg also scheduled for March 11.

The medical staff is working to assess Algerian defender Sofiane Bouchar, who was forced off early

against Burgan with groin discomfort. Initial reports suggest a muscle strain that could keep him sidelined for at least a week.

Head coach Nabil Maâloul emphasized the significance of the Burgan victory, noting that a congested schedule has taken a toll on the squad and contributed to sev-

eral injuries. He stressed that the team will need all available players in the coming period to achieve positive outcomes.

Maâloul also voiced optimism about securing a strong first-leg result against Al-Rayyan and urged fans to provide full support in Wednesday's encounter.

Australian star Kerr says back to 85% of her best

SYDNEY, Feb 28, (Xinhua): On the eve of Australia's opening match against the Philippines at the 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup, its top star and captain Sam Kerr said on Saturday she was back to about 85% of her best after a 20-month lay-off due to injury.

"I've had a long journey from my ACL. I'm honestly so excited, so grateful to be back here and to be playing football," Kerr said at a pre-match press conference.

Since early 2024, Kerr had been out of action for an extended period due to a torn anterior cruciate ligament and subsequent knee issues. She did not return to competition until September last year, when she resumed playing for her Women's Super League club, Chelsea.

"I'm probably 85% and above. I don't want to say I'm at 100% yet. I haven't had one of those games yet where I felt completely myself, but I

think about 85% and above," the Matildas' top goal scorer said.

In the previous 20 editions of the tournament, Australia has won the title only once, in 2010. In the 26-player squad for this year's tournament, the 32-year-old Kerr is the only remaining member of that championship-winning team.

"I think going in as a little bit of a dark horse (in 2010) helped us as a national team, and now with the pressure that the Matildas carry, we've just tried to not talk about winning and just talk about one game at a time," she said.

"I know how much everyone wants to win this tournament, of course, but we don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves. There are a lot of great teams in our path, and we just have to take it one game at a time," she added.

Matildas coach Joe Montemurro said he was looking forward to an "amazing tournament"

and "there's going to be some special memories made." Earlier on Saturday, Philippine head coach Mark Torcaso said his team would "try and spoil the party, not just for Australia, but for South Korea and obviously for Iran as well." "We fight right to the end, regardless of the scenario in the game," Torcaso was quoted by the Australian Associated Press as saying. "We're just going to be there and be annoying and constantly be pushing." The tournament will be staged across Sydney, Perth and the Gold Coast from March 1 to 21. A total of 12 teams will compete in three groups.

The top two teams from each group and two best third-placed teams will qualify for the quarterfinals. The four semifinalists will secure qualification for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil, while the four losing quarterfinalists will compete in playoffs for the remaining two World Cup berths.



Switzerland's Marco Odermatt celebrates winning a men's World Cup downhill race, in Garmisch Partenkirchen, Germany. (AP)