



DAWN ATTACK IN KUWAIT KILLS YOUNG EXPAT

Automatic extension for visit visas and expatriates abroad

Opinion by Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Naim Qassem and the dog named 'Baraqesh'

WHAT has the mullahs' regime achieved during its 47 years of destructive rule? This is a question on the minds of many, including a large percentage of the Iranians themselves. Has the regime assisted its people and improved their standard of living, or has it merely wasted tens of billions in the pursuit of an unattainable objective? A parallel can be drawn in the early 20th century, when Europe suffered under Hitler and his pursuit of a racist vision. That ambition plunged the continent and the world into war, causing 70 million deaths and a devastating defeat for Germany - the consequences of which are still felt today. Since the 1979 coup against the Shah, the Iranian regime has consistently pursued the goal of 'exporting the revolution.' Rather than fostering regional cooperation, it established loyal mercenary groups and promoted sectarianism and religious extremism. This approach marked the beginning of systematic terrorism, carried out both directly and through its proxies. The regime initiated an eight-year war with Iraq, which ended in defeat. Its militias bombed civilian areas and attempted the assassination of HH the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad. Moreover, the regime disregarded the sanctity of Makkah and Madinah, exploiting the annual Hajj season to incite unrest. The pattern of violence extended to the bombing of civilian buildings in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain. The history of the regime is one of aggressive behavior toward its neighbors despite receiving decades of tireless support from them. As stated previously, this kindness was repaid with aggression, confirming the profound criminality of the regime and its mirroring of the actions of Hitler. This aggression has been broadly evident, starting with Lebanon. The 'diabolical party' of the regime has turned this beautiful country into a wasteland, plagued by destruction and treachery.

Continued on Page 5. Follow me on: @AhmedAlJarallah, Ahmed aljarallah, ahmed@aljarallah.com



HH the PM during an inspection visit on Wednesday to one of the approved emergency shelters and accommodation facilities, accompanied by the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi.

- PM pays inspection visit to emergency shelters
Internet service back to normal
Supplies in cooperatives stable
Tehran vows to destroy Mideast infrastructure

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi, Munif Naif and Fares Ghaleb Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: In a blatant Iranian attack on Kuwait, shrapnel fell on a residential area in the Capital Governorate at dawn Wednesday, killing an 11-year-old girl and injuring four members of her family.

Security, military and medical personnel immediately dealt with the incident. Official spokesperson of the Ministry of Defense Colonel Saud Al-Atwan confirmed that the security forces intercepted several hostile aerial targets within Kuwaiti airspace. He explained that this interception caused shrapnel to fall on the residential building, leading to casualties and property damage. Al-Atwan asserted that the armed forces remain committed to their duties, pledging to take all the necessary measures to protect the country, its residents, sovereignty, security and stability. Meanwhile, official spokesperson of the Ministry of Health Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad reported the death of the 11-year-old expatriate girl. In a press statement, Al-Sanad revealed that the girl, who was injured by the shrapnel, was transported to Amiri Hospital through emergency medical services.

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No Hormuz? Experts revive 80s strategy to safeguard Kuwait oil

By Najeh Bilal Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: Oil experts have identified alternative routes for exporting Kuwaiti oil in the event of the total closure of the Strait of Hormuz. In an interview with the newspaper, these experts suggested the repetition of the 1980s approach, when Kuwaiti oil shipments were disrupted during the Iran-Iraq War. At that time, Kuwaiti oil was transported through the Arabian Sea in Oman to Asian countries. They said Kuwait could export its oil through the waters of the divided zone between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and then through the oil pipelines of the Kingdom. They also emphasized the importance of activating the 2013 project of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) -- the construction of long-distance pipelines for exporting Kuwaiti oil in case the Strait of Hormuz is closed. They stressed the need to reactivate the Tapline pipeline, which connects Saudi Arabia to the Lebanese port of Sidon, particularly



Boukhadour



Al-Kandari

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Kuwait formulates plan to bring back citizens abroad

KUWAIT CITY, March 4, (KUNA): The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced on Tuesday the finalization of a comprehensive plan for returning Kuwaiti citizens abroad holding confirmed bookings with Kuwait Airways.

In a statement to the official Kuwait News TV channel, DGCA Deputy Director General for Planning and Projects Saad Al-Otaibi confirmed that the plan was drafted under direct Cabinet directives. The initiative is being executed through high-level coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kuwait Airways Corporation, he added. Al-Otaibi detailed the logistical framework, noting that citizens will first be airlifted to a designated airport in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from which they will be transported to Kuwait via land routes. The official further clarified that Friday, March 6, 2026, has been established as the final deadline for passenger registration. This window allows Kuwait Airways to coordinate efforts with the DGCA, relevant Kuwaiti diplomatic missions abroad, and the Kuwaiti Embassy in Saudi Arabia. A revised flight schedule is currently under development and will be disseminated to registered passengers shortly, Al-Otaibi said.

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Winter bows out in Kuwait Sunday

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The Al-Ojeiri Scientific Center announced that starting next Sunday, winter and its cold spell will come to an end, and the weather will become more moderate, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press release, the center explained that this shift in weather is linked to the start of the Al-Hamim season, which follows the Al-Aqrab season and precedes the Al-Dhir' an season, continuing until April 2. The Al-Hamim season is an annual season known for fluctuating weather, often bringing atmospheric instability with alternating periods of cold and heat, rain, and dust. During this time, spring and winter blend, with occasional dust storms and scattered rainfall. The season is also marked by a gradual rise in temperatures and is punctuated by thunderstorms and cumulonimbus cloud formations.

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Man nabbed after spreading panic online Mahboula towers hoax triggers quick legal response

By Munif Naif Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The Ministry of Interior, represented by its Fintas Investigation Unit, apprehended an individual just hours after he posted a video on social media containing false claims about attacks targeting residential towers in Mahboula. In an official statement, the ministry explained that security agencies were able to track the widely circulated video on a social media application, which falsely claimed attacks targeting "Aliyah" and "Ghaliyah" residential towers in Mahboula. Authorities intensified their investigation and identified the publisher of the video. Upon questioning, the suspect admitted to filming the video and sending it to a group of people via the application. He has since been referred to the concerned authorities for necessary legal measures. The ministry warned that such actions are highly dangerous, as they spread panic, cause public anxiety, and disrupt security agencies through false reports. It emphasized that spreading rumors and false news will be dealt with firmly and without leniency to protect public safety and maintain the security of society.

UK Ambassador commends Kuwait air defenses, swift protection efforts

By Fares Ghaleb Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The British Ambassador to Kuwait, Qudsi Rasheed, praised the resilience of both Kuwaiti citizens and British nationals following a series of missile and drone incidents, noting that most attacks were successfully intercepted by Kuwait's air defense forces. Speaking on the recent security situation, Ambassador Rasheed described the past days as difficult and worrying for everyone, with explosions and alarm sirens heard at night while developments were monitored in real time. He highlighted the calm and composure displayed by both Kuwaiti citizens and British nationals in Kuwait amid the tense circumstances.



Rasheed

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Nasser's deception of Field Marshal Amer ... and such days we alternate among people

On June 5, 1967, President Jamal Abdel Nasser decided Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer had to go. Nasser held Field Marshal Amer responsible for the defeat and believed he must bear the consequences. Nasser was unwilling to relinquish power or change his governing style. Nasser had no intention of accepting his share of the blame for the disaster. The resignation statement was designed to gain public sympathy and maintain popular support. Field Marshal Amer's faction was stronger than Nasser's. He was surprised when Nasser nominated Zakaria Mohieddin for the presidency. Field Marshal Amer submitted his resignation, causing his followers to fall apart.

Day by Day

THE wise and experienced say: Beware of three tears - tears of orphans, the tears of the oppressed, and the tears of your own parents. If you cause any of these tears to fall, you open the gates of Hell upon yourself... and what gates they are. As the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "This world is fleeting. It is sweet, but it deceives and allures, offering nothing but the pleasures of illusion." ... Yet tomorrow is another day. Zahed Matar

Ramadan Timings

Table with 2 columns: Time (Imsak, Iftar) and Day (Thursday, Friday) with corresponding times.



4 KU President inspects colleges, housing sites



8 stc holds its Annual Ordinary General Assembly Meeting

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:51 Asr 15:20
 Sunrise .. 06:10 Maghrib .. 17:50
 Zohr 12:00 Isha 19:06

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: A significant decrease in temperature and mild with light to moderate northwesterly wind, with speeds of 12-35 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

By Night: Rather cold with light

Weather

to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 06-26 km/h.

Station
 Kuwait Airport
 Abdaly
 Bubyan

Max Exp
 21
 20
 14

Min Rec
 11
 12
 08

Jahra 26 15
 Failaka Island 17 11
 Salmiyah 19 15
 Ahmadi 15 11
 Jal Aliyah 20 12
 Nuwaisib 27 14
 Salmiyah 27 11

Kuwait Crown Prince receives leaders calls condemning Iranian aggression

KUWAIT CITY, March 4, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a telephone call from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas who strongly condemned the blatant Iranian attacks on Kuwait's territory.

President Abbas considered the Iranian atrocities a flagrant violation of international law and sovereignty, stressing his country's full support for Kuwait in all measures taken to maintain its stability and sovereignty.

His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the President.

His Highness the Crown Prince

also thanked President Abbas for this fraternal initiative and unwavering stances to back Kuwait's security and stability.

Senegal President

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a telephone call from Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye who strongly condemned the blatant Iranian attacks on Kuwait's territory.

President Faye considered the Iranian atrocities a flagrant violation of international law and sovereignty, stressing his country's full support for Kuwait in all measures taken to maintain its stability and sovereignty.

His Highness the Crown Prince



HH the Crown Prince

conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the President.

His Highness the Crown Prince also thanked President Faye for this fraternal initiative and unwavering stances to back Kuwait's security and stability.

Comoros President

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday a telephone call from Comoros President Othman Ghazali who strongly condemned the blatant Iranian attacks on Kuwait's territory.

President Ghazali considered the Iranian atrocities a flagrant violation of international law and sovereignty, stressing his country's complete backing to Kuwait in all measures taken to maintain its stability and

sovereignty.

His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the President.

His Highness the Crown Prince also thanked President Ghazali for this fraternal initiative and unwavering stances to back Kuwait's security and stability.

Uzbek President

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a telephone call from Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

During the phone call, the Uzbek President stressed the importance

of de-escalation and promoting dialogue among all parties in the region to maintain the stability of countries and the security of civilians was emphasized.

He condemned the repeated attacks on Kuwaiti territory, noting his country's full support for all measures taken by the State of Kuwait to preserve its sovereignty and security.

On his part, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, expressing his sincere appreciation for this kind gesture and supportive stance towards the security and stability of the State of Kuwait.

Al-Yassin Diwaniya welcomes Ramadan well-wishers



Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Al-Jaber, Sheikh Abdullah, Sheikh Faisal and Sheikh Mohammad Al-Faisal



Indonesian Ambassador Lina Maryana and Philippine Ambassador Jose Cabrera III extend greetings to Ambassador Khaled Al-Yassin.

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The Al-Yassin Diwaniya in Rawda welcomed well-wishers for the holy month of Ramadan, reflecting a warm and friendly atmosphere that reflected the deep social bonds of Kuwaiti society, which shine brightly during this blessed month, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

A number of sheikhs, officials, ambassadors, and members of diplomatic missions, along with many citizens and residents, visited the diwaniya.

The gathering created a unifying scene, which reaffirmed the role of diwanis as spaces



Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah and colleague Saud Al-Farhan extended greetings.



Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Mukai Kenichiro

for social connection and strengthened communication.

The Al-Yassin family welcomed the attendees and exchanged greetings, highlighting that Ramadan represents a renewed opportunity to reinforce faith-based values and strengthen the culture of tolerance and solidarity within the community.

Attendees prayed to God Almighty to protect Kuwait, ensure its continued security and stability, and to bless the Arab and Islamic nations with goodness, prosperity, and well-being during this holy month.

Other Voices

Kuwait stands united

By Nasser Al-Hajeri

In moments of uncertainty, a nation discovers its true character. Today, Kuwait stands united. In the face of aggression and violence, our people have shown calm, strength, and deep love for our homeland. We are a small country in size, but our unity has always been our greatest power.

Recent days have reminded us how fragile peace can be in our region. The sounds of sirens and the news of strikes have caused worry in many homes. Yet even in these difficult hours, Kuwait did not panic. Our leadership acted with responsibility. Our armed forces and security personnel stood firm, protecting our skies and our borders with courage and discipline. Their readiness and sacrifice deserve our respect and gratitude.

We also pause to remember the lives lost from our Armed Forces. Two brave servicemen paid the highest price during this time of tension. They were sons, brothers, and proud defenders of our homeland. They stood in duty to protect Kuwait and its people. We pray for mercy upon them and strength for their families and fellow soldiers. Their sacrifice reminds us that peace is not just a political word but a human need worth protecting.

Kuwait has always believed in dialogue and cooperation. Our history shows that we choose wisdom over anger and unity over division. We are a nation that has experienced hardship before, and each time we have risen stronger because we stood together. No outside pressure can break a people who support one another and trust in their country.

This is a time to hold on to what connects us. It is a time to support our security forces, to check on our neighbors, and to speak words that bring comfort instead of fear. We defend our homeland not only with systems and preparedness, but with unity, patience, and faith.

Kuwait stands united today with strength and confidence, firm in defending our safety, our dignity, and our sovereignty. Our message is steady and clear. We stand ready to protect our land and our people. Together, as one nation, we will safeguard our home with resolve and honor, determined to secure a future of safety and lasting peace for our region.



Al-Hajeri

Charity sector set for rapid reaction

Gov't support pledged

KUWAIT CITY, March 4, (KUNA): Officials in Kuwait's charitable sector said Tuesday they are fully mobilizing human, logistical, and technical resources to support the country and back government efforts amid ongoing regional developments, reaffirming their commitment to official directives.

In separate statements to KUNA, they emphasized their national responsibility and role as active partners in the country's civil society, noting that Kuwaiti charities stand united behind political leadership, keeping their administrative and volunteer teams ready to assist as needed and in full coordination with official bodies.

Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society Dr. Khaled Al-Mughamis said the society is operating under an integrated plan emphasizing readiness, rapid response, and constant coordination with state agencies, maintaining emergency plans and enhancing field communications to ensure efficiency and speed when required.

He highlighted that humanitarian work in Kuwait reflects the leadership's guidance and the country's tradition of humanitarianism, with accumulated expertise deployed to safeguard lives, property, and community security.

Director General of the International Islamic Charitable Organization Engineer Bader Al-Sumait said the organization is fully prepared to support government efforts, stressing the need for national unity, adherence to official guidance, and mobilization of administrative and volunteer teams as circumstances demand.

Chairman of the Union of Charitable Societies and Foundations Saad Al-Otaibi,

noted the importance of heightened readiness and responsibility across civil society, emphasizing coordination with official agencies to align charitable efforts with national priorities.

He added that Kuwaiti charities possess extensive experience in managing crises and exceptional circumstances, providing a vital resource to support national plans and societal stability.

Chairman of Balad Al-Khair Society Saad Al-Rajhi reaffirmed the association's full support for all measures and decisions taken by Kuwait's political leadership to safeguard national security, stability, and citizens' safety.

He stressed that the current period requires joint efforts and coordinated action between state institutions and civil society, working with a unified sense of national responsibility.

Al-Rajhi added that the society is deploying all its resources and expertise to support the country, aiming to mitigate the impact of current challenges, serve the public interest, strengthen social cohesion, and reinforce values of solidarity and shared responsibility.

CEO and Board Member of Insan Society Dr. Mubarak Al-Azmi, said his organization is fully utilizing its resources to support government efforts amid the current situation, reinforcing the integrated national role of the charitable sector.

He noted that the society continuously monitors developments, updates operational plans, and raises the readiness level of field teams and volunteers to actively contribute to joint national initiatives.

Al-Azmi emphasized that close cooperation between state institutions and the charitable sector embodies Kuwait's humanitarian approach and reflects a deep societal partnership based on responsibility, collaboration, and unified efforts in service of the nation.

Chairman of Excellence Humanitarian Society Dr. Khalel Al-Hammadi confirmed that his organization is dedicating all human, administrative, and logistical resources to serve the country and society under the current conditions, stressing the need for combined efforts and a strong sense of national responsibility.

Kuwaiti student enrollment at UK university suspended

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education has suspended the enrollment of Kuwaiti students in undergraduate and postgraduate programs in all disciplines at Northumbria University in the United Kingdom.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the decision, stating that the suspension applies to all new students wishing to enroll at the university, not those who are already enrolled.

The Bureau affirmed that the decision is based on the laws and regulations governing higher education and academic accreditation in the State of

Kuwait, recommendations of the Committee for Proposing Standards for Reviewing and Updating the Lists of Higher Education Institutions Outside the State of Kuwait, correspondence from the Kuwaiti Cultural Office in London, and conclusions reached in several meetings.

The Bureau revealed that the decision took effect upon issuance, and all the concerned authorities must implement it.

This decision is in line with the commitment of the Bureau to guarantee the quality of education and regulate the enrollment of Kuwaiti students in accredited higher education institutions that meet the academic standards adopted by Kuwait.

Lawyer, citizen get life in prison for drug smuggling

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Hamoud Al-Shami, with Judges Fahad Bouresli and Abdullah Al-Maqhawi as members, and Abdullah Al-Failakawi as secretary, sentenced a prominent lawyer and a fugitive citizen to life imprisonment after convicting them of attempting to smuggle narcotics and psychotropic substances into the country from London.

The court also sentenced another citizen and a woman to seven-year imprisonment each in connection with the same case, which was uncovered following a sting operation conducted by the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) after extensive investigations.

The investigation carried out by the arresting officer revealed the lawyer's involvement in the use and trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic sub-

stances. Quantities of these substances were seized from his private office, along with other materials found in his apartment, which strengthened the evidence against him.

It was revealed that the defendants attempted to smuggle hashish and psychotropic substances into the country illegally. However, the vigilance of DCGD officers prevented the operation from being completed, and the defendants were apprehended after the necessary legal warrants were obtained.

The court also ordered the dismissal of the third defendant from his position at the Ministry of Electricity and Water, citing proven crimes of moral turpitude and breach of trust.

In addition, the court fined the first and third defendants an amount equal to three times the value of the smuggled narcotics. The second and third defendants were each fined KD 10,000, in accordance with legally prescribed financial penalties.

Kuwait Airways prepares to assist Kuwaitis' return

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: Kuwait Airways Chairman Abdulmohsen Al-Faqaan says the operations center has been activated during the emergency period to assist citizens wishing to return home, reports Al-Rai daily.

Al-Faqaan told in an interview with Al-Akhbar TV that the current focus is on Kuwaiti passengers seeking to return to Kuwait.

He revealed that the first flight arrived yesterday from Bangkok but was forced to land in India before reaching Dammam Airport, where passengers were transported overland to Kuwait.

Al-Faqaan explained that a joint committee, comprising several government entities such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs (through its consulates and diplomatic corps), the Public Authority for Civil Aviation, the Ministry of Interior, and Kuwait Airways, is coordinating and arranging the return of passengers currently abroad. This includes travel by land borders from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, or by air to Saudi Arabia followed by overland transport to Kuwait.



Al-Faqaan

Liaison officer to oversee constant supply of bread

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) has reached an agreement with Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company to appoint a permanent liaison officer to oversee the supply of essential goods in food distribution centers round the clock.

Based on the agreement, Director of the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Department at the ministry Faisal Al-Ansari confirmed the appointment of Hassan Al-Ali as liaison officer. He said this will guarantee direct coordination and expedite the delivery of goods to the 92 food distribution centers throughout the country.

Al-Ansari disclosed that the administrations of cooperative societies are currently monitoring the stock level at their distribution centers daily, and then communicate with the company to request the required quantities.

He added that they also track the transport of goods from the warehouses of the company to the cooperatives using its fleet. He explained this measure is taken in light of pressure on the fleet of the company, which could lead to delivery delays. He said this necessitates ongoing coordination among all concerned parties to prevent shortage.

He stressed that cooperative societies bear the responsibility of ensuring the availability of food supplies, safe transport and storage of these supplies, and coordination with the heads of supply branches to guarantee service continuity and stability for consumers. He revealed that the ministry monitors withdrawal rates and inventory levels daily through the specialized oversight teams and the 24/7 control room.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Nasser's deception of Field Marshal Amer ... and such days we alternate among people

ON the evening of June 5, 1967, President Jamal Abdel Nasser decided that Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer had to go, and thus based his strategy and planning around holding Field Marshal Amer responsible for the defeat.

Despite Nasser's declaration of willingness to assume full responsibility in his resignation speech, this statement proved to be little more than empty rhetoric.

In reality, the Egyptian leader was unwilling to relinquish power, change his governing style, or accept his share of the disaster.

Jamal Abdel Nasser crafted his resignation statement with two clear objectives. First, it aimed to garner public sympathy, and second, to maintain popular support. Second, and more importantly, Nasser aimed to remove Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer, the Minister of War. Field Marshal Amer was not an ordinary official who could be dismissed with a simple decree.

In fact, Field Marshal Amer's faction was more powerful than Nasser's, not only because he controlled the armed forces, but also because he held the positions of Minister of Interior, Director of General Intelligence, and Director of the Military Prison, in addition to his role as Minister of War. This gave him control over all officials and all security and military facilities. Those overseeing the investigation files were part of Field Marshal Amer's group and were loyal to him.

It was therefore decided that the president would announce his resignation and the field marshal would step down as a tactical move, after which Shams Badran, one of Field Marshal Amer's most loyal men, would temporarily assume the Ministry of War and the presidency.

According to the agreement between Nasser and Field Marshal Amer, Badran would assume the presidency temporarily until the situation stabilized, after which he would step down and Nasser and Field Marshal Amer would return to their positions.

As was their custom, Nasser and Field Marshal Amer orchestrated events as if staging an absurd play. By the grace of God, the play turned into a historic victory.

Field Marshal Amer submitted his resignation as agreed. His resignation led all his men to abandon him, convincing themselves that the measure was only temporary and thus avoiding any responsibility.

This was how Field Marshal Amer persuaded them, and they were appeased.

He then waited to hear a statement in which Nasser would announce his resignation from the presidency. However, he was surprised to learn that Nasser had nominated Zakaria Mohieddin for the presidency instead of Shams Badran, as they

On June 5, 1967, President Jamal Abdel Nasser decided Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer had to go

Nasser held Field Marshal Amer responsible for the defeat and believed he must bear the consequences

Nasser was unwilling to relinquish power or change his governing style

Nasser had no intention of accepting his share of the blame for the disaster

The resignation statement was designed to gain public sympathy and maintain popular support

Field Marshal Amer's faction was stronger than Nasser's

He was surprised when Nasser nominated Zakaria Mohieddin for the presidency

Field Marshal Amer submitted his resignation, causing his followers to fall apart

had previously agreed, and sensed that Nasser was about to betray him.

Zakaria Mohieddin belonged to the Nasserist faction loyal to Jamal Abdel Nasser, which meant Nasser could control and manipulate him for any future plans.

Moreover, it was unlikely that the public would welcome Mohieddin's nomination, as he was associated in the people's minds with the price hikes and rising cost of living during his tenure as Prime Minister.

Nasser justified his decision at the time by claiming that Zakaria had raised prices to cover the costs of the development plan.

Upon hearing Zakaria Mohieddin's name, Field Marshal Amer sensed that Nasser was planning to act independently.

Meanwhile, another scene was unfolding in the office of Ali Sabri, a Nasser loyalist and a rival of Field Marshal Amer. Sabri served as the intermediary between the Soviets and Nasser and had enjoyed Nasser's trust for years prior to the July 23 Revolution.

He had previously held positions as head of intelligence and Prime Minister. At that time, Ali Sabri was the Secretary-General of the Arab Socialist Union, the main figure responsible for mobilization and mass gatherings, and an expert in planning and operations.

Prior to the resignation announcement, Ali Sabri was preparing a populist mobilization, which involved trucks carrying thousands of Arab Socialist Union members. According to Sabri's plan, the trucks and buses were deployed to main squares and intersections, carrying banners wrapped in cloth and numerous pictures of the president. The Arab Socialist Union committees replicated the plan in all governorates. The late President Anwar Sadat later referred to the Arab Socialist Union as "the inflated balloon."

Immediately after Nasser announced his resignation, members of the Arab Socialist Union took to the streets, carrying pre-prepared banners reading "Don't resign" and holding hundreds of pictures of Nasser. The popular uprising was thus unleashed, following a plan influenced by Soviet mobilization strategies.

This uprising was designed to mobilize the largest segment of the population, bringing people into the streets to demand exactly what the authorities intended.

In a speech, the late President Hosni Mubarak said he could have pretended to resign, only to have people demonstrate and demand that he stay in office, but he refused to do this, as he believed it would have ruined the country. He recalled the Nasserists' demands that Zakaria Mohieddin refuse the presidency and that Nasser remain in office, with crowds chanting, "Refuse, refuse, Zakaria! Nasser is the best."

The security forces did not intervene or confront the street protesters. On the contrary, they acted with unusual leniency and restraint, encouraging the crowds to grow. This coincided with radio announcers urging people to remain in the streets and protest the president's resignation. Patriotic and stirring songs were broadcast, directed at threatening the enemy and heightening public fervor. As a result, the human tide surged through the streets of Egypt.

The same scene was repeated in other countries, where people demanded that the defeated leader remain in power, inspired by the fervor that had gripped the Egyptians.

■ Is it conceivable that the Al-Mubarakiya markets, which are frequented by citizens, expatriates, and tourists in Kuwait, have no restrooms? Even mosques are closed after prayers to prevent people from using their facilities. Unfortunately, much of our public work is incomplete, unfinished, or lacking in cleanliness.



■ I urge officials to closely monitor their country's affairs to identify and address these deficiencies. Ministers should be present in the field more often than in their offices, as their counterparts in other countries are.



■ The mosque built by the Al-Ghanim family is a magnificent structure. Unfortunately, its restrooms are unclean, which is the responsibility of the Awqaf Ministry, not the donor.

Despite the mosque's elegant architectural design, the restrooms are usually dirty.



■ A Jordanian minister gifted his wife a bouquet of mallow for Valentine's Day, as it was mallow season. Roses have become expensive, either due to scarcity or because people have stopped giving them as gifts.



KUNA photo
Undersecretary of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Lt. Gen. Hamad Al-Barjas meets some Guards at the power station.

Al-Barjas ensures all is good at power station

KUWAIT CITY, March 4, (KUNA): Undersecretary of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Lt. Gen. Hamad Al-Barjas paid an inspection visit on Tuesday to the West Doha Power Station.

In a press release, Lt. Gen. Al-Barjas underlined the importance of high readiness and discipline, in a manner that boosts the KNG units' potential to back the state's ministries and institutions, and cementing the country's stability and security, under the wise leadership.

Al-Barjas conveyed the greetings and appreciation of the KNG command to the personnel and expressed pride for their great national role played in safeguarding the vital sites, the statement noted. He lauded high morale and responsibility of the KNG personnel.

KFF personnel deployed at hospitals nationwide



KUWAIT CITY, March 4, (KUNA): Acting Deputy Chief for Civil Protection at Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Brigadier General Omar Boursesli conducted on Tuesday an inspection tour of security units assigned to securing hospitals.

During the visit, Boursesli inspected security units' preparedness and ensured that fire safety and prevention systems and equipment were in place and fully operational. KFF said in a press release. The tour is part of ongoing efforts to check all preparations

and readiness measures to secure vital sites across the country under the current circumstances, the statement added.

'You see it as picture, enemy sees it as info'

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The National Guard distributed awareness brochures under the title, "You See It as a Picture, the Enemy Sees It as Information."

The brochure stated that photos could show the timing of movements and gatherings, reveal roads, entrances and exits, accurately determine geographical locations, and expose patterns of daily life.

Regular court sessions held

Working diligently: MoJ

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The Ministry of Justice affirmed its commitment to ensure the continuity of work, regularity of court sessions to protect the rights of litigants and stability of the judicial system, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the ministry promised to work diligently to overcome obstacles that may arise due to the current circumstances in the country and the region.

It has taken the necessary measures to regulate work procedures and determine the required number of employees under the current circumstances, based on the decisions of the Civil Service Council and the external circular issued by the Civil Service Commission.

The ministry clarified that it set the attendance rate at no more than 30 percent of the total number of employees in each department under the Administrative and Technical Affairs Sector, Judicial and Legal Affairs Sector, General Directorate of

Execution, General Directorate of Experts, departments under the minister of justice and undersecretary, Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, and Public Prosecutor Office. It added this percentage might increase as needed in coordination with the Civil Service Commission.

It also indicated that supervisory staff must monitor workflow daily and organize the work schedule for court clerks, limiting it to three days a week.

The shift system will continue in the departments where it is implemented, except the Criminal Execution Department, where evening shifts have been suspended.

Food security ensured: Dr. Saud Al-Jalal, the acting Deputy Director General for Inspection and Control Affairs at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), confirmed that emergency teams are fully prepared and are continuing field monitoring to ensure food safety and the smooth flow of supplies in the markets, reports Al-Anba daily.

He also commended the inspection tours carried out by monitoring teams at factories, production sites, and food warehouses.

Customs vows smooth entry of 'food and health' supplies

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The Director General of General Administration of Customs (GAC), Yousef Al-Nuwaif, stated that instructions have been issued to facilitate the entry of all food, health, and special-purpose shipments in coordination with all state institutions to obtain the necessary clearances around the clock, reports Al-Rai daily.

In an official statement, Al-Nuwaif explained that at the start of the current crisis, an emergency meeting was held with all customs leaders. A control room was designated as the headquarters for GAC's operations to make immediate decisions regarding any developments and to ensure smooth and efficient procedures at all customs points, based on the directives of His

Highness the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior.

With reference to the decision issued by the Minister of Commerce and Industry to ban the export of all types of food products outside the country, Al-Nuwaif explained that instructions were issued based on this decision to prohibit the export of these food products and goods. Customs instructions were also issued to implement an electronic tracking and monitoring system for truck routes to maintain the smooth flow of goods and ensure the quick completion of customs procedures.

He reassured the public that all food and health supplies are available, emphasizing that all customs officers are performing their duties with high professionalism and full responsibility.

Don't go to work, disabled told

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) issued external circular No. 5/2026 regarding the exemption of people with disabilities from work during the current exceptional circumstances, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The circular referenced a letter No. 28/02167 dated March 3, 2025 from the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA), requesting that all government entities be notified of the exemption of people with disabilities from work during the cur-

rent exceptional circumstances, as outlined in the letter.

CSC therefore issued the circular to inform all government entities, authorities, and public institutions of the contents of the aforementioned letter, and urge them to take the necessary action in accordance with PADA's decision.

It stated that any inquiries regarding this exemption should be directed to PADA, as it is the competent authority on this matter.

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Power, water supplies stable

Drone strike hits Doha West grid lines, fire contained

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy repaired the high-voltage overhead power lines along the Sixth Ring Road, which were struck by drone shrapnel.

Reliable sources stated that technical teams are still repairing the high-voltage overhead lines in the southern part of the country, which went out of service for the same reason, affirming the stability of the electrical grid.

On the minor fire that broke out at West Doha power station after shrapnel struck the fuel tanks, sources indicated that teams are repairing the damaged section, confirming that production operations at the station are proceeding as usual.

On water production, sources revealed that "maintenance works at the desalination plants are proceeding as per the annual maintenance schedule, and consumption is close to production rates."

Minor shortages are covered through the strategic reserve until the desalination plant maintenance is completed."

Safety, procedures under review across external campuses

KU President inspects colleges, housing sites

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: Kuwait University President Dr. Dina Al-Mailem on Tuesday visited several external sites, such as the College of Medical Sciences in Jabriya, College of Social Sciences in Shuwaikh, College of Architecture in Adailiya, male students housing in Shuwaikh and the construction project at Sabah Al-Salem University City in Shadadiya.

The purpose of the visit is to assess the situation and the implementation of procedures.

The university administration affirmed that these field visits will continue in line with the commitment to protect facilities and guarantee the safety of everyone.

Acting Secretary General of the University and Vice President for Academic Support Services Dr. Abdullah Al-Mutawa, and acting Assistant Secretary General for Facilities Management and Director of the University President Office Mohammad Al-Sulaiman accompanied Al-Mailem during the inspection tour.



Kuwait University's Director tours campuses and external facilities to review procedures and ensure staff and campus safety amid current developments.

Officials stress collective security

International solidarity grows for Kuwait amid Iranian 'aggression'

KUWAIT CITY, March 4, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received a series of telephone calls on Tuesday from several counterparts expressing solidarity with Kuwait and condemning recent Iranian attacks targeting the country and the wider region.

He was contacted by Nasser Bourita, Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Expatriates; Radoslaw Sikorski, Poland's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister; and Andrii Sybiha, Ukraine's Foreign Minister. All three condemned the Iranian aggression against Kuwait and other regional states, affirming their right to take all necessary measures to safeguard their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Sheikh Jarrah also received calls from Portugal's Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel, Serbia's Foreign Minister Marko Djuric, Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, and Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence Helen McEntee. They deplored the Iranian attacks on Kuwait and reiterated support for Kuwait's right to protect its sovereignty and territory, while affirming solidarity with the country.

In separate calls, the minister was contacted by Libya's Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Taher Al-Baour, Estonia's Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna, and Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan. The Libyan and Estonian ministers voiced their countries' condemnation of the Iranian aggression and stressed the right of targeted states to take necessary measures to defend their sovereignty and territories. Mirzoyan, for his part, discussed the ongoing military escalation in the region and its serious repercussions on regional security and stability.

Meanwhile, Jordan strongly condemned the Iranian attacks targeting the buildings of the United States embassies in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In a statement, Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates described the assaults as a flagrant violation of international law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which guarantee immunity for diplomatic missions and their staff. The ministry affirmed Jordan's full solidarity with the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait, supporting all measures taken to safeguard their security, stability and citizens.

For its part, Yemen stated that Kuwait's security and that of the Arab Gulf states is an extension of Yemen's own security and stability. In a statement, Yemen's Foreign Ministry offered condolences to the Kuwaiti leadership and people over the martyrdom of two Kuwaiti soldiers who were performing their national duties. It strongly condemned the Iranian attacks on Kuwait and other brotherly countries, describing them as a blatant violation of international law, the principles of good neighborliness and the United Nations Charter.

The ministry reiterated Yemen's full solidarity with Kuwait and its unwavering support in defending its security and sovereignty, warning that such attacks represent a dangerous escalation that threatens regional stability, international peace and maritime navigation, and calling for a firm collective international stance to deter further aggression and hold those responsible accountable.



Sheikh Jarrah

Ministry of Transportation begins disbursing performance bonuses

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Ministry of Transportation Employees Union Fayez Al-Hamshi said the ministry has started disbursing the outstanding performance bonus to eligible employees, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Al-Hamshi disclosed that in order to be eligible for the bonus, employees must have obtained 'excellent' performance rating for the year 2025, while the amount is based on the job grade, job title and regulations of the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

He confirmed that the list of eligible employees was finalized in accordance with Decision No. 282, issued on Feb

23. He said all the necessary administrative and financial steps have been completed, indicating the bonus will be deposited into the bank accounts of eligible employees.

He praised acting Undersecretary of the ministry Eng. Meshal Jaber Al-Zaid for easing the disbursement process.

He also thanked acting Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs Abdullah Al-Humaida, the director of the Administrative Affairs Department, the director of the Financial Affairs Department, and all their staff for their diligent work in finalizing the list of eligible employees.

Continued from Page 1

Winter bows

The Al-Hamim season is divided into two parts - the first and second Al-Hamim, collectively known as Al-Hamimayn. Day and night are equal in length at the midpoint of this season, specifically on March 16, followed by the spring equinox on March 20.

The equinox occurs when the sun is directly above the equator and begins its northward journey, though slight variations may occur depending on latitude. Two main factors determine the length of day and night - the sun's angle relative to the equator, and the geographical latitude.

The equinox occurs worldwide when the sun is directly above the equator. The farther one is from the equator, the greater the difference in day and night lengths.

With the arrival of the Al-Hamimayn season, the sun enters the summer season, which has a beginning, peak intensity, and end, with its start coinciding with the second Al-Hamim season.

No Hormuz?

since this pipeline could play a significant role in transporting Gulf oil, bypassing the Strait of Hormuz during crises.

A source confirmed that KPC has several alternative routes for exporting its oil if the Strait of Hormuz closes completely. He said the most important of these routes is exporting oil to Asia through the Arabian Sea in Oman, especially since Kuwait used this route during the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980 to 1988. He added that Kuwaiti oil is also stored in the port of Duqm, which overlooks the Arabian Sea, for use when needed.

The source stated that there is no problem exporting oil to Europe, as this could be done through the Suez Canal or the Egyptian SUMED pipeline, which connects the Arabian Gulf to Europe and America, especially since Kuwait's share in the SUMED pipeline investment is around 15 percent.

The source affirmed that KPC is currently studying the expansion of its oil storage projects abroad, especially since it launched its first shipment of oil for storage in South Korea several months ago. He revealed that the storage capacity for Kuwaiti oil in Ulsan, South Korea is four million barrels of crude oil.

Meanwhile, former Arab Shipping Company official and oil analyst Hajjaj Boukhadour asserted that "Iran will not dare to completely close the Strait of Hormuz, as doing so could antagonize the entire world. Complete closure of the Strait is far more

dangerous than the current war between the United States and Israel against Iran. It will be tantamount to a war against the entire world. Therefore, whenever Iran targets a tanker, it does so using small boats."

Asked about how Kuwait will export its oil if the Strait is completely closed, he stressed that KPC has other options. He cited the strategy used in the 1980s by utilizing the western Gulf coasts, such as those of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and then extending to the Arabian Sea in Oman. He pointed out that while this route is longer than exporting oil through the Strait of Hormuz, it is safer. He indicated that this is the most likely option being considered by KPC.

He also urged KPC to complete the oil export pipeline project outside the country, which was proposed in 2013. He explained that the geopolitical problems the region experienced over the past three years prompted KPC to propose the oil pipeline project before the current conflict between the US and Israel against Iran.

He said some Gulf states have already constructed oil pipelines to export their oil in the event of escalating crises in the Strait of Hormuz, citing the pipeline connecting Abu Dhabi to Fujairah, near the Arabian Sea in Oman, as an example.

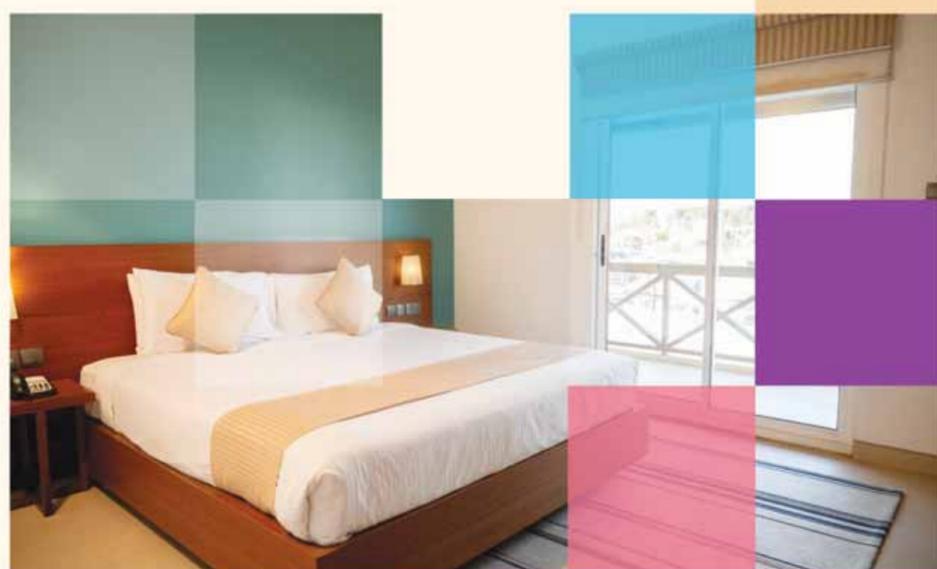
He also pointed out that Saudi Arabia has numerous pipeline connections to the East and West that could be used to transport Kuwaiti oil.

Lawyer and oil analyst Salem Al-Kandari mentioned the possibility of transporting Kuwaiti oil through Saudi Arabia, especially since the shared maritime border makes this possible. He cited as evidence the pipeline that transports gas from the Khafji Joint Operations to Kuwait, which was opened in 2021 and is 100 kilometers long.

At the same time, he stressed the importance of coordination among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries regarding the need to export Gulf oil during crises that threaten the movement of tankers through the Strait of Hormuz. He pointed out that the current crisis requires finding alternatives and to implement them as quickly as possible.

He is hoping to revive the experience of the Tapline oil pipeline, which used to extend from eastern Saudi Arabia and then North to the port of Sidon in Lebanon, with a length of 1,648 kilometers, considering its capacity of five million barrels of oil.

He explained that the goal of the Tapline pipeline, operated in 1950, was to transport Gulf oil to European markets through the Mediterranean Sea, indicating it operated for four decades, but it stopped after the liberation of Kuwait.



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LOCAL

Embassy closed

Australian citizens urged to stay safe

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: The Australian Ambassador to Kuwait, Melissa Kelly, urged members of the Australian community to exercise extreme caution amid ongoing security developments, emphasizing that the current period "is not easy" and that the coming days may bring additional challenges, reports Al-Rai daily.

In a video message addressed to her citizens, Ambassador Kelly said that security warnings continue to be issued frequently, and drone and missile attacks are ongoing around the clock, making it essential to remain in safe locations and fully comply with the instructions of official authorities in Kuwait.

She explained that the embassy building is currently closed as a precautionary measure, but consular work is continuing remotely, with the embassy team handling communications, responding to emails, and providing assistance to citizens as needed. It is possible to contact the embassy through the 24-hour emergency line in Australia, which ensures that messages reach the embassy staff.

The ambassador urged members of the community to follow the embassy's official platforms and register with the "Smart Traveller" service to receive updates promptly, reaffirming the mission's commitment to keeping citizens informed of any developments as soon as they occur.



Al-Amer Diwaniya welcomes well-wishers for Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: Al-Amer Diwaniya received a large number of well-wishers on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Several sheikhs, public figures, and dignitaries in the country attended to offer their congratulations on this blessed occasion.

The diwaniya witnessed a remarkable turnout, which reflects the strong social bonds that characterize Kuwaiti society. Attendees exchanged greetings and friendly conversations, recalling the noble values of the holy month, including solidarity, compassion, and the strengthening of family and community ties.



Sheikhs, dignitaries, and citizens gather to celebrate solidarity and community ties.

Photos by Rezk Tawfiq

Continued from Page 1

Naim Qassem

For 46 years, the Lebanese people have suffered the harm inflicted by Hezbollah under the guise of 'resistance'.

Paradoxically, figures like Hassan Nasrallah and his successor, Naim Qassem, have become the best allies of Israel in Lebanon. By consistently providing Tel Aviv with pretexts, they have further undermined the Lebanese sovereignty.

Today, the 'Party of Satan' is once again dragging the Lebanese people into a destructive conflict—a war waged to support Iran, even if the latter is on the verge of collapse.

The negative influence of the Iranian regime extends throughout the Middle East. Just as the revolution offered salvation to Syrians from the atrocities of the Assad regime, other nations, such as Yemen and Iraq, are facing a similar peril. Iraq is suffering under Tehran-controlled militias. Yemen is aligning with the Houthi movement under the influence of the Persian regime.

For 47 years, Iranian terrorist activities have taken substantial toll across the globe. So, the international community's unified, harsh and unprecedented response is justified, especially after all peaceful attempts at dialogue were met with the consistent intransigence and arrogance of the regime.

Internally, the decades-long attempt of the regime to suppress its own ethnic and sectarian groups has fueled immense domestic resentment. This deep-seated discontent was evident in the widespread jubilation that accompanied the outbreak of war against the regime.

Ultimately, the Iranian regime has become a self-destructive force, much like the fable of the dog named 'Baraqesh'. Baraqesh's untimely bark revealed her hiding place of her people to the enemy, leading to the death of everyone, including herself.

Similarly, the actions of the regime led to its own downfall.

Automatic extension

In other news, Ministry of Interior announced the extension of all visit visas that have expired or are about to expire during the current exceptional circumstances in the country for one month, starting Saturday, February 28, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the ministry explained that the extension will be applied automatically through the automated system, without the need to visit residency affairs departments. All fees and fines incurred during this period will be waived.

The ministry also decided to grant residents currently outside the country, who have exceeded their permitted absence period and are unable to return to Kuwait, an automatic three-month leave of absence through the automated system. This does not require visiting the relevant authorities and includes a full exemption from applicable fees.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed that these extensions may be further extended depending on developments in the country and urged everyone to follow the ministry's official channels for updates.

Cabinet in session

In light of the rapidly evolving developments, Kuwait's Cabinet on Tuesday decided to remain in permanent session to monitor local and regional developments.

This came during the Cabinet's weekly meeting on chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shareeda Al-Maousherji said the Cabinet was briefed at the outset on the phone calls received by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from leaders of brotherly and friendly countries, who expressed solidarity with Kuwait after the recent Iranian attack targeting its territory and airspace.

The Cabinet was also informed of similar calls received by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, in which leaders reiterated condemnation of the attacks and rejection of assaults on civilian facilities.

The Cabinet reviewed the inspection visits carried out by the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister to several key security and service facilities.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet on heightened security readiness, enhanced deployment at vital sites, and the importance of adhering to official instructions and avoiding rumors.

The Cabinet mourned two Kuwaiti Armed Forces martyrs, Petty Officer Walid Majed Suleiman and Petty Officer Abdulaziz Abdulmohsen Dakhel Nasser of the Naval Force, who were killed while performing their national duties.

The Cabinet strongly condemned the Iranian attack on the US Embassy building in Kuwait, describing it as a grave violation of international law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

It reaffirmed Kuwait's right to take all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty, territory, citizens, and residents.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet on the outcomes of the 50th extraordinary ministerial meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which condemned the Iranian attacks on member states and reaffirmed that the security of GCC countries is indivisible. The meeting underscored the right of self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

The cabinet also welcomed the joint statement issued by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Jordan, and the US condemning Iran's missile and drone attacks targeting sovereign territories and civilian infrastructure.

Additionally, the cabinet condemned Iranian attacks target-

ing Saudi Arabia, Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan, and Cyprus, reiterating Kuwait's full solidarity with those countries.

Ministers reviewed emergency response plans and measures to ensure continuity of services, secure supply chains, and maintain strategic reserves.

PM visits emergency shelters

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah paid an inspection visit on Wednesday to one of the approved emergency shelters and accommodation facilities, accompanied by the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi.

His Highness the Prime Minister was briefed by officials about the capabilities and the mechanism for operating the shelter in emergency situations.

His Highness also reviewed the safety system and the logistical and service equipment that ensures the provision of a safe environment in exceptional circumstances.

Late Tuesday, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, accompanied by Acting Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Omar Al-Omar, visited the Ministry of Information.

He was briefed on the mechanism of producing news bulletins and programs at the news studio as well as the field coverage.

His Highness the Prime Minister appreciated the efforts being made by the national cadres to keep pace with the developments of convey the news to the citizens and residents around the clock in collaboration with the state bodies during the current exceptional conditions.

On Wednesday, Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma affirmed full readiness and heightened preparedness across all sports and youth facilities, mobilizing available resources to support state plans in light of current regional developments.

In a press statement after a coordination meeting with officials of the Public Authority for Sports and the Public Authority for Youth, Al-Jalahma said talks addressed unified coordination mechanisms for the upcoming shelter and emergency plan amid prevailing regional circumstances.

He noted that concerned entities are ready to activate approved emergency plans, with data and procedures continuously updated, while enhancing communication and field coordination to ensure swift response and efficient handling of any developments arising from the current situation.

Al-Jalahma added that the current phase requires the highest levels of preparedness and joint coordination among various state institutions, particularly the youth and sports sectors.

He said sports and youth facilities across the governorates are a key asset in shelter plans due to their infrastructure and capacity to accommodate evacuees safely, with field teams assigned to review technical and safety requirements and ensure essential logistical needs.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) affirmed on Tuesday that it fully addressed glitch in the Internet and service is back to normal.

The disruption, which is not related to current events, has been fully handled, CITRA added in a statement.

Earlier, the authority indicated that the largest part of glitch was tackled, and technical teams continued to fix remaining actions, in preparation for normal and full restoration of service in a short time.

Co-ops strategic stocks stable

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi affirmed that the strategic stock in cooperative societies is stable and reassuring.

Al-Ajmi made the statement recently when he inspected the operations of cooperative societies through the central control room for monitoring cooperatives in Abdullah Al-Salem suburb.

He asserted that the supply system is operating at full capacity, with sufficient reserves to guarantee market stability and availability of products. He stressed that there is no reason for concern or panic buying.

Also present during the inspection was acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial, Administrative and Cooperative Affairs Dr. Sayed Issa.

Al-Ajmi looked into the stock movement, supply levels, distribution mechanism for essential commodities, and extent to which cooperative societies comply with the regulations.

He said these efforts are in line with the commitment to implement the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as the decisions of the Cabinet to ensure the preparedness of vital sectors, maintain local market stability, and guarantee food security.

He confirmed that the ministry is acting responsibly in coordination with the relevant authorities as per these directives.

He revealed that the central control room has undergone transformation in accordance with the instruction of Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah.

He said the comprehensive digital transformation project for the regulatory system has been completed, leading to financial and administrative linkage with cooperative societies and real-time data flow that strengthens oversight efficiency and accelerates decision-making.

He added that the digital connectivity system includes integration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Interior. He pointed out that this achieves the highest level of coordination and readiness, and establishes an advanced regulatory framework that adapts to developments and supports the stability of the local market.

He affirmed that the concerned teams are closely monitoring the availability of goods in various areas round the clock, in cooperation with the relevant authorities.

He stressed that the ministry is working at an accelerated

pace to ensure the sustainability of supplies and maintain a balance between supply and demand as part of the commitment of the State to strengthen food security and protect consumers.

He asserted that the cooperative sector operates with full discipline in both performance and supply, supported by centralized oversight that guarantees the availability of products in different parts of the country.

He urged the citizens and expatriates to obtain information from official sources and not be influenced by rumors, emphasizing that the State has the necessary regulatory and supervisory tools to ascertain market stability and meet the needs of everyone.

Sleepers cells monitored

In other news, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdulwahab Ahmad Al-Waheeb affirmed the ministry's high level of readiness to deal with various situations, particularly in light of regional developments, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During a visit to the Civil Defense Operations Room to review current work protocols, he affirmed that the nation's security and the safety of all citizens and residents is the ministry's top priority.

Major General Al-Waheeb issued a stern warning against photographing locations and ongoing developments, noting that such actions are dangerous as they can create panic and anxiety within the community, indicating that the Ministry of Interior is actively monitoring such behavior and will take decisive and appropriate action against anyone involved by referring them to the relevant authorities.

He said, "We will put an end to these inappropriate actions, and several individuals have already been dealt with and referred to the proper authorities as a deterrent."

Major General Al-Waheeb also highlighted vigilance against potential threats, indicating that, "We assume there are sleeper cells or groups with other agendas, and we are monitoring them closely."

Emphasizing the importance of relying on official and credible news sources, he urged the public to verify information before sharing it on social media and to avoid being influenced by rumors or misinformation.

Major General Al-Wahaib said, "Following directives from the country's leadership, the Ministry of Interior promptly activated the Operations Room of the General Directorate of Civil Defense. This room brings together various civilian and military state agencies to ensure their needs are met, support their operations, and effectively manage different situations."

In latest development, the U.S. sank an Iranian warship in international waters, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Wednesday, as it intensified its bombardment with Israel of Iran's security forces and other symbols of power. Tehran vowed to completely destroy the Middle East's military and economic infrastructure - signaling the war was nowhere near over and could expand further.

The tempo of the strikes on Iran was so intense that state television announced the mourning ceremony for Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the conflict, would be postponed. Millions attended the funeral of his predecessor Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989.

In addition to striking Tehran on the fifth day of the conflict, Israel hit the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon, while Iran fired on Bahrain, Kuwait and Israel. As the conflict spiraled, Turkey said NATO defenses intercepted a ballistic missile launched from Iran before it entered Turkey's airspace.

The war has killed more than 1,000 people in Iran and dozens in Lebanon, while disrupting the supply of the world's oil and gas, snarling international shipping, and stranding hundreds of thousands of travelers in the Middle East.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said a torpedo from a U.S. submarine sank an Iranian warship. He did not name the ship, but earlier an Iranian warship sank off the coast of Sri Lanka.

In a Pentagon briefing, Hegseth said that the Tuesday night strike on an Iranian warship was the first such attack on an enemy since World War II.

"An American submarine sank an Iranian warship that thought it was safe in international waters," Hegseth said. "Instead, it was sunk by a torpedo."

Sri Lankan authorities said 32 people were rescued from the Iranian ship and that others died.

Israel said it hit buildings associated with Iran's Basij, the all-volunteer force of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard that conducted a bloody crackdown on protesters in January that killed thousands and saw tens of thousands detained in the country.

The Israeli military also said it hit buildings associated with Iran's internal security command, which also has suppressed demonstrations in the past. It also pounded towns near Beirut.

Israel and the U.S. have said they want to see the Iranian public overthrow the country's theocracy, and strikes against counterprotest forces are likely part of that effort.

Iranian state television showed the ruins of buildings in the center of the capital of Tehran, with interviewees saying the attacks damaged their homes. Strikes have also been reported in the holy Shiite seminary city of Qom, targeting a building associated with a clerical panel set to pick Iran's next supreme leader. Iranian media said it was empty at the time.

State TV has begun calling the conflict the "Ramadan war," a reference to the holy Muslim fasting month currently taking place. But that term also suggested leaders are trying to prepare the public for a protracted conflict.

Adm. Brad Cooper, the top U.S. military commander in the Middle East, echoed that sentiment, saying: "We've just begun."

Cooper said American forces have damaged Iran's air defenses and taken out ballistic missiles, launchers and drones. Israeli military spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said that such damage has led to a decline in launches from Iran.

Still, explosions echoed in the skies over Jerusalem on Wednesday, and Israel's military said Iran had launched mis-

siles toward the country, while Hezbollah sent rockets.

Iran has also struck around the region, and air sirens sounded Wednesday morning across Bahrain, home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet.

At least 1,045 people have been killed in Iran, the country's Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs said Wednesday. Eleven people in Israel have been killed. More than 50 people have been killed in Lebanon, according to the Health Ministry. Six U.S. troops have been killed.

A resident of Tehran, who runs a clothing shop, said he didn't know how to protect himself from the bombing.

"It's very difficult to decide what to do. If I leave the city, how am I supposed to earn money and survive?" said the man, who spoke on condition of anonymity for the fear of reprisals.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard issued its most intense threat yet.

"The continued mischief and deception by the United States in the region will come at the cost of the complete destruction of the region's military and economic infrastructure," it said in a statement issued via Iranian state television.

Kuwait formulates

Citizens seeking repatriation are urged to complete their registration via the dedicated WhatsApp service at: 009651802050.

Kuwait Airways announced Tuesday its readiness to transport Kuwaiti citizens wishing to return home who hold prior bookings and tickets, subject to operational airports currently available.

In a press statement, the company said passengers will be flown to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, with onward travel to Kuwait to be completed by land.

Kuwait Airways indicated that the deadline to register interest is March 6, noting that the move comes as part of its national responsibility and commitment to facilitating the return of citizens under the exceptional circumstances witnessed in the region, in coordination with relevant state authorities.

The airline added that further inquiries can be made through customer service at (171) from Kuwait, or +965 24345555 (ext. 171) from outside Kuwait.

It also noted that inquiries are available via WhatsApp at +965 1802050.

UK Ambassador

The ambassador expressed deep gratitude to Kuwaiti authorities for their continuous professional efforts to protect the public.

He noted that the British Prime Minister held a call with His Highness the Crown Prince, and the British Foreign Secretary spoke with his Kuwaiti counterpart to reaffirm the United Kingdom's commitment to supporting Kuwait and to convey their shock at the recent hostile actions.

The ambassador issued clear guidance for British nationals residing in, visiting, or transiting through Kuwait, urging them to remain in their accommodations, follow instructions from local authorities, monitor updates from the UK Foreign Office, and register to receive alerts.

He stressed the importance of relying only on official channels and trusted sources, staying in regular contact with airlines, hotels, or tour operators for visitors, and avoiding travel to the airport until flights are confirmed by the airline.

Ambassador Rasheed confirmed that the emergency consular assistance lines operate 24/7, emphasizing that the safety of British nationals remains the top priority for the embassy.

He said the embassy continues to monitor developments closely and keep everyone informed, expressing hope for the return of calm and security in the coming days.

Announcement

Issuance of the Bankruptcy Judge's Decision to Open Restructuring Proceedings and Invitation to Creditors to Submit Their Claims.

Pursuant to **Article (105) of the Bankruptcy Law**, the Restructuring Trustee, **Mr. Sabah Mubarak Al-Jalawi**, hereby announces the decision issued by the Bankruptcy Judge in **Case No. 4 / 2024 (Restructuring)**, in which the Judge ruled:

«To accept the petition and open restructuring proceedings for **AM Sweets and Pastries Co. (W.L.L. / Anwar Bader Husain Mohammad)**, and to appoint a Restructuring Trustee.»

Accordingly, the Restructuring Trustee invites all creditors of the company to submit their claims along with all supporting documents within **thirty (30) days** from the date of this announcement.

Claims and supporting documents must be delivered to the Trustee at the following address:

• **Location:** Kuwait Association of Accountants and Auditors (KAAA) – Maidan Hawally – Block 11 – Abdullah Al-Faraj Street.

• **Phone:** 99744026

• **Email:** sabah.aljalawi@kwaaa.org

Cornyn and Paxton head to Republican runoff

Talarico wins Democratic Texas Senate primary over Congresswoman Crockett

DALLAS, March 4, (AP) — US State Rep James Talarico topped Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett in an expensive and fiercely contested Texas Senate Democratic primary that once again has the party dreaming of a big upset in November.

Who Talarico will face depends on a May runoff between longtime Republican Sen. John Cornyn and MAGA favorite Ken Paxton — a race expected to get increasingly nasty over coming months and could hinge on whether or not President Donald Trump offers an endorsement.

Texas, along with North Carolina and Arkansas, on Tuesday kicked off midterm elections with control of Congress at stake and against the backdrop of the US-Israeli war with Iran.

No Democrat has won a statewide race in the reliably Republican state in over 30 years, but in a statement after his victory, Talarico proclaimed “We’re about to take back Texas.”

Crockett’s campaign said she planned to sue over voting issues in Dallas and she spoke only briefly on

Tuesday night to warn that “people have been disenfranchised.”

Cornyn, meanwhile, is seeking a fifth term but is facing a tough challenge from Paxton, the state attorney general. Cornyn hopes to avoid becoming the first Republican senator in Texas history to seek reelection and not be renominated.

The GOP contest also featured US Rep Wesley Hunt, who finished a distant third and conceded. But him making it a three-way race made it tougher for any candidate to reach the 50% vote threshold needed to win the nomination outright and avoid the May 26 runoff.

All three campaigned on their ties to Trump, who did not make an endorsement in the race. Now both Cornyn and Paxton will again fiercely compete to curry the president’s favor.

Cornyn was facing a tough enough battle that he didn’t hold an election night party. Instead, in comments to reporters in Austin, he sought to make the case that a runoff win by Paxton would leave “a dead weight at the top



Texas Democratic US Senate hopeful James Talarico addresses supporters at his election night watch party in South Austin on March 4. (AP)

of the ticket for Republicans.”
“I’ve worked for decades to build the Republican Party, both here in Texas and nationally,” Cornyn said. “I refuse

to allow a flawed, self-centered and shameless candidate like Ken Paxton to risk everything we’ve worked so hard to build over these many years.”

Addressing supporters in Dallas, Paxton made a point of saying he felt like he had during a recent trip to Mar-a-Lago, Trump’s Florida estate. He also proclaimed: “We proved something they’ll never understand in Washington.”

“Texas is not for sale,” he said.
Cornyn’s cool relationship with Trump is part of what made him vulnerable. He and allied groups spent at least \$64 million in television advertising alone since July to try stabilize his support.

Paxton, who began campaigning in earnest only last month, has made national headlines for filing lawsuits against Democratic initiatives. He remained popular in Texas despite a 2023 impeachment trial on corruption charges, of which he was acquitted, and accusations of marital infidelity by his wife.

Senate GOP leaders, who are backing Cornyn, worry that Paxton’s liabilities would make it harder to defend the seat if he is the nominee — and require significant spending that could be better used elsewhere.

In the Democratic campaign, Crockett and Talarico each argued that they would be the stronger general election candidate in a state that backed Trump by almost 14 percentage points in 2024.

Voting was extended in Dallas County and Williamson County, outside Austin, after voters reported being turned away and directed to different voting precincts because of new primary rules. Paxton’s office later challenged a decision keeping the polls open longer, and the state Supreme Court ruled that ballots cast by people not in line by 7 p.m. should be separated from others.

It was not immediately clear how the court’s action would be carried out or how many eligible ballots remained to be counted in Dallas County, Crockett’s home base. Crockett said she would seek legal action after voting was concluded.

And in Harris County, which includes Houston, a spokesperson said that as of 10 p.m. there were still voters at 20 centers.



Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, testifies during a Senate Judiciary Committee oversight hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on March 3. (AP)



Three US citizens who had been detained by ICE (from left), Javier Ramirez of Calif., Leonardo “Leo” Garcia Venegas of Ala., and Marimar Martinez of Chicago, stand and are introduced by Sen Richard Blumenthal, D-C., as Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem appears for an oversight hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, at the Capitol in Washington on March 3. (AP)

Noem defends portrayal of killed Minneapolis protesters as agitators in Senate hearing

WASHINGTON, March 4, (AP) — Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem defended her department’s immigration enforcement tactics in front of a Senate committee on Tuesday and pushed back against criticism from Democrats who say she wrongly disparaged two protesters killed by federal officers in Minneapolis earlier this year.

It was Noem’s first congressional appearance since the shooting deaths of the two protesters galvanized widespread opposition to how the Trump administration is executing its mass deportation agenda, a centerpiece policy of President Donald Trump’s second term. At the time, Noem portrayed the protesters, two U.S. citizens, as agitators, although accounts from local officials and bystander video contradicted assertions from her and other administration officials.

In one exchange, retiring Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina called her leadership a “disaster” and skewered her handling of the immigration crackdown and her management of emergency response.

In the hearing, which stretched nearly five hours, Noem defended her agency’s treatment of immigrants caught up in enforcement activities, and blamed activists and others for attacks against officers.

“I want to address the dangerous environment that our ICE officers face on the streets today,” Noem said. “They are facing a serious and escalating threat as a result of deliberate mischaracterizations of their heroic work and rhetoric that demonizes our law enforcement.”

Since the deaths in Minneapolis, the administration has taken steps meant to tone down tensions, including drawing down the operation there. But the administration has continued pressing restrictions against both legal and illegal immigration, has been buying up warehouses for immigration detention and persisting in federal enforcement in areas around the country. Noem said about 650 investigators remain in Minnesota as part of a broader fraud probe.

The immigration tactics of Noem’s department have triggered a clash in Congress over its routine funding, which remains unresolved, although a spending bill passed last year granted it a significant infusion of cash for the Republican administration’s mass deportation policy. Noem called the partial shutdown “reckless” and blamed Democrats for a move she said put national security at risk.

Her appearance in front of the Judiciary Committee also comes after a weekend shooting at a bar in Texas that is being investigated as a possible act of terrorism, leading to concerns that the escalating conflict in Iran could have repercussions for security in the U.S.

In what was initially billed as an effort to root out fraud in Minnesota, Homeland Security sent hundreds of officers from Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection to the state. They were met by protesters who organized marches, patrolled neighborhoods for ICE activity with whistles and ferried food to immigrants too afraid to leave their homes.

Renee Good, a 37-year-old mother

of three, was shot and killed by an ICE officer on Jan. 7, setting off intense protests demanding an end to the operation. Then on Jan. 24, Customs and Border Protection officers opened fire on another Minnesota resident, Alex Pretti, who had been filming enforcement operations.

Those deaths led to cries for accountability and transparency. Noem, whose initial comments portrayed both Good and Pretti as the aggressors, has come under withering criticism by Democrats and some Republicans, who have called for her to resign.

Democrats repeatedly questioned Noem about her initial comments and called on her to apologize.

“You and your agency rushed to brand these victims as, quote, domestic terrorists,” said Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the top Democrat on the committee. “We have ample video evidence and eyewitness testimony proving you are wrong. Your statements caused immeasurable pain to these families.”

Noem said she was relying on information from people on the scene and blamed “violent protesters” for contributing to the chaos officers encountered.

“I was getting reports from the ground from agents at the scene, and I would say that it was a chaotic scene,” she said.

After public outrage over the deaths, Trump sent border czar Tom Homan to Minneapolis to take control of operations. Homan has since announced a drawdown of the ICE and CBP officers who had been sent to Minnesota to carry out what had been dubbed

Operation Metro Surge, although he’s been adamant that the president’s mass deportation agenda will continue.

Republicans largely kept the focus on the large numbers of migrants who came into the country under former President Joe Biden, portraying Noem as the leader of a cleanup effort of the former administration’s mess.

But she did come under some harsh questioning by members of her own party. Tillis, who called on Noem to resign following the shootings in Minneapolis, criticized her for erroneously arresting American citizens, for failures in her disaster recovery agency and for how she shot her own dog.

“What we’ve seen is a disaster under your leadership, Miss Noem, a disaster,” Tillis said. “What we’ve seen is innocent people getting detained that turn out are American citizens.”

Tillis, who has already announced that he is not running for another term, added: “We’re beginning to get the American people to think that deporting people is wrong. It’s the exact opposite. The way you’re going about deporting them is wrong.”

Another Republican, Sen. John Kennedy from Louisiana, also pushed her to explain why her department paid more than \$200 million for an ad campaign she appeared in last year encouraging migrants to leave the country voluntarily and questioned whether Trump knew about the price tag ahead of time.

Noem, who is set to appear Wednesday in front of a House committee, defended those ads, saying they were effective and went through the regular department bidding process.

Europe

Russia captures 2 settlements in frontline: Russian forces have taken control of two settlements in the frontline following active and decisive operations, including Bobylevka in the Sumy region and Veselyanka in the Zaporizhzhia region, the Russian Defense Ministry said Tuesday.

According to the ministry, Russian Armed Forces carried out strikes on 142 targets, including Ukrainian airfields used to launch long-range strike drones, energy facilities and port infrastructure supporting Ukraine’s military-industrial complex, as well as temporary deployment points of Ukrainian armed formations and foreign mercenaries.

Russian air defense systems shot down 12 guided aerial bombs and 136 fixed-wing drones, it said. (Xinhua)

Spain footbridge collapse kills 5: Five people were killed and one remains missing after a wooden footbridge collapsed along a coastal path at El Bocal beach in the northern Spanish city of Santander on Tuesday afternoon, local media reported.

The wooden structure, part of a coastal path connecting El Bocal and the Spanish Institute of Oceanography, gave way for reasons still under investigation. Seven people were on the footbridge at the time, all of whom fell into the water and onto the rocks below.

One person was rescued alive, while five deaths have been confirmed, including one individual who was taken to the Marques de Valdecilla University Hospital in critical condition and later succumbed to severe injuries. One person remains unaccounted for. (Xinhua)

Man arrested in Birmingham stabbing: A 32-year-old man has been arrested in connection with a stabbing incident in the Alum Rock area of Birmingham and is currently in police custody, according to the West Midlands Police.

The police were called to Bridge Road shortly after 12 pm following reports that another man had been seriously injured. A woman also sustained injuries not believed to be life-threatening or changing.

A nursery nearby was locked down after witnesses saw a man stabbing another man in the street. Ambulance crews arrived to find a man with serious injuries and administered advanced life support on scene, and the woman was treated for less serious injuries, Sky News reported. (AP)

War with Iran strains US-UK ties as Starmer and Trump disagree

LONDON, March 4, (AP) — Keir Starmer has never had a bad word to say in public about Donald Trump.

That is not being reciprocated now as the American president lambasts the British prime minister over his reluctance to join the US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

The dispute is roiling a relationship that Starmer worked hard to forge, and further straining trans-Atlantic ties frayed by Trump’s “America first” foreign policy and transactional approach to international relations.

“This was the most solid relationship of all. And now we have very strong relationships with other countries in Europe,” Trump told British tabloid The Sun in an interview published Tuesday.

“I mean, France has been great. They’ve all been great,” Trump said. “The UK has been much different from others.”

Starmer initially blocked American planes from using British bases for the attacks on Iran that started on Saturday. He later agreed to let the United States use bases in England and on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean to strike Iran’s ballistic missiles and their storage sites, but not to hit other targets.

Even after the British base at Akrotiri in Cyprus was hit by an Iran-made drone over the weekend, Starmer said that the United Kingdom “will not join offensive action.” He said Tuesday that a Royal Navy destroyer, HMS Dragon,



US President Donald Trump, (left), and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer look at each other as they shake hands during a press conference at Chequers near Aylesbury, England on Sept 18, 2025. (AP)

and helicopters with counter-drone capabilities were being sent to the region as part of “defensive operations.”

The British leader has offered a rare, though implicit, rebuke of the U.S. president, saying Monday that the UK government doesn’t believe in “regime change from the skies.”

“Any UK actions must always have a lawful basis and a viable, thought-through plan,” Starmer told lawmakers in the House of Commons on Monday.

“President Trump has expressed his disagreement with our decision not to get involved in the initial strikes, but it is my duty to judge what is in Britain’s national interest,” Starmer added.

The Financial Times called it Starmer’s “Love Actually moment” — a reference to the 2003 movie scene in which a British prime minister played by Hugh Grant stands up to a bullying U.S. president played by Billy Bob Thornton.



French Marine officers wait atop “Le Vigilant” nuclear submarine at L’île Longue military base, near Brest, Brittany, July 13, 2007. (AP)

French President Macron orders nation’s N-powered aircraft carrier to Mediterranean

PARIS, March 4, (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday ordered France’s nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to move from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean to help protect allied assets during the war in the Middle East.

Macron said the Charles de Gaulle carrier will be escorted by frigates and its air wing. In a prerecorded speech on French TV, Macron added that Rafale fighter jets, air-defense systems and airborne radar systems have been deployed over the past few hours in the Middle East.

“And we will continue this effort as much as necessary,” Macron said.

France, the UK and Germany have previously said that they weren’t involved in the strikes on Iran by the United States and Israel that began late last week, but were prepared to take defensive action to destroy Iran’s capability to fire missiles and drones.

Macron, however, said that French forces had shot down drones “in legitimate self-defense in the very first hours of the conflict, to defend the airspace of our allies, who know they can rely on us.” He did not elaborate.

In explaining the need to move France’s aircraft carrier, Macron cited Monday’s strike on a British air force base on Cyprus, adding that Cyprus was a member of the European Union with which France has recently signed a strategic partnership.

“This requires our support,” Macron said.

Macron also said that France has defense agreements binding the EU nation to Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as strong commitments to Jordan and Iraq.

Noting that the war had spread to Lebanon, Macron said the Iran-backed militant Hezbollah group made “the grave mistake of striking Israel” and putting the Lebanese people in danger but warned against Israel launching a ground operation.

“This, too, would be a dangerous escalation and a strategic error,” he said. “Hezbollah must imperatively cease all strikes, and I call on Israel to respect Lebanese territory and its integrity.”

Reflecting France’s traditional support for rules-based international order, Macron noted that France “cannot approve” of the strikes by Israel

and the US on Iran because they were carried outside of the framework of “international law.”

He said it would be “desirable” to end the strikes as quickly as possible, and that lasting peace in the region can only be achieved through the resumption of diplomatic negotiations.

“And I also wish here to express the hope that the Iranian people may themselves freely decide their own destiny,” Macron added.

“That said, history never weeps for the executioners of their own people, and none of them will be mourned,” he said in reference to the killings of Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other Iran top officials.

Macron also insisted on Iran’s responsibility for the conflict.

“It is Iran that developed a dangerous nuclear program and unprecedented ballistic capabilities; that armed and financed terrorist groups in neighboring countries—Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, Shiite militias in Iraq—and that supported Hamas, while always affirming its objective of destroying the State of Israel,” he said.

INTERNATIONAL



The opening meeting of the fourth session of the 14th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, March 4. (Xinhua)

China's top political advisory body starts annual session

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee, China's top political advisory body, opened its annual session on Wednesday in Beijing.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, together with other leaders, attended the opening meeting of the fourth

session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee at the Great Hall of the People.

The agenda for the session was reviewed and approved at the meeting.

Wang Huning, chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, delivered a work report on behalf of the

Standing Committee of the CPPCC National Committee.

The Chinese people will never allow any external forces to interfere in China's internal affairs, and will resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, a spokesperson said on Wednesday. (Xinhua)

Asia

S.Korea opens appeal hearing in Yoon case:

The appeal trial of former South Korean President **Yoon Suk-yeol**, who was sentenced to five years in prison in the first-instance trial for allegedly obstructing an attempted arrest by the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO), began Wednesday at the Seoul High Court, Yonhap News Agency reported.

The former president was convicted in January over allegations including blocking the CIO's attempt to detain him following the emergency martial law declaration on Dec 3, 2024. Both the defense and the special counsel team filed appeals against the ruling.

Yoon is facing a total of eight trials in connection with the martial law attempt, his wife's alleged corruption and the death of a young Marine Corps in 2023, Yonhap said.

In a separate case on Feb 19, he was sentenced to life imprisonment in the first-instance ruling for leading an insurrection over his martial law declaration. (Xinhua)



Yoon

Cambodia vows to eliminate scams centers: Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet assured on Wednesday that the Southeast Asian country will eradicate online scam centers by April 2026.

He made the remarks at the opening ceremony of the Cambodia-ASEAN Business Summit 2026 in Phnom Penh, saying that the move aimed to reinforce the rule

of law and further safeguard the integrity of the investment climate.

"We have worked deliberately to create a secure and predictable operating environment that minimizes jurisdictional risk, enhances confidence of businesses and investment, more competitiveness, and ensures long term business continuity," he said.

The Southeast Asian country has launched an unprecedented nationwide crackdown on cyber scam networks to maintain social security, safety, and public order, and to restore the kingdom's image on the international stage.

Interior Minister Sar Sokha said last week that Cambodia had deported more than 30,000 suspected foreign scammers, as over 210,000 others had voluntarily left the kingdom after operations against online scams had intensified since June last year. (Xinhua)

Armed man shot by police in Queensland: Police officers in the Australian state of Queensland on Wednesday shot a man with a firearm after he was involved in a traffic collision.

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) said in a statement that officers were called to reports of a collision on a highway near the suburb of Sippy Downs, about 85 km north of Brisbane, shortly before midday local time on Wednesday.

The car involved in the incident fled the scene and was tracked by police until the male driver got out of the vehicle around 10 km from the initial crash site and approached officers while armed with a gun, the QPS said. He was subsequently shot by police officers, who provided first aid at the scene before the man was taken to a nearby hospital in a stable condition.

It comes after a 21-year-old man was fatally shot by police in Brisbane on Tuesday after he allegedly threatened officers while armed with a knife. (Xinhua)

Govt forms emergency team to protect nationals in West Asia

Nepalis set to vote in first election after protests ousted previous government

KATHMANDU, Nepal, March 4, (Agencies): Millions of Nepalis are set to vote in crucial parliamentary elections, the first since a violent youth-led uprising toppled the previous government and thrust forward a new generation's demands for sweeping change in the Himalayan nation.

Authorities have tightened security nationwide ahead of the polls Thursday. In addition to regular forces, thousands of temporary police officers have been deployed, and army troops - generally confined to barracks - are patrolling streets and guarding polling stations.

The government has declared a three-day public holiday to allow voters to travel to their homes. Schools and other public buildings have been converted into polling centers, where ballots will be cast by residents - from remote Himalayan villages to towns across the southern plains.

More than one million voters have been added to the rolls since the last national election in 2022, according to the Election Commission of Nepal. Many of them are also first-time voters who took to the streets during last year's protests that ultimately forced former prime minister Khadga Prasad Oli out of power.

Analysts say the youth movement that fueled the uprising is now poised to shape the outcome of the election, as first-time voters demand accountability.

"This election, all the political parties, whether they are old or new, they are more focused on the youth. That is a great shift in our electoral history," said Bhojraj Pokharel, an independent political analyst and Nepal's former chief election commissioner.

Many voters say they want a break from the established political parties, calling for fresh leadership that can tackle widespread corruption and strengthen governance in the country.

"People don't have big expectations from those who are going to be elected. People are only seeking that corruption should be controlled and we should have good governance," said Swastika Lamichane, a 28-year-old office worker.

Others are angry at the political old guard for failing them.

"For the past generations of our fathers and grandfathers, the same old politicians and parties have been elected and they have always controlled power, but they have always failed us," said Kalpana Saud, a 25-year-old housewife.



Election staff set up polling stations a day ahead of parliamentary election in Kathmandu, Nepal on March 4. (AP)

The election is largely seen as a contest among three political parties.

The National Independent Party, formed in 2022, is widely viewed as the front-runner, mounting a strong challenge to the long-dominant Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), which have alternated in power for

decades. The new party's prime ministerial candidate is Balendra Shah, a rapper-turned-politician who upended the country's established political order in 2022 by winning the race for mayor of Kathmandu. He emerged a prominent voice of discontent in 2025 when Nepal was shaken by a youth-led uprising.

The Nepali Congress and the Communists retain deeply loyal voter bases. But on the campaign trail, Shah's party has drawn larger crowds, underscoring its growing appeal among young voters who seek an alternative.

Political instability has repeatedly shaken Nepal since the monarchy was abolished in 2008. The groups that advocate the restoration of the monarchy say they expect to make significant gains in the new parliament, citing what they describe as rising public support for the former king.

Thousands of monarchy supporters gathered during rallies of former king Gyanendra Shah and chanted slogans for his restoration as constitutional head of state. He is also seen by his supporters as the protectors of Hindus in the country where they are a majority.

The ex-king has little chance of immediately returning to power, as support for him is not as significant.

The next administration will inherit daunting challenges - from delivering on the promises demanded by last year's protests and tackling entrenched corruption, to carefully managing ties with its powerful neighbors, India and China. Both countries have long

sought to expand their influence over Nepal.

"The people have very high expectations from the incoming government but the resources are very limited so it will be difficult for them to meet all the aspiration," said Guna Raj Luitel, editor of Nagarik, one of Nepal's most popular newspapers.

Also:

KATHMANDU: The Nepali government on Tuesday said it has formed an Emergency Response Team to address the concerns and ensure the safety of Nepalis residing in West Asia amid ongoing tensions.

The government said the mechanism is aimed at ensuring coordinated, prompt, and effective action. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, nearly 1.8 million Nepali nationals reside in West Asia.

An online system was also established to collect updated information on Nepali nationals in the affected region, the ministry said.

The United States and Israel on Saturday launched a large-scale joint attack on Iran. Iran subsequently carried out retaliatory strikes, targeting sites in Israel and US military bases in the region.

Lat/Am

4 Argentine ex-navy officers face trial: The trial of four former high-ranking officers of the Argentine navy began Tuesday for their alleged responsibility in the sinking of the ARA San Juan submarine in 2017 that resulted in the deaths of its 44 crew members.

A court in the southern province of Santa Cruz is presiding over a trial where the defendants face charges of dereliction of duty, breach of official obligations and aggravated negligent destruction - all of which carry prison sentences. All the defendants maintain their innocence.

Although the military officers face trial, no high-level political figures - including the president at the time or a Cabinet member - have been prosecuted for the November 2017 disaster.

On Nov. 15 of that year, the German-built submarine disappeared in the South Atlantic with 44 crew members on board. (AP)

Jalisco cartel leader buried: The leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel was buried Monday in a shiny golden casket with enormous flower wreaths and a large military presence in the state that gave name to one of Mexico's most powerful cartels.

A federal official confirmed that Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, alias "El Mencho," was buried in a cemetery in Zapopan, a suburb of Guadalajara, Mexico's second-largest city. Dozens of people accompanied the funeral procession, many carrying black umbrellas on a sunny day and with a band playing Mexican regional music known as banda.

The official who discussed the location requested anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the case. The Attorney General's Office declined to confirm the location of El Mencho's burial for "security reasons." (AP)

Africa

S.Africa's anti-apartheid vet Lekota dies: South African anti-apartheid veteran and former defense minister Mosisoa "Terror" Lekota has died at the age of 77 after a long illness, his political party said on Wednesday.

Lekota was a prominent activist against white minority rule in South Africa and served eight years in prison on Robben Island alongside other jailed anti-apartheid figures, including Nelson Mandela, from 1974 to 1982.

Lekota was a fiery member of various political youth organizations during apartheid and was jailed even after he was released from Robben Island for his continued anti-apartheid activism.

He served as South Africa's minister of defense from 1999 to 2008 and was also the national chairperson of the African National Congress, which governed the country after the first democratic election in 1994. (AP)

7 killed in eastern DRC landslide: At least seven people were killed in a landslide on Tuesday at the Rubaya mining site in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with others reported missing, according to sources close to the local administration.

"There was indeed a landslide following heavy rainfall on the mountain known as Kasasa. The earth swallowed many people. We are awaiting the official death toll," David Kasereka, an artisanal miner and resident of Rubaya, told Xinhua.

The Rubaya mines in North Kivu Province are a crucial global source of coltan and have been controlled by the March 23 Movement (M23) rebel group since 2024. The M23 has yet to comment on the tragedy. In January 2026, at least 200 miners were killed after several shafts collapsed at coltan mining sites in Rubaya. (Xinhua)

UN urges halt in Afghanistan-Pakistan clashes

KABUL, March 4, (Xinhua): The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has issued a statement expressing grave concern over ongoing cross-border clashes between Afghan and Pakistani security forces, urging all parties to immediately cease hostilities, fulfill their obligations under international humanitarian law, and avoid further harm to civilians.

The statement issued on Tuesday said that from late evening on Feb. 26 to March 2, UNAMA recorded at least 146 civilian casualties in Afghanistan, including 42 killed and 104 injured. Women and children were among the victims.

The clashes have mainly affected multiple provinces in eastern and southeastern Afghanistan. According to a preliminary assessment by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, about 16,400 families have been displaced by the fighting. Some families who had previously fled their homes due to earthquakes are once again facing emergency relocation.

UNAMA said the continued hostilities have severely restricted movement, making it difficult for humanitarian organizations to access the worst-affected areas.

UNAMA called on all parties to resolve their differences through dialogue, ensure the protection of civilian lives, and create a safe and unhindered environment for humanitarian assistance.



A man inspects a building damaged after a Pakistani strike on a refugee camp in Takhta Pul district, Kandahar province, Afghanistan on Feb 28. (AP)

Also:

KABUL: The counter-narcotics police have set on fire nearly 4 tons of narcotics in western Afghanistan's Nimroz province, said the country's Ministry of Interior Affairs in a statement on Wednesday.

"Counter-narcotics police forces have set ablaze more than 3,984 kilograms of various narcotic substances that were discovered and collected over the past year from areas in Nimroz province," the statement posted on the ministry's social media X account said.

The contraband had been seized during

a series of operations from across the province and was burned publicly.

KABUL: Police discovered 36 kg of opium and took into custody three drug smugglers in Herat province in western Afghanistan on Wednesday, a statement of the provincial police office said.

The alleged drug smugglers, according to the statement, were attempting to take the contraband out of Herat via a car. All the trio suspected smugglers would be handed over to the judiciary after completion of preliminary investigation, the statement said.

26 MSF workers remain unaccounted for in S.Sudan a month after attacks

NAIROBI, Kenya, March 4, (AP): More than two dozen Doctors Without Borders workers remain unaccounted for a month after attacks in South Sudan, the medical charity said.

Two facilities operated by the group, known by French acronym MSF, were attacked on Feb. 3 in Jonglei State, northeast of the capital, Juba, where violence has displaced an estimated 280,000 people since December.

A hospital in the town of Lankien was bombed by government forces, MSF said, while another medical facility in the town of Pieri was raided by "unknown assailants." Both were located in opposition-held areas.

Staff working at the two facilities fled alongside much of the local population into deeply rural areas where armed clashes and aerial bombardments were ongoing.

MSF said in a statement on Monday that "26 of 291 of our colleagues working in Lankien and Pieri remain unaccounted for." "We have lost contact with them amid ongoing insecurity," it said.

The lack of communication with its staff could be linked to the limited network connectivity in much of the state. Staff members who had been con-



Patients are seen at a hospital run by Medicines Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) in Old Fangak in Jonglei state, South Sudan on Dec 28, 2021. (AP)

tacted described "destruction, violence and extreme hardships."

Fighting escalated sharply in December, when opposition forces captured a string of government outposts in north central Jonglei. In January, the government responded with a counter-offensive that recaptured most of the

area it had lost.

Displaced people in Akobo, an opposition-held town near the Ethiopian border, described horrific violence by government fighters. Many described not being able to find food or water as they walked for days to reach safety.

Trinidad and Tobago declares new state of emergency over persistent violent crime

PORT-OF-SPAIN, Trinidad, March 4, (AP): Trinidad and Tobago declared a new state of emergency Tuesday, only about a month after the end of the previous one, as authorities in the Caribbean nation continue to grapple with high levels of violent crime.

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar cited credible reports of attacks planned against law enforcement officers in reimposing the emergency, which grants the government additional powers, including to make arrests and conduct searches without warrants.

Trinidad and Tobago has spent roughly 10 of the last 14 months under an emergency, with the last one ending Jan. 31.

Bissessar said the country's National Security Council has noted that ongoing crime has led to "multiple deaths due to mass shootings and that the continuation of reprisal shootings amongst criminal gangs, if left unchecked, would endanger public safety."

The state of emergency has an initial



The country's coat of arms is displayed on the facade of a government building in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on Aug 20, 2024. (AP)

duration of up to 15 days, but the government can extend it if needed. Government officials did not immediately announce any plans for a curfew.

The latest move to curb crime is expected to have a negative impact on tourism revenue.

"It really isn't good for tourism," said Reginald Mac Lean, president of

the Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association.

With ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, Mac Lean said the state of emergency comes "at a time when we should be capitalizing on what is happening in the rest of the world, to encourage people to come to our shores."

Kuwait oil price surges to \$80.32 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 4, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil rose by USD 1.62, reaching USD 80.32 per barrel on Tuesday, compared to USD 78.70 pb on Monday, according to the price announced by the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) on Wednesday. In global markets, Brent crude increased USD 3.66 to USD 81.40 pb, while US West Texas Intermediate crude rose by USD 3.33 to USD 74.56 pb.

Business

For the year ended on 31 December 2025, and the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting

stc holds its Annual Ordinary General Assembly Meeting



Chairman of the Board Dr. Mahmoud Abdulrahman, accompanied by the executive management.



During the ordinary and extraordinary general assembly meetings.

KUWAIT CITY, March 5: Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, held its Ordinary General Assembly (AGM) and the Extraordinary General Assembly (EGM) at the Company's Headquarters – Assima Tower on Wednesday 4 March 2026, where the attendance represented 78.96% from the total shareholders. The AGM and EGM were held physically and virtually using the online platform specified for holding Annual General Assembly Meetings, provided by Kuwait Clearing Company.

The AGM approved the Board of Directors' and Financial Position's report, the Auditors' report and the Sharia Committee's report for the fiscal year ended on 31 December 2025. The AGM also approved the Audit Committee report and the Corporate Governance report including the Board of Directors' and the Executive Management's remuneration and benefits report for the year ended on 31 December 2024 along with approving all the other items in the AGM agenda. The AGM was followed by the EGM, during which the amendment of Article (6) of the Memorandum of Association and Article (4) of the Articles of Association – concerning the purposes for which the Company was established – was approved.

The AGM also approved the Company's financial statements and the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 38 Kuwaiti fils, representing 38% of the share's nominal value for the year ended 2025, for shareholders registered in the Company's shareholders register as at the end of the record date set for it on Wednesday corresponding to 8 April 2026. The cash dividends will be distributed to the shareholders who are entitled to it at payment date, as of Tuesday, corresponding to 14 April 2026.

Commenting on the announcements of these results, Dr. Mahmoud Ahmad Abdulrahman, stc's Chairman, stated: "Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) continued in 2025 to reinforce its leading position in the ICT sector in Kuwait, achieving solid financial and operational results that reflect the strength of its business model and the clarity of its strategic direction. This performance demonstrates the company's success in translating its long-term vision into tangible achievements through investing in its capabilities, enhancing operational efficiency, and expanding its digital infrastructure to support sustainable growth."

Driven by its strategic framework, r.e.a.c.h., stc focused on achieving balanced growth that enhances profitability, elevates customer experience, and reflects the Company's commitment to operational excellence and sound governance, with the aim of delivering added value to shareholders and stakeholders. Continuous investment in advanced networks, cloud computing, cybersecurity, and AI-enabled solutions formed a key pillar in supporting this direction, alongside the development of human capital, the strengthening of strategic partnerships, and the advancement of the digital services ecosystem. This approach paves the way for a new phase of growth built on agility and collaboration, contributing to a more sustainable and innovative digital future for the State of Kuwait."

Commenting on the company's financial position as at 31 December 2025 Dr. Abdulrahman, stated: "stc's total assets reached KD 479.2 mn by the end of December 2025, while total shareholders' equity reached KD 239.6 mn. This reflects the strength of the Company's financial position and the stability of its capital structure."

Dr. Abdulrahman commented on the cash dividend recommendation of 38% of the Company's total capital for the financial year ended De-

- The General Assembly approved a cash dividend of 38 Kuwaiti fils per share
- Net profit reached KD 34.1
- Solid revenues reaching KD 342.5 mn
- EBITDA reached KD 93.5 mn

ember 31, 2025, saying: "This decision was driven by stc's confidence in the strength of its business model, the clarity of its strategic direction, and its ability to deliver sustainable long-term value, reflecting a well-considered approach that enhances competitiveness, operational efficiency, and ensures the robustness of its governance framework."

This direction reaffirms the company's commitment to maximizing value for its shareholders, through the adoption of balanced strategic decisions that support sustainable growth, align with market expectations, strengthen stc's market position, and ensure the continued creation of value for all stakeholders."

Dr. Abdulrahman noted: "stc is committed to operating responsibly by integrating the principles of sustainability, governance, and long-term value creation across all aspects of its business in alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035. The company continued to reinforce sustainability as a core pillar of its corporate strategy and future objectives, given its importance in guiding our operations and innovations, reflecting our ongoing commitment to transparency and continuous development."

In light of the current events taking place in the State of Kuwait, Eng. Moataz bin Abdullah Aldharrab, the company's CEO, stated: "Driven by stc's commitment to advancing the interests of its valued shareholders, and its dedication to upholding governance practices and maintaining continuous engagement with shareholders, the company ensured the holding of the Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly meetings at this time, taking all necessary organizational measures and ensuring business continuity and the smooth operation of activities under the prevailing circumstances."

Commenting on stc's achievements in 2025, Aldharrab stated: "With divine blessings of Allah, during the year, stc completed a number of projects aimed at strengthening infrastructure and accelerating the speed of digital transformation, most notably the launch of the advanced 5G network. The advanced network will enable customers to access enhanced capabilities that improve operational efficiency and digital utilization, while opening the door for the integration of smart solutions across various sectors."

This step reflects the company's excellence and its ongoing commitment to providing the latest innovative and advanced digital services and products to meet the needs of both individual and enterprise customers, as stc continues to enhance the digital experience in line with the rapid developments in the telecommunications and information technology sector."

During the year, stc also accelerated the integration of artificial intelligence into its operations, contributing to improved business efficiency and enhanced operational workflows. The application of AI in network management, customer services, and internal operations has strengthened accuracy, sped up responsiveness, and optimized resource utilization, supporting the delivery of high-quality services and creating greater value for both customers and shareholders."

Aldharrab noted: "In 2025, stc strengthened its partnerships with gov-

ernment entities through its subsidiaries, e-Portal Holding Company and solutions by stc, aiming to support digital transformation and the development of government services. These partnerships contribute to improving operational efficiency, streamlining procedures, and enhancing the quality of services provided, thereby fostering integration between the public and private sectors. This is aimed to create sustainable value for society and the national economy and reinforce stc's position as a leading company in the field of information and communications technology."

Commenting on the announcement of the financial results for the year ended December 31, 2025, Eng. Aldharrab said: "stc achieved good financial performance during the financial year ended 31 December 2025, supported by sustainable growth across its various operating segments. Total revenues reached KD 342.5 million, recording a growth of 1.8% in 2025, compared to KD 336.5 million in the previous year. This growth was driven primarily by higher revenues from the Consumer segment, which accounted for 77.8% of total revenues. In addition, the Enterprise segment contributed 22.2% of total revenues, supported by ongoing efforts to enhance the company's business model, expand digital services, and deliver integrated technology solutions that meet the needs of businesses across various sectors. Accordingly, EBITDA witnessed a growth of 9.6% to reach KD 93.5 million in 2025 which resulted in a net profit of KD 34.1 million (earnings per share 34 fils) in 2025."

In line with the company's commitment to supporting its employees and developing their capabilities, Aldharrab noted: "During the year, stc relocated to a new headquarters, reflecting its commitment to enhancing the work environment and providing improved facilities for its employees in a manner that supports productivity and sustainable growth. This step underscores the company's focus on human capital, corporate culture, and the development of national talent, strengthening its ability to achieve its strategic objectives and support long-term human capital development, in alignment with its critical role in the national economy, further strengthening its developmental impact."

About stc

Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) is a Kuwaiti shareholding company incorporated pursuant to Amiri Decree No. 187 on 22 July, 2008, to operate and manage the third GSM mobile network in Kuwait as per Law No. 2 of 2007. Accordingly, stc launched its operations in December 2008 and was listed on Boursa Kuwait in December 2014. It is a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and is a subsidiary of stc Group. stc has rapidly reached a leadership stance in the market through its customer and employee centric strategy.

stc offers an innovative range of world-class products, services and solutions with high quality, that cater to the customers' needs and demands, both for individuals and enterprises (solutions by stc). In 2019, stc acquired 100% of the share capital of the Internet Service Provider, Qualitynet General Trading and Contracting Company (solutions by stc) in Kuwait. In April 2022, stc acquired the entire share capital of E-Portal Holding Company and its subsidiaries – the leading ICT services provider in Kuwait.

stc offers high internet speeds due to the implementation of the most advanced 5G network and deployment of the largest network nationwide.

stc seeks to support several initiatives within its social responsibility programme that support various initiatives in the areas of health, education, environment, sports and entrepreneurship that benefit society and employees.

General index falls 0.52%

Boursa Kuwait closes lower by 44 points amid broad declines

KUWAIT CITY, March 4, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed trading on Wednesday with its general index declining by 44.32 points, or 0.52 percent, to reach 8,437.81 points, with 161.8 million shares traded through 13,515 cash deals, valued at KD 54.5 million (about USD 166.2 million).

The Main Market Index declined by 30.89 points, or 0.40 percent, to reach 7,780.68 points, through trading of 49.2 million shares across 4,184 cash deals, valued at KD

7.8 million (about USD 23.7 million).

The Premier Market Index also dropped by 49.51 points, or 0.55 percent, to reach 9,015.27 points, through trading of 112.6 million shares across 9,331 deals, valued at KD 46.6 million (about USD 142.5 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index fell 111.27 points, or 1.37 percent, to reach 8,002.41 points, through trading of 44 million shares across 3,514 cash deals, valued at KD 7.19 million (about USD 22 million).

UN Secretary General calls for global understanding of AI based on science

NEW YORK, March 4, (KUNA): United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres stressed the urgent need for a shared global understanding of artificial intelligence grounded in science and knowledge.

Guterres remarks came during the first meeting of the newly established Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence, following the General Assembly's approval of the experts

nominated to form the body.

Guterres described the panel as global, independent and unique, tasked with helping shape the trajectory of artificial intelligence for the benefit of humanity.

He said the panel would enrich global dialogue with independent and credible science amid rising geopolitical tensions, ongoing conflicts and the growing importance of safe and responsible AI.

The Secretary General added that

the panel's work would help policymakers move from competing claims to practical solutions by establishing effective safeguards and strengthening international cooperation.

He noted the panel would set its working methods, define priorities, form specialized teams and deliver a substantive evidence-based assessment within months.

Guterres said this effort would contribute to the first annual global dialogue on AI governance.

February CPI climbs 3%, clouds rate cut outlook

Türkiye inflation increases to 31.53% amid Iran energy shock

ANKARA, March 4, (Xinhua): Türkiye's annual inflation accelerated in February, complicating prospects for further interest rate cuts, as rising energy prices linked to the ongoing crisis surrounding Iran add fresh pressure to the economy, experts said.

Official data released on Tuesday showed that annual inflation rose to 31.53 percent in February, up from 30.65 percent the previous month. This marks the first uptick in annual inflation after several months of consecutive decline.

Consumer prices rose nearly 3 percent month-on-month in February, driven by food and energy prices, a level economists say remains elevated and inconsistent with a rapid pace of interest rate cuts.

The February reading followed a stronger-than-expected 4.84 percent monthly increase in January, which had already exceeded market consensus and challenges the official year-end inflation target range of 15-21 percent.

The latest figures come as the central bank prepares for its next rate-setting meeting on March 12. While the bank had previously begun a cautious easing cycle after an extended period of tight policy, the recent inflation trend has led analysts to reassess expectations for further cuts in the near

term.

Economists point to rising energy prices as a key driver behind the renewed pressure. Escalating tensions involving Iran have pushed global oil prices higher, increasing costs for fuel, transportation and production in Türkiye, which relies heavily on imported energy.

"February's nearly 3 percent monthly inflation shows that price pressures remain persistent," Istanbul-based economist Mustafa Sonmez told Xinhua. "When you combine this with January's rise, it is clear that the disinflation process is proving uneven," he pointed out.

Sonmez noted that higher energy prices are quickly transmitted throughout the economy.

"The Iran crisis has lifted oil prices, and Türkiye feels that impact nearly immediately. Fuel costs affect logistics, food prices and industrial production. This creates second-round effects that will make inflation harder to contain," he added.

Atilla Yesilada, another Istanbul-based economist and market analyst, said the February data has reduced the likelihood of an immediate rate cut.

"A monthly increase close to 3 percent is high, especially after January's strong figure," Yesilada said.

"Under these circumstances, the central bank may prefer to pause in March and evaluate whether the recent uptick is temporary or more persistent," he stressed.

Yesilada also noted that energy-driven inflation poses a particular challenge. "Energy prices are rising again because of the Iran-related tensions. For an economy with a sizable energy import bill, this not only affects inflation but also the current account and the exchange rate," he said.

Despite the recent acceleration, Türkiye has made significant progress in bringing down inflation from extremely high levels.

Two years ago, annual inflation had surged above 75 percent amid currency volatility and strong domestic demand. Through aggressive monetary tightening and a broader policy shift, authorities have since managed to reduce annual inflation to around 30 percent.

According to Yesilada, the final stage of disinflation is often the most difficult, particularly when external shocks emerge.

"Policymakers are walking a tightrope. They want to sustain growth and ease financial conditions, but they cannot risk undermining credibility after the hard-won gains of the past two years," he said.

Supply chain strain deepens

Iran war disrupts global ocean freight and air cargo supply chains beyond oil

NEW YORK, March 4, (AP) — The Iran war has effectively halted oil tanker movement in the key Strait of Hormuz. But it's also disrupting the wider global supply chain beyond oil, affecting everything from pharmaceuticals from India, semiconductors from Asia and oil-derived products like fertilizers that come from the Middle East.

Cargo ships are stuck in the Gulf or making a much longer detour around the southern tip of Africa. Planes carrying air cargo out of the Middle East are grounded. And the longer the war drags on, the more likely that there will be shortages and price increases on a wide range of goods.

"This is really causing some major impacts within the global supply chain," said Patrick Penfield, professor of supply chain practice at Syracuse University. "As this conflict keeps progressing, you'll start to see some shortages, you'll see some major price increases."

Clarksons Research, which tracks shipping data, estimates that about 3,200 ships, or about 4% of global ship tonnage, are idle inside the Persian Gulf, but that includes about 1,231 that likely only operate within the Gulf. About 500 ships, or 1% of global tonnage, are currently "waiting" outside the Gulf in ports off the coast of the United Arab Emirates and Oman, according to the firm.

While those may seem like small percentages, they have a domino effect that will lead to congestion elsewhere, said Michael Goldman, general manager North America of CARU Containers.

"The supply chain is kind of like a long train with many cars and each car represents, let's say, a port in the world. Well, if one car gets derailed, it can very often have a domino effect to many other cars behind it or in front of it," he said. "So although we only have a small number of ports affected by this military action, it can really have a big effect on the total supply chain."

On Tuesday, President Donald Trump pitched a plan aimed at getting oil and trade moving again through the Strait.

Trump said on social media he ordered the U.S. International Development Finance Corp. to provide political risk insurance for tankers carrying oil and other goods through the Persian Gulf "at a very reasonable price."

Political risk insurance is a type of coverage intended to protect firms

against financial losses caused by unstable political conditions, government actions, or violence. Marine insurers had been canceling or raising rates for insurance in the region.

He said that, if necessary, the U.S. Navy would escort oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz. The Navy has at least eight destroyers and three, smaller, littoral combat ships in the region. These ships have previously been used to escort merchant shipping in the region and in the Red Sea.

A wide range of products are shipped through the Mideast region. Along with about 20% of the world's oil that comes from the region, products made with natural gas such as petrochemical feedstock - used to make plastic and rubber - and nitrogen fertilizer come from the Middle East. Pharmaceuticals exported from India and semiconductors and batteries exported from Asia to the rest of the world are all shipped through the region and could face delays.

In addition to constraints on the Strait of Hormuz, the instability has put a damper on transit in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, which had just begun to see more transit after years of instability due to Houthi attacks on ships in the region. Shipping company Maersk had resumed transit in the Suez Canal and Red Sea but said Sunday it was rerouting that traffic around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa, a move other companies have been making to avoid the volatile region.

That journey adds 10 to 14 days to the trip and about \$1 million extra in fuel per ship, Syracuse' Penfield estimates.

With higher fuel prices, longer routes and higher risk in the region, shippers have begun adding fuel and "war risk" or "emergency conflict" surcharges to what they're charging clients, leading to higher costs all around, he said.

Air cargo has also been constrained. Closed airspace and airports in countries including UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, and Iran have stranded tens of thousands of people - and cargo.

Each of the three major Middle Eastern airlines - Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways - operate fleets of cargo aircraft, and the airlines also transport goods in the belly of their passenger planes.

The amount of goods that travels through the air typically accounts for less than 1% of all freight moving globally, but the products that do travel by air

tend to be perishable or high-value goods like pharmaceuticals, electronics and produce that together account for about 35% of the world trade value, Boeing estimated in its World Air Cargo Forecast.

The longer these airports in the Middle East remain closed the greater the potential disruption to the economy if these sensitive shipments don't arrive or have to be rerouted around the conflict. Even before the war in Iran began over the weekend, air freight and airlines were already contending with closed airspace over Ukraine and Russia.

Flights through these Middle Eastern airport hubs are a key route for passengers and cargo from India. Henry Harteveldt, an airline industry analyst with Atmosphere Research Group, said it's going to be hard to get to India now, and passengers may have to switch to different routes that fly west across Asia. Airlines may have to resort to longer flights, and in some case even add fuel stops on some routes.

"Remember, there's a lot of pharmaceutical products that are made in India and then exported to different countries around the world. If that's disrupted, that has a huge, huge impact," Harteveldt said.

Air cargo costs are expected to rise due to reduced capacity, increased demand, and surcharges.

Maersk said in an operational update Tuesday that it expects air freight rates to rise due to capacity constraints.

"Airlines are also introducing or reviewing the possibility of introducing war risk surcharges on shipments routed through or near the impacted regions," Maersk said in a statement. "There may also be added costs linked to jet fuel which in turn can push up costs."

Despite the supply chain upheaval, however, Michael Goldman, general manager North America of CARU Containers, said the industry will adjust. Over the past few years it has faced other major disruptions like COVID supply shortages and other recent Mideast conflicts and has become more nimble.

"The specific situation that's happening is pretty unprecedented, so it's very unique from that perspective," he said. "But for the last few years the industry just kind of runs on disruption. So in terms of our industry having disruption, that is nothing new. That's more of the same."



People pass by a screen showing the Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI) at the Korea Exchange in Seoul, South Korea, Wednesday, March 4, 2026. (AP)

Gold, silver gain

Global markets wobble, Asia sinks on war fears

BANGKOK, March 4, (AP) — European shares opened higher on Wednesday after another day of sell-offs in Asia, where South Korea's benchmark plunged more than 12%.

U.S. futures were 0.3% lower.

Oil prices climbed more than 3% as the United States and Israel war with Iran entered its fifth day, with Israel targeting the Iranian leadership and security forces and the Islamic Republic hitting back with missile barrages and drone attacks across the region.

Worries over the war, which U.S. President Donald Trump has suggested could last a month or longer, have hammered world markets, spooking investors who fear more spikes for oil prices may grind down the global economy and sap corporate profits.

"I think the Iran situation is getting out of hand, and I think that U.S. President Donald Trump miscalculated enormously," said Francis Lun, CEO of Venturesmart Asia. "The situation is very grim."

Still, sentiment appeared to steady early Wednesday in Europe, where Germany's DAX edged 0.2% higher to 23,851.86. In Paris, the CAC 40 was nearly unchanged at 8,105.25. Britain's FTSE 100 edged 0.1% lower to 10,470.00.

In Asia, South Korea's Kospi led the regional losses as energy security concerns eclipsed optimism over the boost computer chipmakers like Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix have been getting from expanding use of artificial intelligence.

The Kospi sank 12.1% to 5,093.54. Samsung's shares dropped 11.7%, while SK Hynix gave back 9.6%.

The Korea Exchange temporarily halted trading for the Kospi index, while a circuit breaker was also triggered on the tech-oriented Kosdaq after it fell by more than 8%. It later dropped nearly 14%.

South Korea's stock market has been one of the world's best performers this year, but its economy depends heavily on trade and fuel imports, that are threatened with disruptions to traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow gateway to the Persian Gulf through which roughly a fifth of globally traded oil passes.

Trump announced Tuesday that he had ordered the U.S. Development Finance Corp. to provide political risk insurance and guarantees for financial security of all maritime trade.

"If necessary, the United States Navy will begin escorting tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, as soon as possible," Trump said

in a message posted by the White House on X.

Still, the price of U.S. benchmark crude oil climbed more than 3.5%, to \$77.18 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, gained 3.7% to \$84.38 per barrel. Its price has jumped about 15% since the war began.

"Trump's assurances of the US underwrite shipping insurance against Middle East conflict risks and even U.S. naval escorts only mitigate, but do not eliminate, enduring upside risks to oil prices," Mizuho Bank said in a commentary.

The increased insurance costs filtering through to shipping would ultimately cost an extra \$5 to \$15 a barrel, it said, adding that the "war premium" remains firmly intact.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 shed 3.6% to 54,245.54. Like South Korea and Taiwan, Japan depends heavily on imports of oil and natural gas from the Persian Gulf.

Elsewhere in Asia, the Hang Seng in Hong Kong fell 2% to 25,249.48 and the Shanghai Composite index shed 1% to 4,082.47.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 declined 1.9% to 8,901.20.

Taiwan's Taixei lost 4.4% and shares in Bangkok sank 6%.

On Tuesday, the S&P 500 finished with a loss of 0.9% after dropping as much as 2.5% on concerns over the war's damage to the economy. The Dow Jones Industrial Average pared its loss to 0.8% and the Nasdaq composite fell 1%.

Some analysts say stocks could rebound if the war ends soon. If it drags on, higher inflation partly due to rising energy prices could tie the Federal Reserve's hands and keep it from cutting interest rates.

For now, one of the most evident impacts on the economy has been a surge in gasoline prices.

While drivers in Europe and some Asian cities waited in line to fill their tanks with fuel, as a net oil exporter the U.S. does not face a shortage. But prices are still influenced by global market trends.

In the U.S., a gallon of regular was selling for \$3.11 on average, up 11 cents, according to motor club AAA, surprising some drivers at the pump. Gasoline prices were already rising before the U.S. launched strikes on Iran as refiners were switching over to summer blends of fuel.

In other dealings early Wednesday, the dollar fell to 157.46 Japanese yen from 157.74 yen. The euro slipped to \$1.1604 from \$1.1612.

The price of gold rose 1.2%, while silver gained 2.6%.

Spain's Sánchez says 'no to the war' in Iran despite Trump's trade threat

EU backs Spain after Trump's trade warning

MADRID, March 4, (AP) — Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez again criticized the U.S. and Israel's military actions in Iran, standing firm on Wednesday against trade threats from Washington and warning that the war in the Middle East risked "playing Russian roulette" with millions of lives.

"We are not going to be complicit in something that is bad for the world and is also contrary to our values and interests, just out of fear of reprisals from someone," Sánchez said in a televised address.

President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened to end U.S. trade with Spain because of Spain's refusal to allow the U.S. to use joint military bases in the country in its attacks on Iran.

Sánchez has called the U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran an "unjustifiable" and "dangerous" military intervention.

It's not clear how Trump would cut off trade with Spain, which is a member of the European Union. The EU negotiates trade on behalf of all its 27 member states.

On Wednesday, Sánchez expressed concern that the attacks on Iran could lead to another costly military quagmire in the Middle East, similar to the past American interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"In short, the position of the government of

Spain can be summarized in four words," Sánchez said. "No to the war."

The EU said Wednesday it would protect its interests and work to stabilize its trade relationship with the U.S., with which it struck a trade deal last year after months of economic uncertainty over Trump's tariff blitz.

"We stand in full solidarity with all member states and all its citizens and, through our common trade policy, stand ready to act if necessary to safeguard EU interests," said European Commission spokesperson Olof Gill.

After Spain denied U.S. use of its bases, Trump on Tuesday said "we could use their base if we want," referencing the Rota and Morón installations in southern Spain that the U.S. and Spain share, but which remain under Spanish command. "We could just fly in and use it," Trump said. "Nobody's going to tell us not to use it, but we don't have to."

Tuesday's threats from Washington were just the latest instance of the U.S. president wielding the threat of tariffs or trade embargoes as punishment. The U.S. Supreme Court last month struck down Trump's far-reaching global tariffs, saying emergency powers do not allow the president to unilaterally impose sweeping tariffs.

However, Trump maintains that the court allows him to instead impose full-scale embargoes on other nations of his choosing.

Spain has not had any direct contact with the U.S. since Trump's criticisms, Economy Minister Carlos Cuerdo said Wednesday.

"I want to send a message of calm," Cuerdo told

Spanish radio station Cadena Ser. "Beyond those comments (by Trump), there have not been any more moves (by the U.S.)."

Spain's main business groups expressed concerns over the U.S. trade threat, calling the U.S. a "key partner from an economic and political standpoint."

"We trust that our trade relations will ultimately not be affected in any way," the Spanish business chambers CEO, CEPYME and ATA said Tuesday.

Last year, Spain's central bank issued a report that concluded Europe's fourth-largest economy was relatively cushioned compared to the EU average when it came to exposure to tariffs by Trump.

Spain's exports and imports with the U.S. accounted for 4.4% of GDP, the Bank of Spain said, while trade with the U.S. for the EU as a whole was 10.1%.

Exports of Spanish goods to the U.S. accounted for 1% of Spain's GDP, or 16 billion euros (\$18.6 billion), making it Spain's sixth largest export market for goods, the bank concluded.

Spain's position on the Iran conflict is the latest flare-up in its relationship with the Trump administration.

Spain was an outspoken critic of Israel's war in Gaza and attracted Trump's ire last year when it backed out of NATO's pledge to increase defense spending by members to 5% of GDP. At the time, Spain said it could meet its estimated defense needs by spending less - just 2.1% of its GDP - a move that Trump roundly criticized and also threatened with tariffs in response.

Govt to launch gas roadmap as geopolitical risks grow

Malaysia warns Hormuz closure would spike energy costs

KUALA LUMPUR, March 4, (KUNA) — Malaysian Minister of Economy Akmal Nasrallah warned Tuesday that any temporary closure or restrictions on the Strait of Hormuz could disrupt global energy supplies, raise Malaysia's energy import costs and intensify domestic economic pressure amid heightened geopolitical tensions.

Speaking at the third Annual CEO Forum 2026 in Kuala Lumpur, Nasrallah said the strait is a key route for crude oil and liquefied natural gas shipments worldwide, and even short-term disruptions could tighten supplies and push global energy prices higher.

He added that Brent crude rose 8.3 percent from about USD 72 per barrel on February 27 to nearly

USD 78 per barrel on March 2, trending toward USD 80-USD 100 per barrel, directly impacting Malaysia's LNG import costs.

Nasrallah emphasized that sudden energy price increases would affect industrial electricity generation, household fuel expenses, and business energy expenditures, potentially raising electricity tariffs and affecting energy security, highlighting the essential link between stable energy supplies and overall economic resilience.

He stressed that the Malaysian government will continue monitoring geopolitical developments, implement mitigation measures to protect the economy, diversify energy sources, expand domestic genera-

tion capacity, and accelerate renewable energy and transition technologies to strengthen long-term economic resilience.

The minister revealed that Malaysia's national gas roadmap, scheduled for launch in Q3 2026, will address geopolitical challenges, ensure long-term energy supply continuity, and adopt continuous evaluation of risks before adjusting policies and updating strategic energy plans.

According to the latest report from the Malaysian Petroleum Resources Corporation, Malaysia's oil and gas services and equipment sector recorded record revenues of USD 20 billion in FY2024, with pre-tax profits rising 95 percent to USD 2 billion.

Official PMI hits 49 amid weak domestic demand

China factory activity contracts for second month

HONG KONG, March 4, (AP) — China's factory activity shrank for a second month in February, though lower U.S. tariffs could bring about a small boost in the coming weeks.

The official manufacturing purchasing managers index, or PMI, slipped to 49 from 49.3 in January, a four-month low, the National Bureau of Statistics reported Wednesday. The figure from its monthly survey of factory managers is measured on a scale of 0 to 100 and indicates contraction when it is below 50.

December's manufacturing PMI reading of 50.1 broke China's eight consecutive months of contraction, but its recent return to negative territory signals more weakness in manufacturing especially under sluggish domestic consumption and demand.

Huo Lihui, a National Bureau of Statistics chief statistician, attributed the weaker data in a statement to seasonal factors including the Lunar New Year holiday, which lasted for nine days in mid-February this year.

A separate private sector PMI survey by Chinese credit research and analysis company RatingDog also released Wednesday appeared more upbeat, with a February PMI reading of 52.1, up from 50.3 in January,



Workers labor at a ceramic ware factory, in Handan in north China's Hebei province on Nov. 4, 2025. (AP)

remaining in the expansion territory and the sharpest expansion since December 2020. The private survey typically better reflect trends among smaller and more export-focused private companies.

Overseas demand has rebounded in February and was strong, said Yao Yu, founder of RatingDog, in a note, and new export orders have grown notably.

"The mixed bag of manufacturing PMI data suggests a similar trajectory to what we observed in 2025," said Lynn Song, chief economist for Greater China at ING Bank, in a research note. "Resilient external demand (is) continuing to drive growth, while domestic demand has been disappointingly soft."

The Supreme Court ruling last month against Trump's reciprocal

tariffs, which resulted in the reduction in U.S. tariffs globally including for China, is also likely to provide a "small boost" to exports and manufacturing activity over the coming months, said Zichun Huang, a China economist at Capital Economics, in a recent note.

U.S. President Donald Trump's planned meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in April, which could bring about an extended trade truce between the two countries, could also be positive news for Chinese manufacturers.

China's domestic demand weakness, however, is likely expected to continue to be a problem, analysts said, as a prolonged real estate sector downturn dragged on consumption and investment.

This week, China is set to unveil its economic growth target at its annual national congress that begins Thursday, with economists expecting a growth target of 4.5% or above.

The congress, which lasts for around a week, will also approve Beijing's five-year policy blueprint for 2026-2030, with an expected focus on areas such as boosting technological advancements and self-reliance.

GCC banks show stable credit fundamentals despite the overhang of event risks

By S&P Global

For 2026, the financial profiles of rated banks in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region look stable. This assumes no major geopolitical eruption or sharp and prolonged fall in oil prices, with our base case continuing to exclude both full-scale regional conflict and disruptions to oil production or export routes. Geopolitical event risk can always crystallize, though, as seen in the attacks on Qatar in 2025. But this and other recent episodes have been short-lived and limited to the actors involved. Ultimately, the impact of future geopolitical rifts will depend on the duration, intensity, and implications for specific transmission channels such as oil export routes, financial flows, tourism, and consumer and investor confidence.

Reliance on external funding is increasing in the GCC. Bahrain and Qatar still have the region's highest external debt, in the form of non-resident deposits. We expect capital inflows to the region will remain strong over the next 12 months and believe Saudi banks will continue to tap international debt markets to raise the necessary funding for Vision 2030.

Our Bank Ratings In The GCC Countries

Our average long-term rating on banks in the GCC is 'A-' as of Nov. 15, 2025, a slight improvement on last year as a result of us upgrading banks in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. At the same date, 90% of our rating outlooks are stable and 10% are negative, for idiosyncratic reasons. We continue to factor into our ratings significant government support for the majority of GCC banks and we do not expect this to change in the near future, in the absence of momentum toward effective resolution regimes.

Lending Growth Is Two-Paced, Underpinned By Non-Oil Sector Dynamics

We forecast the oil price to stabilize at about \$60 per barrel in 2026 (Brent) and for the six GCC countries we anticipate unweighted average economic growth of 3.1% in 2026, up from 2.9% in 2025. There are notable differences within the region, though. Banks in Saudi Arabia and the UAE will continue to benefit from the tailwinds of economic transformation and growth of the non-oil sector. In the former, growth will continue to be driven by corporate lending, boosted by Vision 2030 opportunities. In the latter, retail lending, accounting for about 27.5% of total UEA credit as of Aug. 31, 2025, will continue to expand driven by population growth, positive consumer sentiment, and reduced processing times thanks to digitalization. While household leverage has increased consistently in the GCC over the past four years, it remains manageable compared with other emerging markets, particularly considering the high debt-absorption capacity of bankable households.

In Qatar, the expected increase in gas production will boost the country's headline growth and strong fiscal and external balances but is unlikely to create significant growth opportunities for the banking system in the short term. Banks in Bahrain will face headwinds of softer growth due to low oil prices. The latter will also affect Kuwait, although reform implementation and investments will likely support lending growth. For example, the expected mortgage law, if accompanied by other structural reforms, could create new opportunities for the banking system. In Oman, certain investments and non-oil expansion will continue to underpin the growth of its banking sector. Lower interest rates will also support the pace of lending growth in the region. We expect the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates by another 75 basis points (bps) between now and the end of 2026. We also assume most central banks in the region will mirror these cuts.

Asset Quality Indicators Are Reaching Cyclical Lows

The combination of a supportive economic environment, write-offs, and recoveries have helped GCC banks report strong asset quality indicators. As of June 30, 2025, the nonperforming loans (NPLs) ratio for the top 45 banks dropped to 2.7% and the provision coverage ratio increased to 155.6%. More importantly, cost of risk reached a cyclical low of 46 bps. We expect asset quality indicators will remain stable at their current levels, barring any unexpected shock. We expect cost of risk to hover around 50-60 bps in 2026. A few latent risks are worth highlighting:

- A significant portion of lending production remains untested through a full economic cycle. Over the past five years, the top 45 banks printed more than \$700 billion in net new lending. While we generally have a positive view of banks' lending and underwriting standards, new lending is not immune to a sharp economic deterioration. This could be driven by a significant slowdown of the global economy that leads to a major reduction in oil prices, prompting some regional governments to curtail spending. It could also stem from a spike in geopolitical or security risk up to a point where it starts to affect economic activity. According to our calculations, GCC banks can collectively absorb a doubling of their current stock of NPLs before starting to show losses.

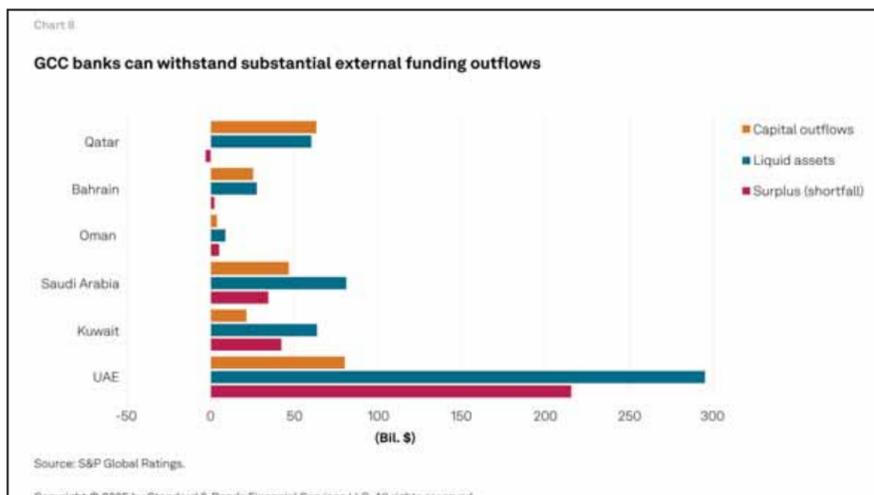
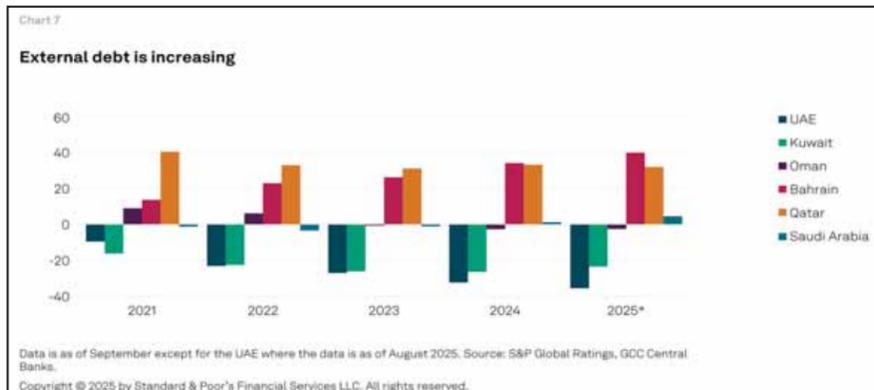
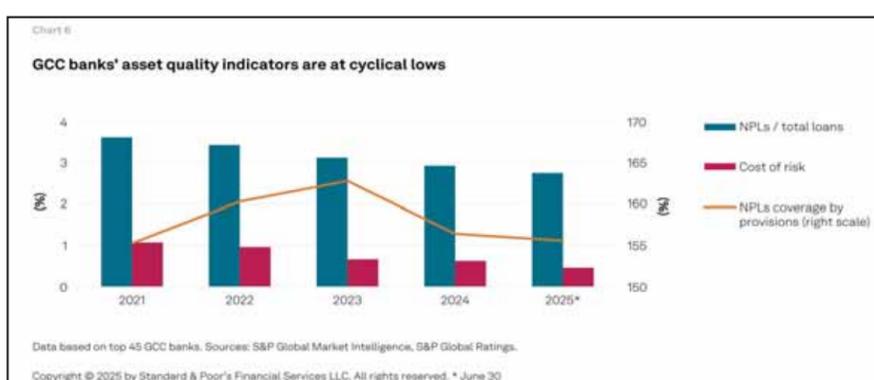
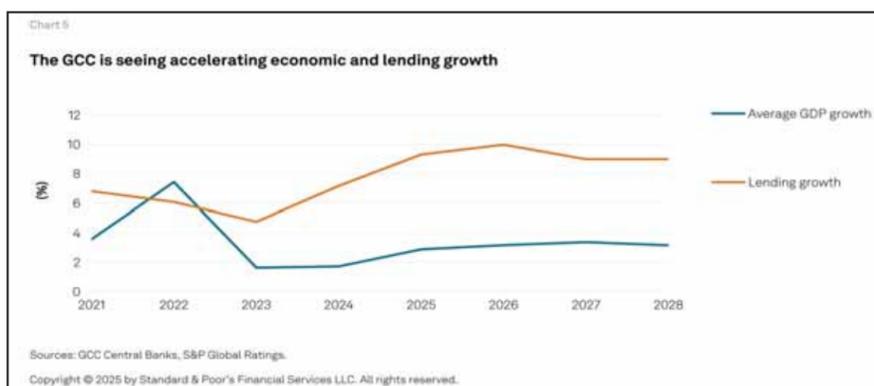
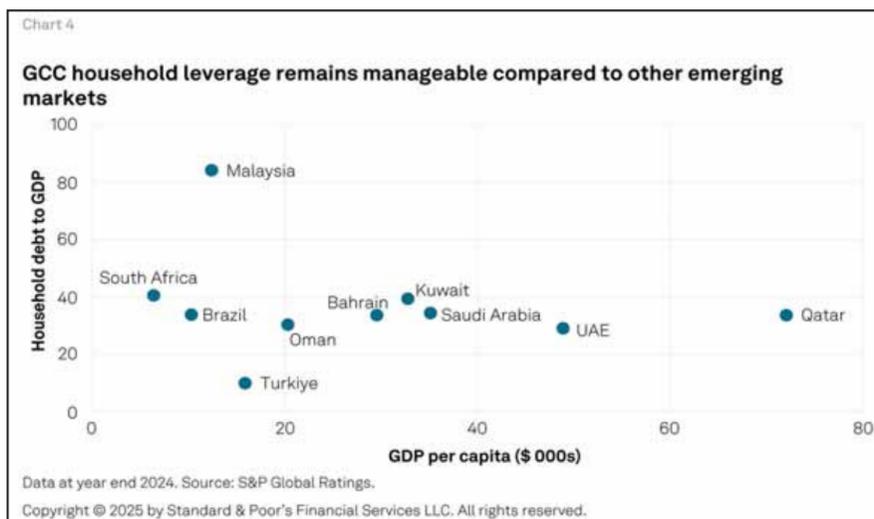
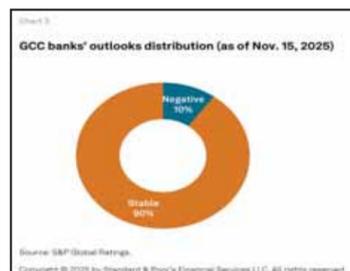
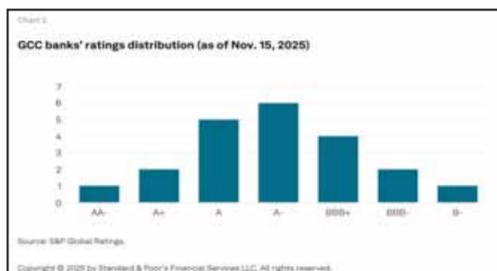
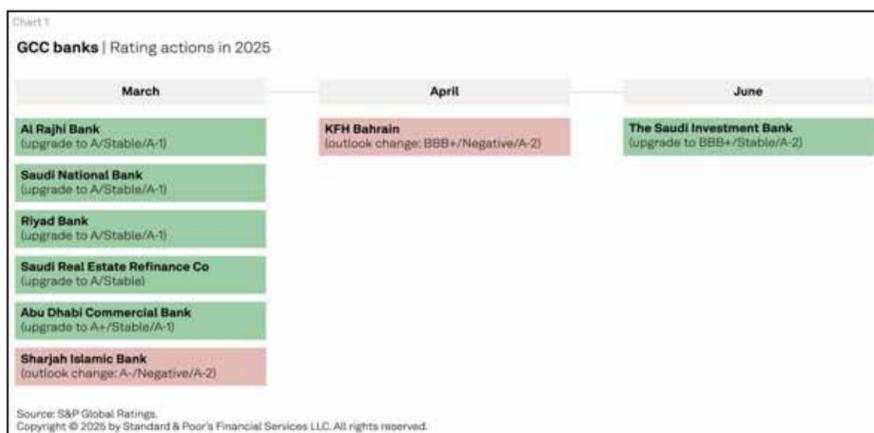
- Some banks have international operations, particularly in Türkiye and Egypt. For Türkiye, we forecast a deterioration in asset quality indicators driven by consumer and credit card loans. Corporate creditworthiness could also be affected by the current economic slowdown, combined with persistently elevated financing costs and the weaker lira. The story is different in Egypt, where borrowers credit quality, particularly SMEs, should benefit from declining interest rates and stronger economic growth. For GCC banks, the risk remains confined to a few players and most of them have the financial muscle to absorb additional risks.

External Funding Is Increasing

Domestic deposit growth is no longer sufficient to fund asset expansion in some markets, particularly in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia where we have seen a pickup in external funding. In Bahrain, banks external debt doubled between December 2022 and September 2025.

A significant portion of this debt is recycled into local assets, including government securities and central bank deposits. This exposes banks to any sudden shift in investors' appetite. The risk is significant because we do not think Bahrain has the financial capacity to support its banking system if it were to experience significant outflows. On a positive note, a significant portion of this funding comes from within the GCC region and should remain stable.

External debt has also been building up in Saudi Arabia. As of Sept. 30, 2025, external debt as a proportion of total lending increased 3.7x compared to year-end 2024. We expect this to continue because banks need to attract external market-based funding to finance Vision 2030 projects, given lagging domestic deposits



Key Takeaways

- GCC banks' financial profiles will remain stable in 2026, in our view, underpinned by broadly stable profitability, supportive asset quality, and solid capitalization.
- The two main downside risks to our baseline scenario are adverse geopolitical developments undermining macroeconomic fundamentals and a significant drop in oil prices.
- The first risk could take the form of a protracted, regional conflict, which is not part of our base case. The second could emanate from a weaker global economy and significant oversupply in the global energy markets.
- 90% of our ratings on GCC banks carry a stable outlook. We have two ratings on negative outlook for idiosyncratic reasons.

growth. We also note positively that the contribution of less stable interbank funding dropped to 47% of total foreign liabilities as of Sept. 30, 2025, from 59% at year-end 2024. We understand that a large portion of this funding is secured by Saudi banks' investments in securities, which somewhat reduces the risk. In any case, we expect the government would provide support to the banking system if needed, as it has previously.

Qatar also relies on external funding. However, the banking system benefitted from government support when navigating the impact of the external funding outflows during the 2017 boycott, which mitigated the banking sector's net external debt position. We note that the recent escalation of geopolitical risk did not result in major external funding outflows from the country. Notably, despite being attacked by Iran and Israel, Qatar did not experience significant foreign funding outflows in 2025. Reportedly, some foreign deposits shifted out of smaller banks and into the market leader in Qatar.

On the other hand, banks in the UAE, Kuwait, and to a lesser extent Oman continue to have strong net external asset positions.

We stress-tested the six GCC banking systems for capital outflows, assuming:

- A 50% outflow of foreign interbank deposits, a 30% outflow of foreign customer deposits, a 20% outflow of deposits from foreign branches and a 10% outflow of other foreign funding sources.
- A 100% haircut on foreign credits and other assets, a 20% haircut on investments, and a 10% haircut on interbank deposits. We calibrated these numbers factoring in the quality of these assets based on our discussion with rated banks.

Our calculations show that all the banking systems, except for Qatar, can withstand outflows using their own foreign assets. For Qatar, our stress test shows a shortfall of \$3 billion, which is much smaller than the previous support extended by the government. This shortfall has also reduced, from \$7.4 billion as of year-end 2024--because a large portion of the increase in external debt was due to the increase in foreign branches' deposits with head office, which would be more stable in a stress scenario, in our view.

Gulf banks also keep a good proportion of their assets in liquid forms. These are generally interbank placements and deposits with the central bank. On top of that, banks tend to maintain a similar proportion of assets invested in relatively high-quality instruments that can be repoed if needed. Therefore, we think GCC banks have sufficient liquid assets to withstand significant private sector deposit outflows, which could happen if geopolitical or security risks were to escalate, which is not our base case.

Profitability Will Decline Slightly

During the first six months of 2025, the top 45 banks in the GCC continued to display good and stable financial performance with an average return on assets reaching 1.7%. Higher lending volumes partially compensated for the slight decline in net interest margin and stable efficiency ratios and declining costs of risk helped. Going into 2026, we foresee a slight decline in profitability given our rate cut expectations. We also expect banks' cost of risk will normalize at around 50-60 bps. In terms of efficiency, we assume banks will continue to spend on digitalization and cyber risk management. We also foresee an uptick in artificial intelligence use not only in risk management and fraud detection but also to improve product offerings to customers.

We expect to see some consolidation in overbanked markets or where it is encouraged by the regulators. Bahrain is an example where two of the largest banks are currently in discussion about a potential merger. In other countries, we think consolidation may happen at the tail end of systems.

Capitalization Is Strong

GCC banks continue to report strong capitalization by international standards, with an unweighted average tier 1 capital ratio of 17% as of June 30, 2025. This ratio has been stable for the past five years, but the contribution of hybrid instruments has increased, particularly for

Saudi banks--where this ratio reached 22% of reported common equity on average on June 30, 2025. That's because shareholders and other investors were less willing to inject core capital into banks and more interested in getting a continuous and predefined income stream from hybrid instruments. It is also explained by the relative aggressive pricing of some of these instruments compared with banks' cost of capital. We expect the quality of capital to continue weakening. However, this trend has not yet reached the point where we would see it as having a negative impact on our assessment of capitalization.

GCC regulators' progress in the implementation of resolution regimes and additional loss-absorbing-capacity (ALAC) instruments requirements is uneven. While there are some laws and working papers in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Oman, these would not be effective resolution frameworks without the requirement for loss absorbing capital buffers. With no material shift in stance by the governments, and a lack of political will to be more cautious about the use of public funds to support distressed banks, we maintain our assumptions of extraordinary government support. We continue to believe that, if problems arose, the authorities' preferred solution would be to bail out the banks rather than bailing-in senior creditors. For the time being, we continue to see the governments of four of the six GCC countries as highly supportive of their banking systems, and we expect they would intervene to prevent problems at systemically important banks. We assess the likelihood of government support as uncertain in Bahrain and Oman due to the sovereigns' limited capacity to support their banking systems.

This report does not constitute a rating action.

Late Oscars bring fresh drama to tightening race

An Oscar race that looked like a runaway may be a close call

NEW YORK, March 4, (AP): Who says to beware the Ides of March?

A March 15 Academy Awards may feel late. By then, it will be almost a year since "Sinners" sunk its teeth into moviegoers last April. Some nominees have been on the campaign trail since the Cannes Film Festival in May.

But the upside of a prolonged Oscar race has meant some unexpected late drama. Think about the same movies long enough, and minds can change. For months, Paul Thomas Anderson's "One Battle After Another" sailed through awards season, picking up prize after prize. But the wins for "Sinners" and Michael B. Jordan at Sunday's Actor Awards - along with some other recent developments - have given the Oscar race what Smoke or Stack might call fresh blood.

An Academy Awards that had looked like a runaway might be a close call, after all. With Oscar voting ending Thursday, let's survey the top categories

Best picture

Where things stand: "One Battle After Another" has won at the Golden Globes, the BAFTAs, the Producers Guild and the Directors Guild. But its nearly unblemished record was shaken up at Sunday's Actor Awards (formerly the SAG Awards), where "Sinners" took the top prize. You'd have to have quite a few rounds at the "Sinners" juke joint to convince yourself that anything else has much of a chance.

What has the edge: The tea leaves are strongest for Anderson's "One Battle After Another." The Producers Guild, which uses a preferential ballot like the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences does, is among the most predictive of bellwethers. Their winners have matched the last five years and in eight of the last 10 years.

The actors guild best ensemble prize, on the other hand, has a shaky track record. In the last 31 years, the SAG winner has matched the Oscar champ only 15 times. The win for "Sinners," though, came right in the midst of Oscar voting. It was a good time to show out. So this race feels close to a coin flip, with a Warner Bros. movie on both sides. The awards season resume makes "One Battle After Another" the front-runner. But "Sinners," even with a record-setting 16 Oscar nominations, gets to play the underdog.

Best actor

Where things stand: This has been one of the most competitive and hard-to-call races of the season. Look at Leonardo DiCaprio. He gives one of the best



Michael B. Jordan accepts the award for outstanding performance by a male actor in a leading role for 'Sinners' during the 32nd Annual Actor Awards on Sunday, March 1, at the Shrine Auditorium and Expo Hall in Los Angeles. (AP)

performances of his career, in the best picture favorite, and he's still a long shot. Instead, Timothée Chalamet was widely perceived as in the lead after early wins at the Globes and the Critics Choice Awards for his frenetic performance in "Marty Supreme." But the BAFTAs muddied the waters (Robert Aramayo, not in the Oscar mix, was the unexpected winner). And "Sinners" star Michael B. Jordan, much to his surprise, won at the Actor Awards.

Who has the edge: Chalamet's maybe meta campaign, full of swagger and braggadocio, rubbed some voters the wrong way. At the same time, many in the academy felt the 30-year-old should have won last year, for his Bob Dylan in "A

Complete Unknown" - a year when he won with the actors guild but lost to Adrien Brody ("The Brutalist") at the Oscars. Chalamet will hope the reverse happens this year. But the academy is notoriously resistant to rewarding young stars. Jordan, 39, isn't much older. But it now suddenly feels like his moment.

Best actress

Where things stand: Since the fall festival launch of "Hamnet," Jessie Buckley has been the favorite. She's won at the Globes, the BAFTAs and the Actor Awards. Her closest competition is probably Rose Byrne, who won at the Globes in the comedy/musical category for "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You."

Who has the edge: This one's easy. Fortunes have fluctuated in most of the top categories, but Buckley has been entrenched as the front-runner for months.

Best supporting actor

Where things stand: Sean Penn, a two-time Oscar winner, has done nearly no campaigning, yet he finds himself the favorite after winning at the Actor Awards and the BAFTAs. But several other nominees remain in the mix. Stellan Skarsgård ("Sentimental Value") won at the Globes and is the kind of widely-liked veteran actor the academy likes to reward. But so is Delroy Lindo ("Sinners"), who was a surprise Oscar nominee. In the eyes of many, Lindo has quickly joined the contenders.

Who has the edge: Penn's recent wins put him clearly in the lead, and he might stay there. But this remains a category rife with possibilities. The academy's strong international leanings should help Skarsgård. And it wasn't an accident that when "Sinners" won best ensemble at the Actor Awards, Lindo gave the acceptance speech.

Best supporting actress

Where things stand: This category has been all over the map. Teyana Taylor ("One Battle After Another") won at the Globes. Wunmi Mosaku ("Sinners") won at the BAFTAs. And Amy Madigan ("Weapons") won at both the Actor Awards and the Critics Choice Awards.

Who has the edge: Any of those three could win. Two of them - Taylor and Mosaku - have the benefit of co-starring in films the academy obviously loves. "Sinners" and "One Battle After Another" have 29 nominations between them, while "Weapons" has only the one. Yet the 75-year-old Madigan, another celebrated character actor who's been great for decades, has the momentum thanks to her charming Actors Award speech.

Books

Reid's 'Unrivaled'

Culinary icon to release memoir

NEW YORK, March 4, (AP): Award-winning chef Patrick O'Connell to bare his 'demons' in a memoir on building The Inn at Little Washington has a book scheduled for September about how he converted an old garage into an international destination for food lovers.

O'Connell's "Main, Middle & Gay" is a memoir by the founder of the Michelin-starred restaurant, The Inn at Little Washington. The title is a reference to streets where the restaurant and hotel is located in Washington, Virginia.

"This book was eight decades in the making. (I had to wait till most of the characters were dead). Unleashing my demons was freeing," the 80-year-old O'Connell said in a statement released Tuesday by Celadon Books, which will publish his memoir Sept. 15.

"Finally, the jagged pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of my life have been assembled into a haunting portrayal worthy of a southern, gothic novel - proving that fiction can rarely compete with reality."

O'Connell, a Washington, D.C. native, opened the restaurant in 1978. He has received numerous honors, including a lifetime achievement award from the James Beard Foundation and a National Humanities Medal, for raising "the culinary arts to new heights of excellence by embracing regional flavors and championing local farmers."

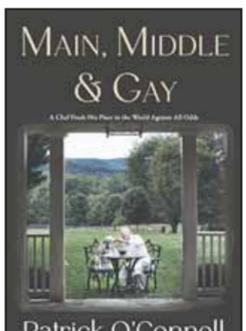
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"Heated Rivalry" author Rachel Reid says she is pushing back the release date of her next hockey romance novel, citing the time demands of sudden fame and the worsening symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

Reid had initially planned to have "Unrivaled" released this fall, but in a video message posted Tuesday on Instagram she announced she was now expecting the book to be delayed to June 2027.

"Unrivaled" will be the third in her "Game Changer" series about hockey rivals-secret lovers Canadian Shane Hollander and Russian Ilya Rozanov. The first two books, "Heated Rivalry" and "The Long Game," are the basis for the HBO miniseries starring Hudson Williams and Connor Storrer that has become a cultural phenomenon and made Reid a major publisher star.

"My life has gotten very different in the last couple months, and although it's all good, it's also taken away my ability to have quality time to write," she said on Instagram. "And there's nothing more important to me than 'Unrivaled' being the best book it can possibly be."



This photo provided by Celadon Books shows the book cover for 'Main, Middle & Gay,' by Patrick O'Connell. (AP)

Book



Christina Applegate appears at the Annual Backstage at the Geffen Gala in Los Angeles on March 22, 2010. (AP)

'You with the Sad Eyes' reveals pain behind fame

Applegate unleashes a raw, probing memoir

NEW YORK, March 4, (AP): Christina Applegate's memoir is not a safe, prim thing. It's raw and angry, lyrical and funny, and more than a bit dangerous - a lot like Christina Applegate.

"My words come out of my face hole the way they come out of my face hole and that's just the way it goes," she tells The Associated Press. "I can feel them coming out of my brain and I have stopped editing them."

"You with the Sad Eyes: A Memoir," out Tuesday, charts the personal and career ups and downs of a veteran Hollywood comic actor with a rawness rarely found in today's memoirs.

She writes of being abandoned by her father and growing up in an abusive household, of being the victim of domestic violence as an adult, motherhood, of surviving cancer and now living with multiple sclerosis.

"I hate the word cathartic because it really wasn't," she says of writing her story. "I just puked it out, adding, 'It was like taking Milk of Magnesia for the soul.'"

Applegate won an Emmy Award playing Rachel's narcissistic sister on "Friends," earned a Tony Award nomination for "Sweet Charity" on Broadway and received four Golden Globe nods. She was named "The Most Beautiful Person in the World" by People magazine in 2009.

But she writes that she has had a lifelong struggle with body image and weight. "I had no idea I was attractive to anyone," she writes. "Truthfully, I have never known how to deal with the fact that I'm a successful person and yet I hate my-



This cover image released by Little, Brown and Co. shows 'You with the Sad Eyes: A Memoir' by Christina Applegate. (AP)

self."

Applegate made a memorable show business debut, appearing in a 1972 episode of "Days of Our Lives" at just three months old and already showing some range - she played a baby boy.

The book charts her three big roles - the dim teenager Kelly Bundy on "Married... with Children," the confused career woman she played on "Samantha Who?" and her favorite part in the Netflix dark tragicomedy series "Dead to Me."

There were also terrifying years, like the ones in which her stepfather was an abusive alcoholic and junkie who pulled her mother into addiction and poverty. She writes of once be-

ing elated simply to have hamburger buns with dinner.

"In looking back across my life, I have realized that when good things happen to me, as many good things have, they are invariably stalked by darkness, dampened by subsequent tragedies and trauma."

Bryn Clark, her editor at Little, Brown and Company, was impressed by Applegate's willingness to offer her unvarnished truth at a time when her peers are usually positioning their brands favorably or making things look rosy.

"We do not see this often - a high profile author really leaning into that darkness and murk and doing it in a way that is not easy," she says. "She just rolled up her sleeves like she's done with everything in her life."

There are great stories about how Applegate made Will Ferrell and Adam McKay crack up with a filthy insult during her audition for "Anchorman" and how she danced in one of musical theater's most demanding parts on a broken foot when she starred in "Sweet Charity" on Broadway.

Applegate looks back with cringe at her first wedding ceremony - it was vegan and dry and she became a bridezilla. ("I'm so sorry, everyone," she writes.) There are other laughable decisions, like the time she took Brad Pitt as a date to the MTV Video Music Awards - but went home with someone else.

Applegate began the process of crafting her memoir three years ago, consulting her diaries and then talking into a recorder for what she estimates was about 100 hours. Once put on paper, she and Clark began to shape it.

"Telling our truth in a way that is vulnerable and honest and uncomfortable is what helps other people feel that they can share theirs, too," says Clark. "I think that's her greatest dream with this book."

One of Applegate's regrets is not being more honest about the sadness and pain she felt after undergoing a double mastectomy. She recalls being interviewed on TV and adopting the persona of Little Ms. Warrior, counting her blessings.

"I was disgusted by myself because I was doing a disservice to people that were sick," she says in the interview. "We've got to just be honest. Look, we don't have to be maudlin about everything, right? But there are people sitting there going, 'I hate this.' And I'm going to say I hate it too, kids."

After going public with her MS diagnosis in 2021, Applegate has changed her approach, becoming very open about how difficult it's been living with the chronic disease.

It has made her use diapers and scotch down stairs on her butt. "My life has in some ways shrunk to the size of my California king," she writes. She created the MeSsy podcast with Jamie-Lynn Sigler to talk about living with the disorder and advising others.

She keeps a hard copy of "You with the Sad Eyes: A Memoir" on her nightstand these days, proud of its unvarnished truth but nervous nonetheless.

"It scares me. I have it next to my bed because I keep trying to go, 'Why did you say that, dude? Why did you do that, dude? Come on, man,'" she says. "But there it is."

Variety

NEW YORK: Two founding members of The Guess Who - the band that crafted the hit song "American Woman" - will tour America itself later this year for the first time in over two decades.

Original guitarist **Randy Bachman** and singer-keyboardist Burton Cummings, who have already announced a tour of their native Canada this summer, are adding more than 20 US dates, they tell The Associated Press.

"Randy and I are getting this incredible welcome back feeling," says Cummings. "It's magic to play the hit records and see people singing along after decades and decades."



Bachman

The Guess Who will cross the border starting June 25 in Minneapolis, and hit such cities as Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, Atlantic City, Boston, Atlanta, Houston, Denver, Salt Lake City, Phoenix, Los Angeles and Seattle.

The last time Bachman and Cummings toured the US as The Guess Who was in 2001 alongside Joe Cocker. Part of the delay in returning stemmed from a trademark dispute with their former bandmates who used The Guess Who name. A settlement was reached in September 2024 giving Bachman and Cummings the trademark. (AP)

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CHONBURI, Thailand: With the festive atmosphere of the Chinese New Year still lingering, a vibrant Yingge performance was staged by Chinese and Thai performers in eastern Thailand.

A familiar scene unfolded in the district of Phanat Nikhom in Chonburi province, where the beats of drums and clashing of cymbals resounded along the roadside and Yingge performers with colorful makeup and elaborate costumes hopped forward while striking their two wooden hammers together to the rhythm.

Running from Feb.28 to March 1, the second Phanat Nikhom Yingge festival attracted seven participating teams, including Nigou Yingge Team from Punning, China's Guangdong Province, as well as Thai teams from Nakhon Sawan, Udon Thani, and Chonburi, marking a significant moment in the ongoing cultural dialogues between the two countries. (Xinhua)

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LOS ANGELES: California's coastal city of Newport Beach held a vibrant Chinese New Year celebration and travel showcase on Saturday as the Lunar New Year draws to a close.

Combining displays of Spring Festival culture with scenes of China's winter tourism offerings, the event, entitled "Chinese New Year: Discover Winter China," was held at Fashion Island, a well-known seaside shopping center in Newport Beach. Organized by the China National Tourist Office in Los Angeles, it showcased the charm of traditional Chinese festive culture and dynamic winter travel experiences in China to communities in southern California.

The program introduced Chinese Spring Festival traditions and intangible cultural heritage items. It also highlighted China's winter tourism resources, such as Harbin Ice and Snow World, enhancing American visitors' understanding of the seasonal diversity of Chinese tourism.

Wu Dawei, director of the China National Tourist Office in Los Angeles, told Xinhua that China's winter season offers distinctive seasonal cuisine and exceptional winter experiences. (Xinhua)

'Deepfaking Sam Altman' and 'The AI Doc' probe AI's future

Duelling documentaries illuminate promise and perils of AI

SAN FRANCISCO, March 4, (AP): Artificial intelligence's dystopian specter has spawned a pair of documentaries dissecting a technology that's depicted in the films as a ravenous parasite devouring humanity's knowledge, creativity and empathy.

The films, "Deepfaking Sam Altman" and "The AI Doc," examine the issue through different lenses while similarly illuminating why the technology evokes both existential fears and utopian visions about how it might change the world.

Both documentaries coincide with an intensifying debate about whether AI will become a catalyst that helps enlighten and enrich people or a technological toxin that insidiously dulls human intelligence while wiping out millions of high-paying jobs that have traditionally required college education.

The AI buildup during the past three years already that has resulted in a \$12 trillion increase in the combined market values of Nvidia, Alphabet, Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Meta Platforms and Tesla, the Big Tech companies that have been leading the charge since the November 2022 release of the ChatGPT chatbot. The massive runup is now stoking worries about the investment bubble bursting.

"There is a lot of anxiety around AI, and the best way to get rid of that anxiety is to talk about it and confront it head-on," Adam Bhala Lough, the director of "Deepfaking Sam Altman," told The Associated Press.

Lough's documentary, which has already been shown in a few theaters around the United States, probes AI by relying on a virtual doppelganger of OpenAI CEO Sam Alt-



OpenAI's CEO Sam Altman speaks at the AI Summit in New Delhi, India, Thursday, Feb. 19, 2026. (AP)

man, whose trailblazing role in the field has inspired comparisons to nuclear bomb inventor J. Robert Oppenheimer. It's Lough's first major project since his HBO documentary, "Telemarketers," garnered an Emmy nomination in 2024.

As its full title suggests, "The AI Doc: Or How I Became An Apocalypticist," digs more deeply into the divide separating the technology's doomsayers from its acolytes.

The documentary rides an emotional seesaw, bouncing

between moments of despair and elation during interviews dozens of AI fanatics and skeptics. It's co-directed by Charlie Tyrell and Daneil Roher, who decided to examine AI's promise and perils as a follow-up to his Oscar-winning 2023 documentary, "Navalny."

Some of "The AI Doc's" darkest moments are delivered by a renowned AI "doomer" Eliezer Yudkowsky, whose vision for the future is so grim that he advises against bringing any more children into the world. The brightest spots are painted by Peter Diamandis, a technology zealot who makes the case for AI infusing humanity with once-unfathomable superpowers.

"The AI Doc" also casts a spotlight on the men steering three of the leading AI laboratories: OpenAI's Altman, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, and Demis Hassabis, who runs Google's DeepMind division. The trio are all interviewed by Roher, who also unsuccessfully tried to talk to the leaders of the two other major AI laboratories - Meta Platforms CEO Mark Zuckerberg and xAI CEO Elon Musk.

The interviews are done against the impending birth of Roher's son as the 32-year-old director tries to find some reasons for hope to counterbalance his existential worries about the AI - a quest that culminated in him embracing the concept of an "apocalypticist."

For all its access and insights, "The AI Doc" seems unlikely to turn viewers into apocalypticists any more than Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film, "Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love The Bomb," elicited warm and fuzzy feelings about nuclear technology.

"This train isn't going to stop," Anthropic's Amodei tells Roher at one point, foreshadowing some of the themes that the Anthropic CEO covers in a recently published essay. "You can't step in front of the train and stop it. You are just going to get squished."

"Deepfaking Sam Altman" is the far-quirkier documentary because of the way that Lough turned the tables on the OpenAI's leader.

After spending months unsuccessfully trying to get Altman to respond to his emails and phone calls requesting interviews, Lough decides to create a "Sam Bot" that becomes the documentary's chief protagonist who demonstrates the technology's penchant for manipulation and self-preservation.

Lough, 46, might not have dared to commission an engineer in India to create a Sam Bot if Altman, 40, hadn't given him the idea with OpenAI's audacious release of a chatbot that sounded like actress Scarlett Johansson. The imitation was so eerily similar that Johansson blasted Altman for deploying the AI copycat in May 2024 after she had rebuffed OpenAI's overtures to use her voice.

Although the Sam Bot resembles a video game character at times, it nails the real-life Altman's contemplative manner and deliberate, almost soothing way of talking. The similarities will be apparent to anyone who also sees the real-life Altman being interviewed in "The AI Doc."

At one point in Lough's documentary, lawyers warn him about the potential legal issues facing his usage of an AI-powered Altman clone in his film.

Fashion

Flowers, water and elegance inspire Dior collection

Dior's Anderson finds his stride in Paris

PARIS, March 4, (AP): The sun was out over the glass-walled runway at the famed Tuileries Garden in the French capital on Tuesday, flooding Jonathan Anderson's fall-winter 2026 collection for Dior with a golden light that invoked Impressionist paintings.

Among the celebrities at Paris Fashion Week packed into the glass walkways around the park's octagonal basin - dotted with artificial water lilies in a nod to Monet - were Anya Taylor-Joy, Charlize Theron, Jisoo, Priyanka Chopra, Willow Smith, Emily Ratajkowski and Maccaulay Culkin.

It was a fitting mood for a collection steeped in flowers, water and the art of being seen.

The greenhouse setting turned the surrounding Parisian strollers into an unwitting audience - an idea Anderson leaned into.

He said he had been thinking about the promenade, about people who dress up to go somewhere, and about his own status as a tourist in his adopted city.

What emerged on the runway was Anderson's most coherent women's collection for Dior to date.

Deconstructed frock coats, peplum jackets and bustle skirts arrived in candied almond shades, Chantilly lace and metallic jacquards. Shrunken blazers sat above lampshade skirts in baby-soft shearing. Sculptural knits held their shape like origami.

The floral theme was everywhere - but it was developed through silhouette and fabric rather than slapped on literally.

Crinkled cardigans recalled the corolla of a bloom. Asymmetrically fastened skirts and dresses evoked petals. Even the crystal detailing on embroidered jeans carried a botanical echo. Anderson reprised his Donagel tweed take on the house's legendary Bar jacket, but made it longer and looser.

The spiral cage dresses that



Models wear creations from the Christian Dior Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Women's collection presented in Paris, Tuesday, March 3. (AP)

wowed at his recent couture show returned as clouds of soft pleated fabric.

With their houndstooth dark and light checks, hand-pleated jackets and coats showed signs of trompe-



From left: Anya Taylor-Joy, Priyanka Chopra and Florence Hunt pose for photographers upon arrival for the Christian Dior Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Women's collection presented in Paris, Tuesday, March 3. (AP)

l'oeil, a technique to make the object appear three-dimensional.

Dotted Swiss ruffle skirts with long trains offered a youthful riff on Christian Dior's iconic Junon gown.

There were ivory hammered silk track pants with covered bridal buttons, jeans with ribbon embroidery and plain robe coats worn as dresses - garments rarely given the spotlight on a runway.

The celebrity turnout was intense - and so were the regal echoes.

Dior has held its shows at the Tuileries since 2020 as part of a partnership with the adjoining Louvre Museum to help restore one of the oldest public gardens in Paris - originally commissioned by Queen Catherine de' Medici and later redesigned for Louis XIV as a place to see and be seen.

On Tuesday, Anderson's designs testified that he is steadily finding his version of that centuries-old tradition. Five collections in, the picture is getting clearer - even if the designer insists it will always remain a moving target.

Television

'America's Culinary Cup'

Lakshmi returns to competitive kitchen

NEW YORK, March 4, (AP): Padma Lakshmi is back in the kitchen with a knives-out cooking competition, and this time the stakes are higher - for the contestants and for her.

The former host of Bravo's "Top Chef" lands on network prime time hosting and judging the CBS show "America's Culinary Cup," which boasts the largest cash prize in culinary television history - \$1 million.

"This is about my love and appreciation and respect for chefs, especially after what the restaurant industry in this country and everywhere has gone through after COVID-19," she says.

The network has given the show the coveted spot after "Survivor" on Wednesdays. It launches Wednesday and episodes also stream on Paramount+.

Whereas "Top Chef" pitted up-and-comers against each other, the first season of "America's Culinary Cup" has invited 16 men and women who are at the peak of their culinary powers.

The inaugural class includes six Michelin star chefs, two James Beard winners, 14 James Beard nominees, three Food + Wine best new chefs, two Bocuse d'Or medalists and multiple "Top Chef" winner Buddha Lo.

"I'm not judging them on who they are, or where they come from, or where their pedigree is," says Lakshmi. "All of that might have been what got them in the door. I am judging them by the plate of food they put in front of me."

Lakshmi is joined on the judge's table by three-Michelin star and fish specialist Michael Cimarusti and molecular gastronomy pioneer Wylie Dufresne.

"These guys are looking at it as professional chefs, having so many decades under their belt of doing this at a very, very high level," she says. "I am the audience's representative."

Fittingly for a show that makes its debut after "Survivor," there's a bit of that show's DNA in the new one, with the chefs making strategic decisions about who competes against the others and the need to make allies.

"It's a show that I think will really appeal to people who like 'Survivor' or 'The Amazing Race,'" says Lakshmi. "We were definitely conscious, obviously, of who we're going on after and also what works on CBS. I'd be a fool not to be."

One early tip that "America's Culinary Cup" is an upscale cooking competition show is a shot of Lakshmi sauntering out of a helicopter in an asymmetrical yellow gown. The sprawling workstations in the communal kitchen have plenty of marble and all kinds of top-notch kitchen toys are available - like wood-fired ovens and smoking guns.

The initial chefs invited hail from 10 states - California, North Carolina, Arizona, Illinois, Colorado, New York, Virginia, Texas, Wyoming and Connecticut. One postponed her wedding to compete, one is pregnant and one was formerly incarcerated.

"The accolades and the talent and the awards and everything else that all of these people walk through the door with, in a way they had to hang them up when they entered the kitchen because it was all about what they were able to do that day, in that moment, in that challenge," says Cimarusti.

The first episode is particularly brutal, with four contestants eliminated. The 16 chefs' first challenge is to cook their defining dish and then they go head-to-head, judged on taste, creativity, presentation and technique.

"You're in the big leagues now," Lakshmi tells them.

The dishes that come out include Singapore Chili Crab and Thai Curry, Sous Vide Hamachi with Scallop and Turnip, and Ras El Hanout Duck Breast with a Miso-Harissa Glazed Cabbage.



This image released by CBS shows, from left, Wylie Dufresne, Padma Lakshmi, and Michael Cimarusti on the set of the cooking competition series "America's Culinary Cup." (AP)

Actor brings historical speech to life at Tibet House event

De Niro delivers Lincoln's civility warning at a Carnegie Hall benefit

NEW YORK, March 4, (AP): Robert De Niro walked onto Carnegie Hall's stage Tuesday night, unannounced and to loud applause. He didn't make any speeches, at least none of his own. After a career defined by playing gangsters, an avenging taxi driver and a paranoid prize fighter, the Oscar-winning actor recited a call for civility, as first spoken by Abraham Lincoln.

"Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defense," De Niro said in an even voice, halting at first, but becoming firmer as he became caught up in words Lincoln delivered in 1838, early in his public life. "Let those materials be molded into general intel-

ligence, sound morality, and in particular, a reverence for the constitution and laws."

De Niro was a featured performer at the 39th annual benefit concert for the nonprofit cultural and educational organization Tibet House US, where others appearing ranged from Laurie Anderson and Elvis Costello to Maya Hawke and Allison Russell. He didn't dwell on current events, or on President Donald Trump, whom he has denounced often fiercely over the past decade. But his reason for giving that particular speech had everything to do with the country today.

De Niro was reading excerpts from Lincoln's "Lyceum Address," a warning against mob violence that Lincoln



Actor Robert Di Niro receives a German television award, 'Goldene Kamera,' media award in Berlin on Feb. 6, 2008. (AP)

delivered to a young man's debating society in Springfield, Illinois. Philip

Glass, a co-director of Tuesday night's benefit, used the address as inspiration for his Symphony No. 15, "Lincoln." He was supposed to premiere his symphony at the Kennedy Center in June, but announced earlier this year that he was calling off the performance, citing Trump's ouster of the center's leadership. The president has made the venue a flashpoint for his battle against so-called "woke" culture.

"The values of the Kennedy Center today are in direct conflict with the message of the Symphony," Glass said in a statement at the time.

Last month, Trump announced that the center would shut down in July for construction he expects to last two

years. Numerous artists in addition to Glass had withdrawn from planned appearances, including Renée Fleming, Lin-Manuel Miranda and Bela Fleck.

Trump's name was rarely spoken by anyone during the nearly three-hour show Tuesday night. But the president was clearly on the minds of numerous performers who denounced the war against Iran, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and what they saw as a general spirit of violence and indifference. Costello, who had the crowd clapping along to "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love, and Understanding," hardly needed to point out the relevance of a song written by Nick Lowe more than 50 years ago. Costello appeared toward the end of

the night, and spoke of listening backstage and marveling at the "millions" of meanings of what he had been hearing. Tuesday night was a tribute to experimentation and to the universality of music, a world's tour of sounds and rhythms. It began with an invocation by the Drepung Gomang Monks, continued through the avant-garde compositions of Glass and Anderson, and stopped along the way for folk, gospel, protest songs, Beat poetry, Broadway and such pillars of modern Western music as the Rolling Stones' "Wild Horses," performed as a duet by Russell and Toro y Moi, and Paul McCartney's "Maybe I'm Amazed," sung by Toro y Moi, the stage name for Chaz Bear.

Is being virtuous good for you – or just people around you?

Being compassionate may boost your own health, study finds

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.



By Michael Prinzing
Wake Forest University

Virtues such as compassion, patience and self-control may be beneficial not only for others but also for oneself, according to new research my team and I published in the Journal of Personality in December 2025.

Philosophers from Aristotle to al-Fārābī, a 10th-century scholar in what is now Iraq, have argued that virtue is vital for well-being. Yet others, such as Thomas Hobbes and Friedrich Nietzsche, have argued the opposite: Virtue offers no benefit to oneself and is good only for others. This second theory has inspired lots of research in contemporary psychology, which often sees morality and self-interest as fundamentally opposed.

Many studies have found that generosity is associated with happiness, and that encouraging people to practice

kindness increases their well-being. But other virtues seem less enjoyable.

For example, a compassionate person wants to alleviate suffering or misfortune, but that requires there be suffering or misfortune. Patience is possible only when something irritating or difficult is happening. And self-control involves forgoing one's desires or persisting with something difficult.

Could these kinds of virtues really be good for you? My colleagues and I investigated this question in two studies, using two different methods to zoom in on specific moments in people's daily lives. Our goal was to assess the degree to which, in those moments, they were compassionate, patient and self-controlled. We also assessed their level of well-being: how pleasant or unpleasant they felt, and whether they found their activities meaningful.

One study, with adolescents, used the experience sampling method, in which people answer questions at random intervals throughout the day. The other, studying adults, used the day reconstruction method, in which people answer questions about the previous day. All told, we examined 43,164 moments from 1,218 people.

During situations that offer opportunities to act with com-

passion, patience and self-control - encountering someone in need, for example, or dealing with a difficult person - people tend to experience more unpleasant feelings and less pleasant ones than in other situations. However, we found that exercising these three virtues seems to help people cope. People who are habitually more compassionate, patient and self-controlled tend to experience better well-being. And when people display more compassion, patience and self-control than usual, they tend to feel better than they usually do.

In short, our results contradicted the theory that virtue is good for others and bad for the self. They were consistent with the theory that virtue promotes well-being.

These studies tested the predictions of two venerable, highly influential theories about the relationship between morality and well-being. In doing so, they offered new insights into one of the most fundamental questions debated in philosophy, psychology and everyday life.

Moreover, in the scientific study of morality, lots of research has examined how people form moral judgments and how outside forces shape a person's moral behavior. Yet some researchers have argued that this should be complemented by research on moral traits and how these are in-

tegrated into the whole person. By focusing on traits such as patience, compassion and self-control, and their roles in people's daily lives, our studies contribute to the emerging science of virtue.

One open question for future research is whether virtues such as compassion, patience and self-control are associated with better well-being only under certain conditions. For example, perhaps things look different depending on one's stage of life or in different parts of the world.

Our studies were not randomized experiments. It is possible that the associations we observed are explained by another factor - something that increases well-being while simultaneously increasing compassion, patience and self-control. Or maybe well-being affects virtue, instead of the other way around. Future research could help clarify the causal relationships.

One particularly interesting possibility is that there might be a "virtuous cycle": Perhaps virtue tends to promote well-being - and well-being, in turn, tends to promote virtue. If so, it would be extremely valuable to learn how to help people kick-start that cycle. The Research Brief is a short take on interesting academic work. (AP)

Polio shots

1st mpox death in Madagascar

ANTANANARIVO, March 4, (Xinhua): Madagascar reported its first death related to mpox since the disease was detected in the country last December, according to a report published Monday by the Malagasy Ministry of Public Health. The ministry's spokesperson Mamy Randria confirmed that the deceased was a three-year-old child who had been hospitalized in critical condition, with her health worsening due to complications.

According to the report, as of March 1, there are a total of 457 confirmed cases in the country.

Health services continue to monitor and manage cases to contain the spread of the disease. The ministry indicated that the vaccination against mpox would begin soon, targeting primarily health-care workers, close contacts of patients, people living with HIV, and transport workers.

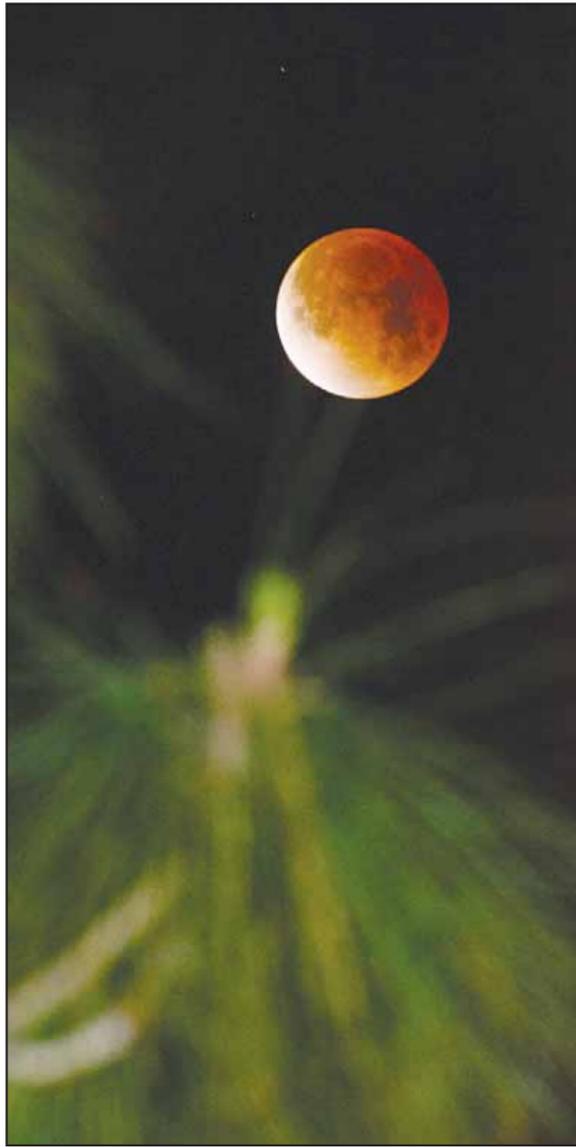
Mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, was first detected in laboratory monkeys in 1958. It is a rare viral disease typically transmitted through body fluids, respiratory droplets, and contaminated materials. The infection often causes fever, rash, and swollen lymph nodes.



Polio vaccination: Laos' Ministry of Health, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization, has launched a nationwide polio vaccination campaign to protect children across Laos.

The initiative, officially launched on Tuesday, underscores Laos' commitment to protecting all children from polio and strengthening the national immunization program. The campaign will mobilize medical personnel and volunteers to reach over 800,000 children across the country, including those in remote and underserved communities, according to a report from the Lao Ministry of Health on Wednesday.

In his speech, Lao Deputy Minister of Health Phayvanh Keopaseuth noted that in 2025, Laos recorded laboratory-confirmed cases of polio and measles. Outbreaks of these and other vaccine-preventable diseases were reported across multiple provinces and districts, with border villages particularly affected.



The Worm Blood Moon is seen between tree branches as peak totality subsides, above Woodland Hills, Calif., Tuesday, March 3. (AP)

Rapid saliva test for common cancers developed

AI tool could predict breast cancer risk

MELBOURNE, March 4, (Xinhua): Artificial intelligence (AI) could soon help predict women's risk of developing breast cancer over the next four years, an Australian study has revealed.

The AI-based tool was developed using mammograms from nearly 400,000 women and then tested on data from almost 96,000 women from Australia, according to a summary of the study on the Australian Science Media Center website on Wednesday.

The study, published in The Lancet Digital Health, found that the AI-based risk score, called BRAIX, estimated breast cancer risk more accurately than the factors doctors have traditionally relied on, such as breast density and family history.

Among women ranked in the top 2 percent of risk by BRAIX, nearly one in 10 were diagnosed with breast can-

cer within four years despite being given the all-clear, a rate higher than that seen in some genetic risk groups, the study said.

The findings showed how AI-based risk scores could personalize breast screening by identifying high-risk women for closer monitoring and low-risk ones for less frequent checks, potentially saving lives without added costs.

In another development, researchers in Australia have developed a rapid, low-cost saliva diagnostic tool that could enable early screening for several common cancers. The team at Australia's Queensland University of Technology (QUT) has developed a simple one-hour saliva test for a protein biomarker called S100P that has been linked with oral, colon, prostate, and pancreatic cancers, a QUT statement said Wednesday.

Researchers developed a rapid testing technique of saliva using paper coated in gold and silver nanoparticles to create a highly sensitive sensor that records the Raman spectrum -- the process by which a substance scatters laser light which is used to identify molecules -- of saliva samples.

"The protein S100P is one of the biomarkers investigated for cancer diagnosis and has been detected in ovarian, prostate, gastric, colorectal and breast cancers," said Associate Professor Emad Kiriakous from QUT's School of Chemistry and Physics.

"This method could shorten diagnosis time to minutes instead of hours or days and uses low-cost and portable materials," said Kiriakous, corresponding author of the study published in the journal Talanta.

Breakthrough offers tool to study brain disorders

China unveils noninvasive long-term brain imaging

BEIJING, March 4, (Xinhua): Chinese researchers have created a new imaging system that allows for long-term, high-resolution imaging of the mouse brain in a non-invasive manner, penetrating the intact scalp and skull without the use of contrast agents, China Science Daily reported on Tuesday.

Non-invasive long-term brain imaging is essential for understanding brain function and investigating the pathological mechanisms of brain disorders. However, imaging through the scalp and skull of mice presents significant challenges due to light refraction, strong optical scattering and acoustic attenuation caused by these complex structures. A research team from the Southern University of Science and Technology, located in Shenzhen in south China's Guangdong Province, has developed an integrated photoacoustic imaging system named PAC-Mes. This system achieves synergistic

optimization across three key dimensions: near-infrared optical excitation, low-frequency acoustic detection and computational reconstruction.

This approach enables efficient penetration through the intact scalp and skull, reduces interference from light scattering, and ensures high-sensitivity, full-angle detection of photoacoustic signals.

It also effectively mitigates acoustic attenuation from biological tissues and suppresses background artifacts, resulting in isotropic high-resolution imaging across the entire field of view. These findings have been published in Science Advances.

Notably, the system operates without exogenous contrast agents and can image a 13-millimeter-diameter area, covering the entire mouse cerebral cortex, with a spatial resolution of 33 micrometers. It supports continuous monitoring for over five months, of-

fering a powerful tool for longitudinal studies.

In a mouse model of mild ischemic stroke, the PACMes system enabled dynamic observation over more than five months. It captured the full trajectory of vascular changes in the infarct region. Moreover, the system non-invasively revealed the key pathological feature of new collateral circulation formation in the infarct area 72 hours after modeling, a crucial pathological feature that provides direct insight into post-stroke vascular repair mechanisms.

The technology represents an ideal platform for monitoring the chronic progression of brain diseases. It also holds promise for advancing research into a range of cerebrovascular disorders, including Alzheimer's disease and epilepsy, and may offer new avenues for studying disease mechanisms and evaluating therapeutic interventions.

'AI tools are not a substitute for doctors'

What to know before asking an AI chatbot for health advice

WASHINGTON, March 4, (AP): With hundreds of millions of people turning to chatbots for advice, it was only a matter of time before tech companies began offering programs specifically designed to answer health questions.

In January, OpenAI introduced ChatGPT Health, a new version of its chatbot that the company says can analyze users' medical records, wellness apps and wearable device data to answer health and medical questions. Currently, there's a waiting list for the program. Anthropic, a rival AI company, offers similar features for some users of its Claude chatbot.

Both companies say their programs, known as large language models, aren't a substitute for professional care and shouldn't be used to diagnose medical conditions. Instead, they say the chatbots can summarize and explain complicated test results, help prepare for a doctor's visit or analyze important health trends buried in medical records and app metrics.

Here are some things to consider before talking to a chatbot about your health:

Some doctors and researchers who have worked with ChatGPT Health and similar programs see them as an improvement over the status quo.

Platforms

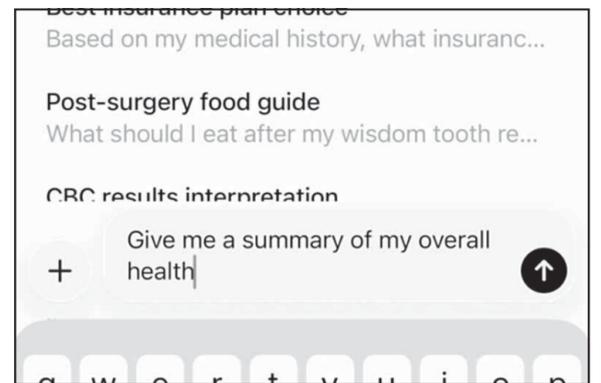
AI platforms are not perfect - they can sometimes hallucinate or provide bad advice - but the information they produce is more likely to be personalized and specific than what patients might find through a Google search.

"The alternative often is nothing, or the patient winging it," said Dr. Robert Wachter, a medical technology expert at University of California, San Francisco. "And so I think that if you use these tools responsibly, I think you can get useful information."

One advantage of the latest chatbots is that they answer users' questions with context from their medical history, including prescriptions, age and doctor's notes. Even if you haven't given AI access to your medical information, Wachter and others recommend giving the chatbots as many details as possible to improve responses.

Wachter and others stress that there are situations when people should skip the chatbot and seek immediate medical attention. Symptoms such as shortness of breath, chest pain or a severe headache could signal a medical emergency. Even during less urgent situations, patients and doctors should approach AI programs with "a degree of healthy skepticism," said Dr. Lloyd Minor of Stanford University.

"If you're talking about a major



This image provided by OpenAI in February 2026 demonstrates a health chatbot on a phone app. (AP)

medical decision, or even a smaller decision about your health, you should never be relying just on what you're getting out of a large language model," said Minor, who is the dean of Stanford's medical school.

Many benefits offered by AI bots stem from users sharing personal medical information. But it's important to understand that anything shared with an AI company isn't protected by the federal privacy law that normally governs sensitive medical information.

Commonly known as HIPAA, the law allows for fines and even prison time for doctors, hospitals, insurers or other health services that disclose medical records. But the law doesn't apply to companies that design chatbots.

"When someone is uploading their medical chart into a large language model, that is very different than handing it to a new doctor," said Minor. "Consumers need to understand that they're completely different privacy standards."

Information

Both OpenAI and Anthropic say users' health information is kept separate from other types of data and is subject to additional privacy protections. The companies do not use health data to train their models. Users must opt in to share their information and can disconnect at any time.

Despite excitement surrounding AI, independent testing of the technology is in its infancy. Early studies suggest programs like ChatGPT can ace high-level medical exams but often stumble when interacting with humans.

A 1,300-participant study by Oxford University recently found that people

using AI chatbots to research hypothetical health conditions didn't make better decisions than people using online searches or personal judgment.

AI chatbots presented with medical scenarios in a comprehensive, written form correctly identified the underlying condition 95% of the time.

"That was not the problem," said lead author Adam Mahdi of the Oxford Internet Institute. "The place where things fell apart was during the interaction with the real participants."

Mahdi and his team found several communication problems. People often didn't give the chatbots the necessary information to correctly identify the health issue. Conversely, the AI systems often responded with a combination of good and bad information, and users had trouble distinguishing between the two.

The study, conducted in 2024, did not use the latest chatbot versions, including new offerings like ChatGPT Health.

The ability for chatbots to ask follow-up questions and elicit key details from users is one area where Wachter sees room for improvement.

"I think that's when this will get really good, when the tools become a little bit more doctor-ish in the way they go back and forth" with patients, Wachter said.

For now, one way to feel more confident about the information you're getting is to consult multiple chatbots - similar to getting a second opinion from another doctor. "I will sometimes put information into ChatGPT and information into Gemini," Wachter said, referencing Google's AI tool. "And when they both agree, I feel a little bit more secure that that's the right answer."

Women over 40 at higher risk

CDC says US maternal deaths fell in 2024 and possibly again in 2025

NEW YORK, March 4, (AP): Fewer US women died around the time of childbirth in 2024, a government analysis shows, and provisional data suggests the trend may have continued last year. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday reported that 649 mothers died in 2024 during pregnancy or shortly after giving birth. That is down from 669 deaths in 2023, and a continued drop from 2022 and 2021 - when it was the highest level in more than 50 years.

Available preliminary data suggests the trend continued in 2025, said Eugene Declercq, a Boston University researcher who studies federal data.

But he warned that there can be changes between the provisional and final numbers, with the tally either rising as late death records arrive or falling as some initial reports are removed upon review because they do not meet inclusion guidelines. That happened with the 2024 numbers, which at the provisional stage were higher than the 2023 count.

"All you could reasonably say is that the provisional 2025 data look promising," Declercq said in an email.

The CDC counts women who die while pregnant, during childbirth and up to 42 days after birth from conditions related to pregnancy. Excessive bleeding, blood vessel blockages and infections are leading causes. The new report did not detail how many of the 2024 deaths died from particular



A pregnant woman stands for a portrait in Dallas, May 18, 2023. (AP)

causes. Maternal deaths spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic because the coronavirus was particularly dangerous to pregnant women and burned-out physicians may have ignored pregnant women's worries.

The waning of COVID-19 was a major reason for the declines in deaths since 2021, Declercq said. Some of the improvement may also reflect successful efforts to improve care, he added.

The new CDC report found that the maternal mortality rate in 2024 was about 18 deaths per 100,000 live births, which was not significantly lower than the year before.

"The declines are welcome, but they are small and only bring us back to where we were six years ago" before the COVID-19 surge, Declercq said, adding there is a need for more attention to the problem.

Cases rise

Measles alert in W. Sydney

SYDNEY, March 4, (Xinhua): Authorities in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) have issued a measles health alert for western Sydney as the number of confirmed cases continues to rise toward the total figure for 2025.

The NSW Department of Health said in a warning released on Tuesday night that it is advising people in western Sydney to be alert for signs and symptoms of measles after being notified of a confirmed case who had no known exposure to the highly contagious airborne disease.

"With the source of the infection unknown, it is likely measles is currently circulating within the community, and other people may have been unknowingly exposed to measles," the department said.

The new confirmed case visited several locations across western Sydney while they were unknowingly infectious at the end of February, including multiple medical facilities.

Anyone who attended an exposure site at the same time as the confirmed case has been told to monitor for symptoms, including fever, runny nose, sore eyes and a blotchy red rash, for 18 days.

The warning was the fourth measles alert issued for Sydney since Feb. 21. The Department of Health said there have been 23 confirmed cases in NSW since the start of 2026.

Ancelotti assessing Brazil squad for World Cup

Real Madrid confirms Rodrygo has a torn ACL, ruling him out of World Cup

MADRID, March 4, (Agencies): Brazil international Rodrygo will miss the rest of Real Madrid's season and the World Cup because of a torn ACL and meniscus in his right knee.

The 25-year-old winger was injured in Madrid's 1-0 loss to Getafe, when he came on as a substitute after having sat out nearly a month due to tendinitis.

Real Madrid confirmed the diagnosis. Rodrygo called it "one of the worst days of my life." "I've always feared this injury. Maybe life has been a little cruel to me lately. I don't know if I deserve this, but what can I complain about? How many wonderful things I've already experienced, which I also didn't deserve," he said on Instagram.

"I'm out for the rest of the season with my club and out of the World Cup with my country, a dream that everyone knows how much it means to me. And all I can do is be strong as always, that's nothing new," Rodrygo added.

Neither Madrid nor Brazil's soccer federation mentioned surgery or a timetable for Rodrygo's return. The federation wished him a "speedy recovery." Rodrygo played in all five of Brazil's games at the 2022 World Cup, where his team lost on penalties in the quarterfinals to Croatia. Rodrygo's spot kick was saved in the shootout.

He was not in Brazil's squad for any of the last four World Cup qualifying games last year, but coach Carlo Ancelotti did use Rodrygo in each of the four friendlies in October and November.

Neymar, who tore his ACL and meniscus in 2023, said he was saddened by news of Rodrygo's injury. It brought back memories of "the suffering, the anguish and the fear of having this injury," he wrote on his social media channels.



Getafe's Boselli fights for the ball against Real Madrid's Rodrygo during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Getafe in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

"My number 10, my boy, my heir (as I call you), I only ask you for one thing. Take care of your head. Now is the time to put everyone you love around you," the 34-year-old Neymar wrote. "As you told me, you didn't deserve to go through this now.. I am sure you will be back to your best.

I love you and as much as you gave me support, I will be here for you." Rodrygo played 27 games for Madrid in all competitions this season, scoring three goals and adding six assists.

Madrid is still missing injured star striker Kylian Mbappé.

Meanwhile, Brazil manager Carlo Ancelotti said he is assessing players and organizing logistics ahead of this year's FIFA World Cup in North America.

The five-time champion will begin its Group C campaign against Morocco on June 13 before facing Haiti on June 19 and Scotland on June 24. "It is a joy to have time to prepare for this important event for Brazil," the 66-year-old Italian said in an interview published on the Brazilian Football Confederation's (CBF) official website.

"It is a great motivation and a great responsibility to try to do the best possible. I am sure that we will have a World Cup of a very high level." The CBF announced in January that Brazil would use the Columbia Park complex in Morristown, New Jersey, as its main training facility during the tournament.

Ancelotti said he and his staff were continuing to monitor players ahead of friendlies later this month. The Selecao will meet France in Boston on March 26 and Croatia in Orlando five days later.

"We have been planning the logistics, organization, the training center, the hotel, so now we have to evaluate the players who are playing, those who are injured and those who are recovering," he said.

"It is a moment of observation. Obviously we have to do well in the friendlies with France and Croatia and observe the matches of the players who could be at the World Cup in June."

Cavaliers 'split' regular-season series with East-leading Pistons



Phoenix Suns guard Jalen Green (4) drives around Sacramento Kings guard Nique Clifford (5) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif. (AP)

CLEVELAND, March 4, (AP): Jaylon Tyson scored 22 points, James Harden added 18 and the Cleveland Cavaliers avenged a recent loss in Detroit by beating the East-leading Pistons 113-109 despite playing without injured star Donovan Mitchell.

Evan Mobley also had 18 points and Dennis Schroder 15 for the Cavs, who split their four regular-season games with Detroit.

Mitchell sat out his fourth straight game with a nagging groin strain. Coach Kenny Atkinson said the seven-time All-Star is "trending better" but doesn't know when he'll be back to build chemistry for the postseason with Harden, who was acquired at the trade deadline.

Jalen Duren added 24 points and 14 rebounds and Tobias Harris scored 19 points - all after halftime - for the Pistons, who had their road winning streak stopped at six games. Cade Cunningham dished out 14 assists but scored only 10 on 4-of-16 shooting for Detroit.

The Pistons cut an 11-point deficit to one in the fourth, but Sam Merrill hit a big 3-pointer to help the Cavs hang on.

While it was the last meeting between Detroit and Cleveland before the playoffs, their rivalry has been reborn with both teams in Eastern Conference title contention.

Knicks 111, Raptors 95

In Toronto, Jalen Brunson had 26 points and 10 assists, Karl-Anthony Towns added 21 points and 12 rebounds, and the New York Knicks beat the Toronto Raptors for their fifth win in six games.

After snapping San Antonio's 11-game winning streak on Sunday, the Knicks ran their win streak against Toronto to 12. The Raptors last beat New York on Jan. 22, 2023, a 125-116 win at Toronto.

Suns 114, Kings 103

In Sacramento, Jalen Green scored 20 points, Grayson Allen had 18 and the Phoenix Suns beat the NBA-worst Sacramento Kings to sweep the four-game season series.

Knicks extend win streak over Toronto to 12

Seventh in the West at 35-26, the Suns won their second straight and got back Devin Booker after the star guard missed four games because of a right hip injury. He scored 14 of his 17 points in the first half.

Collin Gillespie scored 17 points - hitting 5 of 8 3-pointers - and had nine assists and six rebounds. Oso Ighodaro added 14 points and 14 rebounds. Phoenix is without Dillon Brooks because of a fractured left hand.

Thunder 116, Bulls 108

In Chicago, Jared McCain scored 20 points, Isaiah Joe added 19 and the Oklahoma City Thunder - playing without star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander - beat the Chicago Bulls.

The defending NBA champion Thunder held out Gilgeous-Alexander to manage an abdominal strain that sidelined him for most of last month. But even without the reigning MVP, they had more than enough to win for the sixth time in seven games. They lead the Western Conference at 48-15.

Spurs 131, 76ers 91

In Philadelphia, Dylan Harper scored 22 points and Victor Wembanyama needed only 10 to help the San Antonio Spurs bounce back from their first loss in 12 games and rout the Philadelphia 76ers 131-91 on Tuesday night.

The Spurs hit 18 3-pointers and



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, right, shoots as New Orleans Pelicans forward Herbert Jones defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles. (AP)

wrapped their annual rodeo road trip that included two games in Austin, Texas. The Spurs won 8-1 on the trip that started with a Feb. 10 win against the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Spurs had won 11 straight games overall before they lost Sunday to the New York Knicks.

Timberwolves 117, Grizzlies 110

In Minneapolis, Anthony Edwards scored 41 points as the Minnesota Timberwolves overcame a sluggish first half to beat the Memphis Grizzlies.

The Timberwolves, who moved into fourth in the Western Conference over the weekend, have won four in a row and seven of eight. Memphis saw its two-game winning streak end.

Julius Randle added 23 points and 11 rebounds for the Wolves and Ayo Dosunmu contributed 14 points off the bench.

Jaylen Wells led Memphis with 19 points and Cedric Coward added 15. Memphis went on a 12-2 run to cut it to four points in the final minute but Lakers 110, Pelicans 101.

In Los Angeles, Luka Doncic had 27 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists, LeBron James added 21 points and the Los Angeles Lakers rallied past the New Orleans Pelicans for their third straight victory.

Deandre Ayton had 13 points and eight rebounds for the Lakers, who

overcame a fourth-quarter deficit and 21 turnovers by scoring 14 straight points down the stretch and finishing on a 24-7 run. Their late surge was led by Doncic and by Austin Reaves, who missed his first eight shots of the night before ending up with 15 points.

Heat 124, Nets 98

In Miami, Bam Adebayo had 23 points, nine rebounds and six steals, and the Miami Heat beat the Brooklyn Nets in the opener of a two-game series.

Tyler Herro added 22 points and Jaime Jaquez Jr. had 20 for the Heat, who won for the fifth time in seven games.

Adebayo and Herro each had 15 points at halftime, while Jaquez and Andrew Wiggins both had 13 as Miami built a 69-54 lead. The Heat shot 53% in the first two quarters before pulling away in the fourth quarter and leading by 27.

Noah Clowney scored 17 points for the Nets, who lost their ninth straight. Ziaire Williams had 16 points and Nolan Traore added 14.

Magic 126, Wizards 109

In Orlando, Paolo Banchero equaled a season high with 37 points, Desmond Bane scored 25 and the Orlando Magic eased to a victory over the Washington Wizards.

Banchero went 15 of 21 from the field as Orlando shot 55.3% and dominated with its starters on the floor to end a two-game skid. The Magic are seventh in the Eastern Conference.

Hornets 117, Mavericks 90

In Charlotte, Brandon Miller scored 17 points, and the Charlotte Hornets routed the Dallas Mavericks for their fifth straight victory.

LaMelo Ball added 15 points and nine assists to help the Hornets (31-31) reach .500 for the first time since Oct. 28 when they were 2-2.

Brandon Williams had 18 points for the sputtering Mavericks. They've lost 14 of 16.

Charlotte, playing on the first night of a back-to-back, got tremendous production from its bench, with the backups shooting 12 of 21 from 3-point range.

Grant Williams made four 3s, Josh Green and Sion James had three each and Pat Connaughton had two.

'An incredible honor'

Former Wallabies coach Rennie takes charge of the All Blacks

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, March 4, (AP): Former Wallabies coach Dave Rennie was appointed as the All Blacks head coach Wednesday on a contract through the 2027 Rugby World Cup, succeeding Scott Robertson, who was abruptly fired in January.

New Zealand Rugby chairman David Kirk said the 62-year-old New Zealander "is a world-class coach" with a strong track record.

"Dave understands what it means to coach the All Blacks and play a style of rugby that reflects who we are as New Zealanders," Kirk said. "He has a deep understanding of rugby in New Zealand and the role the All Blacks play in shaping our national identity and bringing communities together."

Rennie coached Australia for three years before being removed in early 2023 and replaced by Eddie Jones.

Rennie led an inexperienced Wallabies team through the pandemic period. When international rugby returned to normal, the Wallabies failed to produce consistent results. His firing followed Australia's first-ever loss to Italy.

"Coaching the All Blacks is an incredible honor," Rennie said. "I'm extremely proud to have been entrusted with this role and understand the expectations that come with it."

"I'm really clear on the way I want the All Blacks to play and I look forward to working with the players, management team, and the rugby community."

Rennie coached the Hamilton-based Chiefs to Super Rugby titles in 2012 and 2013 and had a 66% winning record with that team over five years. He then left New Zealand to coach Glasgow Warriors where he had a 65% winning record and reached a Pro14 final.

Rennie was chosen for the All Blacks role ahead of former Japan coach Jamie Joseph. Kirk chaired the committee that selected Rennie and said the process that found the new coach was the most thorough in New Zealand history.

"The All Blacks are set for a chal-



In this file photo, Australia's rugby coach Dave Rennie walks on the field before their rugby union match against England in Brisbane, Australia. (AP)

lenging and exciting two seasons ahead and it's critical we followed a thorough process to find the right head coach," Kirk said. "Dave has a clear direction for the team that gives us confidence the team will be well positioned to perform as we head into the 2027 Rugby World Cup."

Rennie is currently coaching Kobe Steelers in Japan and will return to New Zealand at the end of the Japan League One series. The All Blacks' first matches under his guidance will be against France, Italy and Ireland in June.

New Zealand has a difficult 2026 season in which it will play the world champion Springboks four times, three times in South Africa and once in the United States.

Rennie said he is confident New Zealand can win the 2027 World Cup in Australia.

"It'll take a . . . a lot of work," he said. "By the time we start we'll have about 15 months to the World Cup and I'm well aware the way the draw works out in typical fashion in the World Cup. We're likely to meet South Africa in the quarterfinals."

"We have to get the athletes in the best possible position to execute and play well. It's a sprint from here."

Fluminense signs Castillo

Luis fired by Flamengo after 8-0 win

SAO PAULO, March 4, (AP): Defending South American and Brazilian champion Flamengo fired coach Filipe Luis on Tuesday, just hours after his team won 8-0 in a Rio de Janeiro league semifinal.

Only two months ago, Luis extended his contract at Flamengo to the end of 2027. This year his team lost the trophies of the Brazilian Supercup to local rival Corinthians and the South American Recopa to Argentina's Lanus, but the squad was getting set to bid for major titles again.

Despite thrashing tiny Madureira 8-0 late Monday and 11-0 on aggregate, fans booed Flamengo throughout the game. Many have urged for Luis' sacking since the beginning of the year.

The 40-year-old former Atletico Madrid and Chelsea player joined Flamengo as a player in 2019 and retired in 2023. He won 12 titles for the Rio de Janeiro club as a footballer and five as a coach.

"Flamengo thanks Filipe Luis for all his dedication and his achievements during his journey as our coach. We wish him success in his career," the club said in its social media channels.

Hours later, Luis also confirmed the move.

"I leave at peace, with my head up high and a clear conscience. Soccer is made of cycles, and ours was historical," the coach said.

Brazilian media reported former Monaco coach Leonardo Jardim was Luis' most likely replacement. The 51-year-old Portuguese led Brazil's Cruzeiro to a third-place finish in the latest Brazilian league.

Flamengo recently signed midfielder Lucas Paqueta for a reported fee of 35 million euros (\$40.5 million) in a show of its financial strength in the region.

Flamengo midfielder Georgian de Arrascaeta said on Instagram that Luis "will always be one of us."

"Infinite gratitude. Sometimes you

only know how much you're worth when you become a memory," the Uruguayan player said.

Luis had 101 matches as Flamengo's coach with 63 victories, 23 draws and 15 defeats. Five of those losses took place this year.

Meanwhile, Fluminense has completed the signing of Argentine striker Rodrigo Castillo from Lanus, the Brazilian Serie A club said.

The 27-year-old agreed to a contract that runs until 2030 in a deal reportedly worth 10 million U.S. dollars.

"I am very proud to be joining such a big club. I have high expectations for what is ahead and I am very happy to be here," Castillo said in a statement published on Fluminense's official website.

Castillo made 33 appearances for Lanus and scored 14 goals after joining the club from Gimnasia La Plata last July.

He is expected to make his debut for Fluminense in its away clash against Remo in Brazil's Serie A on March 12.

Venezuelan midfielder Jose Martinez bid farewell to Corinthians on Tuesday, more than two weeks after his contract was rescinded by the Brazilian Serie A club.

The 31-year-old posted a video on social media in which he expressed gratitude to his teammates and the club's fans.

"Thank you for everything, Corinthians! To the fans: never doubt my dedication and my love for these colors. Go Corinthians." Corinthians terminated Martinez's contract last month after he returned late from his vacation with a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament.

The Venezuela international underwent surgery last week and is expected to be sidelined for eight to 10 months.

Martinez made 70 appearances for Corinthians following his August 2024 move from Philadelphia.

100 days to go

World Cup faces new challenges with Iran war and Mexico violence

GENEVA, March 4, (AP): With 100 days to go until the World Cup, the Iran war has added a new layer of complexity to the tournament co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada.

How the conflict will affect the world's most watched sporting event is the latest issue facing organizers already grappling with cartel violence in one of Mexico's host cities, scaled-back plans for fan festivals in the U.S. and criticism from fans against soaring ticket prices.

Officials of the qualified teams are meeting with FIFA staff in Atlanta this week. The tournament kicks off on June 11 when Mexico plays South Africa in Mexico City. It will be the biggest World Cup ever with 48 participating teams, up from 32 at the previous tournament in Qatar.

Here's a look at some of the issues drawing scrutiny as the countdown began. It's not unusual for international politics to overshadow a global sports event like the World Cup - at least in the early stages before the soccer action takes over the headlines.

In 2022, Qatar's treatment of migrant workers drew headlines off the field. The annexation of Crimea and the poisoning of a spy in Britain were in focus when Russia hosted the tournament in 2018. In Brazil in 2014 and South Africa in 2010 there were concerns about crime and security.

The 2026 tournament looks set to kick off amid a backdrop of political tensions involving the U.S. and the participating nations.

Many have been hit by tariffs. Some are facing travel restrictions. Denmark, which can still qualify through playoffs in March, has been shaken by President Donald Trump's calls for the U.S. to take over Greenland. And with 100 days to go, the U.S. was in a military conflict with Iran, one of the first teams to qualify.

Iran is set to play two group stage games in Inglewood, California, and one in Seattle.

However, whether the Iranian team will come to the U.S. is uncertain.

"What is certain is that after this attack, we cannot be expected to look forward to the World Cup with hope," Iran's top soccer official, Mehdi Taj, said.

Still, Iran has not announced it is withdrawing from the tournament, which no team that qualified has done in the past 75 years. Iran, the second-highest ranked team in Asia, was drawn in a group with Belgium, Egypt and New Zealand.

FIFA did not immediately respond to a request on whether Iran federation officials attended the Atlanta workshop.

Fan festivals have been a key part of the World Cup experience in the past two decades. They offer a chance for thousands of fans without match tickets to take part in the World Cup atmosphere by coming together to watch games on a big screen.

Some of those plans are now being scaled back in the U.S.

New York/New Jersey eliminated its Fan Fest in Jersey City, New Jersey, even though it had started selling tickets for an event scheduled to be open every day of the tournament.

Planning to sell tickets was itself unprecedented for World Cup fan zones, which were free to enter since being launched at the 2006 edition in Germany. Seattle cut down its original plan and rescheduled it for smaller venues and Boston trimmed its event to 16 days.

The chief operating officer of Miami's FIFA World Cup host committee said during a congressional hearing on Feb. 24 that it might cancel its event if it did not receive federal funding within 30 days. Kansas City, Missouri, Police Deputy Chief Joseph Maybin said the city had an immediate need for federal funds to prepare security.

House Republicans said federal money may be held up by the partial government shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security, caused by Democrats insisting restrictions be placed on Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

The New England Patriots' stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts, is due to host seven World Cup games, starting with Haiti-Scotland on June 13 and ending with a quarterfinal on July 9. That is FIFA's plan.

The Select Board of Foxborough has refused to issue a permit for World Cup matches at the stadium and set a March 17 deadline to be paid \$7.8 million - what the town estimates will be the cost of police and other expenses. Foxborough said it was not part of FIFA's hosting agreement with Boston.

FIFA has about 7 million seats to fill for the World Cup matches and said last month it received 500 million ticket requests. FIFA president Gianni Infantino has proclaimed all 104 games are sold out and yet some fans received emails last week offering an extra 48-hour window for tickets sales.

FIFA's prices in December ranged up to \$8,680 per ticket. After criticism, FIFA said it will offer a few hundred \$60 tickets for every game to the 48 national federations in the tournament. Those federations will decide how to distribute them to their most loyal fans who attended previous games.

Most seats on FIFA's ticket resale platform - seeking to cut out the secondary market and earn FIFA extra 15% fees from buyers and sellers - are well past the \$1,000 mark.

Mexico's ability to co-host the World Cup has been under scrutiny after a surge in violence last week in the state of Jalisco following the military's killing of a powerful cartel boss. The state's capital, Guadalajara, is set to host four matches during the group stage.

Mexico's government insists the World Cup won't be affected and President Claudia Sheinbaum said there's no risk for fans coming to the tournament.

Infantino told Sheinbaum that he has full confidence in Mexico as a World Cup host. The FIFA leader has repeatedly promised the 2026 World Cup will be the greatest and most inclusive.

Wolverhampton stuns Liverpool



Liverpool's Hugo Ekitike, left, challenges Wolverhampton Wanderers' Ladislav Krejci during the English Premier League soccer match between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Liverpool in Wolverhampton, England. (AP)

Salah ends 10-game league scoring drought

LONDON, March 4, (AP): Last-place Wolverhampton stunned Premier League champion Liverpool with a 2-1 win at Molineux Stadium.

Brazilian midfielder Andre struck a deflected winner in the fourth minute of stoppage time to deliver a blow to Liverpool's hopes of securing Champions League soccer next season.

It also gave Wolves fans a rare highlight in a season that looks destined to end with relegation.

Andre's goal sent the home crowd wild in a thrilling finish to the match.

Mohamed Salah netted in the 83rd minute - ending his 10-game league scoring drought - to equalize for Liverpool five minutes after Rodrigo Gomes had put Wolves ahead.

As the game swung from end to end with both teams looking for a winner, Andre's long-range effort deflected off Joe Gomez and left Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson wrong-footed.

"It feels amazing. It was an amazing game and an amazing night," said Rodrigo Gomes.

It was Liverpool's ninth



Sunderland's Eliezer Mayenda, left, controls the ball in front of Leeds United's Pascal Struijk during an English Premier League soccer match in Leeds, England. (AP)

league defeat of the season.

The top four are guaranteed to qualify for the Champions League, but the Premier League is likely to earn a fifth bonus place because of English clubs' performances in Europe this season.

After running away with the title last term, Liverpool is 16

points adrift of first-place Arsenal.

Victory for Wolves made it back-to-back wins in the league for the first time this season. It beat Aston Villa 2-0 on Friday.

While survival is highly unlikely, given it is 11 points adrift of safety, it is enjoying a late season surge that included a re-

cent 2-2 draw with Arsenal.

Everton secured a rare win at its new stadium by beating relegation-fighting Burnley 2-0.

Goals from James Tarkowski and Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall in each half sealed only a fifth league win at Hill Dickinson Stadium since Everton moved into its new home at the start of the season. Victory also boosted its chances of qualifying for Europe, with David Moyes' team moving to within one point of seventh-place Brentford, which drew 0-0 with Bournemouth.

"Our away form has been incredible but we haven't got enough points here," Tarkowski said. "We have let ourselves down in some games here and conceded some rubbish goals and not taken our chances."

"We are in touching distance to the European places. There are nine matches to go so we will stick some wins on the board and see where we end up. We are chasing them rather than looking below."

Leeds is in danger of being dragged back toward the relegation zone after back-to-back losses.

Habib Diarra's second-half penalty secured a 1-0 win for Sunderland at Elland Road.

Leeds is six points above the drop zone.

Strasbourg advances in French Cup

Inter Milan held 0-0 at Como in 1st leg of Italian Cup semifinals

COMO, Italy, March 4, (AP): Inter Milan was held to a 0-0 draw at neighboring Como in the first leg of the Italian Cup semifinals Tuesday.

Como had the better chances but couldn't quite find the target. The second leg is scheduled for April 22.

Inter, which faces AC Milan in a derby on Sunday, rested several usual starters.

Inter has won the Italian Cup nine times, while Como is chasing its first top-level trophy.



Strasbourg advanced to the semifinals of the French Cup with a 2-1 win over Reims.

In an eventful finish at Stade de la Meinau, Strasbourg converted two penalties in the space of four minutes and then conceded in stoppage time as Reims fought back.

Joaquin Panichelli's spot kick broke the deadlock in the 83rd and when David Datro Fofana was brought down in the box moments later, Strasbourg was awarded a second penalty.

Panichelli had already gone off, so Julio Enciso converted from the spot to double the home team's lead.

Abdoul Ouattara was close to making it 3-0 when he hit the bar in added time, but it was Reims that got the next goal - from Patrick Zabi in the 94th.

Pakistan drops Babar and Ayub for ODI series

ISLAMABAD, March 4, (AP): After a disappointing T20 World Cup, Pakistan has dropped seasoned batter Babar Azam and allrounder Saim Ayub for next week's ODI series in Bangladesh.

The 15-member squad has six uncapped players, including opening batter Sahibzada Farhan, who topped the batting charts at the T20 World Cup with 383 runs. However, Farhan hasn't played a 50-over game at domestic level since October 2024.

The selectors also dropped allrounders Mohammad Nawaz and Shadab Khan, but surprisingly kept T20 captain Salman Ali Agha in the ODI squad after he scored only 60 runs at the T20 World Cup.

Abdul Samad, renowned for his aggressive batting in T20s, is one of the other uncapped player along with Shmyl Hussain, a 21-year-old opening batter, and Maaz

Sadaqat. Ghazi Ghori is the backup wicketkeeper-batter as Pakistan recalled former ODI captain Mohammad Rizwan for the tour.

Mohammad Wasim and Haris Rauf are the two fast bowlers alongside Shaheen Shah Afridi, who will continue to lead the ODI team. Legspinner Abrar Ahmed will be frontline spinner with left-arm wristspinner Faisal Akram the other option.

The three-match series will be played from March 11-15 with Dhaka hosting all the games.

Squad: Shaheen Shah Afridi (captain), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Faisal Akram, Haris Rauf, Hussain Talat, Maaz Sadaqat, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim, Ghazi Ghori, Saad Masood, Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Ali Agha, Shmyl Hussain.



Pakistan's Babar Azam, left, warms up before the start of the T20 World Cup cricket match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in Pallekele, Sri Lanka. (AP)

Ronaldo denies European reports, remains in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH, March 4: Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo, captain and forward of Al-Nassr, continues training with his team ahead of its upcoming Saudi Pro League match against Neom, dismissing European media reports claiming he had left the country.

Al-Nassr's official social media shared photos of Ronaldo in training, confirming the star is actively preparing with the league leader for Saturday's clash.

In recent days, several European outlets suggested that Ronaldo had departed Saudi Arabia on his private jet due to regional tensions. Portuguese newspaper Record reported that his plane left Riyadh following the latest strike on the U.S. embassy. The Daily Mail asked, "Did Ronaldo flee Saudi Arabia?" while Marca (U.S. edition) claimed he had made a "sudden trip from Riyadh to Ma-



Cristiano Ronaldo

dril amid escalating Middle East tensions."

Ronaldo's presence on the training ground proves these reports are false, reaffirming his commitment to Al-Nassr during this critical stage of the season.

Currently, Al-Nassr tops the Saudi Pro League standings with 61 points, two ahead of Al-Ahli and three ahead of Al-Hilal, as the race for the title enters its final stages.



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Japan's Kiko Seike, second left, celebrates with teammates after scoring her team's second goal during the Women's Asia Cup soccer match between Japan and Taiwan in Perth. (AP)

Sports

Eid Al-Rashidi returns home following Kuwaiti Embassy in Baghdad orders

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 4: Eid Al-Rashidi, who plays for Iraqi club Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya, has returned to Kuwait following instructions from the Kuwaiti Embassy in Baghdad due to the ongoing regional instability.

The move was taken to ensure the player's safety, as recent events in the region have also led to a suspension of sports activities in Kuwait, with clubs halting daily training sessions.

Both the Asian Football Confederation and the Gulf Football Federation have postponed all competitions until further notice. This includes the Kuwait vs. Al-Shabab Oman quarterfinals in the Asian Challenge League, Al-Qadsia vs. Al-Rayyan semifinals in the Gulf Club Champions Cup, and fixtures in the AFC Champions League.

Upon returning, Eid posted on his personal X account:

"Praise is to God for my return to my homeland. I was evacuated by order of the Kuwaiti Embassy, and I sincerely thank them."

He added: "We pray for stability



A file photo of Eid Al-Rashidi celebrating.

in the region and hope the situation calms soon so I can return to Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya and continue my journey

with the club."

Eid's agent, Dagheem Al-Rashidi, confirmed the return was coordinated

with the club, and Eid will resume playing in Iraq once conditions improve.

The 26-year-old joined Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya on a contract until June, transferring from Al-Qadsia for approximately \$140,000, split between the player and his former club. Upon signing, Eid described the club as "a big team with a distinguished history and high-level performance," calling the move "an important challenge and a strong motivation to give my best." He also thanked Al-Qadsia fans for their support.

Eid is the first Kuwaiti player to compete professionally in the Iraqi league. Since joining Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya, the team has won all seven matches, with Eid contributing one goal and three assists.

He has quickly adapted to his new squad, benefiting from the guidance of Omani coach Rashid Jaber and the presence of Nigerian player Daniel Gibbala, with whom he previously played at Al-Qadsia. Eid has also formed a strong partnership with Omani forward Issam Al-Subhi, helping the team secure multiple victories.

OCA prioritizes athlete safety amid ME conflict

DOHA, March 4: The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has expressed deep concern over the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. In a statement released, OCA President Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani emphasized the impact of the situation on athletes and communities across the region.

"Our thoughts are with the families and communities affected," the statement read. "During this uncertain time, we call for de-escalation, the protection of civilians, and a swift return to stability. Dialogue and safety must remain top priorities."

The OCA confirmed that it remains in close contact with National Olympic Committees and the organizing committees of the upcoming 2026 Games. Ensuring the safety and well-being of athletes and the broader Asian Olympic movement remains its highest priority.

Meanwhile, the Coordination and Follow-up Committee for the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games concluded its meetings in Nagoya, Japan, on March 2-3, reflecting the



OCA President Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani

OCA's commitment to careful monitoring and responsible planning despite regional uncertainties.

The statement concluded by highlighting that the OCA was founded on the principle of unity — a value that holds greater importance now than ever — and expressed hope for a rapid return to peace and stability in the region.

Atletico survives Barcelona storm to clinch final berth

Atleti advances 4-3 on aggregate

MADRID, March 4, (AP): Atletico Madrid just barely held on to its first-leg advantage against defending champion Barcelona in the Copa del Rey, advancing to its first Copa final in 13 years despite a 3-0 loss to the Catalan club.

Atletico advanced 4-3 on aggregate thanks to its 4-0 win in the first leg last month in Madrid.

Diego Simeone's team will play in the final for the first time since it won its 10th Copa trophy in the 2012-13 season.

The final will be in April in Seville.

Barcelona saw itself in a hole after being trounced in the first half of the first leg last month, conceding all four goals before the break at the Metropolitan stadium.

Barcelona came out strong at home, scoring with Marc Bernal in the 29th minute and Raphinha converting a penalty kick in first-half stoppage time. Bernal added the third in the 72nd, leaving the hosts one goal shy from evening the series.

"We knew it was going to be a tough match, it's not easy to overcome a 4-0 defeat," Raphinha said. "But I'm proud of the team. We gave everything we had from the start. We leave disappointed because we wanted to be in the final, and I think we deserved it after the game that we played."

Barcelona kept pressing but Atletico's stout defense held on.

"Maybe it wasn't our best match, but it was a game of 180 minutes," Atletico goalkeeper Juan Musso said. "They had everything going their way but we suffered when we had to suffer. We knew it wasn't going to be easy, but in the end we made it to the final."

Barcelona lost defender Jules Koundé to an injury 13 minutes into the match. He was replaced by Alejandro Balde, who in the second half asked to be substituted as well. Forward Robert Lewandowski missed the match because of an injury.

Barcelona was looking to repeat as Copa champion after defeating Real Madrid in last year's final.

Barcelona is the Spanish league leader. It has a four-point lead over second-place Real Madrid. Atletico is third, 13 points behind Barcelona.

Both Barcelona and Atletico are in the round of 16 of the Champions League.



Barcelona's Lamine Yamal, left, and Atletico Madrid's David Hancko challenge for the ball during the Copa del Rey semifinal second leg soccer match between Barcelona and Atletico Madrid in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)

Iranian player holds back tears responding to a war-related question

Japan beats Taiwan, Vietnam edges India with late winner

PERTH, Australia, March 4, (AP): Momoko Tanikawa and Kiko Seike scored second-half goals as Japan overcame the heat and a determined Taiwan defense on Wednesday to open Group C with a 2-0 win at the Women's Asian Cup.

Ngân Thị Van Su scored twice, including the clincher in the fourth minute of stoppage time, to guide Vietnam to a 2-1 win over India that completed the opening matches for the tournament's 12 teams.

Japan won back-to-back titles in 2014 and '18 and entered the tournament in Australia among the favorites.

After failing to convert multiple chances in the first hour, Japan finally opened the scoring when Momoko Tanikawa controlled Hana Takahashi's long, lofted pass, steadied herself and finished with a neat right-foot shot from close range in the 61st minute.

Seike doubled the lead in the second of seven minutes of added time when she leaped to get above the defenders on the edge of the box and headed in Remina Chiba's high cross from the left.

Japan had 30 shots at goal, including 10 on target, from almost 90% of possession. Taiwan didn't fire a shot on goal but did well to keep the margin to two goals.

Yui Hasegawa's last-minute shot was tipped over the crossbar by Taiwan goalkeeper Wang Yu-ting.

Match officials allowed a cooling break in each half, with players taking a few minutes to use ice bags on their faces and necks and drink water as the temperature headed toward 37 Celsius (99 Fahrenheit) in the Western Australia capital.

Van Su curled a right-foot shot into the



Vietnam's Huynh Nur, left, and India's Sweeti Devi Ngangbam compete for the ball during the Women's Asia Cup soccer match between India and Vietnam in Perth, Australia. (AP)

top corner from the left side in the 30th minute and Vietnam almost went ahead 2-0 just after halftime but had a goal disallowed on VAR.

The review determined that a long cross into the box touched the arm of Nguyen Thi Thanh Nha before Thai Thi Thao tapped in amid a goalmouth scramble in the 48th.

India equalized four minutes later on a counterattack when substitute Sanfida Nongrum launched a left-foot strike over the Vietnam goalkeeper.

The game appeared set for a draw until Vu Thi Hoa crossed from the left and Van Su fired a left-foot shot between the

legs of a defender to seal the victory.

It was a setback for India, which hosted the 2022 Women's Asian Cup but had to withdraw after an outbreak of COVID-19 within the squad.

Sara Didar choked back tears as she shared the concerns of the Iranian soccer team for their families and loved ones at home amid the war while they're in Australia contesting the Women's Asian Cup.

"Obviously we're all concerned and we're sad at what has happened to Iran and our families in Iran," Didar said in comments translated to English during a news conference Wednesday on the eve of a Group A game against Australia.

"I really hope for our country to have good news ahead.

The 21-year-old striker was part of the squad that stood in silence as the Iran anthem played at the Gold Coast Stadium before their opening loss to South Korea on Monday.

The squad and management arrived in Australia well before the strikes by Israel and the U.S. on Saturday that led to the broader conflict.

On Wednesday, an Asian Football Confederation moderator asked reporters before the scheduled pre-match news conference to stick with football questions and refrain from asking about the war.

When a question was posed, Didar and Jafari each expressed concerns about the people in Iran.

"Obviously we have so much concern regarding the health of our families and our loved ones and all other Iranian people inside our country, which we are fully disconnected with," Jafari said, highlighting the limited contact because of blackouts in Iran.

"But, here, we are coming to play football professionally and we will do our best to concentrate on our football and match ahead."

A pocket of Iranian fans at Monday's game waved the red, green and white national colors and some chanted support for the team.

Jafari said the team was happy to have the support of Iranian-Australians.

Australia coach Joe Montemurro said he wanted his team and supporters to greet the Iranian squad with compassion. Thursday's game is expected to draw a capacity crowd at Gold Coast Stadium.

Ristavich boosts Kazma handball team ambitions

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 4:

Kazma Club has welcomed French coach Slavisa Ristavich as the new head coach of its handball team, a move that Director Salem Abdulsalam describes as a major boost for the "Orange" as it aims to compete in the remainder of the season.

Abdulsalam thanked Kazma's management and Board President Omar Al-Mulla for their support and for removing obstacles to ensure the team can perform at its best in upcoming competitions.

He said: "Signing Slavisa marks a new phase for the team. We aim to develop our performance and remain competitive, especially after the recent suspension of sports activities due to regional events."

Ristavich replaces Serbian coach Bozo Rudic, who stepped down, and brings extensive experience from European and Arab leagues.



Salem Abdulsalam

He has won multiple championships and holds the highest coaching certification from the French Handball Federation.

The French coach has previously managed Club Africain and CS Hammamet in Tunisia, as well as Qatar SC and Al-Wakrah SC in Qatar.

Currently, Kazma sits third in the Premier League standings with 14 points, trailing Kuwait Cluband Burgan. With Ristavich at the helm, the club is determined to stay in the title race and challenge for top honors this season.