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## Opinion

# Our Amir, your speech is eloquent and reassuring

**Ahmed Al-Jarallah**

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

“SPEECH of wisdom and power” is the title that best describes the address delivered by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of the last ten days of Ramadan.

His Highness outlined strategic guidelines to confront the challenges Kuwait faces from a neighbor that has chosen aggression over good neighborliness and friendly relations.

He stated clearly, “Kuwait’s security is a red line.” Defending Kuwait’s security and stability is non-negotiable. His Highness emphasized the importance of learning from these lessons and uniting as one to ensure that the nation remains strong and proud, with the support of the minds and hands of its citizens, whose unity and cohesion enable them to achieve great things.

Our pursuit of peace does not mean leniency in protecting national security. The people, the government, and the leadership are all committed to defending the homeland.

It is a shared responsibility, involving not only ministries and government institutions but also all segments of society, including every resident of this blessed land.

His Highness the Amir was clear when he said, “We are closely monitoring developments, and every

step taken is based on a comprehensive strategic assessment, a careful reading of reality, and a complete commitment to protecting the nation, its people, and those residing on its land.”

Kuwait is not weak. It is fully capable of confronting challenges. The current situation poses a threat to the entire region.

His Highness the Amir affirmed, “Our homeland is a red line, and its sovereignty is safeguarded by the will of its people and the bravery of its men and women. We will not allow any country to compromise its security or stability.”

Sovereignty is the foundation upon which the future is built. Since its inception, Kuwait has faced difficulties with wisdom and national unity.

When His Highness the Amir emphasizes that “the homeland is a red line,” it signifies that any aggressor must take into consideration the full consequences

of their actions.

Kuwait is a defensive state, yet it is not an easy target for anyone. At the same time, Kuwait continues to pursue peace based on a national vision that accepts no compromises.

His Highness’s statement that “Gulf security is indivisible” means that any threat to the security of a GCC member state is a threat to the national security of the entire Gulf region. Therefore, all member states have the right to defend their security together.

Continued on Page 5

Follow me on:

@Ahmedaljarallah

Ahmed aljarallah

ahmed@aljarallah.com



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# KUWAIT BOOSTS CYBER WATCH TO SAFEGUARD NATIONAL SECURITY

## Washington must not treat Kuwait as an afterthought: Ambassador Joey Hood

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: In an exclusive interview with Arab Times, Ambassador Joey Hood – former Acting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and former Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait – speaks candidly about the Iranian attacks on the Gulf, Washington’s failures of consultation, the importance of diplomatic presence during crisis, and why Kuwait should never be treated as an afterthought in American policy.

**1. You served in Kuwait and know the country closely. What was your personal reaction when Iranian missiles and drones began threatening Kuwait and the Gulf?**

My first reaction was deeply personal. I wished I could get on a plane immediately and go sit with my friends in Kuwait – in their diwanis, their offices, and their homes – to show solidarity in a difficult moment. That is what real friendship demands.

Instead, we found ourselves in the disturbing position of watching Kuwait and other Gulf states absorb the shock of a crisis they did not create, while air travel was disrupted and civilians were left facing a threat no country should have to face alone. I have tremendous confidence in Kuwait’s security institutions and in the resilience of Kuwaiti society, but that does not lessen the seriousness of what has happened.

**2. Many in the Gulf feel they were dragged into a confrontation they did not choose. Is that a fair view?**

I think that feeling is understandable. Gulf countries did not ask to become the arena in which regional escalation is tested. At the same time, no one in this region is surprised by the nature of the Iranian regime. For decades, Tehran has relied on militias, proxies, intimidation, and ideological expansionism to project power beyond its borders.

But understanding the nature of the regime is one thing. Being properly consulted, properly prepared, and properly treated as a partner is another. Those are



Ambassador Joey Hood, former Acting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and former Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait.

separate issues. One can recognize the Iranian threat while still asking whether Washington handled this crisis in a way that fully respected the interests, vulnerabilities, and political realities of its Gulf partners.

**3. Do you believe Washington adequately consulted its Gulf allies before this escalation?**

From outside government, I have to speak with some caution. But based on everything I know about how diplomacy works, I believe there are serious reasons to question whether consultation was adequate.

Consultation is not a box to tick. It is not one phone call between capitals. It is not a hurried exchange after decisions are effectively made. Real consultation means sustained engagement, advance political signaling, embassy-level dialogue, and a serious effort to understand what partners will actually face if a crisis spills over onto their territory. If Gulf states felt exposed, surprised, or

politically cornered, then that itself tells you something important.

**4. You have been unusually critical of the suspension of U.S. Embassy operations in Kuwait. Why do you see that as such a serious mistake?**

Because diplomats are most valuable in moments of crisis, not in moments of comfort.

Anyone can attend receptions and smile during calm periods. The real test of diplomacy is whether you remain present when your partners are under pressure, when your own citizens need help, and when difficult coordination is required as events are unfolding. Of course governments have to think about safety, and of course family members may need to be moved in volatile circumstances. But emptying out diplomatic presence sends the wrong message at exactly the wrong moment.

It can easily be read as: we will stand with you – but from a distance. That is not how trust is built in the Gulf, and it is certainly not how trust is sustained in Kuwait.

Continued on Page 5

# Attacks repelled as Kuwait seals skies



Ministry of Social Affairs photo  
Photo during an inspection tour in a number of cooperatives recently.

## Co-ops confirm stable stocks

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

**KUWAIT CITY, March 10: Official spokesperson of the Defense Ministry Colonel Saud Al-Atwan announced that the Kuwait Armed Forces intercepted a wave of hostile aerial targets on the airspace of the country from dawn until midnight on Monday.**

In a statement issued by the General Command of the Army, Al-Atwan revealed that air defense systems detected, intercepted and destroyed these targets, while a hostile drone was shot down. He clarified that the sounds of explosions heard in some areas are due to the air defense operations against the hostile targets.

He urged the public to strictly comply with the security and safety instructions issued by the relevant authorities. He emphasized that the Kuwait Armed Forces maintain the highest level of readiness to deal with threats and anything that targets the security and stability of the country.

Meanwhile, official spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior Brigadier General Nasser Bousalib reiterated the warning against approaching suspicious objects or debris, urging people to report such objects immediately through the emergency number 112.

Bousalib said the concerned authorities responded to reports on falling debris in several locations, indicating the specialized field teams dealt with these reports swiftly and

efficiently. He added that the explosive ordnance disposal teams handled reports about shrapnel from defensive interception operations.

He confirmed the continuous preparations and coordination among the relevant authorities to ensure the safety of everyone. He said the activation of sirens is one of the precautionary measures being taken under the current circumstances.

Following is a summary of the air defense operations:

- Two enemy ballistic missiles intercepted and destroyed
- One enemy drone shot down
- Operations took place from dawn until midnight
- Detection and interception location: southern region

**Reports and field actions**

- 16 reports on shrapnel handled by explosive ordnance disposal teams
- 314 total reports since the beginning of the aggression
- Four recent siren activations
- 80 total siren activations since the beginning of the attacks

In related news, Director of the Public Relations and Security Media General Department at the Ministry of Interior Colonel Othman Al-Mansouri said the Cybercrime Department, which is under the Criminal Security Sector, is exerting tremendous efforts to monitor and track violations on social media.

In an interview with Kuwait TV, Al-Mansouri clarified that these efforts were already underway even before the crisis, but the workload and pressure have intensified due to the current circumstances. He disclosed that the department deals daily with violations, abuses and attempts circulating on social media that could undermine national security.

Continued on Page 5

## Canada begins 1st land departure from Kuwait

By Fares Ghaleb  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: The Canadian Embassy in Kuwait announced on Monday the launch of the first overland departure for Canadian citizens choosing to leave the country. The embassy stated that the trip’s destination is Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and the journey was facilitated with official assistance.

It stressed that this step is part of the embassy’s efforts to support Canadian citizens wishing to leave Kuwait due to the current circumstances.

The embassy urged Canadians who wish to depart to contact them via the designated email address.

## 50 begin exit

## French Embassy assists citizens leaving Kuwait

By Fares Ghaleb  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: French Ambassador to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin confirmed the departure of a bus from Kuwait as part of the voluntary repatriation operation for French citizens.

This is in line with ongoing efforts to assist French nationals, particularly those considered most vulnerable.

Continued on Page 5

## AI weapons, deepfakes open new war front, experts warn

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: As geopolitical tensions intensify in the region, coupled with the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, modern wars are no longer confined to traditional battlefields, and have extended into the media and digital spheres, forming what is known as “information warfare.”

Dr. Safaa Zaman, President of Kuwait Association for Information Security (KAIS), emphasized that the world is witnessing a significant acceleration in AI development.

In a press statement, she explained that the impact of these technologies is not limited to the economic, health,

or educational sectors but has clearly reached the military domain. Modern armies are increasingly relying on intelligent systems for data analysis, decision-making, and the efficient management of military operations.

Drones and unmanned systems are among the most prominent applications of AI in modern warfare, as they are now capable of performing reconnaissance, surveillance, and attack missions without putting soldiers in direct danger. Thanks to machine learning algorithms, these systems can rapidly analyze images and field data, giving military commanders greater capacity to make precise tactical decisions.

forming reconnaissance, surveillance, and attack missions without putting soldiers in direct danger. Thanks to machine learning algorithms, these systems can rapidly analyze images and field data, giving military commanders greater capacity to make precise tactical decisions.

Continued on Page 5

## Kuwait condoles UAE, slams consulate attack

KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday sent a cable of condolence to UAE President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan, expressing sincere sympathy over the martyrdom of two UAE armed forces personnel in a helicopter accident while performing their national duty.

His Highness the Amir prayed to

Almighty Allah to bestow vast mercy upon the martyrs’ souls and to grant their families, as well as the people of the UAE, patience and solace.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent a cable to the UAE President, conveying heartfelt condolences and praying for mercy upon the martyrs and comfort for their bereaved families.

Similarly, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable to Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed, expressing deep condolences and sympathy over the loss, and praying to Allah Almighty to bless the martyrs with His mercy and grant their loved ones patience.

Continued on Page 5

## Kuwait MoCI moves to avert price exploitation

KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA): Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai spearheaded an extensive field inspection of various retail outlets and commercial markets on Monday evening, as part of a rigorous campaign to tighten market oversight and ensure price stability.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) stated in a press release that the ministerial tour aimed to verify compliance with regulations and controls.

The inspection resulted in the detection of numerous irregularities and the subsequent issuance of 10 violation citations, it added.

Continued on Page 5

## Ramadan Timings

Imsak .....	Wednesday .....	04:44
Iftar .....	Wednesday .....	17:54
Imsak .....	Thursday .....	04:43



**National Investments Company's General Assembly Approves 25% Cash Dividend Distribution of the Share's Nominal Value**

9

## 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:** Warm with light to northwesterly wind to light wind, with speed of 08-32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

## Weather

**By Night:** Rather cold to cold with light variable wind to light to moderate southeasterly wind, with speed of 08-32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait Airport	22	05
Abdaly	22	07
Jahra	23	08

## Call to maintain joint security, reject acts harmful to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Monday evening received a phone call from Jordanian Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II.

During the phone conversation, the Jordanian Crown Prince condemned the heinous attacks on the region's countries, which represent a blatant breach of international charters and countries' sovereignty, security and stability, given their serious impacts on regional and global security and stability.



HH the Crown Prince

He underlined the need to maintain joint security and reject any action that could harm the State of Kuwait and other countries in the region amid regional security tensions.

His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to King Abdullah II of Jordan, voicing thanks and appreciation to the Jordanian Crown Prince for his sincere fraternal sentiments, and calling for scaling up Arab coordination to safeguard regional security and stability.

## CBSE exams postponed due to Gulf crisis: India embassy

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: The Indian Embassy in Kuwait announced the postponement of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) exams scheduled for March 12-16 due to the current situation in the Gulf.

In a press statement, the embassy explained that the Central Board of Secondary

Education in India decided to postpone the exams and the new exam dates will be specified after an assessment of the situation.

The board indicated that it will review the situation on March 14 to make appropriate decisions regarding the exams scheduled for March 16 onwards. The embassy then urged all concerned students to contact their schools for the updates and to adhere to the official announcements on this matter.

# Kuwait Airways operates special Paris-Dammam flight for returnees

Boarding for Dammam, Kuwait expats need Saudi transit visa

**KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA): Kuwait Airways announced Tuesday it will operate a special flight from Paris to Dammam Airport to facilitate the return of passengers to Kuwait.**

In a press statement, the airline said the flight, numbered KU168D, will depart from Paris at 11:00 am on Friday (Paris time) and is expected to arrive in Dammam at 7:20 pm the same day.

The company noted that this flight will be the last scheduled flight for passengers currently in Europe wishing to return to Kuwait.

Kuwait Airways called on travelers in Europe who wish to return to Kuwait to head to Paris airport and book seats on the flight.

It added that expatriate passengers must obtain a transit visa from Saudi Arabia to transit through the country.

Reservations can be made by contacting the customer service call center at (171) or through WhatsApp at +965 1802050, the airline added.

## Amman

Meanwhile, Kuwait Airways announced Monday the operation of a special flight from Amman to Dammam Airport to facilitate the return of passengers to Kuwait.

In a press statement, the national carrier said the flight, numbered KU562D, will depart from Amman at 12:00 am on Thursday (Amman time) and is expected to arrive in Dammam at 2:20

pm the same day.

The airline called on travelers currently near Jordan who wish to return to Kuwait to travel to Amman and book seats on the flight.

It noted that expatriate passengers must obtain a transit visa from Saudi Arabia to transit through the country.

Kuwait Airways added that bookings can be made by contacting its customer service call center at (171) or through WhatsApp at +965 1802050.

## Istanbul

Kuwait Airways announced Monday it will operate a special flight from Sabiha Gokcen International Airport (Turkiye) to Dammam Airport to facilitate the return of passengers to Kuwait.

In a press statement, the airline said the flight, numbered KU158D, will depart from Istanbul at 11:00 am on Tuesday (Istanbul time) and is expected to arrive in Dammam at 3:00 pm the same day.

The national carrier called on travelers currently in Turkey who wish to return to Kuwait to head to Sabiha Gokcen Airport and book seats on the flight.

It noted that expatriate passengers must obtain a transit visa from Saudi Arabia to travel.

Kuwait Airways added that reservations can be made by contacting the customer service call center at (171) or through WhatsApp at +965 1802050.

Fool-proof security at mosques nationwide

## 'Qiyam' prayers draw Kuwaitis, residents crowd



KUNA photo  
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Major General Abdulwahab Ahmad Al-Wuhaib, conducted an inspection tour of several mosques.

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah /Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: In a spiritually uplifting atmosphere, mosques throughout the country witnessed a large turnout of worshippers as they gathered for the 22nd night of Ramadan.

This scene affirmed the worshippers' eagerness to seize the blessings of the last 10 nights of Ramadan and be closer to Allah through acts of worship and supplication.

Mosques were filled with worshippers -- citizens and expatriates -- who lined up in tightly arranged rows to perform the night prayer (Qiyam) in reverence and tranquility. The sounds of Quranic recitation and heartfelt supplications echoed throughout the mosques in various governorates.

The second night of the final 10 nights witnessed an influx of worshippers in mosques, as many are keen on spending the night in prayer, reciting the Holy Quran and engaging in the remembrance of Allah, hoping to attain the great reward and witness Laylat Al-Qadr (Night of Decree), which is better than a thousand months.

All segments of society, including youths, elderly and families, are eager to be in the houses of Allah during these blessed nights and perform the rituals of the holy month of Ramadan.

During the night prayers, worshippers responded with deep devotion to the Qunut supplications, raising their hands in prayer to Almighty Allah, asking Him to accept their good deeds, to protect Kuwait and its people, and to perpetuate the blessings of security and stability upon them.

This ambiance of faith continues in the mosques as the last 10 days of Ramadan unfold, with worshippers striving to seize the blessed days through worship and devotion, hoping to attain forgiveness, mercy and salvation from Hellfire.

As part of security preparations and field readiness to secure mosques and places of worship, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Major General Abdulwahab Ahmad Al-Wuhaib, conducted an inspection tour of several mosques on Monday, accompanied by the Head of the Traffic and Operations Sector, Brigadier General Abdullah Ahmad Al-Ateeqi, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Ministry of Interior explained that Major General Al-Wuhaib, during the tour, reviewed the details of the approved security and traffic plan for the mosques.

He received a briefing on the security deployment, force distribution, and the intensification of fixed and mobile patrols in the surrounding areas. He also inspected the field readiness of security personnel and the measures taken to regulate traffic, facilitate the arrival of worshippers, and ensure smooth movement around the mosques.

Major General Al-Wuhaib emphasized the need for vigilance and attentiveness, and ensuring that all necessary facilities are provided to worshippers.

He highlighted the importance of everyone's cooperation and adherence to the instructions of security personnel.

At the conclusion of the tour, Major General Al-Wuhaib praised the security personnel on the ground, commending their sincere efforts and dedication to duty. He affirmed the pride of the Ministry of Interior leadership in their contributions.

## Employees stranded outside will not be considered absent

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced on Sunday that employees stranded outside Kuwait due to the closure of airspace and the exceptional circumstances in the region will be exempt from the regulations concerning absence from work, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, CSC explained that this period will be considered actual working time until the stranded employees are able to return to Kuwait. It has contacted government agencies, public bodies, and institutions to address the situations of employees unable to return due to the exceptional circumstances in the region.

The exemption period will be determined by the direct supervisor or their next supervisor after the end of the employee's authorized leave or holiday period, during which they were expected to return.

Employees must submit documentation proving their presence outside the country during this period for it to be recorded as actual working time in the automated systems, in accordance with established procedures.

## MoSA urges co-ops to supply food, essentials to 95 shelters

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) has instructed cooperative societies to equip 95 shelters in all governorates with essential supplies, including a variety of food items, to ensure a rapid response when needed, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In light of the current regional crisis and its potential impact on the country, the ministry contacted the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies to circulate a memo to the boards of all cooperative societies regarding the preparation of these shelters, located in schools in all six governorates. The initiative aims to streamline operations and guarantee a quick response when needed.

Charitable societies are also preparing furnishings such as mattresses and blankets, among other necessities.

According to sources, the circular requires cooperative societies to prepare a

variety of food items, including water, snacks, and other supplies that are sufficient for approximately 400 individuals per location, and provide three meals a day.

The circular clarified that bedding, including mattresses, blankets, pillows, and other essentials, will be provided by charitable organizations in coordination with relevant authorities.

It emphasized that any cooperative society named in the ministry's circular must store the required items in its warehouses until further instructions from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The sources revealed that the 95 shelters are distributed in all the governorates as follows: 19 each in Capital and Ahmadi Governorates, 17 in Hawally Governorate, 11 in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate, 14 in Farwaniya Governorate, and 15 in Jahra Governorate.



Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah



Wang Yi

## China, Kuwait cooperate for quick return to peace in area

BEIJING, March 10: Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a phone call with Foreign Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Monday, March 9.

Sheikh Jarrah briefed Wang Yi on the latest developments of the regional situation, stating that Kuwait is not a party to the war but has still been impacted by the flames of war. Gulf countries including Kuwait remain committed to resolving disputes through dialogue while reserving their legitimate right to self-defense.

The Kuwaiti side highly appreciates China's position and the efforts China has made, and stands ready to strengthen communication and coordination with China to jointly promote the early restoration of security and stability in the region. Kuwait attaches great importance to and will continue to ensure the safety and security of Chinese personnel and institutions in the country.

Wang Yi stated that China has always advocated resolving disputes through political and diplomatic

means. The ongoing hostilities are a war that should not have happened and serves no one's interests. The United States and Israel launched military strikes against Iran while the Iran-US negotiations were still underway and without the authorization of the United Nations, which is a blatant violation of international law. At the same time, the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Gulf countries must also be fully respected, and any attack on innocent civilians and non-military targets deserves condemnation.

The pressing priority now is to stop fighting, and end the war as soon as possible. China appreciates the consistent calls of Gulf countries for dialogue and negotiation. China will continue to make efforts for peace, and the special envoy of the Chinese Government on the Middle East issue has already left for the region to mediate and will strengthen communication and exchanges with the Kuwait and other countries. China hopes and believes that Kuwait will continue to ensure the safety and security of Chinese institutions and personnel in the country.

Defendants remain behind bars

## Court postpones Sheikh Talal money fraud case to March 30

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: The Second Circuit of the Court of Cassation decided to adjourn to March 30 the hearing of the two cases filed against Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled who is accused of embezzling funds from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense.

The case was adjourned for the defense to complete its arguments.

The court had scheduled the session on Monday for the defense to present its case after accepting the appeal against the Ministers' Court ruling, which had sentenced Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled to 14 years in prison, imposed a fine of KD 20 million, and required him to repay KD 10 million.

The Court of Cassation accepted the appeal because the Ministers' Court ruling did not include the evidence supporting the charges of embezzlement and money laundering for which the defendant was convicted.

Detention continues: The detention

renewal judge ordered the continued detention of seven defendants, including employees and former officials of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), for 14 days pending investigation into the agricultural land allocation manipulation case.

The Public Prosecution is continuing its investigations with other newly detained individuals connected to the case.

A specialized team, formed by Attorney General Saad Al-Safraan, is conducting the investigations to determine all circumstances of the case and identify everyone involved in the illegal distribution of agricultural plots.

Since the start of the investigations, the Public Prosecution has taken quick and decisive measures, including freezing the bank accounts of the defendants and freezing any financial or real estate transactions related to the cases under investigation.

The alleged crimes include harming the state's food security, bribery, forgery, intentional damage to public funds, and money laundering.

## Thanks to defense forces for safeguarding Kuwait

"I EXTEND my deepest gratitude and appreciation to all our government agencies for their cooperation in protecting the land and airspace of Kuwait. I especially thank the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, the National Guard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Information for their dedicated efforts in service of their nation."

eminent Kuwaiti citizen **Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"I also thank the blood donors, both citizens and residents. We pray to God Almighty to protect our leadership, our people, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries from all harm and evil. I ask God to have mercy on our righteous martyrs, both military and civilian, and we pray that they may dwell in Paradise. Amen. Iran should have directed its strikes, missiles, and drones in response to the Israeli-American attack towards those responsible, rather than targeting its neighbors in the GCC countries, which did not allow the use of their territory or airspace to attack Iran."

"Iran should have benefited from its relationships with neighboring countries and maintained its friendships to reaffirm the sincerity of its previous fraternal statements. Iran must correct its course in defending its territory and people before the United States and Israel intensify their strikes in the coming days to weaken it after destroying its remaining missiles and drones."

"We are living in a time that leaves no room for laughter or jokes. This message is directed to young people who expose themselves to legal consequences, cause public disturbance, and then bring distress to their families as a result of their arrest. I urge officials at Kuwait Radio not to overuse some beautiful national songs by repeating them so often that listeners become bored. People tire of repetition and prefer variety in their meals, places, and clothing."

"I have been informed that the majority of the members of the interview committee responsible for selecting imams at the Ministry of Islamic Affairs are non-Kuwaitis. I affirm my respect for them and appreciate their efforts. However, I hope that the position of imam will be Kuwaitized and that the number of Kuwaiti members on the interview committee will be increased."



Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber

his leadership, which reinforced reassurance and demonstrated that Kuwait is strong in its will, united in its people, and capable of protecting its land with wisdom and competence under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince (May God protect them)."

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"On ordinary days, cities seem tranquil, moving at their usual pace. Schools open their doors, streets bustle with activity, and homes are occupied with the simple details of daily life. However, there are moments in the life of nations when the rhythm suddenly changes, when the alarm sounds, and people feel that the world around them has become more tense than before."

"In such times, it is not the loudest voices that matter most, but the calm voice that reminds everyone of a simple truth - the strength of nations is not measured by what is happening around them, but by how their people remain united when circumstances become difficult. The region today is going through a sensitive phase, where interests are intertwined, events are accelerating, and tensions are rising. Yet amid all this noise, the most important truth remains - societies that know how to preserve their unity are the ones capable of overcoming the most difficult moments."

"Fear is a natural human emotion, especially when news is widespread, rumors circulate, and warnings dominate the scene. However, history shows that fear, if left unchecked, can turn into collective anxiety, and awareness transforms fear into responsible caution. Throughout its history, Kuwait has demonstrated the ability to navigate difficult times with wisdom and cohesion. Its strength has never lain in the absence of challenges, but in the capacity of its society to stand united whenever necessary."

"In the current situation, the anxiety visible on people's faces does not reflect reality. The truth is found in the strong solidarity among the people, where families and neighbors reassure one another. Society continues to rally around official institutions with trust and responsibility. This spirit is not foreign to this nation. From its inception, Kuwait was founded on a simple yet profound principle - a ship cannot survive if each individual is preoccupied with themselves, but only if everyone understands that their fate is intertwined."

"In times like these, the nation needs calm minds more than emotional outbursts. It requires an awareness that distinguishes between fact and exaggeration, between legitimate caution and unwarranted panic. Above all, it depends on mutual trust between society and its institutions. Regional challenges, however significant they may appear, are never more dangerous than internal division or the spread of rumors."

"Therefore, our greatest responsibility today is to preserve our unity and remember that stability begins within society itself. Over the decades, Kuwaitis have proven that moments of anxiety do not divide them, but bring them closer - transforming fears into solidarity, questions into dialogue, and anxieties into collective awareness."

"Nations are tested not only in times of prosperity but also in their ability to maintain composure when the world around them is in turmoil. Kuwait has always exemplified this balance. Today, the details of life may change slightly. Some procedures may be temporarily adjusted, but what remains unchanged is the core of society. Kuwait is a homeland that unites its people under one flag, where unity is not a slogan but a daily practice, revealed in the most challenging moments."

"The most important message in times like these is not fear of what might happen, but confidence in what we already possess - a cohesive society and collective awareness. Alarms may sound, and news may rush by, but as long as people sincerely rally around their homeland, reassurance will always be stronger than any other voice."

– Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



First Deputy PM presides over ceremony

## 20 police officers from Qatar, UAE graduate

KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA): First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, presided over the swearing-in ceremony for a group of police academy graduates from brotherly countries.

The ceremony, held in the presence of Lieutenant General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib, included 20 graduates from

police academies and colleges in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, comprising 10 graduates from the Qatar Police Academy, five from the Mohammed Bin Ghanem Al-Ghanem Naval Academy in Qatar, and five female graduates from Abu Dhabi Police College in the UAE.

All graduates were appointed to the police force with the rank of Lieutenant

following their oath, officially beginning their service in safeguarding the nation.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef extended his congratulations to the new officers, wishing them success in fulfilling their national duties and maintaining the security and stability of the country.

The ceremony was attended by senior security officials.

## Stay away from projectile debris, report finding on 112, warns Mol

314 cases handled since attacks began

KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Interior renewed its warning to the public not to approach any suspicious objects or missile debris and to immediately report such findings through the emergency hotline (112).

The remarks were made by Nasser Bouslaib, Director General of the General Department of Security Relations and Media, during a media briefing on the latest developments amid the ongoing Iranian aggression against Kuwait.

The spokesman said that since 12:00 midnight on Sunday, March 8, authorities have received several reports of falling debris at various locations across the country.

All reports received through the emergency hotline (112) were handled promptly and



Nasser Bouslaib

efficiently by specialized field teams.

Explosive ordnance disposal teams responded to 16 field reports involving debris resulting from defensive interception operations, raising the total number of reports handled since the beginning of the attacks to 314, he added.

He also noted that warning sirens were activated four times during the recent period, bringing the total number of activations since the start of the aggression to 80.

The spokesman added that specialized teams had been deployed to several sites to safely clear debris.

He added that authorities have implemented an organizational plan, in coordination with relevant state sectors, for the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan, regulating the timings of Taraweeh and Qiyam prayers and other religious activities as part of security and safety measures.

He concluded by praying for Kuwait's continued safety and security.



KUNA photo

Acting Deputy Chief for Civil Protection at the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), Brigadier General Omar Boursli talks to officials stationed at a hospital.

Boursli conducts tour

## KFF reviews fire safety at stations & hospitals

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: On Monday, Brigadier General Omar Boursli, Acting Deputy Chief for Civil Protection at the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), conducted an inspection tour of several fire stations and personnel assigned to secure hospitals to assess their readiness, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, KFF explained that Brigadier General Boursli reviewed the fire safety and prevention systems and equipment at the various locations during his visit. This reflects KFF's commitment to maintaining full preparedness and readiness to protect vital sites under current conditions.

Meanwhile, the Public Relations and Media Officer at the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Al-Hajji, urged citizens and residents to exercise caution and vigilance, emphasizing the importance of cooperating with relevant authorities during current events, reports Al-Jarida daily.

In a press statement, he highlighted a concerning issue - some individuals gathering around accident sites or suspicious objects, which hinders the work of specialized teams and delays a quick response.

Lieutenant Colonel Al-Hajji stressed the need to avoid such gatherings, as they could negatively affect security operations and endanger those present.

He also called on everyone to follow the instructions of KFF and relevant authorities, remain indoors, and only go out in cases of extreme necessity during emergencies.

Lieutenant Colonel Al-Hajji emphasized the importance of supervising children and refraining from spreading rumors, urging the public to rely only on official sources to prevent panic and misinformation.

He expressed his wishes for everyone's safety and prayed for the protection of Kuwait and its people.

# MoE evaluates Teams platform stability, postpones short tests

Al-Tabtabaei urges stronger participation in online classes

**KUWAIT CITY, March 10: Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei chaired an expanded meeting on Monday morning at his office with senior officials from the Ministry of Education to review the latest developments in distance learning via the Teams platform.**

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Education, the meeting was attended by the acting Undersecretary Eng. Mohammed Al-Khaldi, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs Eng. Hamad

Al-Hamad, Director General of Educational Affairs Prof. Mohammed Al-Wazzan,

Director General of Guidance, Research, and Curricula Prof. Mohammed Al-Otaibi, Director General of Educational Support Services Prof. Maryam Al-Enezi, and Director of Public Relations and Educational Media Arwa Al-Ayyar.

During the meeting, Minister Al-Tabtabaei received a detailed briefing on the distance learning



Al-Tabtabaei

process, including the level of interaction in virtual classes, student and teacher attendance rates on the educational platform, and the challenges faced by some schools and how these are being addressed.

During the meeting, they decided to postpone short tests until further notice, taking into consideration the current circumstances and to provide greater flexibility for schools, students, and teachers. They also decided to reassess the situation in light of developments in the coming period and to take any necessary measures to ensure the best interests of students and maintain the stability of the educational process.

They emphasized the importance of students and teachers attending and participating in online classes via the Teams platform, and stressed the need for continued monitoring by school administrations to achieve the desired

educational outcomes during the distance learning period.

During the meeting, Minister Al-Tabtabaei commended the significant efforts of staff in all sectors of the Ministry of Education.

He praised the role of teaching and administrative staff, as well as school administrations, in monitoring students and ensuring the continuity of their studies despite the challenges, affirming that these efforts reflect a strong sense of responsibility and a commitment to the best interests of students.

Minister Al-Tabtabaei highlighted the crucial role of parents in supporting their children during distance learning, and called for continued cooperation between families and schools to enhance student discipline, monitor academic progress, and achieve the best possible educational outcomes.

## Kuwait FM receives calls from Vietnam, Albania counterparts

**KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA):** Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Monday received a couple of phone calls from his Vietnamese and Albanian counterparts Le Hoai Trung and Ferit Hoxha respectively.

During the phone conversation with Trung, they discussed

the latest military escalation and its serious reflections for regional security and stability.

The Albanian foreign minister, for his part, condemned the Iranian aggression on the State of Kuwait and the region's countries and underlined the targeted countries' right to take all necessary measures to safeguard their sovereignty and territory.

## IICO distributes 6,500 Iftar meals to expat workers during Ramadan

**KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA):** The International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) has distributed about 6,500 food meals to expatriate workers since the start of Ramadan this year, as part of its iftar project.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Tuesday, the organization said the project supports its humanitarian mission and promotes social solidarity by providing daily meals at workers' gathering and work sites, easing their living burdens and fostering compassion.

It aims to distribute 8,750 meals throughout Ramadan at a total cost of KD 10,600, with around 300 meals daily to reach the maximum number of beneficiaries.

Distributions have covered high density worker areas, such as the Ministries zone and Subhan at the Kuwait Public Transport Company (KPTC), delivering meals on-site to suit their routines, IICO said.

Amid recent regional developments and regulations, the organization reorganized distribution to sustain the project, now operating inside Jaber Hospital in coordination with the Ministries of Social Affairs and Health, reflecting institutional collaboration for commu-



IICO photo Members of the charitable organization distribute meals.

New service ensures quick responses to higher education inquiries

## NBAQ launches 'Inquire' WhatsApp channel

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

**KUWAIT CITY, March 10:** Dr. Jassim Mohammed Al-Ali, Director General of the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance (NBAQ), announced

the launch of the "Inquire" communication channel via WhatsApp.

He stressed that the initiative is part of NBAQ's efforts to activate emergency plans and adapt to the current situation.

Dr. Al-Ali explained that the service is designed to receive

and respond to inquiries online, ensuring the continued delivery of services efficiently and conveniently.

Those interested in learning about recommended academic programs and higher education institutions can use the "Inquire" channel by contacting 22924016

or through the search platform on the NBAQ website.

He emphasized NBAQ's commitment to continuously developing its services and digital channels to meet the demands of the current phase and enhance institutional performance.

## Other Voices

### We, Iran ... and the others

By **Ahmad alsarraf**

SINCE the 1980s, I have harbored apprehensions about the Iranian regime. At first, I felt pleased, perhaps for a few hours, after its success in overthrowing the Shah's tyrannical regime, the "policeman of the Gulf," and after the promise by the leader of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, that he would soon return to his beloved city of Qom after completing certain tasks.

However, as soon as he announced his intention to transform Iran into an Islamic Republic and expressed surprise at the apprehension some felt regarding his call, completely ignoring the dangerous contradiction inherent in the term, my joy vanished and was replaced by suspicion.

I later expressed this sentiment in dozens of articles, one of which nearly landed me in prison on state security charges after the Iranian embassy, at the behest of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sued me for expressing my opinion about the Supreme Leader.

For reasons that have become all too well known, my anxieties have intensified. Among these reasons are Iran's refusal to accept arbitration in the dispute over the Emirati islands, its expansion of political, ideological, and military influence into four Arab states, the negative repercussions we have suffered in the Gulf, Iran's illogical stance on the Durra gas field, and the repeated border incursions by some Iraqi militias loyal to Iran.

It was natural for apprehension towards Iran to increase, especially after its complete preoccupation with foreign affairs at the expense of its people's well-being, despite being the only country in the world, besides the United States, that possesses everything any government could dream of.

The Iranian leadership could have made it a paradise on earth. But perhaps the leadership's preoccupation with another paradise led them to neglect the welfare of their people, and we all paid a heavy price, and continue to do so.

The Israeli-American war on Iran came, followed by a second Israeli-American war.

These wars could have been a factor in overlooking all of Iran's transgressions and building solidarity or sympathy with it in the face of Zionist expansionist hegemony and arrogance, coveting our lands and resources.

But the situation changed completely after a large number of Iranian missiles and drones rained down on civilian targets and our homes, through no fault of our own.

Iran never needed to control four weak Arab states or the militias within them, because the poor conditions of those states constituted a financial, political, and moral burden for it.

It is possible to understand the justifications of some that Iran's war or hostility towards Israel drove it to seek

allies if those states or militias were truly helpful to Iran and not an insatiable financial burden.

Those who support or ally for money will cease their support when the money runs out. Hostility towards Israel or insistence on conflict with it cannot be achieved simply by gaining allies who form a ring around that state, assuming they possess sufficient power.

Iran should have started by strengthening its internal front before seeking to gain poor and weak allies.

Iran's battle with Israel likely began with the handover of the keys to the Israeli embassy in Tehran to the PLO, which then used it as its embassy headquarters. It was clear then that it would be a thorn in Israel's side.

For more than forty years, the Zionist leadership sought to persuade every American president to stand with them to eliminate the clerical regime in Tehran. Finally, Israel found someone to fulfill its demands.

Meanwhile, none of the resistance states did anything to prepare for the day of battle.

Israel had its plans, programs, and preparations, and thus succeeded in exhausting and weakening its adversaries one after another. Israel does not want any strong state in the region, no matter whether it is ruled by ideological or dictatorial regimes.

Israel does not want educated populations around it, nor even advanced economies. Israel had already succeeded in achieving its goals, and therefore it had to eliminate the troublesome regime in Tehran.

Victory over Israel, today as always, requires preparation from within before preparation from without. Perhaps we once had the time to do so, but it seems that most, if not all, of Israel's adversaries have lost that advantage.

Comparing the situations of some of our countries to Israel, we find that administrative, political, and military corruption has weakened some of our Arab regimes.

Furthermore, the quality and quantity of our education are far inferior to those of Israel.

The percentage of the poor and illiterate among us is much higher. The number of those yearning to flee our countries is constantly increasing.

The number of those killed in the streets of some Arab cities by their own soldiers is perhaps greater than the number killed by others.

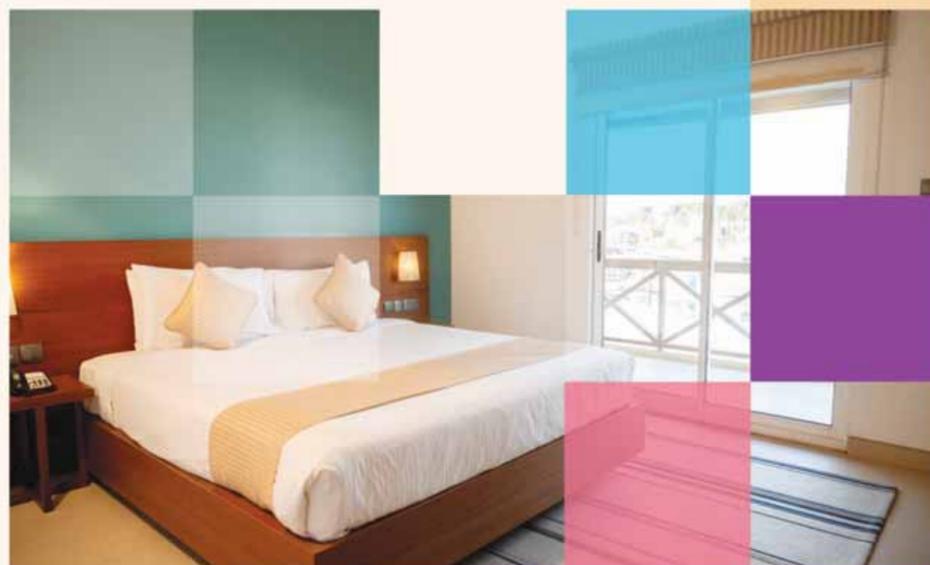
Last but not least, the number of those willing to betray their homeland is unusually higher than what we find in Israel. Countries hostile to Israel have failed to recruit spies, perhaps due to loyalty.

Read some articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and you will understand why we are so weak.

Note: This article was written two days ago, according to Ramadan publishing requirements, before the Iranian president apologized for targeting the Gulf states and pledged to stop the aggression against us.



email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw



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## PM commends staff efforts and government backing amid challenging circumstances

# Kuwait Prime Minister visits Sabah Al-Salem University City

KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, accompanied by Minister of Higher Education Dr. Nader Jalal and President of Kuwait University Dina Al-Mailem, paid on Monday a visit to Sabah Al-Salem University City.

His Highness the Prime Minister held a meeting with the minister, Al-Mailem and the university staff during which preparations and measures taken to ensure the continuation of the educational process were discussed.

Boosting coordination with concerned government bodies was also discussed to ensure preserving the safety of students and teaching staff and sustainability of services as well as a future strategy to benefit from technical methods to back education and provide a stable academic environment.

His Highness the Prime Minister listened to an explanation by officials about the approved field management system to monitor university facilities and coordinate among concerned agencies in a way that contributes to upgrad-

ing readiness and rapid response under different circumstances.

His Highness the Prime Minister commended efforts and duties performed by the university and academic and administrative cadres and eagerness to continue action with the spirit of national responsibility during these exceptional conditions. He underlined the government's full support for any measures taken to bolster educational institutions' readiness and help continue their vital role to serve the homeland.



Prime Minister Diwan photos

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, paid an inspection visit to Sabah Al-Salem University City, accompanied by the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Nader Jalal and the President of Kuwait University Dina Al-Mailem.

## Continued from Page 1

### Our Amir,

Kuwait has long affirmed that it will not tolerate any threat to the security of the Gulf states, as the international community seeks stability in this vital region.

His Highness the Amir highlighted, "The international community must take decisive stances to ensure respect for international laws and conventions, consolidate international peace and security, and prevent the recurrence of such violations."

Pressuring Iran to halt its aggression has become an urgent necessity to prevent escalation, which threatens the global economy as a whole.

Locally, His Highness the Amir expressed a fatherly appreciation for the sincere efforts of state institutions and their dedicated personnel. He praised their steadfast national role and affirmed his full confidence in the strength and capability of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces, which continue to perform their duties with readiness and efficiency, making them the impregnable shield and unyielding barrier against the ambitions of aggressors, based on a firm military doctrine and unwavering loyalty to the nation and its leadership.

The speech delivered during the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan presented a comprehensive and wise vision of all the challenges Kuwait faces, and reflected close monitoring of current events. This vision demonstrates the wisdom of a leader who steers the ship of Kuwait towards peace and stability.

### Attacks repelled

He affirmed the cooperation between the Cybercrime Department and Public Relations and Security Media General Department. He stated the Cybercrime Department handles reports and content by tracking reactions on various social media platforms or analyzing circulated videos. He explained that in some cases, arrests cannot be announced for security reasons. He then underscored the importance of exercising caution when using social media and avoiding reposting or engagement with any content that could inadvertently harm national security. He warned that certain interactions may unintentionally serve hostile entities.

He urged the public to follow official and reliable accounts to obtain accurate information and to avoid being influenced by rumors or accounts that could negatively affect public morale.

In a related development, Al-Man-souri stressed the importance of not frightening or alarming children at home about current events, as such behavior could have psychological effects on them.

He also pointed out that the ministry is working hard to provide awareness services in sign language for the hearing impaired, in coordination with its Information counterpart, in addition to conveying awareness messages in several languages to better serve the public.

He emphasized the crucial role of parents and sponsors in reassuring those around them, including the domestic workers.

On Tuesday, Ministry of Social Affairs Undersecretary Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi said the cooperative societies are among the fundamental pillars of the food and consumer security systems in the country.

In a press statement during an inspection tour in a number of cooperatives recently, Al-Ajmi affirmed that the field indicators proved the stability

of the strategic stock of basic and consumer goods, and the continuous supply operations at a normal and regular pace, ensuring that consumer needs are met without any obstacles.

Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs and Cooperative Affairs Dr. Sayed Issa accompanied Al-Ajmi in the inspection tour to personally look into the workflow mechanisms, monitor the level of operational readiness in the central markets, ascertain the availability of basic goods, and follow up the supply chains and inventory management.

According to Al-Ajmi, the inspection tour is part of the ongoing field monitoring of vital sectors related to food security. He said this is in accordance with the directives of the political leadership, decisions of the Council of Ministers, and instructions of Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthar Al-Huwailah. He added that the aim is to guarantee market stability and availability of essential goods for citizens and expatriates.

He revealed that the tour included reviewing inventory management mechanisms and the organization of display and sales operations in cooperatives, monitoring the procedures followed to ensure the smooth flow and continuous availability of goods to maintain the stability of the food system and meet consumer needs, listening to the opinions and suggestions of cooperative society officials and employees, as well as a number of consumers, enhancing direct communication with various parties involved in cooperative work, and identifying challenges and observations that contribute to improving performance and services.

He confirmed that the ministry focuses on the cooperative sector, recognizing its leading economic and social roles in the country. He said the ministry works continuously to support this sector and develop its operational efficiency to meet the current needs and to better serve the public.

He also stressed the need to maintain the highest level of operational readiness, raise the inventory management efficiency, and guarantee the availability of goods. He pointed out that this is a manifestation of the vital role of cooperatives in serving the community and stabilizing the food security system.

In latest development, Iran launched new attacks on Tuesday at Israel and Gulf Arab countries as it kept up pressure on the Middle East in a war started by Israel and the United States that has rattled world markets and shows no signs of a letup.

In Bahrain, authorities said an Iranian attack hit a residential building in the capital, Manama, killing a 29-year-old woman and wounding eight people. Saudi Arabia said it destroyed two drones over its oil-rich eastern region and Kuwait's National Guard said it shot down six drones.

In the United Arab Emirates, firefighters battled a blaze in the industrial city of Ruwais - home to petrochemical plants - after an Iranian drone strike, officials said. No injuries were reported.

Sirens also sounded in Jerusalem, and sounds of explosions could be heard in Tel Aviv as Israel's defense systems worked to intercept barrages from Iran.

At the Pentagon, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth warned that Tuesday "will be yet again our most intense day of strikes inside Iran: The most fighters, the most bombers, the most strikes, intelligence more refined and better than ever."

### Kuwait condoles

The State of Kuwait extended its condolences and solidarity with the United Arab Emirates following the martyrdom of the two servicemen.

In a statement issued Monday, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs conveyed its heartfelt sympathy to the UAE government, people, and the soldiers' families, praying for the martyrs and for strength and solace to their families.

Meanwhile, Kuwait strongly condemned the attack targeting the Consulate General of the United Arab Emirates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In a statement released Tuesday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the assault represents a blatant violation of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, and other relevant international agreements.

The ministry affirmed Kuwait's solidarity and full support for the UAE in rejecting such acts that contradict international norms and threaten diplomatic security.

### AI weapons,

AI plays a crucial role in intelligence analysis, as modern battlefields generate massive amounts of data, including satellite imagery, communications, and video feeds. Intelligent systems can quickly sort and analyze this information, identifying patterns and potential threats.

These technologies have contributed to the development of more accurate target tracking and location systems, utilizing satellite positioning, advanced navigation systems, and military radars.

On the other hand, Dr. Zaman warned that the use of AI in the military raises significant ethical and legal challenges, particularly with the emergence of weapons capable of making semi-autonomous offensive decisions.

This raises questions about legal responsibility in the event of errors or the targeting of civilians.

She also highlighted concerns about an accelerating arms race in this field.

Dr. Zaman affirmed that modern warfare is no longer confined to battlefields but has extended into the media and digital realms, in what is known as "information warfare," where AI technologies can be used to create fabricated news, images, and videos aimed at spreading fear and confusion within societies.

In this regard, AI consultant and former regional information systems officer at the World Bank and the United Nations, Mohammed Abbas, agreed with Dr. Zaman, noting that escalating geopolitical tensions in the Arabian Gulf have pushed conflicts into more complex digital spaces.

He explained that wars no longer rely solely on conventional weapons but have entered the realm of cyber warfare and psychological operations, aimed at destabilizing societies through rumors and disinformation. AI has become a double-edged sword. While it can enhance cyber defense capabilities, it can also be used as a tool for destabilization through the spread of fabricated news or manipulation of public content. Technologies such as deepfakes and artificially manipulated videos have become powerful weapons in the hands of hostile actors.

These tools can create seemingly realistic videos of political leaders or fabricated security events, potentially inciting panic among citizens and sowing confusion in society.

Abbas noted that the spread of fake news increases significantly during times of crisis, as these technologies may be used to amplify social divisions or undermine official institutions. He stressed the importance of quickly refuting rumors before they spread widely.

Abbas emphasized the need to rely on official sources for information, such as government data or accredited news agencies, and the necessity of cross-checking news with multiple reliable sources before sharing it.

6 Tools for Verifying Digital Content

1. Reverse image search - Use search engines like Google Images to trace the source of an image and determine its original publication date.

2. Fact-checking platforms - Follow websites and organizations that specialize in fact-checking and debunking misinformation.

3. Image and video metadata analysis - Examine the technical data of content to identify when it was captured or modified.

4. Comparing news with reliable sources - Verify that the information appears in reputable media outlets or comes from official sources.

5. Analyzing suspicious videos - Use tools that detect clip manipulation or signs of deepfake technology.

6. Follow official accounts - Refer to statements from government agencies and accredited media institutions before sharing any news.

### French Embassy

Gauvin revealed that about 50 French citizens - identified as priority cases due to humanitarian or other circumstances - were on board the bus. "Most of them were transit passengers who will be able to continue their journey to France by plane," he added.

He said the operation was carried out by the French Embassy in Kuwait in coordination with the Crisis and Support Center at the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. He stated that the embassy was mobilized from the very beginning of the crisis to support the French citizens in Kuwait. He disclosed that this support included responding to calls round the clock, providing information and security guidance through the embassy's website and social media channels, and assisting with individual cases.

He affirmed that the embassy remains in constant contact with Kuwaiti authorities and French embassies in the region, with the support of the crisis center.

He also mentioned that a meeting of the local security committee was held a few days earlier to monitor developments. He stressed that the safety of French citizens is a top priority, indicating the embassy continues to provide support and assistance to them.

### Kuwait MoCI

The documented infractions included price gouging, non-compliance with the ministerial decree on price stabilization, selling goods above the officially advertised rates, and the intentional withholding of commodities.

The Ministry confirmed that all legal measures have been initiated against the offenders, who were referred to the Commercial Prosecution for further adjudication.

Furthermore, based on direct instructions from Minister Boodai, two central markets were administratively shuttered for gross violations of established commercial controls.

### Washington must

5. Are you saying Washington still does not fully understand Kuwait?

I think Washington too often underestimates Kuwait politically, even while depending on it strategically.

That is a mistake. Kuwait is not just a military staging point, a logistical convenience, or an old chapter in the history of 1991. It is a country with memory, dignity, political culture, and a society that notices very clearly who shows up and who does not. Too many American officials have behaved as though the bilateral relationship can run on autopilot - as though past gratitude guarantees future alignment. That is not how any serious partnership works.

Friendship is not self-sustaining. It requires presence, humility, and effort. If Washington takes Kuwait for granted, it will eventually discover that even strong relationships can weaken through neglect.

6. Some would say your criticism is not really about military strategy, but about a wider American diplomatic failure. Is that fair?

Yes, that is fair.

This moment has exposed something larger than a military confrontation with Iran. It has exposed a diplomatic mindset in Washington that too often treats regional partners as people to be informed rather than people to be deeply consulted. That is not smart statecraft. It is not sustainable. And in a region as sensitive and interconnected as the Gulf, it is dangerous.

The United States still has enormous strengths in the region. No other outside power replicates its security depth, educational attraction, business ties, or political reach. But influence is not maintained by inertia. It has to be renewed. If Washington wants lasting influence in the Gulf, it must act less like a distant superpower and more like a disciplined ally.

7. What, in your view, did the United States get wrong operationally once the crisis began?

It appears that the United States was not as prepared as it should have been to manage the civilian side of escalation. That is troubling because this is not unfamiliar terrain for the State Department or for American crisis planners. The U.S. government has longstanding procedures for warning citizens, preparing contingencies, coordinating with host governments, and managing departures from conflict zones.

If the possibility of confrontation with Iran had been visible for weeks, then planning should have matched that reality. Citizens should have received clearer guidance earlier. Embassies should have been postured for crisis. Coordination with local authorities should have been airtight. These are not impossible tasks. They are basic responsibilities. When governments fail at basics during a crisis, partners notice.

8. Kuwait has traditionally favored de-escalation and mediation. Do you believe Washington listens enough to that kind of Gulf advice?

Not always, and it should.

One of Kuwait's real strengths is that it combines credibility, caution, and regional legitimacy. It is not reckless. It is not theatrical. When Kuwait speaks in favor of restraint, dialogue, and de-escalation, that voice carries weight precisely because it is seen as serious and responsible.

Washington would be wise to listen more carefully to that kind of counsel. Gulf diplomacy is not a decorative add-on to hard power. It is often the

difference between containing a crisis and widening it. If the objective is stability, then the U.S. should not only defend Gulf partners militarily; it should also take Gulf political wisdom more seriously.

9. What should Washington do now if it wants to restore confidence in Kuwait and the Gulf - and what message would you send to the people of Kuwait?

First, Washington needs to show up - physically, politically, and diplomatically. It should send senior officials, fill ambassadorial gaps, and restore visible diplomatic presence. Gulf partners should not be left to interpret silence as solidarity.

Second, the United States needs to communicate more clearly and more respectfully. Gulf leaders and Gulf publics alike deserve to know not only what Washington is doing, but what broader outcome it is seeking. Confidence is built through clarity, presence, and serious consultation.

Third, Washington must stop treating consultation as a formality. Kuwait and the other GCC states should be engaged as serious partners whose concerns matter before, during, and after major decisions.

And to the people of Kuwait, I would say this directly: you have many friends in the United States who care deeply about your safety and well-being and who remember your extraordinary hospitality over many decades. I have never forgotten that when I was serving in Iraq for two years, I entrusted my wife and children to life in Kuwait, and Kuwaiti society embraced them with generosity, friendship, and care. That kind of trust is not forgotten. Kuwait is a special country, and its people are special as well.

10. Many Kuwaitis and Gulf citizens do not closely follow how power works in Washington. When they hear influential American voices openly calling for escalation, a prolonged war, and a more offensive military role for Gulf states, how should they interpret that?

The U.S. Constitution clearly states that only the Congress has the power to declare war. However, a political consensus has prevailed since 1945 that favors placing that power solely in the hands of the President. Nonetheless, every President has sought the support of Congress in some form, often what is called an "authorization for the use of military force." What is different in this case is that President Trump has not sought the views of Congress at all, which provides a useful indication of how much influence the current Congress holds over the President.

And in any case, military operations are always decided by the President in his role as Commander in Chief of the armed forces. With all of this in mind, I would advise Kuwaitis not to put too much stock in what they hear from people who are not President Trump. Instead, they should watch the U.S. stock market and the price of retail gasoline; these are indicators that President Trump also watches closely, as he does not want his decisions to have a long-term negative effect on the economy.

A broader challenge that your question illuminates is the relative lack of Gulf citizens' role in the American policy conversation during moments of crisis. Too often, hawkish voices dominate the space while too few credible Gulf-linked analysts, former officials, and informed interlocutors are present to explain the political, social, and strategic costs of escalation as seen from Kuwait and the wider GCC region.

## INTERNATIONAL

## America

**Missouri ex-House speaker gets 21 months:** A former Missouri House speaker was sentenced Monday to 21 months in prison after pleading guilty to wire fraud for misusing federal COVID-19 relief funds for his personal benefit.

Former Republican House Speaker **John Diehl** received about \$380,000 in federal loans for his law firm between 2020 and 2022 through a program intended to help cover operating expenses for businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

But Diehl admitted in a September plea agreement that he instead used the money for personal expenses, including country club dues, swimming pool maintenance, his home mortgage and vehicle payments for a Tesla, Audi and Jeep. Prosecutors said he used more than half the money to fund his law firm's defined benefit plan, of which he was the only participant, and also paid off a civil settlement related to his time as state House speaker.

Diehl resigned as House speaker in 2015 after The Kansas City Star reported that he had exchanged sexually suggestive text messages with a college student serving as a Capitol intern. At the time, Diehl acknowledged "making a serious error in judgment by sending the text messages."

In 2023, the Missouri Ethics Commission imposed a roughly \$47,000 fine on Diehl for campaign finance violations, including allegations that he used nearly \$6,800 of campaign funds to pay for personal expenses.

Diehl had asked the federal court to spare him from prison, noting that he had already paid back all the pandemic relief funds to the Small Business Administration.

The US attorney's office had recommended a prison sentence of 21 to 27 months. In addition to prison time, the



Diehl

court on Monday ordered Diehl to pay a \$50,000 fine. (AP)

**Mississippi jury acquits engineer:** A jury has acquitted a former engineer overseeing military aircraft maintenance of charges of making false statements and obstructing justice during the criminal investigation of a 2017 military plane crash in Mississippi that killed all 16 service members aboard.

James Michael Fisher was found not guilty Thursday after an eight-day trial in federal court in Greenville, Mississippi.

Fisher had been the lead propulsion engineer at the Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex in Warner Robins, Georgia, in 2011. That's when military investigators said civilian maintenance personnel failed to find defects in a cracked and corroded propeller blade that was installed on a KC-130T transport plane. Investigators said that propeller blade broke apart while the New York-based plane was in flight from Cherry Point, North Carolina to El Centro, California on July 10, 2017.

Fifteen Marines and one Navy corpsman were killed when the propeller blade slammed into the aircraft body, causing a shock that broke the plane into pieces in the sky and sent the wreckage plummeting into soybean fields near Itta Bena, Mississippi. (AP)

**FAA briefly grounds all JetBlue flights:** The Federal Aviation Administration briefly grounded all JetBlue flights early Tuesday due to a request from the airline, the agency said in a notice posted to its website.

The ground stop was lifted about 40 minutes after it was imposed.

"A brief system outage has been resolved and we have resumed operations," the airline said in a statement. JetBlue did not provide further information.

The airline, which was founded more than 25 years ago, has its headquarters in New York City and its flagship terminal at the city's John F. Kennedy International Airport. (AP)

## US Justices Jackson and Kavanaugh spar over SC orders favoring Trump

WASHINGTON, March 10, (AP): Sharing a stage, Supreme Court Justices Ketanji Brown Jackson and Brett Kavanaugh sparred Monday over the many emergency orders the court has issued allowing President Donald Trump to move ahead with key parts of his agenda.

The setting was extraordinary, a federal courtroom filled with legal luminaries, including the federal judge singled out by Trump after blocking part of the president's immigration crackdown.

Kavanaugh, 61, and Jackson, 55, sat a few feet apart in a courtroom in which they both heard cases when they served on the federal appeals court in Washington. They were separated only by a federal judge who asked questions of them both. The occasion was an annual lecture in memory of a former federal judge and prosecutor, Thomas A. Flannery.

Trump appointed Kavanaugh to the high court in 2018. Jackson moved up from the appeals court in 2022, appointed by President Joe Biden.

The issue in emergency appeals is whether a policy that has been challenged in court should be allowed to take effect while a legal case that could



The Supreme Court is photographed on Feb 6, in Washington. (AP)

last for years continues.

Jackson, a frequent dissenter from the emergency orders, said Kavanaugh and the other conservatives who repeatedly sided with Trump last year were not serving the court or the country well.

"The administration is making new policy ... and then insisting the new policy take effect immediately, before the challenge is decided. This

uptick in the court's willingness to get involved in cases on the emergency docket is a real unfortunate problem," Jackson said to loud applause.

The court is "creating a kind of warped" legal process by intervening in an early stage of a case and essentially predicting the outcome before arguments are fully developed, she said.

WH reaches deep into realm of states

## Trump pushes GOP on voting bill, demanding an end to most mail balloting

WASHINGTON, March 10, (AP): US President Donald Trump said Monday he won't sign any other legislation into law until Congress passes a strict proof-of-citizenship voting bill that he says also must end Americans' ability to vote by mail, a startling demand months before the midterm elections.

Trump told House Republicans during their annual retreat at his golf club in Florida that he doesn't think they will win elections unless voting laws are toughened up to prevent fraud - even though mail ballots are popular in many states and federal law already requires that voters in national elections be US citizens, with scant evidence that non citizens ever try to vote.

The president wants to bolster the so-called SAVE America Act, which the House has already approved, and he pressed the Senate to push past its filibuster rules to send it to his desk. Voting experts have said the bill could disenfranchise some 20 million American voters who don't have birth certificates or other documents readily available, a number that would likely

swell with the additional ban on mail balloting that Trump is demanding.

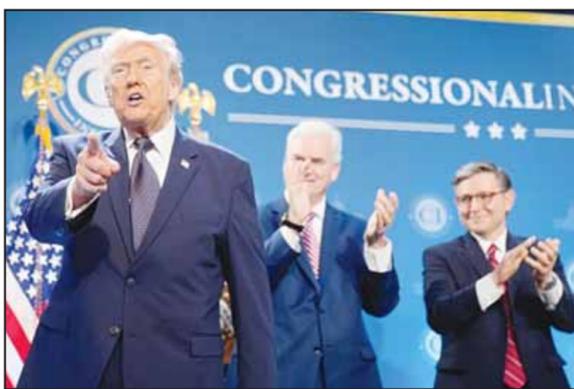
"I'm not going to sign anything until this is approved," Trump said, calling it his No. 1 priority.

"It'll guarantee the midterms," he said. "If you don't get it, big trouble."

The president's determination to impose election changes has sounded alarms from voting rights groups as the Trump administration reaches deep into the realm of the states, which, under the Constitution, are in charge of election ballots and procedures in the US.

It also comes as his Republican Party, which narrowly controls Congress, faces headwinds this fall, its majorities at risk. Lawmakers have other priorities, including the more immediate need to fund the Department of Homeland Security as airport workers and others are going without paychecks amid the fight in Congress over the agency's immigration and deportation operations.

Democrats largely oppose Trump's efforts to seize more control over elections, and Senate Democratic leader



US President Donald Trump gestures as Rep Tom Emmer and House Speaker Mike Johnson applaud at the Republican Members Issues Conference on March 9 at Trump National Doral Miami in Doral, Fla. (AP)

Chuck Schumer said Trump's demands would gridlock the chamber.

"This is what he does - he's a thug,

he's a bully," said Schumer of New York.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, who

is close with Trump, appeared alongside the president on the stage with other GOP leaders applauding the bill.

But Senate Majority Leader John Thune has said using the so-called "talking filibuster" to pass the voting bill, as Trump and others propose, isn't as easy as it seems.

"We can't find a piece of legislation in history that's been passed that way," Thune told reporters.

Trump has said even if it takes six months, he wants the bill approved before any others will be signed into law.

The president continues to claim that he was not the loser in the 2020 election and his Justice Department is digging into his concerns. The FBI took the highly unusual move of seizing ballots and elections materials in Georgia and, most recently, in Arizona.

Trump wants the GOP-led Congress to build on the Safeguarding American Voter Eligibility, or SAVE America Act, with a new package, which he calls the "best of Trump."

Already, the bill, as approved by the House, would require voters to present

proof of citizenship with a passport or birth certificate when they register to vote. They would also have to show a photo ID when they cast ballots, as many states already require.

Trump would add one main provision: to ban mail-in ballots, which are used by many states nationwide. He would make exceptions for voters who are disabled, in the military, or in other situations.

The president believes mail-in ballots are fraudulent, but voting groups have long championed the practice as helping to make it easier for Americans to vote.

The president also wants to tack on two unrelated provisions around transgender rights issues - one that would ban those born as men from playing in women's sports and another to block sex reassignment surgeries on some minors.

Trump also mentioned the possibility of adding an unrelated foreign surveillance bill, known as FISA, which is up for an extension and is often a difficult political matter in Congress.



Rescuers put out the fire at a residential neighbourhood following Russia's drone attack in Kharkiv, Ukraine on March 9. (AP)

## Russia and Ukraine both claim front-line progress with US-brokered talks on hold

KYIV, Ukraine, March 10, (Agencies): Russian and Ukrainian officials are making contradictory claims of battlefield successes in their 4-year-old war, with Ukraine saying it has pushed Moscow's forces back in some places on the front line but the Kremlin insisting that Russia's invasion of its neighbor is making progress.

At the same time, Russia's almost daily aerial attacks on civilian areas of Ukraine continue, with overnight drone strikes on two cities injuring at least 14 people, including two children, emergency services said Tuesday.

Ukraine's air force said that it shot down 122 out of 137 drones that Russia launched during the night.

US-brokered talks between Russia and Ukraine are on hold as Washington's attention is gripped by the Iran war, which has drawn the international spotlight from Ukraine's plight as it strives to hold back Russia's bigger army.

Despite being short of soldiers, Ukrainian forces have recently retaken nearly all the territory of the southeastern Dnipropetrovsk industrial region during a counteroffensive, driving Russian troops out of more than 400 square kilometers (150 square miles), Maj. Gen. Oleksandr Komarenko said in an interview published Tuesday by local media outlet RBC-Ukraine.

He described the overall situation on the front line as difficult but under control, with the heaviest fighting continuing near Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine and Oleksandrivka in the south, where he said Russian forces have concen-



In this image made from video provided by Russian Defense Ministry Press Service on March 6, Russian soldiers fire a self-propelled mm gun towards Ukrainian positions in Ukraine. (AP)

trated their main effort.

There was no independent verification of his description of the military situation.

However, the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said late Monday that recent Ukrainian counterattacks "are generating tactical, operational and strategic effects that may disrupt Russia's spring-summer 2026 offensive campaign plan."

Meanwhile, a Kremlin aide said that Russian President Vladimir Putin told US President Donald Trump late Monday that Russian forces are "advancing rather successfully" in Ukraine.

That progress should "encourage" Kyiv to "move toward a negotiated settlement of the conflict," Yuri Ushakov told reporters - even though Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly demanded a lasting peace deal and European governments accuse Putin of feigning interest in talks while the Russian military keeps hammering Ukraine.

The Kremlin is hoping that the Iran war will bring it a financial windfall from rising oil prices, distract global attention from the Ukraine war, run down Western arsenals and force the US and its NATO allies to reduce military support for Kyiv.

Russian air defense systems intercepted and destroyed 163 Ukrainian fixed-wing drones overnight, the Russian Defense Ministry said Monday.

According to the ministry, the drones were shot down between 11:00 pm local time (2000 GMT) on Sunday and 7:00 am (0400 GMT) on Monday.

Fifty-four were downed over the Bryansk region and 47 over Crimea, it said, noting that another 16 drones were intercepted over the Krasnodar region and 11 over the Kaluga region.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said Sunday that Russian air defense also downed six drones heading toward Moscow.

Zelenskyy, meanwhile, is hoping that by supplying its cutting-edge and battle-tested drone technology to the United States and its Gulf partners for the war in the Middle East, Ukraine will win more international diplomatic leverage against Moscow.

## Canada's Carney heads to Norway to watch NATO exercises, meet with PM

OTTAWA, Canada, March 10, (AP): Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney plans to visit Norway on Friday where he will observe a NATO exercise before visiting the United Kingdom, his office announced Monday.

Carney's office said he will observe the Norwegian-led NATO Cold Response exercise. Cold Response is run by NATO every two years and involves about 25,000 troops from 14 nations training together to perform land, air and sea operations in Arctic conditions.

Canada, the United States, the UK, Germany, Netherlands, France, Sweden and Finland are among the countries taking part in the exercise.

"Canada is, and forever will be, an Arctic nation. In the face of new threats, we are deepening defense collaboration with our Arctic partners to create a stronger, more prosperous, and more secure world for Canada and for all," Carney said in a statement.

While in Oslo, Carney is expected to meet with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre to discuss trade, in-



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney makes his way to the podium to speak with reporters, in Sydney, Australia on March 4. (AP)

vestment, clean energy, critical minerals and the aerospace sector.

The Canadian prime minister will also attend the Canada-Nordic Summit to meet with Nordic leaders and talk about ways to enhance geopolitical co-

operation.

Before returning to Canada, Carney plans to stop in London to meet with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer to talk about defense and the war in the Middle East.

## Europe

**Belarus journalist convicted of treason:** Belarusian journalist **Pavel Dabravolski** was convicted Monday of treason and sentenced to nine years in a maximum-security prison, activists said, the fifth media worker to be jailed in two weeks in a relentless government crackdown on freedom of the press.

Dabravolski, who has reported for international and domestic news outlets and won numerous prizes for his work, was found guilty during a closed-door trial at Minsk City Court, according to the Belarusian Association of Journalists. The 36-year-old most recently worked for Belafan, which the Belarusian authorities have designated as extremist.

President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus for over three decades, has stayed in power through a relentless crackdown on dissent.

Massive protests broke out following the 2020 elections, which were widely denounced as fraudulent. More than 65,000 people were arrested and thousands were beaten. In the wake of the protests, hundreds of independent media outlets and nongovernmental organizations were shut down and outlawed.

Exiled opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya said Dabravolski was being targeted by "trumped-up charges."

"Dabravolski's only 'crime' was doing his job and covering the 2020 protests after the stolen elections," she said. "We see that the conveyor belt of repression inside Belarus continues unabated."

Activists have reported a sharp increase in government pressure on Belarus' media workers. (AP)

**UK prosecutors charge ex-army member:** A former member of the Syrian military was charged in Britain

with three counts of murder as a crime against humanity for attacks on civilians in Damascus in 2011, British prosecutors said Monday.

The Crown Prosecution Services said it marks the first time they have brought those charges in the UK under the International Criminal Court Act of 2001.

The 58-year-old who was a member of the Syrian Air Force Intelligence department also faces three counts of torture and one count of conduct ancillary to murder. He is due to appear Tuesday in Westminster Magistrates' Court.

"The charges are extremely serious and show that we fully support the UK's 'no safe haven' policy in relation (to) alleged war criminals," Metropolitan Police Cmdr. Commander Helen Flanagan said. "Where we are presented with allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity that fall within our jurisdiction, then, as we have shown here, we will not hesitate to investigate those rigorously and robustly." (AP)

**Finland's proposal sparks debate:** Finland's plan to lift its long-standing legal ban on nuclear weapons has triggered an unusually broad debate, with opposition parties, experts and peace advocates questioning not only how the decision was made, but also whether it could distance Finland from the Nordic security tradition and ultimately make the country less secure.

The Finnish government announced that it will seek to amend the Nuclear Energy Act and the Criminal Code to remove the blanket ban, in place since the 1980s, on the import of nuclear devices and their transport, supply and possession in Finland. The Ministry of Defense said the move is intended to align Finnish legislation with NATO's deterrence and defense posture. Domestic and international media have widely interpreted it as a relaxation of restrictions on nuclear weapons.

Under the proposed changes, such activities would be permitted in the context of Finland's homeland defense, NATO's collective defense or other defense cooperation.

The proposal has quickly sparked controversy on several fronts, beginning with questions over procedure and political legitimacy. The plan was announced without prior consultation with opposition parties, drawing criticism across the political spectrum. (Xinhua)

Japan wary of Trump's aggressive military actions

## United States allies and rivals in Asia gauge fallout from war in Middle East

SEOUL, South Korea, March 10, (AP): As war spreads across the Middle East, US rivals and allies in Asia are preparing for the consequences, which include possible economic shock and long-term security threats.

Here's a look at how the fighting in the Middle East is impacting the Koreans, Japan and China.

At a major political conference last month, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un insisted the country's decades-long pursuit of nuclear weapons was the "correct" choice, despite crippling isolation and scarce resources.

The US-Israeli attacks on Iran will only reinforce that belief.

North Korea's leadership likely watched uneasily as the strikes killed Iran's supreme leader. The attack followed a US operation in January that captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

Pyongyang's Foreign Ministry has condemned the attacks on Iran as illegal and a "most despicable" violation of sovereignty. Notably, it didn't mention the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Similar strikes to take out North Korea's leadership would be far riskier and less likely to succeed, said Hong Min, an analyst at South Korea's Insti-

tute for National Unification.

Unlike Iran, North Korea has followed through on its nuclear ambitions. Its expansive arsenal contains dozens of warheads, with a range of delivery systems threatening Asian US allies and intercontinental ballistic missiles potentially capable of reaching the US mainland. It would be difficult to eliminate North Korea's capabilities in a single wave of preemptive strikes, and would leave open the possibility that surviving systems could be used to attack targets in South Korea, Japan or even America.

In his first public appearance since the war began, Kim last week inspected sea trials of his prized new warship and tests of what state media called nuclear-capable cruise missiles. Some analysts say the display may have been meant to showcase his military capabilities after the killing of Khamenei and the US sinking of Iranian naval assets - signaling that, unlike Iran, his ships could carry nuclear warheads.

Attacking North Korea would also be complicated by its geographic proximity to China and Russia - Washington's most significant rivals - with whom Kim has been deepening ties as he seeks a more assertive presence in



Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi gestures as US President Donald Trump delivers his speech during their visit to the aircraft carrier USS George Washington at the US Navy's Yokosuka base in Yokosuka, south of Tokyo, on Oct 28, 2025. (AP)

the region.

The US military actions on Iran and Venezuela both came despite active negotiations. Analysts have differing views on how that might affect North Korea's desire for diplomacy with the

United States, which derailed in 2019 following the collapse of a summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump.

At February's ruling party congress, Kim left the door open to dialogue with

the United States, reiterating Pyongyang's earlier calls that Washington drop its demands for the North's denuclearization as a precondition for reviving talks.

Hong said that while Kim is likely to maintain that position, the attack on Iran may have deepened his distrust of Washington and the leader could raise the bar for negotiations.

But Park Won Gon, a professor at Seoul's Ewha Womans University, said Kim could feel greater urgency to seek a deal with Trump, viewing their unresolved diplomacy as a risk.

South Korean officials have suggested that Trump's expected visit to China in late March or April may provide a possible opening with Pyongyang.

South Korea, heavily dependent on trade and imported fuel, is alarmed by Iran's attacks on energy infrastructure and attempts to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of global oil trade flows.

The war is also heightening unease in Seoul about its alliance with the United States. The Trump administration has shown a willingness to act militarily without broad coordination with allies.

The United States for decades has

pledged full military - including nuclear - protection for its allies and stations about 28,000 troops in South Korea to deter North Korea. While a major reduction in that commitment is unlikely, Seoul must now consider the risk of being drawn into potential conflicts triggered by unilateral US action, including beyond the Korean Peninsula, Hong said.

"Whether it's Taiwan, North Korea or the US-China competition, there have long been concerns in South Korea that the Trump administration could make overly aggressive decisions without fully considering the potentially serious consequences for its allies," said Hong. "Those concerns are now significant."

South Korea must "clearly define the actions it could take" under different scenarios, he said.

Japan, another key US ally in Asia, is also wary of Trump's aggressive military actions and worried about any disruption to the Strait of Hormuz.

While Tokyo has backed US efforts to curb Iran's nuclear development, the war has raised questions about its legitimacy and caused skepticism about Washington's credibility as an ally, said Mitsuru Fukuda, a professor at Nihon University.

## N.Korean leader's sister criticizes US-S.Korea for proceeding with drills

SEOUL, South Korea, March 10, (AP): The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un criticized the United States and South Korea for proceeding with their annual joint military exercises at a perilous moment for global security and warned that any challenge to the North's safety would bring "terrible consequences."

Kim Yo Jong's statement Tuesday came a day after the allies started their 11-day Freedom Shield exercise involving thousands of troops, while Washington also wages an escalating war in the Middle East.

Without directly referring to the Iran war, Kim said the US-South Korea drills undermine regional stability at a time when the global security structure is "collapsing rapidly and wars break out in different parts of the world due to the reckless acts of outrageous international rogues."

Freedom Shield is one of two annual command-post exercises conducted by the US and South Korean militaries. The largely computer-simulated drills are designed to test the allies' joint operational capabilities while incorporating evolving war scenarios and security challenges. As usual, Freedom Shield will be accompanied by a field training program, called Warrior Shield.

Mentioning the country's expanding nuclear program, Kim Yo Jong said North Korea will continue to bolster its "destructive power" against what it



A North Korean military guard post, (top), and a South Korean post, (bottom), are seen from Paju, South Korea, near the border with North Korea on Feb 26. (AP)

sees as external threats and "constantly and repeatedly convince the enemies of our war deterrence and its fatality."

North Korea has long portrayed the allies' joint drills as invasion rehearsals and often used them as a pretext to ramp up its own military demonstrations or weapons tests. The allies say the exercises are defensive in nature.

Meanwhile, South Korean President

Lee Jae Myung acknowledged "some anti-defense weapons" could be relocated by the US but said such moves wouldn't seriously undermine defenses against North Korea. His comments followed media speculation that the United States was moving some Patriot missile defense systems and other equipment from South Korea to support operations in the Middle East.

Party lacks majority to advance reforms

## Colombia's Petro wins in congressional election

BOGOTA, Colombia, March 10, (AP): The party of Colombian President Gustavo Petro secured a victory in congressional elections, but will have to build coalitions with other parties to carry out announced reforms, including a controversial push to rewrite the nation's constitution.

Petro's Historical Pact party won almost a quarter of all seats in the Senate on Sunday, more than any other party.

But its staunchest opponents also made gains, with the Democratic Center party - the conservative party led by former President Alvaro Uribe - securing 17 seats in the 103-member Senate.

In the House of Representatives, the Democratic Center received the most overall votes, with the Historical Pact coming in fifth place. But votes in the House don't always correlate with the number of seats each party gets. After a formula is applied to assign seats to different regions, Petro's party could have a higher representation in the House.

Traditional parties including the Liberals and Conservatives lost ground in the Senate, while the Green Party also saw a smaller showing.

"The country seems to be turning away from voices in the center, and it's becoming more polarized," said Carlos Arias, a political consultant based in Bogota.



Election workers count ballots after voting ended after polls closed in legislative elections in Bogota, Colombia on March 8. (AP)

Jorge Restrepo, an economist at Bogota's Javeriana University, said the election results showed that Colombia, a nation governed for decades by technocratic administrations on the center and the right, is no longer "immune to populism."

"The Petro administration has taken a series of measures that are popular in the short term" but not sustainable in

the long term, Restrepo said.

He pointed to a massive increase in the nation's minimum wage, decreasing gasoline prices and reforms to the nation's labor laws that have increased overtime payments.

"These decisions have helped to increase the popularity of the Historical Pact," Restrepo said. "And make its critics more unpopular."

### Africa

**Madagascar's president dissolves gov't:** Madagascar's President Michael Randrianirina has dissolved the government, according to a communique released Monday evening by the Presidency.

"The President of the Republic informs that, in accordance with the implementation of the Constitution, the government has ceased its functions and that he will soon proceed with the appointment of a new prime minister, in line with the provisions stipulated by the Constitution," the communique said.

According to the communique, the secretaries-general of each ministry will handle routine affairs until a new prime minister is appointed and a new government is formed.

No specific date has yet been announced for the appointment of the next head of government. (Xinhua)



Randrianirina

**Somalia prez signs constitution into law:** President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia has signed the country's new constitution into law to help create a legal framework to strengthen governance and enhance political stability.

The revised document, which ends years of provisional governance, is the most important pillar for reinforcing national unity and institutionalizing a governance system, said Mohamud, who signed the new charter Sunday evening in Mogadishu, the capital.

"Today concludes the extensive process of revising Somalia's Federal Constitution, which has been provisional for some time and recently ratified by the Federal Parliament," he said, according to a statement issued by the presidency. (Xinhua)

**UN peacekeepers defy S.Sudan army order:** The United Nations Mission in South Sudan said Monday that it would not comply with a government order to shut down its base in Akobo, an opposition stronghold near the Ethiopian border where tens of thousands of refugees have fled.

On Friday, the South Sudanese army ordered UN peacekeepers as well as NGOs and civilians to vacate the town ahead of a planned assault.

But the mission refused to leave and said it would provide "a protective presence for civilians" in the town, adding that the safety and security of its personnel "must be fully respected at all times."

The UN Mission said it was engaging "intensively with national, state and local stakeholders" regarding this order. "Any military operations in and around Akobo gravely endanger the safety and security of civilians," said mission chief Anita Kiki Gbeho. (AP)

### Asia

**Major flood warning issued for Australian city:** An emergency warning has been issued for major flooding in the eastern Australian city of Bundaberg following days of torrential rainfall.

The police service in the state of Queensland said on Tuesday morning that people in north, south, east and central Bundaberg should prepare to evacuate after the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) issued a major flood warning for the Burnett River that flows through the city.

The BoM warning issued on Tuesday morning local time said that the Burnett River at Bundaberg, 300 km north of Brisbane, is likely to exceed its major flood level of 7.0 meters on Tuesday afternoon.

It said that the river is expected to peak around 7.60 meters from Tuesday evening into Wednesday, just below the December 2010 level of 7.92 meters that resulted in the evacuation of hundreds of homes.

Speaking in Canberra, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese urged people in the path of a slow-moving tropical storm in the region to prioritize their safety by following emergency warnings and avoiding floodwaters.

Bundaberg had a population of 52,370 people at the time of the last national census in 2021. (Xinhua)



Albanese

**Suspected gas leak in Japan injures 6:** Six workers were injured on Tuesday following a suspected gas leak at a paper mill in central Japan, with two of them in serious condition, local media reported.

An emergency call was made at 9:50 a.m. local time, reporting two men at Daio Paper Corp.'s plant in Kani, Gifu Prefecture, had inhaled an unidentified gas and complained of breathing difficulties, Kyodo News reported.

Six injured workers, in their 20s to 60s, were taken to hospital. The two who complained of breathing difficulties, in their 50s and 60s, were unable to speak, while the others appeared to have minor injuries, the report said.

The police believe the men suffered poisoning while replacing a valve that carries carbon monoxide, it added.

The plant makes products such as toilet paper, with about 1,000 people, including contractors, working there. (Xinhua)

**16 injured in Philippine vehicle accident:** A sedan crashed into a passenger jeepney in the central Philippine province of Cebu on Monday morning, injuring at least 16 people, police said.

Police said the accident occurred in Naga City when a sedan swerved into the opposite lane and struck a jeepney that had stopped along the roadside to pick up passengers. The impact caused the jeepney to overturn.

Police added that the drivers and passengers of both vehicles, as well as several individuals standing on the sidewalk nearby, sustained injuries in the crash.

All injured individuals were brought to a local hospital for medical treatment, police added. No fatalities were reported as of this writing.

Police have launched an investigation to determine the cause of the crash. (Xinhua)

### Cuba's energy crisis slashes classes

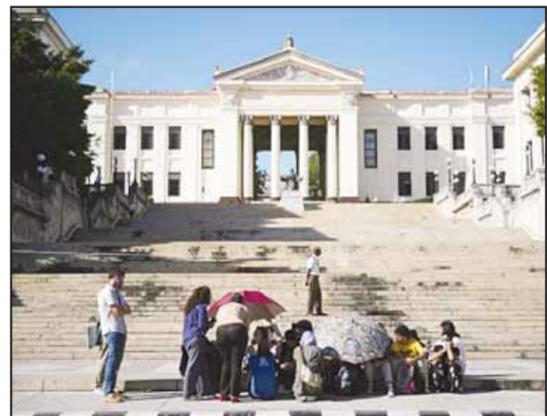
## Students stage sit-in at Havana University

HAVANA, March 10, (AP): An impromptu sit-in protest at the steps of Havana University on Monday drew a small group of students concerned about their education amid an energy crisis worsened by a US oil blockade of the island, which has reduced classes and is paralyzing the country.

Power outages and transportation shutdowns have forced the university to reduce the number of classes or hold them online, though many students are also struggling with slow and unreliable internet. "We aren't martyrs for any side; we are university students. So, none of us intended to be here, but there has been no other way," said one of protesters, who didn't want to be identified by name due to fear of government reprisals.

The First Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Modesto Ricardo Gómez, stepped out to speak to the students. He acknowledged the financial difficulties affecting higher education, and said they have been made worse by the current standoff with the Trump administration.

"Today we have been tremendously affected by the criminal and



Students gather outside the University of Havana during a protest over an energy crisis that has disrupted classes in Havana, Cuba on March 9. (AP)

genocidal blockade of the United States government, which, without a thought for the people or our youth, is truly massacring an entire society," Gomez said.

On the main streets of Havana,

many people had to walk to work or go shopping Monday. Gasoline is rationed to 20 liters per car, and getting a fill-up involves an elaborate appointment process that can take weeks.

## Human Rights Watch details deaths and injuries of police drone attacks in Haiti

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica, March 10, (AP): Drones operated by Haitian security forces and private contractors have killed at least 1,243 people and injured 738 others, Human Rights Watch said Tuesday.

Of those killed, 17 were children and 43 were adults not believed to be members of any criminal group. Of those injured, at least 49 were believed to be civilians, according to the rights group. The killings took place between March 1, 2025, and Jan. 21, 2026.

The most lethal drone operation killed 57 people, it noted.

"Haitian authorities should urgently rein in the security forces and private contractors working for them before more children die," Juanita Goebertus, Americas director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

A spokesperson for Haiti's National Police did not respond to a request for comment.

The nonprofit said the number of armed drone attacks in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, which is 90% controlled by gangs, has "significantly increased" in recent months, with 57 reported between November and late January, almost double that of the 29 attacks reported from August through October last year.

Human Rights Watch said its researchers analyzed seven videos



A police officer stands guard in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on March 3. (AP)

uploaded to social media or shared directly with the group that show armed quadcopter drones in action and geolocated four of them to Port-au-Prince.

"The videos show the repeated use of drones equipped with explosives to attack vehicles and people, some of them armed, but none who appear to be engaged in violent acts or pose

any imminent threat to life," the group said.

Human Rights Watch said it did not find widespread drone use among criminal groups.

One of the attacks highlighted in the report occurred Sept. 20, 2025, in the Simon Pele neighborhood, an extremely impoverished community controlled by a gang of the same name.

## Kuwaiti oil price surges to \$122.94 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA): Price of Kuwaiti oil surged by USD 24.46, reaching USD 122.94 per barrel (pb) in Monday's trading, compared with USD 98.48 pb in Friday's trading, according to Kuwait Petro-

leum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday. Globally, Brent crude rose by USD 7.21 to reach USD 98.96 pb, while US West Texas Intermediate crude increased by USD 3.87 to reach USD 94.77 pb.



Boursa Kuwait HQ

## Bursa Kuwait closes higher with broad-based gains

KUWAIT CITY, March 10, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Tuesday's trading session on a positive note, as all major indices advanced. The general market index climbed 113.68 points, or 1.34 percent, to close at 8,592.23 points.

Trading activity was robust, with 224.6 million shares changing hands across 15,237 cash transactions, generating a total turnover of KD 70.5 million (approximately

General index tops 8,590 points

USD 215.7 million).

The main market index gained 101.49 points, or 1.30 percent, settling at 7,929.98 points. Total trading volume on this segment reached 82.9 million shares through 6,216 deals, valued at KD 12.9 million (around USD 39.4 million).

The premier market index also posted strong gains, adding 122.18 points, or 1.35 percent, to close at 9,178.77

points. It saw 141.7 million shares traded through 9,021 transactions, worth KD 57.6 million (roughly USD 176.2 million).

The Main 50 Index recorded the highest rise of the day, surging 149.12 points, or 1.85 percent, to reach 8,230.23 points. Trading volume for this index totaled 76.5 million shares across 5,222 transactions, amounting to KD 11.5 million (approximately USD 35.19 million).

## Real estate transactions plunge sharply in March

No commercial deals recorded

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 10: The local real estate market recorded modest performance in the first week of March, with a decline of 31.25 percent in the number of transactions and 41.83 percent in the total value of transactions compared to the same period last year.**

This clearly shows the impact of geopolitical tensions on the local real estate market.

The newspaper obtained a

copy of the weekly report from the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Departments at the Ministry of Justice -- covering the period March 1-5, indicating the registration of 66 transactions worth KD35.85 million in residential, investment and warehousing sectors, compared to 96 transactions worth KD61.65 million within the same period last year.

Although residential real estate had the largest share of total transactions at 75.75 percent, it witnessed a decline of 7.4 percent in the number of transactions and 9.3 percent in value.

The number of residential transactions reached 50, valued at KD18.11 million, compared to 54 transactions valued at KD19.97 million during the

same period last year.

The investment real estate sector recorded 14 transactions valued at KD9.74 million, compared to 38 transactions valued at KD12.15 million in the first week of March last year. This is a decline of 63.15 percent in the number of transactions and 24 percent in value.

The warehouse sector recorded two transactions valued at KD8 million.

Meanwhile, commercial real estate was absent in the first week of March -- the first time in several months that no new transactions were recorded, thereby, reflecting the atmosphere of anticipation and caution in the real estate market, considering the escalating geopolitical tensions in the region.

## HSBC committed to GCC through 130 years of challenges

### Elhedery: GCC will emerge stronger from crisis

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: HSBC Group CEO, Georges Elhedery's statement regarding events affecting the GCC countries:

"Our thoughts are with all those affected by current events. HSBC remains steadfast in our confidence in the GCC and in the long-term strength, resilience and promise of the region. Our conviction in the GCCs' fundamentals and its future is unchanged. The region has repeatedly shown its ability to endure periods of disruption, adapt with determination, and emerge stronger. We continue to believe that the years ahead will bring renewed stability, growth, and prosperity. HSBC has been deeply committed to the region for more than 130 years. We remain invested in its future and in the opportunities that lie ahead for its people, businesses, and economies. We are fully engaged in supporting our colleagues, customers and partners across the region."

Georges Elhedery was appointed Group CEO from 2

September 2024. He most recently served as Group Chief Financial Officer from January 2023 until September 2024.

Mr Elhedery joined HSBC in 2005 as a senior Global Markets executive with extensive trading experience in London, Paris and Tokyo.

He later moved to Dubai and served as Regional Head of Global Markets, Middle East and North Africa (MENA); then as Head of Global Banking & Markets, MENA; and finally as CEO for HSBC, Middle East, North Africa and Türkiye.

Mr Elhedery returned to London to serve as Head of Global Markets in 2019 before taking up the position of Global Co-CEO of Global Banking & Markets in 2020.

Mr Elhedery holds a degree in Engineering from the École Polytechnique in Paris, France, as well as a post-graduate degree in Statistics and Economics from the École Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Administration Économique (ENSAE).

Diesel jumps 17%, butane cylinders up 22%

## Ministry of Petroleum boosts Egypt fuel prices amid Middle East crisis

CAIRO, March 10, (KUNA): Egypt's Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources announced Tuesday adjustments to the prices of several petroleum products and natural gas amid exceptional conditions facing global energy markets.

In a statement, the ministry said the new prices, effective as of Tuesday, include a 14.28 percent increase in the price of 95-octane gasoline to EGP 24 per liter (around USD 0.45), while 92-octane gasoline rose by 15.58 percent to EGP 22.25 (around USD 0.42).

It added that 80-octane gasoline increased by 16.19 percent to EGP 20.75 per liter (around USD 0.39), while diesel prices rose by 17.14 percent to EGP 20.50 per liter (around USD 0.38).

The decision also included vehicle natural gas, which increased by 30 percent to EGP 13 per cubic meter (around USD 0.24), and butane gas cylinders, which rose by 22.22 percent to reach EGP 275 for the 12.5 kg cylinder (around USD 5.20) and EGP 550 for the 25 kg cylinder (around USD 10.41).

The ministry said the move comes in light of exceptional circumstances resulting from geopolitical devel-

opments in the Middle East and their direct impact on global energy markets, which have led to a significant rise in import and local production costs.

It explained that disruptions in supply chains, rising risk levels, and increased maritime shipping and insurance costs have resulted in a sharp surge in global crude oil and petroleum product prices, reaching levels unseen in years.

The statement added that Egypt continues efforts to boost local production, advance exploration activities, and develop its oil and gas resources by encouraging investment partners to expand their operations, as part of efforts to reduce import costs.

It affirmed that the government is closely monitoring market developments and costs to ensure the sustainability of petroleum product and gas supplies to citizens and all state sectors.

The ministry also stressed that any exceptional measures are taken within the framework of responsible management of current international challenges while maintaining energy security and local market stability as a top priority.

### Rising oil prices and strikes deepen regional hardship

## UN warns of environmental risks from Middle East refinery strikes

UNITED NATIONS, March 10, (Xinhua): UN humanitarian workers voiced alarm on Monday that reported strikes on Middle East oil refineries could have serious environmental consequences, including impacts on access to safe water and on public health.

"This comes on top of strikes on water desalination plants reported in several countries," the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said.

The office said the region was already facing immense humanitarian needs prior to the latest escalation.

When asked about oil prices surpassing 100 U.S. dollars a barrel since the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran on Feb. 28, Stephane Dujarric, chief spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said the increase "will impact everything ... including UN operations."

Dujarric said the increase affects the world

body's logistics operations including the cost of humanitarian food and the fertilizer needed to help grow it.

"It will be across the board," he said. "It underscores yet again our addiction to fossil fuel, where supplies, you know, are concentrated in just a few regions of the world," he said. "And it should also be an opportunity to redouble our efforts on renewables."

OCHA said that evacuation orders remain in effect for southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut, forcing civilians to evacuate on a large scale.

The office said local authorities reported that more than 115,000 people are sheltering in more than 500 collective centers, while more than 500,000 people have registered as displaced. Health services continue to be affected, with five hospitals and dozens of primary healthcare centers having ceased opera-

## Oil surge amid Iran war drives up fuel, food & transport costs

NEW YORK, March 10, (AP): As the price of crude oil surpassed \$110 a barrel Monday, reaching heights not seen since 2022, consumers were feeling the effects of the Iran war and its damage to worldwide energy production.

Gasoline prices are climbing, and many people will find some of the most immediate economic pain at the pump. But you don't have to drive a car to be affected. Nearly all goods - including food - that are bought and sold must travel from where they're produced. Those costs will climb with higher gasoline, diesel and jet fuel prices.

And the spike in oil prices will likely be a big factor for U.S. inflation. As the war continues, some experts say the price of, well, everything could be affected.

"The longer this lasts, the more significant the shock would be," said Gregory Daco, chief economist at consulting firm EY-Parthenon.

Here's how the growing cost of oil and gas could impact consumers as the war continues.

Gasoline, diesel and jet fuel are made from crude oil. As the cost of crude climbs, so do the prices of those widely used products, which keep equipment, cars, buses, delivery trucks and airplanes running.

Across the U.S., drivers were paying an average of \$3.48 for a gallon of regular gasoline Monday, compared with \$2.98 before the war started. Prices have increased about 17% since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran.

Prices vary across states. In California, drivers were paying \$5.20, up 12% from a week ago. Some of California's refineries have shut down in recent years, so the massive state relies on imports of gasoline and other refined products from Asia.

By contrast, the average price in Louisiana, which has oil production and refineries, was \$3.04.

The spike in oil prices is likely to further push up gasoline prices, and could be felt more significantly in Asia and Europe, which are more dependent on Middle Eastern oil and gas than the United States.

The price of diesel - which powers 18-wheeler trucks - climbed Monday, too: to \$4.65 a gallon in the U.S., a 23% jump since the war started.

"Can't underscore what a massive jolt this is to the logistics, trucking, (agriculture) sectors," Patrick De Haan, a petroleum analyst at GasBuddy, wrote on X Monday.

The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway that carries a fifth of the world's crude oil and liquefied natural gas, already has caused problems for the shipping industry. Quickly rising oil and gas prices will add to the burden.

Fuel prices account for 50% to 60% of the total operating cost of shipping goods by ship, according to Patrick Penfield, professor of supply chain practice at Syracuse University, so higher fuel prices have a huge effect on the industry.

"When fuel prices start to go up, everything starts to slow down," Penfield said. "So your ships slow down, your trucks slow down. People are less apt to ship things via air. And it really kind of causes a drag on the economy when fuel price go up."

Fuel surcharges will also rise - as shipping companies aim to pass along higher costs to their customers, ultimately making goods more expensive.

Heating your home and cooking food with natural gas are also likely to cost more as the war grinds on.

Europe's benchmark natural gas rose 75% since the war

began, according to data from the Intercontinental Exchange.

That could also affect the cost of products made from natural gas, such as petrochemical feedstock. It's used to make plastic and rubber, as well as nitrogen fertilizer.

The spike in oil prices likely won't be felt immediately at U.S. grocery stores, said David Ortega, a professor of food economics and policy at Michigan State University. But if oil prices remain high for a month or more, he said, "we're in different territory."

Higher oil prices impact the agricultural sector in two ways, Ortega said. They raise the cost of inputs such as fuel for farm equipment and the fertilizer, which is derived from natural gas. They also raise demand for soybean oil, palm oil and other vegetable oils that can be used as replacements for petroleum-based fuel.

But Ortega said on-farm costs are only a small part of what consumers pay at the supermarket. A larger share comes from the cost of processing and transporting food, which uses a lot of energy.

"Food gets to the grocery store on diesel, whether it's on a truck or on a boat," Ortega said.

If oil prices remain elevated, fresh foods that must be transported quickly could see price hikes more quickly than packaged foods, which are less perishable, Ortega said.

With U.S. oil prices increasing by roughly 42% from their pre-war levels, to roughly \$95 a barrel from about \$67 before the conflict, that could push up inflation in the United States from 2.4% in January to 3% or higher in the coming months, according to a rough estimate by economists at JPMorgan.

Economist Daco, of EY-Parthenon, estimated that the bump in gas prices could push monthly inflation to as high as 1% in March, which would be the highest monthly increase in four years. Yearly inflation would near 3% in that case.

"That's a significant shock in and of itself," Daco said. Mark Mathews, chief economist and executive director of research at the National Retail Federation, said higher gas prices would likely affect consumer spending, particularly lower-income shoppers.

U.S. households pay on average \$2,500 a year, or nearly \$50 a week, to fill up their tank, he said. If consumers are paying, say, \$10 more per week, he said, their budgets are certainly affected.

"How do they offset that?" he said. "Going out to a movie theater or going to a theme park or going out to eat - all those areas would be ... more likely see cuts."

Mathews expects that retailers will absorb higher transportation costs for a while - as many did with higher tariffs - before they increase prices.

Italian Finance Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti warned against passing along higher energy costs to consumers, recalling the lessons learned after Russia invaded Ukraine.

"We must act immediately to stop energy prices from spreading to all consumer goods, as happened in 2022," he told a Monday G7 meeting in Brussels, according to a statement from his office.

Ed Anderson, a professor of supply chain and operations management for the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas, said shippers won't immediately pass on costs to customers.

"If the conflict is only in the short run, companies will eat it," he said.

## Global stocks rebound as Trump signals Iran war nearing the end

TOKYO, March 10, (AP): Global shares rebounded Tuesday from their sharp declines a day before as global investors wagered that the war with Iran may not last too long.

But the gains fell far short of losses Monday, when oil prices neared \$120 per barrel before falling back to about \$90. U.S. shares were set to rise, with Dow futures up 0.4% at 47,970.00. S&P 500 futures rose 0.4% to 6,830.75.

Helping to assuage investors' fears, U.S. President Donald Trump told CBS News he thinks "the war is very complete, pretty much." He also made other comments that seemed to threaten intensified action against Iran if it makes any "attempt to stop the globe's oil supply."

France's CAC 40 added 1.9% in early trading to 54,248.39, while Germany's DAX surged 2.4% to 23,966.97. Britain's FTSE 100 gained 1.6% to 10,410.08.

In Asia, Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei 225 added 2.9% to finish at 54,248.39 after the government released revised

economic data that showed Japan's economy grew slightly faster than initially estimated in the final quarter of last year, boosted by solid business investments.

The economy expanded at an annual pace of 1.3%. The initial estimate was a much weaker 0.2%.

"Today is the rebound, obviously positive comments from President Trump overnight, we're starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel for the war," said Neil Newman, a managing director and head of strategy at Astris Advisory Japan.

"So volatility is going to remain with us but things are certainly looking a lot brighter today," he said.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 1.1% to 8,692.60. South Korea's Kospi jumped 5.4% to 5,532.59.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 2.2% to 25,959.90, while the Shanghai Composite index rose 0.7% to 4,123.14.

Share prices have been swinging mostly in tandem with oil prices, which have gyrated as the war has deepened.

Peacekeepers have also observed incursions into Lebanon by the Israel Defense Forces, including reporting Monday one IDF tank near Kunin in southeast Lebanon, 7 km north of the Blue Line.

OCHA said that the closure of crossings along the Gaza Strip's perimeter continues to undermine humanitarian operations.

"The continued closure of the Zikim crossing is forcing aid workers to re-route critical supplies intended for northern Gaza through the southern crossing of Kerem Shalom, which is still the only operational crossing point. This long route is slower and more costly, and increases reliance on scarce fuel inside Gaza, where movements take place on damaged roads," the office said.

The exit from Gaza of patients who need medical evacuations and the return of Palestinians from abroad remain suspended.



شركة الاستثمارات الوطنية  
National Investments Company

## National Investments Company's General Assembly Approves 25% Cash Dividend Distribution of the Share's Nominal Value

National Investments Company (NIC) recorded distributable profits of KWD 24 million, representing 30 Kuwaiti fils per share, while other comprehensive income reached KWD 36 million for the year ended 2025



**Khaled Waleed Al Falah**

**National Investments Company continues to strengthen its position in the financial and investment sectors, supported by a solid financial foundation and well-considered strategic direction.**

**NIC's strategy is centered on innovation and the adoption of best practices in delivering financial and investment services.**

**Achieving sustainable growth and maximizing shareholder returns remain among the top priorities of National Investments Company.**

National Investments Company held its Ordinary General Assembly meeting for the financial year ended 31 December 2025 on Tuesday, 10 March 2026, at the Company's headquarters at Al-Khaleeja Complex, with an attendance rate of 73.326%. The meeting was approved to be held both physically and electronically by shareholders.

The Ordinary General Assembly approved all items on the agenda, including the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 25% of the nominal value of the share capital, equivalent to 25 Kuwaiti fils per share (after deducting treasury shares), for the financial year ended 31 December 2025, to shareholders registered in the Company's records in accordance with the applicable entitlement dates and procedures.

During his address to the General Assembly, the Chairman of the Board of National Investments Company, Mr. Khaled Waleed Al Falah, expressed the Board of Directors' appreciation and pride in the results and notable achievements realized during the past year. He noted that the Company continues to strengthen its leading position in the financial and investment sectors, supported by a solid financial base and well-considered strategic directions that enhance its ability to create sustainable value for shareholders and contribute to supporting the path of economic growth and the development of the investment environment.

Al Falah explained that National Investments Company continues to move forward in consolidating its distinguished record of qualitative achievements through a clear strategy based on innovation and the application of best practices in delivering financial and investment services. He affirmed that achieving sustainable growth and maximizing returns for shareholders remain among the Company's top priorities, alongside developing an integrated system of financial solutions that respond to clients' needs and keep pace with the rapid changes in regional and global markets.

Al Falah indicated that the year 2025 represented a pivotal milestone in the journey of National Investments Company, as the Company continued to reinforce the concept of sustainability as a core pillar within its long-term strategy. This was positively reflected in its financial performance through achieving solid operational results and rewarding annual profits. He



**Fahad Abdulrahman AlMukhaizim**

**National Investments Company continued to expand its market presence by attracting a diverse range of investors, including both individual and institutional clients, driven by the delivery of innovative investment solutions that meet their evolving aspirations.**

**The Company played an integrated role in the investment transaction, acting as Joint Lead Coordinator, Subscription Manager, Receiving Agent, and Exclusive Listing Advisor. The offering was valued at approximately USD 180 million and attracted demand of nearly USD 900 million.**

### Acknowledgment and Appreciation

At the conclusion of the General Assembly proceedings, the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Khaled Waleed Al Falah, expressed his deep appreciation and gratitude to the members of the Board of Directors, the executive management, and all employees of National Investments Company, commending their dedicated efforts and outstanding professional contributions which played an effective role in achieving positive results in line with the Company's strategic directions and strengthening its competitive presence in the financial market.

Al Falah also expressed his sincere appreciation to the supervisory and regulatory authorities, foremost among them the Capital Markets Authority, Bursa Kuwait, the Central Bank of Kuwait, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, praising their pivotal role in strengthening the foundations of the investment environment and stimulating economic development in the State of Kuwait. He also extended sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government of the State of Kuwait, and expressed pride and honor for the heroes of the armed forces and all those standing in the field protecting the nation for their sincere efforts and continuous work in serving the homeland and safeguarding its security and stability, praying to Almighty God to protect Kuwait and its people and to preserve the blessings of stability and prosperity.

noted that the Company recorded strong profitability levels, in addition to achieving advanced levels of return on average assets and average shareholders' equity, as well as a noticeable improvement in asset quality. The Company also succeeded in maintaining an effective balance between its cost structure and revenue streams, reflecting the resilience of its business model and its operational efficiency. He emphasized that these indicators reflect the Company's ability to deliver value-added services to clients and maximize shareholders' equity within a framework of well-considered strategic planning and a clear vision for sustainable growth.

Al Falah reviewed the Company's financial performance during 2025, noting that the Company achieved net profits of KWD 24 million, equivalent to 30 Kuwaiti fils per share, representing an increase of 98%, reflecting the efficiency of its business model and the effectiveness of its investment approach despite the continued global economic challenges and the varying performance of some financial markets. Al Falah highlighted key financial indicators, noting that the Company's total assets increased by 26% to reach KWD 735 million by the end of the year, in addition to the increase in total shareholders' equity attributable to the parent company by 21% to reach KWD 240 million, reflecting the strength of the Company's financial position and its continued ability to support its investment and operational activities within a balanced and sustainable framework.

Al Falah added that other comprehensive income recorded growth during 2025 to reach KWD 36 million, representing an increase of 50%. The Company's revenues reached KWD 47 million during the past year, while total assets under management recorded growth of 20% to reach KWD 1.3 billion.

Al Falah stated that National Investments Company continues to explore new investment opportunities in both local and international markets, contributing to expanding the scope of its business and enhancing the diversification of its investment portfolio. This is achieved through adopting advanced strategies based on continuous analysis of market trends and identifying promising opportunities across various economic sectors, supporting its competitiveness and strengthening its regional and international presence.

In conclusion of his speech, Al Falah extended his thanks and appreciation to all clients and shareholders of National Investments Company for their continued confidence in the Company's Board of Directors. He affirmed that this valuable trust constitutes the cornerstone in supporting the strategy of National Investments Company and strengthening its ability to achieve its objectives in the investment and economic sectors. This confidence has had a positive impact in enabling the Company to achieve positive financial and operational indicators across various levels, despite the challenges imposed by economic conditions at both the local and global levels, the repercussions of which have been reflected in the performance of regional and international markets.

### A Successful Investment Journey

For his part, the Board Member and Chief Executive Officer of National Investments Company, Mr. Fahad Abdulrahman Al Mukhaizim, stated that the Company's financial performance for the year ended 31 December 2025 reflects the strength of its investment approach and its ability to transform market changes into valuable opportunities. He emphasized that the results achieved reflect the efficiency of strategic decision-making and disciplined execution, which has reinforced the Company's position as an investor capable of achieving sustainable growth in a challenging environment.

AlMukhaizim explained that the Company continued to expand the scope of its presence by attracting diverse segments of investors, including both individual and institutional clients, driven by the provision of innovative investment solutions that meet their aspirations. This was directly reflected in the growth of assets under management and the strengthening of long-term trust with existing clients, in addition to attracting new investors.

In this context, he pointed to the growing role of the Asset Management team in strengthening the Company's position within the local market through the conclusion of new agreements to provide market making services for companies listed on the Premier Market and others preparing to join it. This raised the number of companies benefiting from this service to 16 companies. This has contributed to consolidating the Company's position among the leading providers of market making services on Bursa Kuwait, supporting liquidity efficiency and enhancing trading activity. Investment funds also recorded notable positive performance despite regional pressures and political and military tensions in the Middle East, reflecting the depth of investment expertise and the professionalism of the Company's teams and their ability to manage risks and adapt to market fluctuations with high efficiency.

He also highlighted the qualitative achievements of the Alternative Investments Division, which executed a series of successful transactions, most notably managing and executing the initial public offering and listing of Action Energy Company K.S.C.P., where the offering witnessed strong demand exceeding five times the offered shares, reflecting clear investor confidence and the attractiveness of the transaction structure.

He explained that the Company played an integrated role in the transaction, including Joint Lead Coordinator, Subscription Manager, Receiving Agent, and Exclusive Listing Advisor, leading all stages of execution from preparation, structuring, and obtaining regulatory approvals, to marketing, book-building and allocation, and ultimately the final listing. The offering value reached approximately USD 180 million, compared to demand approach-

ing USD 900 million, attracting thousands of subscribers and achieving a balanced distribution of shares between institutional and retail investors, reflecting the quality of the offering structure and fairness of allocation. This resulted in a return of approximately 11% for subscribers within ten trading sessions by year-end.

AlMukhaizim emphasized that this momentum represents the starting point for a new phase built on a clear strategic vision supported by a growing pipeline of capital market mandates. The Company is currently providing advisory services for an initial public offering in the consumer goods and retail sector, which has reached an advanced stage of execution and is expected to be listed on the Premier Market of Bursa Kuwait by the end of the first quarter of 2026, with an estimated value of approximately USD 500 million. The Company is also providing similar services for another offering in the basic education sector targeted for completion by the end of 2026, contributing to expanding the depth of the local market and enhancing investor access to defensive assets with long-term growth prospects.

AlMukhaizim continued that the Real Estate Investments sector at National Investments Company maintained strong operational performance during 2025, driven by the continued qualitative and carefully studied expansion of its portfolio components through the acquisition of new portfolios with high operational efficiency, alongside maintaining high occupancy levels within owned and managed assets, reflecting the strength of performance and operational management efficiency.

AlMukhaizim also noted that the Company's Strategy sector continued to complete the establishment of National Investments Company (DIFC) Limited in the United Arab Emirates, in addition to launching the "NICrowd" initiative, and participating in an event organized by the Kuwait Economic Society on crowdfunding in Kuwait, in a step that enhances regional presence and supports innovation in investment tools.

On another front, AlMukhaizim explained that the Human Capital sector at the Company continued to strengthen its position as a key pillar in supporting the creation of institutional value and advancing the path of transformation and sustainable growth. Efforts focused on attracting distinguished talents, elevating performance levels, enhancing organizational flexibility, and investing systematically in human capital development, which contributed to building a workforce capable of keeping pace with rapid transformations and the requirements of digital transformation.

The year also witnessed a noticeable improvement in employee performance indicators, reflecting the success of talent retention policies and the rise in engagement and job satisfaction levels. The Company continued participating in

strategic initiatives such as the "Watheefi" career fair, alongside launching the "nilo" health and wellness platform, establishing an internal corporate communication community, launching the Human Capital Lab, and creating the "Sustainability Ambassadors" network. These initiatives contributed to enhancing the employee experience, strengthening a culture of institutional belonging, and integrating sustainability practices into daily operations in a way that supports the achievement of long-term value for the Company and its shareholders.

### Social Responsibility

In line with its commitment to its developmental role, National Investments Company continued implementing its annual Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs during 2025, by embedding sustainability as a core pillar within its comprehensive strategy through a balanced approach that combines economic performance with positive societal impact, reflecting its national and humanitarian responsibility. Its initiatives focused on supporting human capacity development and empowering Kuwaiti youth through participation in national employment platforms, and supporting awareness and media programs aimed at developing skills and enhancing professional readiness in line with the objectives of the "New Kuwait 2035" vision.

On the internal environment level, the Company reinforced the culture of sustainability through health, humanitarian, and environmental initiatives, including organizing blood donation campaigns and supporting charitable activities during the holy month of Ramadan, reflecting its commitment to creating a positive and sustainable impact within the community.



## Energy price surge deepens Europe's cost-of-living crisis

LONDON, March 10, (Xinhua) - A sharp rise in oil and gas prices amid escalating tensions in the Middle East and fears that the Israel-United States war on Iran could disrupt supplies through the Strait of Hormuz is intensifying Europe's cost-of-living pressures. Brent crude, the international benchmark, briefly climbed to around 119 U.S. dollars per barrel on Monday, its highest level since mid-2022, before retreating below the 100-dollar mark later in the session.

European natural gas prices also jumped sharply, with Dutch TTF natural gas futures for April delivery rising 11.59 percent to 59.57 euros (69.31 U.S. dollars) per megawatt-hour, an increase of 86.4 percent from 31.96 euros (37.19 dollars) on Feb. 27.

### SOARING ENERGY PRICES SQUEEZE HOUSEHOLDS

The surge in wholesale energy prices is quickly feeding into consumer costs across Europe.

Fuel prices have already risen sharply in several countries. In France, diesel reached the symbolic threshold of 2 euros (2.33 dollars) per litre on Monday for the first time since the summer of 2022. In Bulgaria, fuel prices have risen by around 10 euro cents (0.12 dollar) per litre since early March, with diesel posting the largest increase. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), diesel prices reported the biggest increase in the Republika Srpska entity, with a 25 percent hike since early March.

As prices climb, drivers in several cities have begun refueling early. In The Hague, Xinhua reporters observed heavier traffic at fuel stations while long lines of cars waited at a Galp station in Lisbon's Amadora district.

Rising prices have also triggered cross-border fuel shopping. Dutch motorists were reported lining up in Zelzate, Belgium, while some German drivers are traveling to Poland, the Czech Republic and Luxembourg to take advantage of cheaper fuel. German Federal Police spokesperson Marcel Pretzsch confirmed the increase in "small-scale cross-border traffic."

### GOVERNMENTS' RESPONSIVE MEASURES

As energy costs surge and public concern grows, governments across Europe

are assessing measures to mitigate the impact on households and businesses.

During a videoconference meeting between G7 finance ministers and the International Energy Agency (IEA), policymakers discussed potential responses to deteriorating energy markets, including the possible release of emergency oil reserves.

IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol warned that disruptions to transit through the Strait of Hormuz and possible production curtailments pose "significant and growing risks" to global oil markets. He said the meeting examined all available options, including making the IEA's emergency oil stocks available to the market.

French Economy Minister Roland Lescure said governments were ready to take necessary steps, including tapping strategic reserves, though he stressed that "we are not there yet."

According to the IEA, member countries must hold oil stocks equivalent to at least 90 days of net imports. France held reserves covering about 122 days of net imports as of November 2025.

Several countries have already taken domestic steps. Serbia suspended exports of crude oil and fuel products until March 19 to prevent shortages. Croatia and Hungary introduced temporary caps on retail fuel prices. In Italy, the government is studying whether to activate so-called "mobile excise duties," a mechanism designed to offset rising pump prices.

### INFLATIONARY SHOCK BEYOND ENERGY BILLS

For households, the impact could become more immediate if high energy prices continue.

In the Netherlands, comparison platform Overstappen.nl said the average monthly energy cost for a two-person household signing a new fixed-term contract rose by around 36 euros within a week.

In Britain, the Resolution Foundation warned that sustained increases in oil and gas prices could add about one percentage point to inflation and roughly 500 pounds (671.42 dollars) to typical annual household energy bills, with lower-income households likely to be hit hardest.

## Iran conflict chokes global economy

Central banks face tough choices amid oil shock

### WASHINGTON, March 10, (AP) - The war with Iran is doing collateral damage to the world economy.

The conflict is driving up energy and fertilizer prices; threatening food shortages in poor countries; destabilizing fragile states such as Pakistan; and complicating options for the inflation fighters at central banks like the Federal Reserve.

Causing much of the pain: the Strait of Hormuz - through which a fifth of world's oil passes - was effectively shut down after the U.S. and Israel launched missile strikes Feb. 28 that killed Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"For a long time, the nightmare scenario that deterred the U.S. from even thinking about an attack on Iran and which got them to urge restraint on Israel was that the Iranians would close the Strait of Hormuz," said Maurice Obstfeld, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics and former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund. "Now we're in the nightmare scenario."

With a key shipping route cut off, oil prices have surged - from less than \$70 a barrel on Feb. 27 to a peak of nearly \$120 early Monday before settling closer to \$90. They've taken gasoline prices with them.

According to AAA, the average price of U.S. gasoline has shot up to \$3.48 a gallon from just under \$3 a week ago. Prices could be felt even more significantly in Asia and Europe, which are more dependent on Middle Eastern oil and gas than the United States.

In India, restaurants are already warning of possible shutdowns as the government prioritizes gas supplies for households. Thailand has suspended overseas travel for civil servants and urged them to take stairs instead of elevators. The Philippines has introduced a temporary four-day work week for some government agencies, while Vietnam is encouraging people to work from home.

Every 10% increase in oil prices - provided they persist for most of the year - will push up global inflation by 0.4 percentage points and reduce worldwide economic output by as much as 0.2%, said Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

"The Strait of Hormuz has to be reopened," said economist Simon Johnson of the Massachu-

setts Institute of Technology and recipient of the 2024 Nobel memorial prize in economics. "It's 20 million barrels of oil a day going through there. There's no excess capacity anywhere in the world that can fill that gap."

The world economy has shown it can take a punch, absorbing blows from the Russian invasion of Ukraine four years ago and from President Donald Trump's massive and unpredictable tariffs in 2025. Many economists express hope that global commerce can stagger through the latest crisis.

"The world economy has shown itself capable of shaking off significant shocks like broad U.S. tariffs, so there is room for optimism that it will prove resilient to the fallout of the war on Iran," said Eswar Prasad, professor of trade policy at Cornell University.

Especially if oil prices can fall back to the \$70-to-\$80-a-barrel range, wrote economist Neil Shearing of Capital Economics, "the world economy may absorb the shock with less disruption than many fear."

But a lot of ifs remain. "The question is how long is it going to go on?" said Johnson, also former IMF chief economist. "It's hard to see Iran backing down now that it's announced this new leader" - Mojtaba Khamenei. The son of the slain ayatollah is believed to be even more of a hardliner than his father.

Also muddying the outlook for an end to the crisis is uncertainty about what the United States is trying to achieve. "This is all about President Trump," Johnson said. "It's not clear when he's going to declare victory."

For now, the war is likely to create economic winners and losers.

Energy importers - most of Europe, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, India and China - will get clobbered by higher prices, Shearing wrote in a commentary for London's Chatham House think tank.

Pakistan finds itself in an especially bleak position. The South Asian country imports 40% of its energy and relies especially heavily on liquefied natural gas from Qatar, supplies of which have been cut off by the conflict. Higher energy prices will squeeze Pakistani families and damage their economy.

Far from cutting interest rates to provide some relief, though, the country's central bank will probably have to raise them instead, say economists Gareth Leather and Mark Williams of Capital Economics. That is partly because inflation remains uncomfortably high in Pakistan - and higher energy prices threaten to make it worse.

But oil-producing countries outside the warzone -

Norway, Russia, Canada - will benefit from high oil prices without the risk of missile and drone attacks.

Energy isn't the only issue. Up to 30% of world fertilizer exports - including urea, ammonia, phosphates, and sulfur - pass through the Strait of Hormuz, according to Joseph Glauber of the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Disruption in the Strait has already cut off fertilizer shipments, raising costs for farmers - and is likely pushing food prices higher.

"Any countries with significant agriculture sectors, including the United States, would be vulnerable," Obstfeld said. "The effects are going to be most devastating in low-income countries where agricultural productivity may already be challenged. Add this extra cost component and you get the prospect of significant food shortages."

The United States, now a net exporter of energy, should gain slightly overall from higher oil and gas prices. But ordinary families will feel the pain at a time when Americans are already furious about high costs ahead of November's midterm elections.

U.S. households pay an \$2,500 a year, or nearly \$50 a week, to fill up their cars, said Mark Mathews, chief economist at the National Retail Federation. A 20% increase in gasoline prices means an extra \$10 a week out their budgets, forcing them to cut back elsewhere. "If I have to pay more for an essential, then I would reduce a discretionary item," Mathews said.

If oil prices remain around \$100 a barrel, analysts at Evercore ISI calculated, the resulting higher gasoline prices will wipe out for most Americans the benefits of higher tax refunds this year arising from Trump's 2025 tax cuts. Only the top 30% would still see a gain.

The Iran crisis also puts the world's central banks in a bind. Higher energy prices feed inflation. But they also hurt the economy. So should central bankers raise rates to curb inflation - or cut them to give the economy a lift?

The Fed is already divided between policymakers who think a weak American job market needs help from lower rates and those still worried that inflation remains stuck above the central bank's 2% target.

"Their minds will easily go to the 1970s," Johnson said, when conflict in the Middle East and an Arab oil embargo sent oil prices rocketing. Central bankers are haunted by the memory that their predecessors "didn't get it right in the 1970s. They thought it was a temporary shock. They thought they could accommodate with lower interest rates, and they ended up regretting that because inflation became much higher."

## The Conversation

## Big beautiful refund? 5 tax code changes that may put more money in your pocket

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

By Jim Franklin

Western Governors University School of Business

The days are getting longer and W-2s are blooming, which can only mean one thing - the U.S. tax season is here.

Many Americans may receive a bigger tax refund than in previous years as a result of changes under what has been dubbed "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," a package of tax breaks and spending cuts that President Donald Trump signed into law on July 4, 2025.

The act renewed tax cuts originally put in place in 2017 that had been set to expire at the end of 2025. Had that happened, one estimate shows the average individual filer would have seen a US\$2,955 increase to their tax bill starting in 2026.

That hike would have come from factors including higher individual tax rates, while the standard deduction and child tax credit would have been slashed in half.

Instead, many filers can expect the new law to reduce their taxes for 2025 and beyond, with numerous provisions in place for the next three years.

Trump's tax and spending package has introduced a variety of provisions aimed at benefiting a broad cross-section of individual taxpayers. The changes under the act are retroactive, meaning that even though the

law was signed in July, taxpayers can treat the provisions as if they went into effect at the start of 2025.

Here are some of the new things 2025 filers should know about:

People subject to steep local and/or state taxes can now deduct a significantly larger portion of those assessments.

Allowable property, sales or income taxes paid to state and local governments in 2025 are deductible up to \$40,000, or \$20,000 for married filing separately. That's up from the previous maximum of \$10,000 and \$5,000, respectively.

Higher income taxpayers - those with modified adjusted gross income exceeding \$500,000, or \$250,000 for those married filing separately - won't be able to take full advantage of the \$40,000 deduction. OB3 calls for gradual reductions in the deduction amount as income level rises.

In 2030, the state and local deduction reverts to the previous \$10,000 limit, or \$5,000 married filing separately.

Workers in approved occupations, such as hospitality, cosmetology or personal training, who receive qualified tips will be able to deduct up to \$25,000 in tip income from their taxes for the first time.

This new deduction is phased out for single filers with a modified adjusted gross income over \$150,000 and married couples filing jointly over \$300,000.

This tax break is available through 2028.

Have earnings from working overtime? From 2025 through 2028, filers can take a deduction for pay exceeding their regular rate.

For example, if an employee typically earns \$20 per hour and earns \$30 per hour when working overtime, they qualify for a deduction of the extra \$10. The maximum annual deduction is \$12,500, rising to \$25,000 for joint filers.

As with many of these deductions, there is a phaseout for taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income over \$150,000, or \$300,000 for joint filers.

Purchased a new vehicle for personal use or thinking about buying one soon? From 2025 through 2028, buying a vehicle made in the United States means the filer can deduct vehicle loan interest.

Vehicles that qualify include cars, minivans, vans, SUVs, pickup trucks and motorcycles that underwent final assembly in the U.S.

The maximum annual deduction is \$10,000. The deduction starts to phase out for taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income over \$100,000; \$200,000 for joint filers.

For tax years 2025 through 2028, individuals older than 65 are eligible for a deduction up to \$6,000 or \$12,000 total for a married couple when both spouses qualify. The deduction begins to phase out when modified adjusted gross income exceeds \$75,000 or \$150,000 for joint filers.

It's important to note that this deduction is in addition to the existing senior deduction that was passed under a prior law.

This article is for informational purposes only and does not constitute professional tax advice. Please seek a qualified tax professional for advice based on your individual tax circumstances. (AP)

## DHS blames Democrats for crippling airport security delays

## Airport security chaos as shutdown hits spring break travel

WASHINGTON, March 10, (AP): The hourslong security lines at a handful of U.S. airports this week highlight the potential problems when a government shutdown coincides with the busy spring break travel season.

Houston's secondary airport weathered the worst problems, with lines consistently lasting over three hours for much of Sunday and Monday. Passengers also had to wait more than an hour to get through security at several other airports, including in New Orleans and Atlanta.

The surge of millions of travelers as schools take spring breaks would put pressure on even a fully staffed airport system. With the staffing problems that tend to accompany a government shutdown, some airports are beginning to feel more pressure. Still, most airports have not experienced significantly long security lines.

The longer Transportation Security Administration officers have to work without pay during the partial shutdown, the more likely it is that some will miss work as they take on second jobs to pay for necessities like gas and child care and their other bills. Many may still be rebuilding finances after the 43-day shutdown last fall, the longest in history.

Johnny Jones, secretary-treasurer of the TSA union's bargaining unit, said workers will miss their first full paychecks this weekend since the shutdown began Feb. 14. He said morale among the workforce "has taken a severe hit."

"Over the last 15 months, TSA officers have went through three government shutdowns," he told The Associated Press.

Jones, who also works as a



Airline passengers wait in long lines outside the terminal to get through the TSA security screening at William P. Hobby Airport in Houston, Sunday, March 8, 2026. (AP)

TSA agent, said it took months for him to financially recover from the 43-day shutdown.

"I refilled my water buckets and now I'm starting to empty them again. Some people were not so fortunate to be able to refill their water buckets," he said.

This current shutdown has only affected the Department of Homeland Security. Democrats in Congress refused to fund the department because they objected to its immigration enforcement tactics. Democratic lawmakers have said DHS won't get funded until new restrictions are placed on federal immigration operations following the fatal shootings of Alex Pretti and Renee Good in Minneapolis earlier this year.

The TSA and Homeland Security have consistently blamed Democrats for the long security lines.

"This chaos is a direct result of Democrats and their refusal to

fund DHS. These political stunts force patriotic TSA officers, who protect our skies from serious threats, to work without pay," said Lauren Bis, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, Department of Homeland Security. "These frontline heroes received only partial paychecks earlier this month and now face their first full missed paycheck, leading to financial hardship, absences, and crippling staffing shortages."

Chris Sununu, president and CEO of the Airlines for America trade group, reiterated his plea for Congress to end the shutdown.

"More than 2.7 million people cleared through TSA yesterday, but too many had to wait in extraordinarily long and painfully slow-lines at checkpoints," Sununu said in a written statement Monday. "It's unacceptable to have wait times of 2 or 3 hours. And it's unacceptable that TSA

officers will have \$0 in their paychecks this week."

But Democrats on the House Homeland Security Committee rejected the notion that they were to blame for TSA officers going unpaid.

"FACTS: Democrats introduced a clean bill to fully fund TSA with no conditions. Republicans blocked it," the Homeland Democrats group said on X. "Republicans would rather disrupt our travel than rein in ICE. It's shameful."

The country's longest security lines have been reported at the William P. Hobby Airport in Houston, with wait times topping three hours. Video from New Orleans on Sunday showed the security line stretching out of the terminal and across a parking garage as the wait there peaked at 77 minutes.

The lines at both those airports had eased by Monday afternoon, but Hobby airport was still reporting a two-hour wait for security and officials were urging travelers to get to the airport at least three or four hours ahead of their flights. The wait time in New Orleans was reported at 10 minutes in the late afternoon.

But more problems could pop up if a security shift is short on screeners when it's busy.

Neither the Houston airport authority nor TSA would answer questions Monday about why Hobby airport is so prone to long delays during the shutdown. Hobby is smaller than George Bush Intercontinental Airport, which handles roughly three-quarters of all the passengers passing through Houston. But Hobby still handled nearly 15 million passengers in 2024.

## More sewage disasters ahead

## US faces growing predicament from old sewer infrastructure

WASHINGTON, March 10, (AP): The January collapse of a pipe as wide as a car dumped so much sewage into the Potomac River that officials tracked a spike of gut-wrenching bacteria drifting slowly past Washington for weeks, prompting an emergency declaration and federal assistance.

It was a disaster of historic scale - 244 million gallons (924 million liters) spilled - spotlighting the severe consequences of old, failing infrastructure. But smaller sewer overflows that draw far less notice are common. Tens of thousands occur every year across the U.S., contaminating rivers, flooding streets and sometimes causing backups into homes that threaten human health.

"It's really one of those out of sight, out of mind problems that doesn't rise to the top until it becomes a crisis," said Alice Volpitta, the Baltimore Harbor waterkeeper with the nonprofit Blue Water Baltimore.

At least 18.7 million people are served by one of roughly 1,000 utilities that are in serious violation of pollution limits. At least 2.7 million live with a system that violated federal clean water rules continually over the last three years, according to an Associated Press analysis of federal data.

In Maryland it is Baltimore, not the nation's capital nearby, that has seen hundreds of sewer overflows in recent years often caused by broken pipes, tree roots or severe storms. Cities like Houston, Memphis and Cahokia Heights, Illinois, have reached court agreements to address their problems. And in places where sewage and rain flow through the same pipes, heavy rains made worse by climate change can make overflows to waterways more frequent and severe.

President Donald Trump called state and local leaders "incompetent" over the spill, but some experts say his administration's funding cuts are adding to the national problem. Many utilities can't afford upgrades - the Environmental Protection Agency says hundreds of billions are needed over the next two decades.

"We're going to see probably more incidents like we saw with the Potomac sewage spill," said Becky Hammer, a senior attorney with the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council.

A neighbor's message alerted Teddy Bloomquist to a potential flooding problem. Downstairs in his Baltimore row house, cloudy brown water with chunks of human waste was coming up from the shower drain. It was the third sewage backup that winter, each potentially leaving behind harmful bacteria.

"We're taking buckets and it turns out every time someone's flushing their toilet, it's coming up," Bloomquist said. "It's just coming so fast."

Baltimore's sewer system is more than a century old, with some parts of its tangled web of pipes mapped only in recent decades. Many cracked and leaked from decades of decay, letting rain in and worsening backups that surge through maintenance hole covers, drain into city rivers and flow into basements.

"A spill that happens in a community, in somebody's house, or right next to their house - that will be a memory for their forever," said Sri Vedachalam, a water and climate expert at the consulting firm Corvias Infrastructure Solutions.

Since the start of last year, roughly 15 million gallons (57 million liters) of sewage spilled in Baltimore. A map shows the spill sites scattered like measles across the city.

One neighbor was left with bits of toilet paper frozen into the snow in his backyard and spent the day heaving sewage out of his tub and toilet. Repairs cost thousands, including replacing his bathroom floor. Another neighbor said she used her wet vac to suck up roughly 120 gallons (454

liters) of sewage.

The city has spent nearly \$2 billion over more than two decades under a consent decree with federal and state regulators. They've installed new water mains, closed off outlets where sewage easily overflowed and stopped sewage bottlenecks from occasionally forming in pipes that feed a treatment plant.

Baltimore's efforts are reducing sewer overflows but take time and must be balanced with cost, according to city's Department of Public Works. They've made considerable progress --- sewer overflows are sharply below a rainy 2018 when their volume equaled about as much as the Potomac spill - but the city has proposed extending a deadline to complete necessary work to 2046.

Officials offer up to \$5,000 to residents cleaning up sewage backups after certain storms, though activists say more is needed. The city said the program is governed by specific eligibility criteria.

Maryland's progress is known because it's among states that publicly report overflows. About half of states don't, according to an Associated Press review of state reporting practices. For a majority of states, the EPA recently extended a federal electronic reporting deadline, from 2025 to 2028, to report overflows. The agency said extensions were needed to smooth the transition.

Flooding and water quality needs over the next two decades have ballooned to at least \$630 billion, the EPA estimated in 2024. Local residents will pay most of that. The federal government has a smaller role that's expanded in recent years, but may soon decline.

The 2021 infrastructure law added billions for water needs, but this is the last year money will go out to states for loans to local projects. The Trump administration last year proposed deep cuts to that program and to grants that help states fund environmental oversight including monitoring and protecting water. Congress rejected those cuts, preserving access to funds for Baltimore and other communities, said Maryland Sen. Chris Van Hollen, a Democrat.

But environmental justice efforts to help poor, often largely minority areas were cut as part of the Trump administration's attack on what it scorned as radical 'diversity, equity and inclusion' programs.

Some small grants were canceled, like \$14 million to install septic systems in majority-Black Alabama counties where residents live with sewage piped from their homes onto their property. So were regional assistance centers intended to help small communities plan complex projects and compete for a big pool of new money.

One such center that served six Midwest states was setting up to test drinking water and clean up mold in the East St. Louis, Illinois, region, said Bonnie Keeler, who led the center. That project was just one of dozens planned before the program was spiked.

There still are major sources of financing. In November, the EPA announced \$6.5 billion for wastewater and drinking water projects through a loan program, plus another \$550 million that would be handed to states. The loan program for states has run for nearly 40 years and provided more than \$180 billion for over 50,000 low-cost loans, the agency said. The agency offers some technical assistance as well.

"EPA helps invest in our nation's water infrastructure by identifying needs, funding infrastructure projects through multiple programs, and providing technical assistance to connect communities and tribes to federal funding," the agency said.

Bloomquist wants Baltimore to pay for damages and prevent it from happening again. He had to miss several days of work after the January backup and has to replace his basement floor.

## Exports to EU, Asia lift China amid falling US sales

## China exports surge 22% on chip, auto boom

HONG KONG, March 10, (AP): China's exports jumped nearly 22% in the first two months of the year from a year earlier, powered by a surge in shipments of computer chips, autos and electronics.

The export figures released by China's customs agency on Tuesday were much better than economists had forecast. They far exceeded the 6.6% annual pace of growth recorded in December.

Shipments to the U.S. fell 11% in January and February, narrowing from a 30% drop in December. Exports to the European Union increased almost 28% while those to Latin America climbed 16%.

Exports to the rest of Asia, including Japan and India, also were sharply higher.

China's exports have been a bright spot for its economy despite tensions with the U.S. Chinese exports climbed 5.5% for 2025 as its trade surplus surged to a record of nearly \$1.2 trillion. Higher shipments to other regions have helped offset weaker exports to the U.S. after U.S. President Donald Trump imposed a variety of higher tariffs on imports from many countries.

The boom in use of artificial intelligence is driving strong demand for computer chips of all kinds. China's exports of semiconductors by value soared near-



An aerial view of a container terminal in seen in Shanghai, Tuesday, March 10, 2026. (AP)

ly 73% in the first two months of the year, partly also lifted by higher prices as the world faces a memory chip shortage. Its exports of autos rose 67% and mechanical and electrical items rose 27%.

Trump's planned visit to Beijing at the end of March is being closely watched for a possible extension of a trade truce between the two countries reached in October last year, which could be positive news for Chinese exports to the U.S.

A recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling against Trump's sweeping tariffs has already resulted

in lower tariffs for countries including China.

"While the recent pace of gains is unlikely to be sustained, exports are likely to remain robust given the recent decline in U.S. tariffs and strong demand for semiconductors," Zichun Huang, a China economist at Capital Economics, wrote in a note.

China's total imports in January and February rose almost 20%, up from December's 5.7% year-on-year increase. However, its imports from the United States dropped nearly 27% from a year earlier.

## No one injured as weapon recovered

### Multiple gunshots fired near Rihanna's LA home and a woman detained

LOS ANGELES, March 10, (AP): Los Angeles police took a woman into custody after she fired gunshots outside Rihanna's gated home, according to authorities and news reports on Monday.

No one was injured, police said. It wasn't immediately clear whether the singer was at home when the shooting happened Sunday afternoon.

Police received a call about shots fired around 1:15 p.m. in the Beverly Hills area, Officer Charles Miller said Monday. A 35-year-old woman was later taken into custody and investigators recovered a weapon, according to a police statement. The suspect has been booked on suspicion of attempted murder and is in jail on \$10 million bail. The district attorney had not yet announced



Rihanna arrives at the premiere of 'Smurfs' on July 13, 2025, at Paramount Studios in Los Angeles. (AP)

charges.

Miller did not say who lived in the home. Multiple local news outlets reported that it belongs to Rihanna. Public records show the property is owned by a trust run by Evan Jehle, who is a member of the advisory board for Rihanna's Clara Lionel Foundation.

Emails seeking comment were left with Rihanna's publicist and manager.

KABC-TV showed video of what appeared to be five bullet holes in the front gate of the home.

"Shooting just occurred. Ten gunshots fired from the vehicle," a police dispatcher told responding officers on audio obtained by KABC. The gunfire came from across the street, police said.

It was not known if the woman

under arrest had any connection to Rihanna.

In 2018, a man was accused of breaking into a different home of Rihanna's in the Hollywood Hills and spending 12 hours there. The man pleaded no contest to felony counts of stalking and vandalism and a misdemeanor count of resisting arrest in 2019. He was sentenced to probation.

A nine-time Grammy Award winner, Rihanna has 14 No. 1 hits on the Billboard Hot 100, including "We Found Love," "Work," "Umbrella" and "Disturbia." She founded the makeup brand Fenty Beauty in 2017.

She and A\$AP Rocky announced the birth of their third child, a girl named Rocki Irish Mayers, in September.



The exterior of Rihanna's residence is shown Monday, March 9, in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)

## Film

### Eyes Oscar glory

### 'Secret Agent' director on Brazilian films rise

MEXICO CITY, March 10, (AP): For the second consecutive year, the hypercompetitive category of best international film at the Academy Awards includes a Brazilian film that has also earned a nomination for best picture, best acting and achievement in casting.

"The Secret Agent," directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho, will compete for the award on March 15 in Los Angeles, a year after Walter Salles' "I'm still here" won the statuette for best international film - and there is significant chance that it could secure a second triumph for Brazilian cinema.

"So many good things have happened to the film and it feels like it just keeps going," Mendonça Filho said in an interview in Mexico City, where "The Secret Agent" is playing in theaters.

The director of films such as "Bacurau," "Pictures of Ghosts" and "Aquarius," credits this milestone for Brazilian cinema, in part, to public funding for cinematography in Brazil, which he said leads to diversity in production and highlights the talent available.

"What I want now, today talking to you, is that...there is a film being edited in Brazil by someone and maybe this film we will be talking about next year. That's what I want," he said.

Set in the northern city of Recife in 1977, "The Secret Agent" explores themes such as the loss of personal and collective memory. The character played by star Wagner Moura assumes a false identity to avoid his pursuers during the military dictatorship while obsessively searches public records for any trace of his mother. At the same time, he is at risk of vanishing from his own son's memory.

"In my country memory is associated with class," said Mendonça Filho. "For example, well-off families from the middle class, they all have family albums. But if you go to poor families ... they don't. It's an incredibly strong theme to be discussed. And I think that's what the film is about. The film is very much about not having existed. Not because of you, but because of society."

Despite the risk of erasing memory, the film is anchored in the memories of Mendonça Filho and aided by the production design of Thales Junqueira and the costumes of Rita Azevedo, through fashion, buildings, cars, as well as an endearing cast, which includes the septuagenarian Tania Maria in the role of Dona Sebastiana.

It is still a Brazilian film, so despite the misfortune, there are moments of comedy such as a "hairy leg" attack, a media hoax used to justify crimes, and nostalgic tributes to local theaters that once showed hits like "Jaws."

"1977 is the first year I remember," the director said. "I was already a little cinephile. I was very interested in cars. I don't know anything about cars today, but cars at the time were really interesting for me. People I remember, clothes, colors. And when I was writing the script, I really felt myself crawling back into time, into myself."

Mendonça Filho said he was looking for an exciting tone for the film, shot in Panavision, and that it would have a captivating sound, full of music.

"Much like the films from the past that made people want to see films in a cinema," he said. "Sometimes it can be brutal, but it's also full of love and it's very much about life in Brazil and in Latin America".



Brazilian filmmaker Kleber Mendonça Filho, director of the Oscar nominated film 'The Secret Agent', poses for a portrait in Mexico City, Dec. 9, 2025. (AP)

## Fashion



A model wears a creation as part of the Chanel Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Women's collection presented in Paris, Monday, March 9. (AP)

### Blazy transforms Chanel

### Fall's trend was dressing for hard times, real life

PARIS, March 10, (AP): Chanel's Matthieu Blazy is still building.

Six months into his tenure at the Parisian stalwart, the designer staged his second ready-to-wear collection at Paris Fashion Week Monday, where brightly colored cranes rose from a holographic floor - a deliberate signal that the construction is ongoing.

For Parisians who have spent years staring at the real thing above Notre-Dame cathedral, the set was perhaps less dreamy than intended.

The audience inside the Grand Palais suggested the foundations are solid: Margot Robbie, Oprah, Jennie, Kylie Minogue, Lily-Rose Depp, Teyana Taylor and Olivia Dean all turned up to watch the next floor go on.

Blazy took his cue from a quote from Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel: "We need dresses that crawl and dresses that fly."

The collection was structured around that tension - plain against spectacular, function against fantasy - with a discipline his sprawling debut last October sometimes lacked.

The opening looks were austere by design. Black knit zip-ups, tweed blousons and boxy overshirts arrived with little more than four gold buttons to signal they belonged to Chanel.

In the vast runway space, they could read as underwhelming.

But Blazy's point was architectural: the suit, he said, is "the first brick" - and everything else rises from it.

That logic tracks to the founder.

In her apartment on Rue Cambon, a wall is covered in gauze painted gold - something poor made precious.

Chanel built a house on that idea, borrowing from everyday dress and elevating it.

Blazy is doing the same with her codes, stripping the suit to a knit shirt jacket or pressed-tweed blouson before rebuilding it in silicone-woven fabric and metallic mesh.

The collection's most provocative move was its silhouette.

Blazy pulled waistlines dramatically low - belts slung to mid-thigh, pleated skirts starting where blazers ended.

The references were retro flapper filtered through a modern lens: drop-waisted twinsets, patchwork dresses with floral embroidery, vivid patterned knits with a twenties pulse.

A furry coat in bold geometric color could have been worn in a chic part of London's Camden.

Whether the ultra-low waistlines will land with the well-heeled clients who pack Chanel's front rows is another question.

Selling a radically new proportion to women with deep loyalty to the house is a different challenge than winning critical praise.

The final stretch answered that concern with force. Sequined plaid suits arrived in dazzling color. Beaded coats glistened with star-charr embroidery.

Metallic mesh was woven to mimic tweed motifs, and several models wore pastel-tinted hair to match their looks.

Fabric flowers burst from bodices. Trailing ribbons, layered ruffles, and insect-wing detail-

ing turned the runway into something closer to spectacle than commerce.

Blazy cast wide - teens through to women in their fifties - and let the show breathe, with a runway circuit that took models the better part of seven minutes.

He framed it all with seven pared-back black and cream looks, as if to say: whatever else changes, the Chanel you know isn't going anywhere.

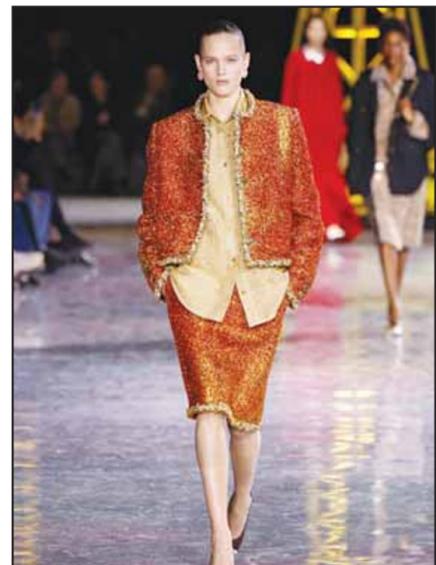
The celebrities came first, as they always do at the Paris runways.

After Oprah Winfrey stole the show in the opening stretch of the nine-day week, Naomi Watts and Kai Schreiber were at Balenciaga. Rooney Mara, Diane Kruger, Alexa Chung, Elizabeth Olsen and Yseult turned up at Givenchy.

Sarah Paulson and Tracee Ellis Ross watched Celine. Chappell Roan was at Vivienne Westwood and then at McQueen, where Myha'la and Sophie Thatcher were also there. Chanel was still to come Monday, and Louis Vuitton capping the season Tuesday.

But this week was about more than the front row.

Paris Fashion Week's biggest houses are in reset mode, and the designers leading them are trying to answer the same



A model presents a creation from the ready-to-wear Fall/Winter 2026-2027 collections by Chanel during the Paris Fashion Week in Paris, France, on March 9. (Xinhua)



Lori Harvey (left) and Kylie Minogue pose for photographers upon arrival for the Chanel show.



Models wear creations as part of the Chanel Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Women's collection in Paris. (AP)

hard question: How do you dress people when the world feels dark, loud and unstable?

First came clothes built to shield: high collars, wrapped coats and strong tailoring.

Then came the silhouette: a sharper line, as designers moved away from years of oversized dressing and back toward shape.

The third trend was glamour that looked less polished. Hair was messier, makeup was smudged, clothes felt rougher and the mood was darker. Luxury no longer looked sealed off from real life.

Balenciaga led the first trend.

In his second show, Pierpaolo Piccioli built the collection around darkness and the search for light, working with "Euphoria" creator Sam Levinson on a set tied to the series' return.

The mood pushed the collection toward unease.

On the runway, that became balloon bombers, cocoon backs, portrait collars and face-framing necklines that made the body look guarded.

Even the softer draped dresses kept that mood: these were clothes for a hard world.

Givenchy pursued a similar path and made it more personal. Sarah Burton's third show felt like the one where her point of view clicked.

She was not proposing one ideal woman, but many women and many ways of being strong, with exact tailoring, strong coats, peplum hips, velvet, shearling and evening looks grounded in real life.

Burton's collection was about how women put themselves back together in the world they are living in. That idea gave the clothes force. They were polished, but still connected to it.

Junya Watanabe pushed the idea furthest, turning gloves, motorcycle gear and emergency blankets into couture-like forms.

McQueen did the same, with Seán McGirr talking about paranoia, perfection and the strain of always being seen. His slashed leather trousers, low-slung minis and chainmail-like textures suggested exposure, but also defense.

The second big trend was silhouette.

After years of volume, slouch and oversized ease, Paris is moving back toward the body.

Celine made that shift most clearly. Michael Rider's third outing felt like a designer settling into his idea.

He wanted clothes for living in. His coats and suits sat closer to the torso. His trousers kicked out in cropped flares. His menswear came in long, narrow overcoats that looked crisp rather than inflated.

Rider also suggested that the long dominance of oversized dressing may be breaking.

His version of sharpness was not stiff or nostalgic. It had ease, but it also had character.

Classic clothes came back with a little edge: smaller details, stranger proportions, a more exact line.

That made Celine a clear mood-setter.

Paris runways were after presence, just no longer through sheer size.

## Young hobbyists turn old-school crafts into creative careers

## Young people embrace 'grandma hobbies' to escape screens

LOS ANGELES, March 10, (AP): By age 23, Emma MacTaggart was already noticing how rare her free time was - and how it was seldom screen-free.

She was working long hours in investment banking and once she was finally able to log off after work, she would turn to her phone. Along with her roommates, she decided to hunt for a hobby that would replace that habit. They became "hooked" on needlepoint, she said, a practice she had briefly learned from relatives as a child, but one that she hadn't picked up in years. And she hasn't turned back since.

"It was a really therapeutic way to kind of distract yourself from either work or stress, but also just do something with your hands instead of doomscrolling," she said. "We became completely obsessed."

MacTaggart is part of a throng of young people who are turning to analog hobbies and activities as a means of escaping technology and reconnecting with childlike creativity and exploration. Somewhat ironically, this analog movement has been galvanized by its trendiness on social media.

Some of these hobbies - knitting, gardening and, of course, needlepoint - have been ascribed the term "grandma hobbies" online, referring to the older demographic that's often been associated with them. But many other offline, tactile hobbies, like pottery,



Emma MacTaggart, founder of What's the Stitch needlepoint business, is photographed in her studio, in New York, Monday, Feb. 9, 2026. (AP)

origami and even blacksmithing, have gained traction online with Gen-Z and millennials recently.

A younger crowd embraced such hobbies in 2020 when the pandemic left many with more free time. But "grandma hobbies" have persisted beyond a pandemic fad and some seem to be picking up steam in their popularity online.

While she said she may not consider herself a crafty person, MacTaggart, now 26, founded the needlepoint business What's the Stitch and runs

popular social media profiles of the same name. After seeing growing interest in her content, she began to build up her business and now sells needlepoint canvases, accessories and digital designs. The flair MacTaggart puts into her creations is a touch of cheeky humor and, occasionally, profanity.

"It is such a historically buttoned up craft, so it's fun to put a young spin on it," she said.

Jaime Kurtz, a professor of psychology at James Madison University

whose research focuses on happiness, said many of these activities can also help to reduce anxiety and stress, and provide a sense of accomplishment since they require focus and can be challenging.

"Hobbies are really important, and a lot of us have lost them, or we just don't prioritize them enough, or we think we're too busy," Kurtz said. "But just finding little bits of time to carve out to do these kinds of things is a really wise use of time."

Clara Sherman, who co-founded the company So Bam Fun to "reinvigorate" the game of mahjong with a younger generation, said when she plays the game with friends, she's able to reach a "zen state."

"You kind of feel like you're existing in this little bubble of just myself, my friends and this game we're all enjoying together," she said. "It just really does allow you to shut off the rest of the world."

Some young hobbyists are not looking to escape their phones through their activity of choice, but are interested in how modern technology can enhance their experience.

Isaiah Scott, a birdwatcher, artist and content creator, said the app eBird is a key part of his experience. It allows birders to log and track their observations while also contributing to scientific research and conservation.

It's easy to say his generation is "glued to their phones," Scott said, but that access to technology also "opens

so many doors to get involved in hobbies that may have been forgotten about or (are) just difficult to get into otherwise."

Scott, who is based in Savannah, Georgia, said bird watching is akin to the Pokémon games he loved growing up: "It feels like a video game, but in real life." Traveling to different regions is like unlocking a new map, he said, and racking up a high number of species seen is like achieving a high score. Scott has seen about 800 different species himself.

Beyond providing him with an enriching hobby, birdwatching set Scott, 22, on a mission to "protect and to conserve our natural world." He founded the nonprofit Rookery and Roots Conservancy and recently purchased a 16-acre parcel of land in Rincon, Georgia, to safeguard wildlife habitats. The purchase was made possible in part because of the platform he's built online.

Exposure to global audiences online has helped other analog hobbyists build and operate thriving businesses thanks to their social media popularity. Anna Weare, for one, is a full-time blacksmith and farrier, but she's also known online as AnvilAnna.

She had already been working successfully with a slew of clients when she started posting videos on TikTok and other social platforms, where she's got international reach and enthusiasm. Weare thinks some of the shine on blacksmithing and other centuries-

old practices could be due to fatigue over a hyper-digitalized world and poorly made products. The waitlist to snag Weare's coveted one-piece spurs, which are recognized for their durability and rarity, is about a year long.

"People, now more than ever, are realizing that things made in factories or mass produced, they wear out so quickly," Weare, 27, said. Whether they're buying products she made or inspired by her content to pick up the hammer themselves, Weare said "people want longevity, and this craft has been around for so long for a reason."

Many crafters and hobbyists also feel a strong sense of community among their peers.

Kristie Landing created Verse & Sip, a platform and collective for poets and poetry lovers, and she posts videos online of letter writing, letter locking, wax seals and origami, among other paper crafts. Landing, 34, said she constantly gets questions from an "active community" of viewers about the type of paper she uses or where she bought her tools, but they're also interested in connecting with each other.

She recently started a pen pal matching service after receiving an abundance of comments from followers who expressed that they would like to have someone to swap letters with - particularly someone who would appreciate the care they put into their physical communications, or just admire their penmanship.

## Fund empowers women entrepreneurs

## Hilton's fund helps women rebuild businesses

NEW YORK, March 10, (AP): The pop culture star, advocate and entrepreneur Paris Hilton launched an initiative Monday to support female small-business owners impacted by disasters, a nationwide expansion of her philanthropic support for women entrepreneurs after the 2025 Los Angeles fires.

Hilton is donating \$350,000 to kickstart the Back in Business Recovery Fund, with a goal to raise at least \$1 million by the end of March.

"Women-owned businesses are really the heart of so many of these communities," Hilton told The Associated Press. "I want to be able to lift up and support them, shine a light on them and really make a difference in their lives."

The new initiative will be a partnership between Hilton's social impact organization 11:11 Media Impact and GoFundMe.org, which is the philanthropic arm of the fundraising platform GoFundMe and will contribute \$100,000 to the fund's launch.

Hilton and those organizations deployed over \$1 million in cash grants to 50 women-owned small businesses after the LA fires, which destroyed her own Malibu home.

Losing the home where she was raising her young children has been "very emotional," Hilton said, and spurred her to think of other mothers who'd lost not just houses but income to support their families.

The grants of up to \$25,000 went to owners of child care centers, bakeries, bookshops, dance studios and salons damaged by the Eaton fire, which devastated the community of Altadena. The money helped cover rent, payroll, replacing equipment and rebuilding.

One year later, 90% of the grantee businesses are still operating, accord-

ing to the Pasadena Women's Business Center, which also received a grant to provide technical assistance and mentorship to impacted enterprises.

The grantees included Renata Ortega, who ran her floral design company Orla Floral Studio from a converted garage next to the Altadena home she shared with her husband and three dogs.

Ortega was unsure how she would keep her business going after flames destroyed her house and studio space, including all her floral and event equipment.

"Nothing prepares you for that amount of loss," she told The Associated Press. "I didn't think I was going to be able to get back on my feet because it took me years to be able to come up with the inventory I had."

She worried for the staff she employed and the flower market vendors who depended on her purchases, too.

The grant helped Ortega pay the deposit on a studio space and purchase a badly needed floral cooler. Orla Floral is now "booked and busy," she said. She was able to keep her staff and is hoping to hire another employee soon.

She credits much of her recent growth to the grant. "It directly went into getting us back into business, but actually back and better than ever," she said.

The support also gave Ortega a motivational boost as she faced rebuilding her home and livelihood simultaneously.

"You have to keep going and you have keep pushing and fighting forward," Ortega told herself, "because if somebody like Paris Hilton notices your story and thinks you're important, then you have to believe in yourself and also think that you're important."



Paris Hilton attends a news conference at the Capitol, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026, in Washington. (AP)

Hilton supported grantees as a customer, too, proudly donning a catsuit from the apparel shop Crop It Like It's Hot at the Coachella music festival and hiring food vendors like Carmela Ice Cream and Hot Shrimp Mami for her own parties.

Those relationships inspired her to think "think bigger" about a national initiative, Hilton said. So did her lived experiences as a woman, mother and entrepreneur.

"For so much of my career, I've been underestimated," said Hilton, a great-grandchild of the hotel magnate Conrad N. Hilton. "I've worked very hard to show people that there's much more to me."

While there are 14.5 million women-owned businesses in the U.S., a

39% share according to Wells Fargo, women, and especially minority women receive disproportionately less investment than men through venture capital and loan financing.

"They are the most undercapitalized and underresourced, and particularly if primary caregiving responsibilities are falling on them too, sometimes that leads to increased recovery burden," said Rebecca Grone, director of 11:11 Media Impact.

Like the LA program, the Back in Business Recovery Fund will distribute unrestricted grants, partnering with some of the 150 local women's business centers spread across the U.S.

Collaborating with the centers will help identify impacted women quickly and opens up access not just to cash, but to a community of business owners facing similar challenges, said Amanda Brown Lierman, executive director of GoFundMe.org. "It's really key to the success."

Decisions on when to activate the fund will also be informed by reaching out to the women business centers to assess impacts, Brown Lierman said.

While the money will go to owners themselves, the impact is aimed toward the whole community, said Grone. Saving businesses can protect jobs and tax revenue, but it can also preserve the soul of communities, drawing displaced residents back home.

"You don't want to come back if the community isn't thriving, so as folks are rebuilding their homes, the things that are familiar and make a community feel like home are equally as crucial," she said.

A YouTube series called "Back in Business" was also released Monday, highlighting some of the LA business owners.



Priya Kansara poses for photographers upon arrival at the World premiere of the film 'Project Hail Mary' on Monday, March 9, in London. (AP)

## Critics slam trivialization of deadly real-life conflict

## WH war videos mix entertainment and reality

NEW YORK, March 10, (AP): Peaceful and violent, in video game screenshots and movie clips and on professional playing fields, the icons come fast and furious in quick-cut footage - some of the most renowned slivers of 21st-century American popular culture, harnessed by the Trump administration to promote the freshly launched war with Iran.

The White House's social media feed has issued a series of pumped-up videos that mix real Iran war explosions with movie action heroes, gaming footage and bone-crunching football tackles, leading critics like a top cleric of the US Catholic Church to condemn a trivialization of deadly real-life conflict.

Clips from "Braveheart," "Superman," "Top Gun," "Breaking Bad," and "Iron Man." All appear cut between declassified imagery of what is presumably the Iran war. Even the cartoon likeness of SpongeBob SquarePants is spliced in, asking, "You wanna see me do it again?" in between images of buildings, planes and vehicles blown up by American bombs. The caption on one bomb-heavy post: "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue" - the title of a post-9/11 Toby Keith song about war that is subtitled "The Angry American."

The fiction-meets-reality product of the White House's aggressive social media team cuts a wide swath through cultural touchstones that resonate with young men, including the video games Call of Duty, Grand Theft Auto, Mortal Kombat and Halo. Two videos feature NFL and college football tackles and Major League Baseball home runs - with the cracks of bats interspersed with explosions.

They're set to ominous or aggressive music, including Childish Gambino's "Bonfire," Miami XO's "Bazooka" and AC/DC's "Thunderstruck." One of the White House postings described the video as "Justice



Gamers play 'Halo Wars 2' at the Xbox Media Showcase at E3 2016, Monday, June 13, 2016, in Los Angeles. (AP)

The American Way," accompanied by flag and fire emojis.

It's hard not to see the thinking here: The more cinematic the content, the more people might support the war.

The sounds and images of American popular culture, a sure attention-getter in many contexts, have increasingly been used in politics in recent decades, at least as far back as Bill Clinton's use of Fleetwood Mac's "Don't Stop" during his 1992 presidential campaign. Never, though, has a White House built and disseminated content quite like this, drawing explicit parallels between the aggressive moments of modern entertainment - a video game kill shot, a hard football hit, a towering home run - and battle footage to amplify the enthusiasm for war.

What's happening with the White House videos, which some call the "gamification" of war, hasn't landed well in some quarters.

Two actors whose work appeared in

the videos - Ben Stiller, who starred in the 2008 movie "Tropic Thunder," and Steve Downes, who portrays Master Chief, the protagonist in Halo - said the material was used without permission and called for their depictions to be removed.

Stiller said on X that he had "no interest in being part of your propaganda machine. War is not a movie." Downes called the videos "disgusting and juvenile war porn." Neither the NFL nor Major League Baseball would comment on the use of their footage in the war videos.

The discussion reached a high level in the U.S. Catholic Church as well. Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, the archbishop of Chicago, said he found it sickening to see a war that has brought real death and suffering being treated like a video game. That approach, he said, dishonors the people who have died, including U.S. servicemen.

"Our government is treating the suf-

fering of the Iranian people as a backdrop for our own entertainment, as if it's just another piece of content to be swiped through while we're waiting in line at the grocery store," Cupich said in a weekend statement. "But, in the end, we lose our humanity when we are thrilled by the destructive power of our military."

Asked for comment, the White House would not say whether or not it would accommodate artists who said their work was used without permission.

"America's heroic warfighters are meeting or surpassing all of their goals under Operation Epic Fury," said White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly. "The legacy media wants us to apologize for highlighting the United States Military's incredible success, but the White House will continue showcasing the many examples of Iran's ballistic missiles, production facilities, and dreams of owning a nuclear weapon being destroyed in real time."

It's not the first time this White House has trotted out game-related memes. Last year, it posted a drawing of Trump dressed as Master Chief. In another, it made Trump look like a blocky Minecraft character with the caption: "America's most pro-gamer president."

Every war has a psychological dimension, and this seems to be part of it, said Zia Haque, director of the Baker Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies at Juniata College in Pennsylvania. "We live in a digital age, and I see this as a use of the space to propagate the message across the board," he said.

Some observers also cast the administration's content as potential efforts to encourage gamers to join the military. It wouldn't be a first: The Pentagon's efforts to recruit players date to at least 2002, with the release of a first-person shooter called America's Army.

## Variety

LOS ANGELES: Tommy DeCarlo, who became the lead singer of classic rockers Boston for nearly 20 years based on a Myspace tribute to the band's original singer, has died.

DeCarlo's children, Annie, Talia and Tommy Jr., said in posts on his Facebook and Instagram pages that their father, who had been struggling for months with brain cancer, died Monday. They said, "He fought with incredible strength and courage right up until the very end." He was 60.

Brad Delp, the original singer of the band that was founded in 1975 and had hits including "More Than a Feeling" and "Peace of Mind," died in 2007.

DeCarlo, then a 43-year-old working at a Home Depot in North Carolina, wrote, sang and recorded a tribute song to Delp. He posted that song along with a few Boston covers to his Myspace page and sent the link to the band. (AP)

DeCarlo

link to the band. (AP)

SALLA, Finland: Traditional reindeer racing that's been delighting spectators for decades in Finland brought hundreds of fans to the Salla Reindeer Cup in the frigid town of Salla this past weekend.

Around 1,000 people attended the competition, despite frigid subfreezing temperatures and the remote location near the Russian border, roughly 264 kilometers (164 miles) northeast of the city of Oulu.

They watched and cheered as the reindeer galloped across the snow-covered track, pulling their handlers behind them on skis. Whoever is fastest wins the race.

Spectators came not only from Finland but also Italy, Norway, Germany and France, among other countries.

Reindeer husbandry has been an important part of Scandinavian culture for many decades, especially for the Sami Indigenous people in the far north of the country. (AP)

PHILADELPHIA: Amid the garden installations at the Philadelphia Flower Show, a small booth attracted visitors by inviting them to tour China.

Organized by the Sino-American Business & Travel Association and the China National Tourist Office in New York, the booth introduced visitors to travel destinations across China, from scenic landscapes, historic sites, to vibrant modern cities.

Pennsylvania State Representative Keith Harris, who visited the booth, told Xinhua that his earliest impression of China came from martial arts films. "My first introduction to China was Bruce Lee," he said. "I saw all his movies - I was the Bruce Lee kid in my neighborhood." (Xinhua)

SINGAPORE: Singapore on Monday launched an essay competition for pre-university students on the theme of the city-state's artificial intelligence (AI)-driven economic future, with a top prize of 3,000 Singapore dollars (about 2,338 U.S. dollars).

Participants are asked to examine how AI can boost productivity, create new industries and strengthen Singapore's competitiveness, while also addressing challenges such as its impact on the labor market and issues of ethical governance, the Monetary Authority of Singapore and the Economic Society of Singapore said in a joint statement. (Xinhua)

The organizers said the theme aligns with the government's push for AI adoption in 2026. (Xinhua)

## Military actions responsible for 5.5% of Earth's emissions

## Energy turmoil from Iran war fuels renewable energy debate

NEW YORK, March 10, (AP) - World leaders have tried and failed to curb climate change by appealing to nations to act for the common good. Now, the Iran war and its costly energy crunch have some experts wondering if selfishness and nationalism may be a more likely way to save the planet, by boosting support for homegrown renewables over imported fossil fuels.

Bombed refineries, disrupted shipping channels for oil and liquefied natural gas and skyrocketing fuel prices should point even the most reluctant leaders to a cleaner fossil free future, hope some experts.

But others are dismissive, noting the same speculation emerged, and then quickly flopped, as recently as Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That prompted some European nations to replace gas with even dirtier coal.

"Just wishful thinking," said Stanford University climate scientist Rob Jackson, who tracks global emissions of carbon dioxide.

The head of the United Nations will argue otherwise on Monday.

"The turmoil we are witnessing today in the Middle East makes it evident that we are facing a global energy system largely tied to fossil fuels - where supply is concentrated in a few regions and every conflict risks sending shock waves through the global economy," UN Secre-



A person rides a scooter behind the gasoline price board of a gas station in San Francisco, Thursday, March 5. (AP)

tary-General António Guterres said in an email to The Associated Press. "In past oil shocks, countries had little choice but to absorb the pain. Now they have an exit ramp. "Homegrown renewable energy has never been cheaper, more accessible, or more scalable," Guterres said. "The resources of the clean energy era cannot be blockaded or weaponized."

Annual UN climate conferences

aimed at global cooperation have accomplished little. The most recent meeting in Brazil, known as COP30, ended with a statement that didn't even mention the words "fossil fuels," much less include a timeline to reduce their use. Guterres said then that he "cannot pretend that COP30 has delivered everything that is needed." Under President Donald Trump, whose attack on Iran

has sparked new energy concerns, the US didn't even participate in the Brazil meeting. Even though renewable energy use and new installations are soaring globally, outpacing fossil fuel growth, the world continues to increase its fossil fuel use every year with emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide and methane rising to new highs year after. That's driving atmospheric warming that increases costly and deadly extreme weather, including dangerous heat, around the world.

"The bottom line is that for at least another five years and maybe longer, emissions reduction will in fact be dealt with largely unilaterally," said Michael Oppenheimer, a Princeton climate and international affairs professor. "If countries see the Israel-U.S.-Iran war as a further reason to head for the exits on fossil fuels by loosening domestic opposition to the necessary policies, that will be accomplished unilaterally at the domestic level."

Caroline Baxter, director of the Converging Risks Lab at the Council on Strategic Risks in Washington, said there has already been a "dramatic slowdown" in the movement of fossil fuels to various ports due to the conflict. And for countries like Japan or South Korea that depend on tankers arriving in their ports to deliver energy, this is a really big deal, she said. Baxter said she "wouldn't be

surprised" if some shift to green energy because of the conflict, if only because renewable energy offers more stability than fossil fuels do.

"I think there is an opportunity, rightly or wrongly, for countries to really turn inward and try to power themselves in a way that cuts off their dependence on other nations for that source," said Baxter, who was US deputy assistant secretary of defense for force education and training from 2021 to 2024 under the Biden administration.

Baxter said if she's right and if "everyone does it in their backyard," it will limit future climate change "without the thorny diplomatic negotiations and the behind closed doors" of international climate conferences.

The war will lead to more solar panels and heat pumps installed in coming months, said energy analyst Ana Maria Jaller-Makarewicz, of IEEFA Europe.

More skeptical analysts point to the Russian invasion of Ukraine a few years ago, which put a massive kink in Europe's natural gas supply, yet didn't change the world's fossil fuel dependence. Politicians often pivot to other fossil fuels to address war-oriented energy insecurity, such as coal, which releases even higher amounts of heat-trapping gases.

"We have seen this at the European

level where actors post-2022 slowly wanted to move away from the energy transition which is exactly the wrong lesson," said war studies lecturer Pauline Heinrichs at King's College in the United Kingdom.

Just as Europe did then, many countries, like China and India - already the world's No. 1 and No. 3 carbon-emitting countries - could turn to more coal use, said Ohio University's Geoff Dabelko, an expert on climate and conflict, and University of St. Andrews' Neta Crawford, author of "The Pentagon, Climate Change, and War: Charting the Rise and Fall of US Military Emissions."

Whatever happens with nations' energy choices, the war itself will spike emissions. Even before it began, reports showed that the world's militaries are responsible for 5.5% of Earth's heat-trapping emissions each year, more than any country except China, the United States and India.

Crawford, co-founder of the Costs of War project at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, said fighter jets consuming vast quantities of fuel, releasing carbon dioxide and other pollutants, is just one example. "The consequences of war on emissions will far exceed any incremental offset in emissions due to increased enthusiasm for a green transition," she said.

## Inconvenient organ

## How appendix 'evolved' and what it actually does

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

By Phil Starks and Lilia Goncharova  
Tufts University

Most people know only two things about the appendix: You don't need it - and if it bursts, you need surgery fast.

That basic story traces back at least to Charles Darwin, the English naturalist who developed the theory of natural selection. In "The Descent of Man," he described the appendix as a vestige: a leftover from plant-eating ancestors with larger digestive organs. For more than a century, that interpretation shaped both textbook and casual medical wisdom.

But the evolutionary story of the appendix turns out to be much more complicated.

Along with our colleague Helene M. Hartman, a student preparing for a career in health care, we combined our expertise in behavioral ecology, biology and history to review the scientific literature on the appendix, expecting a simple answer.

Instead, we found an organ that evolution kept reinventing, more interesting than most people imagine.

The appendix is a small pouch branching off the first section of the large intestine. Its shape and structure vary widely across species - a clue that evolution may have tinkered with it more than once.

Some species, including certain primates such as humans and great apes, have a long, cylindrical appendix. In others, including several marsupials such as wombats and koalas, the appendix appears shorter or more funnel-shaped. Still others, including some rodents and rabbits, have differently proportioned or branching structures. This structural diversity suggests that evolution has modified the organ under different ecological conditions.

That suspicion is supported by evolutionary analyses. Comparative studies show that an appendix-like structure evolved independently in at least three distinct lineages of mammals - marsupials, primates and glires, a group that includes rodents and rabbits. A broader evolutionary survey found that the appendix evolved separately at least 32 times across 361 mammalian species.

When a trait evolves repeatedly and independently, biologists call this convergent evolution. Convergence does not mean a structure is indispensable. But it does suggest that, under certain environmental conditions, having that structure provided a consistent enough advantage for evolution to favor it again and again.

In other words, the appendix is unlikely to be a useless evolutionary accident.

The appendix supports the immune system. It contains

gut-associated lymphoid tissue - immune cells embedded in the intestinal wall that help monitor microbial activity in the gut. In early life, this tissue exposes developing immune cells to intestinal microbes, helping the body learn to distinguish between harmless symbionts and harmful pathogens.

The appendix is particularly rich in structures called lymphoid follicles during childhood and adolescence, when the immune system is still maturing. These immune components participate in mucosal immunity, which helps regulate microbial populations along the intestinal lining and other mucosal surfaces. Lymphoid follicles produce antibodies, such as immunoglobulin A, to neutralize pathogens.

Researchers have also proposed that the appendix acts as a microbial refuge. Some have suggested that biofilms - thin, structured communities of bacteria - line the appendix. During severe gastrointestinal infections that flush much of the gut microbiome from the colon, beneficial bacteria sheltered within these biofilms may survive and help repopulate the intestine afterward. Those beneficial microbes assist with digestion, compete with pathogens and interact with the immune system in ways that reduce inflammation and promote recovery.

These hypotheses motivated a question our team explored: If the appendix helps preserve microbial stability, could removing it subtly affect reproductive fitness?

Older clinical concerns suggested that appendicitis or appendectomy might impair fertility by causing inflammation and scarring - known as tubal adhesions - in the fallopian tubes. Such scarring could physically obstruct the egg's passage to the uterus. But several large studies have since found no decrease in fertility after appendectomy - in some cases, researchers found a small increase in pregnancy rates.

The appendix appears to have multiple functions, including immune and microbial ones. Affecting fertility, however, does not seem to be one of them.

While the appendix has an interesting past, with evolution continually reinventing it, its modern importance is modest at best. Darwin underestimated the organ's history, but his instinct wasn't far off in the medical present: Some parts of human biology mattered more in the environments people evolved in than in the lives they lead today.

Early humans lived in environments with little sanitation and strong social contact - perfect conditions for outbreaks of pathogens that cause diarrhea. An appendix that quickly restored the microbiome after infection could significantly improve survival. But over the past century, clean water, improved sanitation and antibiotics have sharply reduced deaths from diarrheal diseases in high-income countries.

WASHINGTON, March 10, (AP) - "Exercise your brain," experts advise people hoping to stave off dementia. But how? Stretching your brain might be the better description.

Do a crossword puzzle a day and you may just get good at crosswords. Instead, research increasingly shows that a variety of habits and hobbies are like a cognitive workout, building knowledge and skills that may help up parts of the brain as we get older.

One recent study linked a lower risk of Alzheimer's disease and cognitive decline to lifelong learning, meaning intellectually stimulating experiences - reading and writing, learning another language, playing chess, solving puzzles, going to museums - from childhood into retirement.

"They kind of like stretch your brain and your thinking. You're using your different cognitive systems," explained neuropsychologist Andrea Zammit of Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, who led that study.

If you didn't embrace what Zammit calls cognitively enriching activities early in life, it's not too late to get started. Middle age offers an important window for protecting brain health and scientists are examining a wide range of possible ways to stay sharp, from taking up music to birdwatching and brain-training games.

"It's not just one activity. It's more about finding meaningful activities that you might be passionate about," Zammit said - and sticking with them rather than dabbling.

Physical health is critical to brain health, too. That's why experts also recommend the work-up-a-sweat kind of exercise as well as controlling blood pressure, good sleep, even later-in-life vaccination.

## Experts offer tips on cognitive workouts

## Challenging your brain keeps it healthy



A section of a preserved human brain on display at the Museum of Neuroanatomy at the University at Buffalo, in Buffalo, N.Y., on Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2003. (AP)

There's no magic recipe to prevent either dementia or the normal cognitive decline of aging, cautioned Dr. Ronald Petersen, an Alzheimer's specialist at the Mayo Clinic. But lifestyle changes offer a chance to "slow down the arc of deterioration," he said.

Zammit's study on lifelong learning study enrolled nearly 2,000 older adults, ranging from age 53 to 100, who started out dementia-free and were tracked for eight years. Researchers quizzed them about educational and other cognitively stimulating activities in their youth, middle and older ages, and administered a battery of neurologic tests.

Some eventually were diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease - but it struck five years later in those with the high-

est amount of lifelong learning compared to those with the least amount, Zammit's team reported in the journal *Neurology*. And staying more mentally active in middle age and beyond was linked to a slower rate of cognitive decline.

More interesting, Zammit said, were autopsy findings from 948 participants who died during the study: Even when their brains harbored Alzheimer's hallmarks, the more cognitively "enriched" people had better memory and thinking skills and a slower decline before their death.

That's what scientists call cognitive reserve. It means learning strengthened neural connections in various regions, helping the brain to be more resilient, able to work around damage from ag-

ing or disease at least for a while.

The Rush study can't prove cause-and-effect - it shows an association between cognitive stimulation and dementia risk. Other studies offer similar clues, such as those linking brain health to playing a musical instrument.

Another study hinted that brain "speed training" - using an online program that requires spotting images as a screen flashes increasing distractions - also may help. A study funded by the National Institutes of Health now is examining if there's benefit to long-term computerized exercises that aim to improve attention and reaction time.

That brain processing speed affects how we multitask or drive, said Jessica Langbaum of the Banner Alzheimer's Institute, who isn't involved with the brain training research. For now, she advises choosing activities that help you think on your feet - maybe joining a book club to combine solo reading with discussion and social connection.

Lots of chronic health problems that strike in middle age can increase the risk of later-in-life Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia. For example, high blood pressure damages blood vessels, which is bad for the heart and reduces blood flow to the brain. Poorly controlled diabetes can spur damaging inflammation in the brain.

That means key recommendations for heart health - get regular exercise, eat lots of fruits and vegetables, avoid obesity and control diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol - also are good for brain health.

A bonus step: Get vaccinated against shingles. It not only prevents that incredibly painful rash but growing research shows the vaccinated have a lower risk of developing dementia.

## China promotes women's health awareness

## Chinese experts develop 'molecular bridge' to boost cancer treatment

BEIJING, March 10, (Xinhua) - Chinese scientists have improved upon an existing powerful leukemia treatment, which now works even when cancer cells try to hide from it.

Their innovative approach, detailed in the latest issue of the journal *Cell*, acts like a molecular bridge, strengthening the connection between the body's cancer-fighting cells and the leukemia cells they are meant to destroy.

Their treatment modifies what is traditionally known as CAR T cell therapy. Such therapy involves taking a patient's T cells, changing them in a lab so they can find and attack cancer cells, and then putting them back into the patient's body.

In many patients, however, the cancer comes back after the therapy. This happens because cancer cells can hide. They remove the marker on their surface that the CAR T cells are looking for. Once hidden, CAR T cells cannot find them.

In the past, fixing this meant going back to the lab to genetically redesign the T cells all over again. This process is expensive, takes a long time, and is technically very difficult.

Now, a research team from the Institute of Process Engineering (IPE) at the Chinese Academy of Sciences has developed a new helper molecule called FACE.

The idea came from studying patient samples. The researchers found that both leukemia cells and the immune cells used in CAR T therapy have large amounts of the same protein on their surface -- a protein called CD71. So they created FACE from ferritin, a natural protein that binds to CD71. During the preparation process, FACE at-

taches to CAR T cells. Later, when those cells are given to the patient, FACE also grabs onto nearby leukemia cells, locking the two together.

"FACE serves as a tiny bridge or a piece of strong glue. Even when leukemia cells try to hide, FACE helps the CAR T cells hold on and do their job," said Wei Wei, one of the lead researchers from the IPE.

The research results have been striking. In laboratory studies using mouse leukemia subjects, the new approach worked even when the original cancer target had decreased markedly. Standard CAR T cell therapy failed under these conditions, but the FACE-CAR T cells were still able to find and kill the leukemia cells, leading to a 100-percent survival rate.

"One of the most promising aspects of this new method is its simplicity," said Wei, explaining that FACE is made from a protein naturally found in the body and simple materials that are already approved for medical use.

According to Wei, these findings have been validated in multiple clinically relevant mouse leukemia subjects, and in samples derived from human patients.

"This molecular bridge offers new hope for patients with hard-to-treat leukemia that no longer responds to existing therapies. It's a practical approach that could make a life-saving therapy more effective without adding complexity or cost," Wei added.

## Also:

**DAR ES SALAAM:** The expert team of the China-aided Zanzibar schistosomiasis prevention and control project on Thursday held a health education event on female genital

## Weight-loss

## Hims &amp; Hers and Novo end lawsuit

NEW YORK, March 10, (AP) - Novo Nordisk is dismissing its patent infringement lawsuit against telehealth company Hims & Hers, as the two companies have reached an agreement that will see Novo Nordisk's branded weight loss medicines sold through the Hims platform.

Early last month Hims & Hers said that it was going to launch a cheaper, off-brand version of the weight-loss pill Wegovy, just weeks after drugmaker Novo Nordisk launched its highly anticipated reformulation of the blockbuster medication. At the time, Novo Nordisk vowed to sue Hims, calling the new product "an unapproved, inauthentic, and untested knockoff" of semaglutide, the chemical name for Wegovy.

But just two days later, Hims dropped its plan to offer the cheaper, off-brand version of Wegovy. That move came a day after the Food and Drug Administration threatened to restrict access to the ingredients needed to copy popular weight-loss medications.

The FDA permits specialty pharmacies and other companies to make compounded versions of brand name drugs when they are in short supply. And the booming demand for GLP-1 drugs in recent years prompted companies like Hims to jump into the multibillion-dollar market for the drugs, with many patients willing to pay cash.

In 2024, the FDA said that GLP-1 drugs were no longer in a shortage, which was expected to put an end to the compounding. But companies like Hims relied on an exception to keep selling their versions of the medications because the practice is still permitted when a prescription is customized for the patient.

## Cereulide cited

## PAFN recalls Danone Nutricia baby formula over health risk

KUWAIT CITY, March 10: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) announced on Monday a precautionary recall of several batches of infant formula manufactured by Danone Nutricia, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PAFN stated that the decision follows reports received through the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). The recall is a preventive measure due to the potential presence of Cereulide in some batches, and is aimed to protect the health and safety of children and consumers.

## SPORTS

# Harden joins 29,000-point club in Cavaliers win



Memphis Grizzlies' Javon Small (10) defends Brooklyn Nets' Jalen Wilson (22) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in New York. (AP)



Oklahoma City Thunder forward Jaylin Williams (6) shoots against Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic (15) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City. (AP)

## Shai Gilgeous-Alexander ties Wilt's record

**CLEVELAND, March 10, (AP): James Harden scored 21 points to become the ninth player in NBA history with more than 29,000 career points, Keon Ellis added 19 off the bench, and the Cleveland Cavaliers cruised to a 115-101 victory over the short-handed Philadelphia 76ers.**

Donovan Mitchell had 17 points and six assists, and Evan Mobley had 15 points and eight rebounds for the Cavaliers. Harden reached the milestone with a free throw in the first quarter, finishing the game with 29,017 points in 17 pro seasons.

Cleveland is 8-1 at home since Jan. 23, with its lone loss Sunday to surging Boston, and has won 18 of its last 24 overall. The Cavaliers are in fourth place in the Eastern Conference, one game behind New York.

Quentin Grimes scored 17 points and Cameron Payne had 12 points for Philadelphia, which has lost two in a row and four of its last five to slip into eighth in the East. Justin

Edwards added 14 points.

**Thunder 129, Nuggets 126**

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander drilled a step-back 3-pointer with 2.7 seconds left to cap a frantic final minute on a night he matched Wilt Chamberlain's record for consecutive 20-point games, and the Oklahoma City beat the Denver Nuggets.

Gilgeous-Alexander finished with 35 points and a career-high 15 assists, becoming the second player in NBA history to have those totals and zero turnovers. He also had nine rebounds. In the third quarter, Gilgeous-Alexander reached the 20-point mark for the 126th straight game, equaling Chamberlain's streak from 1961-63.

With Oklahoma City leading 126-122, Denver's Nikola Jokic hit a 3-pointer and Oklahoma City's Jaylin Williams was called for an off-ball foul fighting through a screen. Jamal Murray made the free throw with 8.5 seconds remaining to tie the game.

Gilgeous-Alexander responded, elevating over Spencer Jones for his second 3 in the final 14 seconds. Denver's Aaron Gordon missed a 61-foot heave at the buzzer.

The Thunder are 6-0 since Gilgeous-Alexander returned from an abdominal strain that sidelined him for nine games.

Williams scored 29 points and Ajay Mitchell, in his return after missing 20 games with an abdominal strain and a sprained left ankle, added 24 points.

**Jazz 119, Warriors 116**

In Salt Lake City, Brice Sensabaugh scored 21 points, two-way player Blake Hinson made the go-ahead 3-pointer in the final minute, and the depleted Utah Jazz outlasted the ailing Golden State Warriors.

Hinson made four 3-pointers including a shot from beyond the arc on the right wing with 29.9 seconds remaining to shock the Warriors, who were without Stephen Curry and several other rotation regulars.

Kyle Filipowski contributed 19 points and 15 rebounds for Utah, which had lost eight of nine games.

De'Anthony Melton, who led the Warriors with 22 points, made a 3-pointer to cut the lead to 117-116, but Elijah Harkless, another two-way player, clinched the game for the Jazz with two free throws to reach a career-high 16 points.

Gui Santos scored 15 points and Brandin Podziemski added 14 but missed four fourth-quarter free throws for the Warriors, who have lost four of five and are struggling to stay in the NBA Play-In Tournament race in the Western Conference.

After missing 40 games with back ailments, Seth Curry returned and finished with 13 points.

**Nets 126, Grizzlies 115**

In New York, Day'Ron Sharpe matched a season high with 19 points, Ochai Agbaji added 18 and the Brooklyn Nets beat the injury-plagued Memphis Grizzlies for their second straight victory.

Nolan Traore added 17 points for the Nets, who were coming off an improbable 107-105 win at Eastern Conference-leading Detroit on Saturday night that snapped a 10-game skid.

The Nets, who rested leading scorer Michael Porter Jr., had six players score in double figures. The Grizzlies had only eight players available.

Ryan Rupert scored a career-high 20 points and Javon Small added 19 for Memphis, which has lost four straight and 11 of 14.

The Grizzlies were missing Ja Morant (left elbow), Scotty Pippen Jr. (right toe soreness), Santi Aldama (knee), Ty Jerome (calf), Cedrix Coward (right knee), newcomer Taj Gibson (reconditioning), Taylor Hendricks (right thumb soreness) and Brandon Clarke (calf). Zach Edey and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope are out for the season.

## Eastern Washington holds off Weber State

# Gonzaga advances to 29th straight WCC final

LAS VEGAS, March 10, (AP): Graham Ike had 24 points and 11 rebounds to lead No. 12 Gonzaga to a 65-56 victory over Oregon State on Monday night and put the Bulldogs in the West Coast Conference Tournament championship game for the 29th straight time.

Gonzaga (29-3) will play No. 21 Saint Mary's or Santa Clara in the title game. Those teams met later Monday night. It will be the Zags' last WCC championship before heading to the Pac-12 Conference next season.

Oregon State, in fired coach Wayne Tinkle's last game after 12 seasons, ends at 17-16.

Ike, the WCC player of the year, made 10 of 17 shots for his 14th double-double this season and 45th of his career. He was the only Gonzaga player to score in double figures.

Jorge Diaz Graham led the Beavers with 15 points and Noah Amenhauser scored 11.

Gonzaga, which never trailed, entered the game as the national leader in scoring points in the lane at 45.2 per game and outscored the Beavers 38-24 inside. The Zags' defense also was critical to outscoring Oregon State 16-0 on the fast break.

That defense made its presence felt early, forcing 10-second and shot clock violations during a 15-2 first-half run that put Gonzaga up 21-6. Oregon State missed its first nine shots and shot just 28.6% in the opening half.

The Beavers managed to be somewhat competitive in the second half, though there was little doubt in the outcome.

Oregon State lost for just the second time in 11 games this season when holding their opponent to fewer than 70 points.

Alton Hamilton IV scored a career-high 25 points, Isaiah Moses added 22 and Eastern Washington held off We-



Saint Mary's forward Paulius Murauskas, left, and Santa Clara forward Allen Graves (22) scramble for the ball during the first half of an NCAA college basketball semifinal game in the West Coast Conference men's tournament in Las Vegas. (AP)

ber State 84-79 in a Big Sky Conference Tournament quarterfinal.

No. 3 seed Eastern Washington (14-18) will play seventh-seeded Idaho in a Tuesday semifinal. The Vandals beat the Eagles twice, including in the regular-season finale to end EWU's eight-game winning streak. Top seed Portland State plays fourth-seeded Montana in the other semifinal.

Hamilton made 8 of 10 shots with two 3-pointers and both of his free throws for Eastern Washington. He added five rebounds. Moses had eight assists and his three-point play with 37 seconds left gave the Eagles an 82-76 lead. Johnny Radford totaled 12 points and four rebounds off the bench.

Tijan Saine Jr. led the sixth-seeded Wildcats (16-16) with 27 points. Nigel Burris added 14 points and Viljami Vartiainen scored 13.

Hamilton made all six of his first-

half shots and scored 18 to guide Eastern Washington to a 46-32 lead at the break. Hamilton had the first four points in a 16-0 first-half run for the Eagles.

Orlando Lovejoy had 21 points and Lance Stone came off the bench to score 16, leading Detroit Mercy to a 70-64 victory over Robert Morris in a Horizon League Tournament semifinal.

No. 3 seed Detroit Mercy (17-14) will play top-seeded Wright State in the championship game on Tuesday with an automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament on the line.

Lovejoy made 5 of 14 shots and 11 of 12 free throws for the Titans, adding six assists. Stone sank 6 of 12 shots with two 3-pointers. Tyler Spratt had 10 points and Legend Geeter contributed nine points and 10 rebounds.

Sash Gavalyugov scored 23 points

including a back-breaking 3-pointer to lead Santa Clara to a 76-71 victory over No. 21 Saint Mary's in the semifinals of the West Coast Conference Tournament to take a big step toward making the Big Dance.

The Broncos (26-7) will play No. 12 Gonzaga (29-3) in the championship game on Tuesday night. The winner receives the conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament.

While the Bulldogs are safely in the tournament, Santa Clara was considered on the bubble. The Broncos entered this game No. 42 in the NCAA's NET rankings and No. 37 in Kenpom.

Saint Mary's (27-5) could take a hit in the tournament seeding, but the Gaels figure to get into the field of 68. They were No. 20 in the NET and No. 22 in Kenpom.

Thomas Dowd finished with 23 points and 13 rebounds, and regular-season champion Troy ended the five-day run of No. 10 seed Georgia Southern with a 77-61 victory in the championship game of the Sun Belt Conference Tournament.

Dowd made 8 of 12 shots with two 3-pointers and 5 of 6 free throws for the Trojans (22-11), who earned a second straight trip to the NCAA Tournament and their fourth overall.

Georgia Southern (21-16) became the fourth team to win five games in five days in a conference tournament - joining N.C. State (2024, ACC) and Connecticut (2011, Big East). North Carolina did it in 1922 and 1925 while members of the Southern Conference.

Jerrrell Bellamy scored 15 on 7-for-11 shooting for Troy. Victor Valdes added 12 points and six assists, and Cobi Campbell scored 11.

Spudd Webb had 16 points to pace the Eagles, and Tyren Moore scored 10 on 3-for-11 shooting with two 3-pointers. Nakavieon White added 11 points off the bench.

## 'A surreal moment'

# US 'rock star' Paralympic skier wins silver for late twin brother



Patrick Halgren of the US competing in the Para Alpine Skiing Men's Super-G Standing competition at the 2026 Winter Paralympics, in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. (AP)

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy, March 10, (AP): Patrick Halgren, the self-proclaimed "rock star" of the Milan Cortina Paralympics, said he could feel the presence of his late twin brother in his silver medal-winning Para alpine ski run.

"He made this happen for real. He is the ski god and he has blessed me with speed today," Halgren said of his brother Lucas Sven Halgren.

Lucas Sven died in a motorcycle accident in New Zealand in 2016, three years after Patrick nearly died and lost most of his left leg in another motorcycle accident.

Patrick has been plastering blue-and-yellow stickers that read "Svendit" around Cortina d'Ampezzo, a play on "send-it," which is Patrick's mantra on life and a reference to his brother who went by Sven.

"He's the reason I'm here. I'm just a vessel to cram love and combat hate down your throats. He inspired me to live life, but life is fragile. You can die," Patrick said. "It's all for him. It's for my family. It's for the people that have struggled. He's dead. I'm here living, talking to you guys."

Halgren celebrated in front of his parents, Peter and Kathy, which he said was "pretty cool."

"But also, it sucks not having Sven here, so ups and downs," the 33-year-old Halgren said after winning his first medal in his second Paralympics appearance.

"They went to Tijuana, Mexico, for their honeymoon 50 years ago. They picked up their dead kid in New Zealand, and they've watched me win the Paralympics at the most beautiful ski valley in the world," Halgren told the Olympics website. "This is a surreal moment for them. This is an experience that will create a memory lasting a lifetime and such a good moment."

Halgren said it was Sven who steered him to Para alpine skiing after the 2013 crash that nearly killed him and resulted in the above-the-knee amputation of his left leg.

"I died myself. I was in a coma for a month. I died four times," he said. "They used a defibrillator to start my heart. Blood transfusion. I get it, and I'm lucky that I have that because I know what it's like. Not many people do."

Now it's hard not to miss Halgren, and not only because of his long braids that are dyed red, white and blue. Always entertaining and joking with those around him, the outspoken American has taken on a showman personality at the Games.

At the podium ceremony, he performed an air guitar solo using his crutch. He said it was just "another Monday" for him.

"I am a rock star," he added. "I always wanted to be this guy. Jim Brown, he was my idol. He was a professional football player, played lacrosse at Syracuse. I did both those sports, and he retired at the peak of his career and became basically the first Black action movie star. I always wanted to be him, and now I am him."

Halgren said he "learned to be un-irritable, un-embarrassable."

"It's about being vulnerable in this life. It's about trying things and failing. It's OK to be embarrassed. It's OK to look weird."

As he talked to the media, Halgren was congratulated by nearly every rival that passed by. He was second to Switzerland's Robin Cuche in the men's super-G standing.

"Medals don't mean anything to me. The love from all the people supporting me is what means anything to me," he said. "I can feel, I can literally feel all the people who have ever given me well wishes and 'Thanks' and 'Good lucks.' I can feel them loving me and they're the reason I won."

"You celebrate the victories the same as the defeats. I've been blessed to have to develop my character over the last 11 years, losing my leg and could either roll over and die, or I could become the greatest Patrick Halgren on Earth, and that's what you're seeing."

His future plans? "I would like to dominate the Earth in every category with one leg."

Anything else? "My horse is thirsty, I'm out."

## Real and Man City renew long-term rivalry in Champions League last-16

MADRID, March 10, (Xinhua): Real Madrid has a large part of its season at stake and coach Alvaro Arbeloa has his future on the line when Manchester City visits the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie.

Real Madrid goes into the game four points behind FC Barcelona in La Liga, but knowing the Champions League has traditionally been the club's favorite competition and that success in Europe can cure any domestic woes.

The flipside, however, is that an early exit from the tournament can be a knockout for a Real Madrid coach, and Arbeloa will know that failure to get past Manchester City will mean his tenure finishes at the end of the season.

The clash between Real Madrid and Manchester City is starting to become a Champions League classic, with the two sides meeting every year since 2002.

That season saw Real Madrid pull off a miraculous late comeback with Rodrygo scoring twice in injury time to force an extra 30 minutes, where Karim Benzema put Real Madrid into the final with a penalty.

Manchester City took its revenge the

following year with a 4-0 thrashing of Real Madrid, before the 2024 campaign saw Real Madrid knock Pep Guardiola's team out after a penalty shoot-out.

The two teams met in the intermediate stage last season, with Real Madrid

beating a Manchester City that was struggling for form both in Europe and domestically, but the tables turned again in December when Manchester City enjoyed a 2-1 victory in the Santiago Bernabeu in the group stage that



Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior, duels for the ball with Celta's Javi Rodriguez during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Celta Vigo and Real Madrid in Vigo, Spain. (AP)

was easier than the final score implies.

Arbeloa has a long list of injuries to contend with as left back Alvaro Carreras became the latest casualty with a calf injury. He joins Rodrygo, Jude Bellingham, Dani Ceballos, David Alaba, Eder Militao and Kylian Mbappe on the injury list, with Eduardo Camavinga a doubt after suffering a dental problem that left him unable to play away to Celta Vigo on Friday night.

The loss of Mbappe, his nagging knee problem, and Rodrygo, who is out for several months after tearing his cruciate knee ligament, means Vinicius Jr will again carry the weight of the Real Madrid attack, while Arbeloa has to decide whether to show faith in Trent Alexander Arnold, who adds creativity for Real Madrid, but is more vulnerable defensively than Dani Carvajal.

Elsewhere, Antonio Rudiger and Raul Asencio will play in central defense with Aurelien Tchouameni in the midfield holding role he has made his own this season. The Frenchman will have to be careful, as he and Vinicius are a yellow card away from suspension and their loss for next week's return leg in Manchester would be a huge blow for Real Madrid and Arbeloa.

## SPORTS

# West Ham sinks Brentford in shootout, sets up FA Cup quarterfinal with Leeds



West Ham United's Axel Disasi, left, and Brentford's Igor Thiago in action during the English FA Cup fifth round soccer match between West Ham United and Brentford in London. (AP)

## City-Liverpool in quarters and third-tier Port Vale gets Chelsea

**LONDON, March 10, (AP):** West Ham will face Leeds United in the FA Cup quarterfinals after beating Brentford 5-3 in a penalty shootout following a 2-2 draw after 90 minutes and extra time.

The tie was decided when stationary West Ham goalkeeper Alphonse Areola saved Dango Ouattara's woefully taken Panenka effort in the shootout.

His effort, the third of Brentford's five, was the only penalty kick not converted. The finale came at the end of a pulsating match that featured two goals apiece from West Ham's Jarrod Bowen and Brentford's Igor Thiago.

A regular talisman for the Hammers, Bowen got the opener after 19 minutes

when he reacted quickly to a loose ball in the box to slam it past 'keeper Caoimhin Kelleher.

Thiago equalized for Brentford nine minutes later but West Ham was ahead again before halftime when Bowen coolly converted a penalty kick.

The second half failed to live up to the high standards set in the opening 45 minutes but another penalty decision proved key.

Thiago got his double from the spot with nine minutes remaining after Crysencio Summerville was adjudged to have pushed Michael Kayode. It was Thiago's 20th goal of the season in all competitions.

The result means West Ham has needed extra time or penalties to win all three of its FA Cup ties thus far but that will bother neither the players nor coach Nuno Espirito Santos.

They can look forward to an enticing home game against Leeds, one of the two

all-Premier League encounters. The other has Manchester City facing Liverpool on the weekend of April 4-5.

Manchester City will host Liverpool in the pick of the FA Cup quarterfinals from the draw.

Third-tier Port Vale, the lowest-ranked team left in the competition after its shocking win over Sunderland on Sunday, must travel to Chelsea and Arsenal was drawn away to second-tier Southampton.

Leeds will visit West Ham, winner of the last fifth-round match on Monday. West Ham beat Brentford 5-3 on penalties after extra time to reach its first quarterfinals in a decade.

The quarterfinals will take place over the weekend of April 4-5.

Quarterfinals draw:  
Southampton vs. Arsenal  
Chelsea vs. Port Vale  
Manchester City vs. Liverpool  
West Ham vs. Leeds

## Espanyol and Oviedo draw

## Lazio snaps 4-game winless streak



Lazio's Patric, left, and Sassuolo's Domenico Berardi in action during the Serie A soccer match between Lazio and Sassuolo in Rome, Italy. (AP)

**ROME, March 10, (AP):** A stoppage time goal from Adam Marušić gave Lazio a 2-1 win over Sassuolo and snapped its four-game winless streak in Serie A.

Marušić headed in his first goal of the season after 90+3 minutes.

Lazio had not won since January or scored in over a month but Daniel Maldini opened the scoring two minutes after kickoff.

The son of AC Milan great Paolo Maldini pounced on a loose ball to fire home from close range.

However, Sassuolo's in-form winger Armand Lauricé equalized just before halftime with a well-placed drive from 12 meters out. It upped his recent stats to two goals and four assists in his last four league games.

Lazio had the lion's share of the chances but its toothlessness in front of goal looked to be its undoing once again until Marušić popped up in the final seconds.

The result lifted the capital side one place into 10th, a point and a place behind Sassuolo.

It was only the second defeat in seven games for Sassuolo.

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Espanyol and Real Oviedo drew 1-1 in a game that extended Espanyol's winless La Liga run to 10 matches and left Oviedo rooted to the bottom of the table.

Oviedo came into the game without a win in five but took the lead after eight minutes through Alberto Reina.

However, Espanyol was on top and got a deserved equalizer nine minutes before halftime thanks to Kike Garcia.

Espanyol continued to control the play in the second half and finished with 26 shots to Oviedo's six. But neither side could find the net again.

A point was a meagre outcome for both clubs and left Oviedo four points adrift at the bottom of La Liga.

Espanyol, meanwhile, has yet to win this year but remains in seventh thanks to a good start to its campaign.

## Rodriguez eyes Minnesota debut against Vancouver

## Visa issues may leave Jamaican club short-handed against Galaxy in Cup

**CARSON, Calif., March 10, (Agencies):** Mount Pleasant, a team from the Jamaican Premier League, is bracing to be without as many as 10 players when it takes on the LA Galaxy of Major League Soccer in a CONCACAF Champions Cup matchup.

The reason: Those players, including six from Haiti, were unable to get visas to enter the U.S. for the match, Jamaican officials said.

Officials said Monday the match is still set to be played as scheduled, even while the Jamaican club - which plans to add younger players from the academy level if necessary - and CONCACAF seek a solution. The U.S. has travel restrictions on citizens from some nations, including Haiti, though there are mechanisms that can assist athletes in some cases.

The Jamaican club has been dealing with the issue since at least last week, apparently to no avail.

The match is the first of a two-leg Round of 16 matchup in the tournament, with the second leg set to be played in Kingston, Jamaica on March 19.

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James Rodriguez says he is ready to make his long-awaited MLS debut for Minnesota United against the Vancouver Whitecaps on Sunday.

The 34-year-old joined Minnesota on February 6 but has yet to play for the club.

"I will play next Sunday, if all goes well, against the Vancouver Whitecaps," the Colombia captain said in a streaming broadcast.

Rodriguez is in a race against time to regain fitness before the FIFA World Cup, to be co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19.

The former Real Madrid and Bayern Munich midfielder has not played competitively since parting ways with Mexican side Leon in December 2025.

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Sao Paulo sacked manager Hernan Crespo despite the club's strong start to the Brazilian Serie A season.

In a statement, Sao Paulo also confirmed the departures of assistant coaches Juan Branda and Victor Lopez, physical trainers Federico Martinetti and Leandro Paz, and goalkeeping coach Gustavo Nepote.

"Sao Paulo wishes Hernan Crespo

and his coaching staff success in the continuation of their careers," it said.

Crespo led Sao Paulo to 22 wins, six draws and 18 losses after taking charge of the club for a second time in June last year. The former Argentina striker was also the manager during an eight-month spell in 2021.

Sao Paulo is currently second in Brazil's 20-team Serie A standings with 10 points from four outings, behind leader Palmeiras on goal difference.

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Botafogo has completed the signing of Venezuelan center-back Nahuel Ferraresi on loan until the end of the year, the Brazilian Serie A club said.

The 27-year-old, who is contracted to Sao Paulo until December 2027, agreed to a performance-based deal that reportedly includes a buy option for six million euros.

"Nahuel Ferraresi arrives to strengthen Glorioso's defense," read a statement on Botafogo's official website. "The Venezuelan player is already with his new teammates taking part in pre-season training." Ferraresi has made 89 appearances across all competitions for Sao Paulo since joining in 2024.

He has been capped 42 times for Venezuela since his international debut in 2018.



The former Real Madrid and Bayern Munich midfielder, James Rodriguez.

Moreno left out of Bolivia squad for playoffs

## Austria gets approval ahead of WC to pick Chukwuemeka and Wanner

**ZURICH, March 10, (Agencies):** Austria got permission from FIFA to select former England and Germany youth internationals ahead of playing at the World Cup against Argentina and Lionel Messi.

Borussia Dortmund winger Carney Chukwuemeka and PSV Eindhoven midfielder Paul Wanner both were born in Austria and eligible under FIFA rules to change their eligibility.

Chukwuemeka's switch from England and Wanner's transfer of eligibility from Germany were approved by FIFA late Monday.

Austria, coached by Ralf Rangnick, is in a World Cup group with defending champion Argentina, Algeria and Jordan.

The 22-year-old Chukwuemeka played for Aston Villa and Chelsea before moving to Dortmund. He was an England youth international who also was eligible through his parents to play for Nigeria.

The 20-year-old Wanner came through the Bayern Munich academy and played on loan last season with Heidenheim. He moved last August to PSV, which gave him the playmaker's No. 10 jersey.

Austria will play at a men's World Cup for the first time since 1998. The team opens against Jordan on June 16 at the San Francisco 49ers' stadium, then plays Argentina at the Dallas Cowboys' stadium and Algeria at the Kansas City Chiefs' home.

Chukwuemeka and Wanner will first be eligible for warmup games this month when Austria hosts Ghana and South Korea, which both qualified for the World Cup.

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Marcelo Martins Moreno, Bolivia's all-time top scorer, was left out of the national team's squad on Monday for the 2026 FIFA World Cup playoffs.

The 38-year-old scorer of 31 goals in 108 international matches has not represented Bolivia since November 2023. He came out of retirement last month to sign with boyhood club Oriente Petrolero.

Manager Oscar Villegas included veteran goalkeeper Carlos Lampe, influential defender Luis Haquin and midfield enforcer Moises Villaruel.

Bolivia, which last played in the World Cup finals in 1994, advanced to the playoff tournament in Mexico by finishing seventh in the South American qualifying group.

Its first playoff match will be against Suriname in Monterrey on March 26, with the winner to face Iraq five days later.

The World Cup finals will be played in the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19.

Bolivia squad: Goalkeepers: Carlos Lampe, Guillermo Viscarra, Gerónimo Govea Defenders: Diego Medina, Yomar Rocha, Lucas Macazaga, Roberto Fernandez, Dieguito Rodriguez, Luis Haquin, Richet Gomez, Marcelo Torrez, Efrain Morales, Diego Arroyo, Leonardo Zabala Midfielders: Ervin Vaca, Hector Cuellar, Robson Matheus, Moises Villaruel, Gabriel Villamil, Ramiro Vaca, Carlos Melgar Forwards: Victor Abrego, Miguel Terceros, Jesus Maraude, Fernando Nava, Moises Paniagua, Enzo Monteiro and Juan Godoy.

## Jones and Yeboah banned for life

**WASHINGTON, March 10, (AP):** Two players were banned for life by Major League Soccer for gambling on soccer, including bets involving their own matches.

Derrick Jones and Yaw Yeboah were both placed on administrative leave in October pending a review of potential violations of league rules.

MLS said the investigation concluded the players "engaged in extensive gambling on soccer, including on their own teams, during the 2024 and 2025 seasons." The league cited one instance where the players bet on Jones to receive a yellow card in a 2024 match, which he did. Both players were with the Columbus Crew at the time.

"Major League Soccer remains steadfast in its commitment to match integrity," MLS Commissioner Don Garber said in a statement. "The League will continue to enforce its policies, enhance education efforts, and advocate for the elimination of yellow card wagering in all states to protect the integrity of our competition for clubs, players, and fans."

Jones was playing for the Crew when he was placed on leave. Yeboah, Jones' former teammate in Columbus, played for LAFC last season and is currently playing for Qingdao Hainiu in China.

MLS was alerted to suspicious betting through its integrity partners and retained a law firm for the subsequent investigation. The Crew cooperated with the probe.

"The Columbus Crew are proud



In this file photo, Columbus Crew midfielder Yaw Yeboah looks on during the first half of an MLS soccer match against the Minnesota United in St. Paul, Minn. (AP)

of the reputation we've established in MLS and global soccer that's rooted in respect and integrity throughout our organization," the team said. "We fully condemn all actions and notions that aren't aligned with these critical values for our Club and any individual's activity contradicting the principles of fair competition that are pivotal to our team, league and sport."

Jones, 29, played for the Philadelphia Union for four seasons starting in 2016. He later had stints in Nashville, Houston and Charlotte before joining the Crew ahead of the 2024 season.

Yeboah, 28, played for the Crew for three seasons from 2022-24.

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India's Sanfida Nongrum, left, and Taiwan's Chang Chi-lan fight for the ball during the Women's Asian Cup soccer match between India and Taiwan in Sydney. (AP)

# Sports

## Philippines and Taiwan reach Women's Asian Cup quarters

### Japan rolls on

**PERTH, Australia, March 10, (AP):** Japan kept its perfect defensive record intact to reach the quarterfinals of the Women's Asian Cup without conceding a goal as Taiwan and the Philippines also qualified.

On a day when the action on the field was overshadowed by five players from the Iranian team being granted asylum by host nation Australia, Japan's 4-0 win over Vietnam ensured a spot for the Philippines on goal difference.

Collisions between players marred Taiwan's 3-1 win over India. Both teams' goalkeepers were taken off after blows to the head.

Japan heads into its quarterfinal matchup against the Philippines with three wins from three games and a tournament-leading 17 goals. Japan is the only team yet to concede at the Asian Cup.

Vietnam started against Japan knowing that a three-goal loss would end its chances of qualifying as one of the best third-place teams if Taiwan avoided defeat to India.

Vietnamese goalkeeper Khong Thi Hang made a series of impressive saves to limit Japan to a 1-0 halftime lead but was constantly under pressure from an opponent which had scored 11 goals against India.

Riko Ueki headed Japan's opening



Japan players react following the Women's Asian Cup soccer match between Japan and Vietnam in Perth, Australia. (AP)

goal, her fourth of the tournament, before Maika Hamano, Aoba Fujino and Kiko Seike all scored against a tiring Vietnamese defense. Japan will meet the Philippines in the quarterfinals.

Vietnam's Duong Thi Van was taken off late in the game after a clash of heads with Japan's Mina Tanaka.

Taiwan heads to a quarterfinal meeting with China after a win over India which ended with concerns over the welfare of key players on both teams.

Su Yu-hsuan gave Taiwan the lead before Manisha Kalyan's free kick off the crossbar brought India back into the contest. Taiwan restored its lead when a penalty bounced off the

post and in off Indian goalkeeper Elangbam Panthoi Chanu for an own goal.

Taiwan was leading 2-1 when its goalkeeper Wang Yu-ting was taken off following a head injury assessment. The immediate cause wasn't obvious but Wang had previously played on after an earlier collision when Sanfida Nongrum's shoulder

made contact with her head.

Chen Yu-chin made sure of the win with Taiwan's third goal on the break but two Indian players ended up stretchered off after they collided while trying to stop her.

Goalkeeper Panthoi charged out toward Chen and was leaping to attempt a save when defender and captain Sweetie Devi's knee struck

her in the face. Panthoi was taken off on a stretcher with severe swelling on her face and Devi was briefly motionless on the ground before being taken off the field.

It was the second time Panthoi had treatment after being struck on the head. In the first half she was hit by a shot which caused her to fall back and her head hit the ground.

### 'A great opportunity to bring everyone together'

## World Cup chief operating officer says tourney is 'too big' to be postponed amid global turmoil

**DALLAS, March 10, (AP):** FIFA's World Cup chief operating officer says the tournament is "too big" to be postponed because of global turmoil caused by the U.S. and Israeli war against Iran.

Speaking at the International Broadcast Center for the 48-nation tournament, which starts June 11, Heimo Schirgi said FIFA continues to closely monitor the Iran war and its fallout.

"If had a crystal ball I could tell you now what is going to happen, but obviously the situation is developing," Schirgi said. "It's changing day by day and we are monitoring closely. We're working together with all our federal partners and also our international partners in evaluating the situation, and we basically take it day by day and at some stage we will have a resolution. And the World Cup will go on obviously, right? The World Cup is too big and we hope that everyone can participate that has qualified."

The tournament, expanded from 32 nations to 48, is scheduled for 11 U.S. venues plus three in Mexico and two in Canada. While the Trump administration has imposed a travel ban on four of the nations that have qualified - Iran, Ivory Coast, Haiti and Senegal - it says it will make an exception for play-

ers, team officials and immediate relatives.

Schirgi said FIFA is in constant contact with Iran's soccer federation for updates, but he wouldn't share any details about those conversations.

FIFA officials were in Dallas for the announcement of plans for the city's fan festival that will operate for 34 days during the World Cup and to view construction of the

broadcast hub at the downtown convention center - about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from AT&T Stadium, the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys where nine matches will be played.

"Given the state of the world today, this will be a great opportunity to bring everyone together," Schirgi said. "For you who have not experienced the World Cup, the World Cup is very special because it's truly

global and it brings everybody together. We witnessed that in Qatar, in Russia, everywhere. People were amazed how international this whole thing is."

Schirgi also addressed FIFA's surprise decision last month to add a 48-hour window for ticket sales. FIFA has been criticized for ticket prices as high as \$8,680 for category one seats - the best in the lower bowls - \$5,575 for category two and \$4,185 for category three. Tickets for the first round range as high as \$2,735 for category one, \$1,940 for category two and \$1,120 for category three.

"It was basically giving an opportunity to fans who have applied and were not successful for tickets in their category to offer them a different category of tickets," Schirgi said. "So if you have applied for a category three ticket for a specific match and you haven't got it because we don't have enough category three tickets, we offered those people because they applied early - we said instead of having a category three ticket, would you like a category two ticket?"

After criticism, FIFA said in December it was selling a few hundred \$60 tickets for every game to the 48 national federations in the tournament, to be sold to their regularly attending fans.



Heimo Schirgi, FIFA soccer chief event operations officer, left, looks at a fan scarf with Monica Paul, North Texas organizing committee president, during a news conference announcing the 2026 FIFA World Cup Fan Festival soccer experience in Dallas. (AP)

## Arabian Gulf Cup Federation reviews options for Champions League semis



In this file photo, Al-Qadsia player prepares to take a shot as an opponent defends.

**KUWAIT CITY, March 10:** The Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation said that no official decision has yet been made regarding the format for completing the remaining matches of the GCC Champions League for Clubs, particularly the semi-finals and final.

The federation explained that the current situation in the Gulf region forced the postponement of the two semi-final matches, which had been scheduled for March 4 and March 11.

The semi-finals were set to see Al-Qadsia face Al-Rayyan, while Zakho was due to meet Al-Shabab.

In an official statement, the federation said it had taken note of reports circulating in several media outlets regarding the fate of the remaining fixtures. It added that the Competitions Committee is currently reviewing a number of proposals and options to determine the most appropriate mechanism for completing the tournament.

The statement stressed that the goal of examining these options is to ensure fairness and equal opportunity for all competing teams, allowing the competition to resume in a balanced and transparent manner.

The federation added that the final decision will be announced once the review process is completed, ensuring the outcome aligns with its vision of developing its competitions and strengthening sporting rivalry among Gulf clubs.

### Next up is Portuguese champion Lisbon

## Norway's Bodø/Glimt stuns Europe with fairy-tale run

**NORWAY, Bodø, March 10, (AP):** Glimt's stellar lineup of teams in the Champions League's round of 16 this week and you'll find many of the super-rich aristocrats of European soccer: Real Madrid, Liverpool, Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Paris Saint-Germain, Manchester City.

And then there's Bodø/Glimt. This homely and humble club from a fishing town of around 55,000 people in northern Norway shouldn't really be mixing with Europe's powerhouse clubs.

Well, they are - and not just that, they're beating them all.

Check out this four-win streak that has gotten Bodø/Glimt to the knockout stage of Europe's top club competition: 3-1 at home to Man City, 2-1 away to Atletico Madrid, and then home-and-away victories over Inter Milan - last season's runner-up - in the playoffs that took place during Norwegian soccer's offseason.

Next up is Portuguese champion Sporting Lisbon in the first leg of the last 16 on Wednesday.

Here's what to know about the tiny club delivering the feelgood story of this or any Champions League campaign:

Bodø is located above the Arctic Circle, more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) north of the Norwegian capital, Oslo. Nestled along the western coastline off the Norwegian Sea, it is farther north than soccer's top club competition has ever previously been.

The town - which has its own airport - has less than an hour of sunlight during its shortest days, meaning players take supplements to combat a lack of sun.

It can be bitterly cold and windy in the long winters but the locals are through the latest one. The forecast temperature for kickoff against Sporting is 3 Celsius (37 Fahrenheit).

Away from soccer, Bodø gained some repute in 2024 when it was named the European Capital of Culture.

Bodø/Glimt's Aspmyra stadium has a capacity of around 8,000 spectators, hardly built for hosting big matches in Europe's top club competition.

A new stadium - the 10,000-seat



Glimt's players celebrate at the end of the Champions League playoff soccer match between Inter Milan and Bodo Glimt, at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy. (AP)

Arctic Arena - is being built on the edge of town but isn't much bigger.

Adding to the quirky feel of the Aspmyra is the fact it has an artificial field, which is criticized by some in soccer for the way the ball rolls and

bounces in comparison to grass.

UEFA allows approved artificial pitches to be used up to and including the semifinals of its competitions.

Founded in 1916, Bodø/Glimt had to wait more than a century before

being crowned Norwegian champion for the first time - and the change in fortune had much to do with hiring a former fighter pilot.

The team had just been relegated to Norway's second tier - underlying its status as an "elevator club," as it's called in Norway, for going back and forth between the top two divisions - when Bjørn Mannsverk was asked in early 2017 to join the backroom staff as a mental coach.

Mannsverk had developed techniques for his squadron before bombing missions in Libya and he brought a philosophy and culture at Bodø/Glimt that made players talk openly about their feelings, change their attitudes and routines about things like preparation and nutrition, and remove the stigma around mental training.

The players and coach Kjetil Knutsen fully bought into Mannsverk's ways - like, for example, having a rotating cast of captains to share leadership duties and gathering in a circle after conceding a goal to discuss what hap-

pened and maintain solidarity - and it has helped the team grow.

Bodø/Glimt won its first Norwegian league title in 2020 and captured three of the next five, finishing runner-up last year. The team's success transferred to continental competition as it reached the Europa League semifinals last season - losing to Tottenham over two legs - and then qualified for the Champions League for the first time.

Bodø/Glimt isn't funded by a Middle Eastern sheikh or American private investment so its inexpensively assembled squad is filled with largely unheralded players from Norway and Denmark.

In Norway's most recent squad selection, there were only two Bodø/Glimt players called up.

Its star striker is Kasper Høgh, a 25-year-old Dane who has never played for his country. Its other leading attacker is Jens Petter Hauge, who returned to Bodø/Glimt in 2024 - four years after leaving for AC Milan but failing to establish himself.