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## Opinion

### The Iranian Revolutionary Guard slaughtered the friendship of regional states

**Ahmed Al-Jarallah**

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE Iranian regime, led by the Revolutionary Guard, has appointed a new Supreme Leader for Iran.

The status quo appears unchanged, meaning the Iranian people will continue to suffer until God decrees otherwise.

The appointment of Mojtaba Khamenei as the

new Supreme Leader exposes a major power struggle within the regime, reflecting a conflict not only with the world but also with the people themselves.

Since 1979, there have been numerous uprisings against the regime, at times escalating to bombings targeting its pillars. The regime responded with brutal repression to maintain control, with the death toll in the January uprising exceeding 32,000.

This brutality has defined the Tehran regime, not only towards its own people but also towards the people of neighboring countries and some Arab states that were under Iranian influence until recently, including Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

Lebanon presents another example. Hezbollah, often referred to as the Party of Satan, has turned the country into an Iranian fiefdom and carried out acts of terrorism not only against various segments

of Lebanese society but also against citizens of Gulf states. Its activities have included hijackings, bombings, and assassinations.

The Iranian regime has pursued a political doctrine of "exporting the revolution," viewing it as a means to incorporate the region, or the so-called strategic periphery, into the Persian Republic. In other words, it seeks to impose the same sectarian and political ideology promoted by Tehran in all neighboring countries.

This approach reflects clear political immaturity, as the era of forcibly changing people's beliefs ended centuries ago. Today, nations possess cohesive popular support, and only a leader detached from reality would attempt such a course of action.

Reports have emerged of an Iranian plan to seize control of Bahrain and occupy the Eastern Province

of Saudi Arabia during the so-called "Arab Spring" using 100,000 fighters.

These reports indicate that the regime does not seek stability in the region as long as its nefarious goals are unfulfilled.

The current war has exposed paradoxes that reveal the Iranian regime's aggression toward the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

Over the past 12 days, the leaders of these countries have exerted strenuous efforts to end the war.

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Cabinet reviews security developments, salutes Amir's speech

## Eid Al-Fitr holiday officially set in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): Kuwait's Cabinet held a meeting Tuesday under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Maousherji briefed the media on the outcomes.

At the outset of the meeting, the Cabinet praised the address delivered Monday by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, marking the last ten days of Ramadan, highlighting its emphasis on national unity, awareness, and vigilance amid rapidly evolving regional tensions.

The Cabinet affirmed Kuwait's right to defend itself under Article 51 of the UN Charter and reiterated the country's soli-

darity with fellow members of the Gulf Cooperation Council in safeguarding regional security.

During the meeting, ministers were also briefed on the prime minister's participation in a virtual summit between regional leaders and the European Union, where Kuwait condemned the attacks targeting its territory and called for international efforts to halt the escalation and restore stability.

The Cabinet reviewed diplomatic efforts led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, including summoning the Iranian ambassador in Kuwait and delivering a formal protest note over the continued missile and drone attacks on the country.

It also condemned an attack on a residential facility in Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia, which resulted in civilian casualties, as

well as an assault targeting the consulate building of the United Arab Emirates in the Kurdistan Region.

Separately, the Cabinet announced the public holiday schedule for Eid Al-Fitr. If Ramadan completes 30 days, the holiday will run from Thursday, March 19, through Monday, March 23, with work resuming on Tuesday, March 24.

If Ramadan lasts 29 days, the holiday will run from Thursday, March 19, through Sunday, March 22, with work resuming on Monday, March 23.

The Cabinet also reviewed reports from various ministries on measures taken to raise readiness levels and ensure the availability of essential supplies and services for citizens and residents amid the current security developments.

## AIR DEFENSE ACTIVE AS KUWAIT INTERCEPTS THREATS

# Safe, controlled returns for Kuwaitis and expats

Kuwait Army stands ready, Defense Minister affirms

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Official spokesperson of the National Guard Brigadier Jadaan Fadhel Jadaan announced on Wednesday morning that the Kuwait Armed Forces shot down eight hostile drones in the areas under their jurisdiction.

In a press statement, Jadaan emphasized that the Armed Forces remain committed to protecting the national security and the vital sites against any external threats.

He advised the public to strictly comply with the safety instructions of the competent authorities and cooperate with the military and police forces in maintaining the stability of the country.

In addition, official spokesperson of the Ministry of Defense Colonel Saud Al-Atwan announced that the Kuwait Armed Forces intercepted a wave of hostile aerial targets to the airspace of the country from dawn until midnight on Tuesday.

In a press statement, Al-Atwan disclosed that the air defense systems detected five hostile drones -- four were engaged and destroyed, while one crashed outside the threat zone.



Kuwait's Defense Minister during the inspection tour.

Ministry of Defense photo

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### Justice Ministry pauses debtor arrest warrants

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The Ministry of Justice announced on Tuesday the temporary suspension of certain services for litigants on the unified government e-services application "Sahel" and the ministry's electronic portal, citing the current situation in the country, reports Al-Seyassah daily.



Al-Sumait

In a press release, the ministry explained that the suspended services include "Request for Arrest of a Debtor" and "Arrest Warrants," and will remain unavailable until further notice. All other electronic services will continue to be accessible to the public.

In this regard, the Minister of Justice, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, stressed that the measure is temporary and that normal procedures will resume once the situation stabilizes.

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### Report unlicensed financial services, says Central Bank

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The Central Bank of Kuwait has called on the public to cooperate and report any information regarding individuals or entities engaging in unlicensed financial activities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The bank emphasized that such practices could endanger individuals' funds, threaten the stability of the national economy, and expose customers to financial risks.

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### Kuwait intensifies market crackdown on price hikes

KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): The Ministry of Commerce said on Wednesday that inspection campaigns in Jahra and Mubarak Al-Kabeer issued 32 violation reports, closed seven central markets for price breaches, and shut an unlicensed medical supplies warehouse in Shuwaikh Industrial Area.

In a statement to KUNA, the ministry said the inspection tours, conducted under directives of Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai, monitored several violations in markets and shops to ensure compliance with ministerial decisions and approved price controls.

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### Day by Day

KUWAIT Municipality representatives are urged to visit the truffle market, where the municipality rents out shops and benefits from the rental income.

While this market has the potential to contribute to boosting the national economy, it lacks basic sanitary facilities and restrooms. The area is also affected by pollution and poor cleanliness. A similar situation can be observed in the Al-Mubarakiya market.

We hope Kuwait Municipality authorities will take note of this, as cleanliness is next to godliness.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

### Fog expected

### Stormy spell to soak Kuwait until Friday

KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): The Meteorological Department forecast rainfall affecting the country from midnight Wednesday until Friday noon, with possible thunderstorms, active winds and chances of fog through the weekend.

Acting Director of the department, Dhirar Al-Ali, told KUNA Wednesday noted winds may cause fog in some areas from Thursday evening until Friday morning, and again from Friday evening until Saturday morning.

Weather conditions are expected to gradually improve after Friday afternoon as clouds and rainfall chances decrease.

### Ramadan Timings

Imsak ..... Thursday ..... 04:43  
Iftar ..... Thursday ..... 17:54  
Imsak ..... Friday ..... 04:41

## HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

### The story of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his daughter Zaynab, and her cousin... and the lessons learned

Abu al-'As said to the Prophet (PBUH), "I want to marry your daughter Zaynab."

The Prophet asked Zaynab, "Your cousin has asked for your hand. Do you accept him as your husband?" Her face flushed.

Zaynab told her husband, "My father was sent as a prophet, and I have embraced Islam."

Abu al-'As said, "As for me, I don't want people to say I abandoned my people."

Zaynab replied, "I am your wife, and I am the one who should excuse you most."

Abu al-'As remained an unbeliever until the Hijra (migration).

Zaynab asked the Prophet, "Will you allow me to stay with my husband?"

She said, "I fear the day when I see my children orphaned."

The Prophet said, "God has commanded me to separate a Muslim wife from a disbelieving husband."

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KIC Board of Directors recommends 8 cash dividend of 40 fils per share & bonus shares for capital increase



Jazeera Airways launches Qaisumah-Cairo flights following Kuwait airport suspension

## Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 04:51 Asr ..... 15:20  
Sunrise .. 06:10 Maghrib .. 17:54  
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



Sheikh Sabah Khaled



Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef

Jordan condoles army officers death

## Gambia condemns Iran attacks on Kuwait in Crown Prince call

KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Tuesday received a phone call from President of the friendly Republic of Gambia Adama Barrow, who strongly condemned the heinous Iranian attacks on Kuwait.

During the phone conversation, the Gambian leader denounced the attacks as a blatant breach of Kuwait's sovereignty and international law, while underlining his country's absolute support for all measures Kuwait is taking to safeguard its sovereignty and security.

His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Gambian president, thanking him for this good gesture and sup-

port for the security and stability of the State of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, received a call from Jordanian Interior Minister Mazen Al-Faraya, who expressed his sincere condolences over the martyrdom of two members of Kuwait's land border security forces.

According to a statement issued by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior, Al-Faraya affirmed his country's full solidarity with Kuwait in confronting anything that threatens its security and stability.

For his part, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef expressed appreciation to the Jordanian minister for his sincere sentiments, noting that such noble gestures reflect the strong historical and brotherly relations between Kuwait and Jordan.

## Global rights bodies slam Iran blatant hits on GCC countries

KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): International human rights and humanitarian organizations have emphatically denounced and condemned Iran's blatant aggression against the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the ensuing direct threat to civilians' safety and security.

This came in a statement issued by a coalition of 29 multinational organizations, led by the Kuwaiti Society for Human Rights, regarding the ongoing events in the

State of Kuwait and the region as a whole.

They underlined that targeting vital facilities and civilian infrastructure, including service facilities and public government departments, is a flagrant breach of the principles of international humanitarian law, particularly the rules prohibiting the targeting of civilians or civilian property.

They added that this action also poses a serious threat to regional stability and puts the lives of the civilian population in jeopardy.

Stay calm, spend normal life

## Mental health of kids priority in current situation – expert

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Zahraa Al-Kout, a specialist in child and adolescent therapy at Jaber Hospital, emphasized the need to prioritize the mental health of children and adolescents under the current circumstances, indicating that their constant exposure to news on television or mobile phones, or listening to adults discussing the current events, can trigger anxiety, tension and fear, as such information is beyond their comprehension capacity.

In a statement to the newspaper, Al-Kout explained that reducing the exposure of children and adolescents to such news is one of the most important protective measures, along with the efforts of parents to control their reactions and emotions, since family tension directly impacts the mental state of children.

She stressed the importance of maintaining the daily routine, such as waking up and going to bed at the usual times, continuing distance learning, adhering to the usual diet, and engaging in daily activities without any remarkable

lifestyle changes.

She said parents should remain calm when sirens are activated and obtain news only from official sources. She asserted that remaining calm during such moments is crucial in reassuring the children, stating that parents should first ensure the safety of their children and guide them to engage in activities or interests that distract them and alleviate their anxiety.

She added that the curiosity of children and adolescents often prompts them to ask questions about what is happening, hence, the parents must simplify information and explain it in an age-appropriate way -- through stories or simple conversation, while reassuring them that sirens and warning systems are for protection and guidance, not to instill fear.

She urged parents to pay attention to behavioral changes in their children like bedwetting, difficulty in sleeping, sudden crying, hyperactivity or unusual stubbornness. She then underscored the importance of seeking guidance and psychological support from specialized centers if such symptoms are observed.

Crackdown on drug peddlers on

## Gang of Kuwaitis, bedoun held

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Despite the current situation in the country, the Drug Control General Department (DCGD) at the Ministry of Interior continues its security efforts to track down drug dealers and traffickers.

Security sources informed the newspaper that the DCGD, led by its Director Brigadier General Mohammad Qabazard and his assistant Brigadier General Sheikh Hamad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, apprehended a gang of five individuals – Kuwaiti citizens and one

stateless person (Bedoun) – after intensive surveillance and monitoring. Sources said the gang was found to be involved in drug trafficking and possessed materials used for counterfeiting currency.

Sources revealed that the sting operation in Salmiya and Sabahiyah resulted in the discovery of narcotics including methamphetamine (crystal meth), a firearm, around KD100,000 cash, tools and papers suspected to be used for currency counterfeiting.

Sources said the suspects, along with the seized items, were referred to the competent authorities for the necessary legal measures.

# PM reviews contingency plan in Civil Aviation trip

Premier inspects fuel depots damage



Top and above: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah conducted an on-site inspection of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (DGCA) headquarters and visited the Kuwait International Airport.

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah conducted an on-site inspection of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (DGCA) headquarters on Tuesday to review emergency readiness and strategic contingency protocols.**

Accompanied by the authority's Chairman Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, the Premier toured emergency shelters, where he was briefed on operational frameworks, logistical capabilities, and safety preparations to maintain business continuity during crises.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah also held a meeting with the authority's chairman and staff, along with Kuwait International Airport's senior officials on technical and opera-

tional preparations, approved emergency plans and precautionary measures for dealing with all scenarios.

His Highness the Premier also inspected the recently attacked fuel depots at the Kuwait International Airport.

Concluding his visit, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah expressed appreciation and thanks to national cadres and teams operating at the authority and different bodies at the Kuwait International Airport for their sincere efforts and hard work to serve the nation.



Sheikh Abdullah



Dr. Adel Boursesli

Gulf situation discussed

## Kuwait's top judge lauds Amir speech 'reassuring'

KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): President of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and President of the Court of Cassation Counsellor Dr. Adel Boursesli said Tuesday that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's speech on the occasion of the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan, carried all the concepts and indications of wisdom, responsibility, pride, strength and dignity.

In a press statement, the chief judge said His Highness the Amir's speech has instilled a spirit of reassurance and confidence in the hearts of the Kuwaiti people and residents.

It has also reflected the wise leadership's commitment to maintaining the homeland's security and stability, and mirrored the State of Kuwait's unwavering approach of safeguarding peace and stability.

### Defense minister

Kuwait's Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received a phone call Tuesday evening from UK Defense Secretary John Healey. The Ministry of Defense said in a statement Wednesday that the call addressed recent developments and issues of mutual interest.

Sheikh Abdullah expressed Kuwait's appreciation for the supportive positions of the United Kingdom.

He also praised the strong ties between Kuwait and the UK, affirming the depth of the strategic partnership between the two countries.

## Crisis forces PAM to call off trade union election

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) announced the suspension of ordinary and extraordinary general assemblies of trade unions, and the postponement of trade union elections and all voting procedures until further notice, in light of the current circumstances in the country and to ensure public safety, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PAM explained that this decision is in line with the directives and instructions from the competent authorities and aims to reduce gatherings, and protect the safety of members of general assemblies and boards of directors of trade unions.

Temporary certificates will be issued for up to two months to trade unions whose boards of directors' terms have expired, in order to ensure the continuity of administrative and organizational work until normal procedures resume.

PAM confirmed its ongoing monitoring of developments in coordination with relevant authorities, and urged everyone to adhere to issued instructions and follow updates from official sources.

## Other Voices

### Who is deceiving the other?

By Ahmad alsarraf

ZIONISM is a modern nationalist political movement rather than a religion. Therefore, Zionism does not believe in Judaism in the same way that a religious person believes in their religion. Nevertheless, Zionism is deeply rooted in Jewish history and religious traditions, and Jews differ sharply on the way Judaism and Zionism are linked.

Zionism emerged in the late nineteenth century, influenced by the rise of European nationalism as well as the ancient Jewish religious connection to Zion and Jerusalem. The idea of the return to the land appears in the Bible, in religious rituals, and in rabbinic writings.

There are three main currents of thought regarding the relationship between Zionism and Judaism. The first views them as inseparable, as they are the essence of Judaism itself. The second sees them as distinct, arguing that Judaism, as a religion and ethical tradition, predates modern nationalism by thousands of years.

A minority believes that Zionism contradicts Judaism because they believe that only the Messiah can restore Jewish sovereignty over the land, and therefore a secular state established by force or politics is religiously illegitimate.

In general, many Zionists are religious Jews whose Zionism is rooted in Judaism. Others are secular but support Jewish national self-determination for historical, cultural, or security reasons.

Because Zionism is a political ideology, not a religious doctrine, the most accurate way to understand it is that it draws on Jewish religious texts, symbols, and history but is not fundamentally identical to them.

Theodor Herzl's Zionism was primarily a nationalist political project based on the premise that Jews were a persecuted people in Europe in need of a nation-state.

Palestine was chosen because it was the "historical homeland" and held religious significance for Jews.

Although Herzl was not a religious figure, he used Judaism to achieve political goals. Despite Herzl and most of the founders being secular, they used

Old Testament texts, the story of the "chosen people", and the divine promise of the land to justify the political right to a Jewish state on land inhabited by other people.

Christian Zionism is a movement within the conservative American Evangelical Church that views Israel as the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. It wields significant influence on American politics, particularly within the Republican Party's stance toward Israel.

Christian Zionism is based on a literal interpretation of the Old Testament, believing that the return of the Jews to the Promised Land is a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Christ, followed by the "Rapture" and periods of tribulation, which will then be followed by a thousand years of peace.

Consequently, these evangelicals do not see Jews as fellow believers, but rather as instruments in God's plan for the return of Christ, after a mass conversion to Christianity or the destruction of the world.

Herein lies the tragedy, the divergence from the traditional Jewish perspective, and the profound, unspoken theological tension between the two sides.

The Christian Zionist vision anticipates the Battle of Armageddon, a major war in Palestine between the forces of good (Christ and the army of believers) and the forces of evil (an alliance of infidel nations), ending with Christ's victory and the beginning of his thousand-year reign.

This cannot be achieved without the gathering of Jews in Palestine, setting the stage for the Battle of Armageddon, the return of Christ, and the end of the Jews.

However, the Jewish perspective differs. They see their existence as religiously Jewish not as the end of the story, but as a temporary phase that will lead, after a major war at the end of time, to the victorious emergence of the people of Israel, led by the Jewish Messiah who will come for the first time to establish a Jewish kingdom over all nations and subjugate the Gentiles.

Herein lies the contradiction - each side uses the other to achieve its goal, which ultimately is the annihilation of the other.

On a different note, the selection of Mojtaba Khamenei as the new Supreme Leader of Iran, succeeding his father, simply means that the dangerous situation in the region will continue.



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## HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



## The story of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his daughter Zaynab, and her cousin... and the lessons learned

BEFORE the Prophethood, Abu al-'As approached the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and said, "I want to marry your eldest daughter, Zaynab."

The Prophet replied, "I will not do so until I ask her permission." He then asked Zaynab, "Your cousin has come to me and mentioned your name. Do you accept him as your husband?" Her face flushed, and she smiled. Zaynab married Abu al-'As ibn al-Rabi', thus beginning a strong love story. They had two children, Ali and Umamah.

A big problem emerged when the Prophet (PBUH) received his divine mission.

When Abu al-'As returned from travel, he found that Zaynab had embraced Islam. She said to him, "I have great news for you."

He walked away, which shocked Zaynab who followed him, saying, "My father has been sent as a prophet, and I have embraced Islam."

Abu al-'As asked, "Why didn't you ask me first?" She replied, "I would not have disbelieved my father. He is truthful and trustworthy. I am not the only one who has embraced Islam. My mother, my brothers, my cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib, your cousin Othman ibn Affan, and your friend Abu Bakr al-Siddiq have all embraced Islam."

Abu al-'As said, "I don't want people to say I abandoned my people and disbelieved in the gods of my forefathers just to please my wife. I am not accusing your father; he is truthful. Will you excuse me?"

Zaynab answered, "I am the one who should excuse you most. But I am your wife, and I must help you and guide you to the truth."

Abu al-'As remained an unbeliever. Later, during the migration of Muslims from Makkah to Madinah, Zaynab asked the Prophet, "O Messenger of God, will you permit me to stay with my husband?"

The Prophet granted her permission, and Zaynab remained in Makkah until the Battle of Badr.

Abu al-'As decided to join the army of the Quraysh, which meant he would fight against Zaynab's father.

Zaynab wept and prayed, saying, "O God, I fear the day I lose my husband and my children are orphaned, or I lose my father."

Abu al-'As ibn al-Rabi' went out with the Quraysh army and participated in the Battle of Badr, which ended with his capture.

The news reached Makkah, and when Zaynab learned of the Muslims' victory, she prostrated in gratitude to God. She inquired about her husband and learned that he had been taken prisoner.

Determined to secure his release, she decided to pay a ransom. She had nothing of value except a necklace she had inherited from her mother. She removed the necklace and sent it to the Prophet with her husband's brother.

The Prophet, who was receiving ransoms and releasing prisoners, saw the necklace, which was once owned by his late wife, Khadijah (may God be pleased with her). He asked, "Whose ransom is this?" and was informed that it was for Abu al-'As ibn al-Rabi'.

The Prophet wept and said, "This is Khadijah's necklace." Then he stood and addressed the people, saying, "O people, Abu al-'As ibn al-Rabi' is my son-in-law, and

Abu al-'As said to the Prophet (PBUH), "I want to marry your daughter Zaynab."

The Prophet asked Zaynab, "Your cousin has asked for your hand. Do you accept him as your husband?" Her face flushed.

Zaynab told her husband, "My father was sent as a prophet, and I have embraced Islam."

Abu al-'As said, "As for me, I don't want people to say I abandoned my people."

Zaynab replied, "I am your wife, and I am the one who should excuse you most."

Abu al-'As remained an unbeliever until the Hijra (migration).

Zaynab asked the Prophet, "Will you allow me to stay with my husband?"

She said, "I fear the day when I see my children orphaned."

The Prophet said, "God has commanded me to separate a Muslim wife from a disbelieving husband."

he is a man of impeccable character. Will you allow him to be released and for Zaynab to receive her mother's necklace?" The people agreed to the Prophet's request.

The Prophet gave the necklace to Abu al-'As and asked him to tell Zaynab not to part with her mother Khadijah's necklace.

He then spoke privately with Abu al-'As, informing him that God had commanded him to separate the Muslim wife from her disbelieving husband. The Prophet asked Abu al-'As to return Zaynab to her father, and he agreed.

Zaynab went out to meet Abu al-'As at the gates of Makkah. When he saw her, he said, "I am leaving." She asked, "Where to?" He replied, "It is not I who will leave, but you who must go to your father."

She asked, "Why?" He explained and asked her to return to her father.

Zaynab then asked, "Why don't you embrace Islam and accompany me to Madinah?" and he replied, "No."

Zaynab took her son and daughter and went to Madinah. For six years, many men proposed to her, but she refused, hoping that her husband would return to her.

After six years, Abu al-'As set out with a caravan from

Makkah to Syria.

During his journey, he encountered a group of the Prophet's companions who apprehended him. He inquired about Zaynab's house and knocked on her door just before dawn. When she saw him, she asked if he had come as a Muslim. He replied, "No, I came as a fugitive."

She asked, "Won't you embrace Islam?"

He said, "No."

She said, "Have no fear. Welcome, my cousin, the father of Ali and Umamah."

After the Prophet finished the dawn prayer, a voice came from the back of the mosque saying, "Abu al-'As ibn al-Rabi' is under my protection." The Prophet asked, "Did you hear what I heard?" They replied, "Yes, O Messenger of God."

It was Zaynab's voice. She said, "O Messenger of God, even if Abu al-'As leaves me as a wife, he is still my cousin and the father of my children. He is under my protection, O Messenger of God."

The Prophet addressed the people, stating that he had no doubt about his son-in-law Abu al-'As's honesty and trustworthiness. He left the matter to them to either allow him to return to his people with his wealth, or decide otherwise, and that he would not hold them accountable if they chose differently.

The people agreed to let him keep his wealth, so the Prophet said, "We have granted protection to whomever you have granted protection, O Zaynab."

The Prophet asked his daughter Zaynab to treat Abu al-'As with kindness, for he was her cousin and the father of her children. However, he emphasized that Abu al-'As should not approach Zaynab, as she was not permitted to marry him.

Zaynab went inside and asked Abu al-'As ibn al-Rabi', "Is our separation easy for you? Will you embrace Islam and stay with us?" He replied, "No."

Abu al-'As took his wealth and returned to Makkah. Upon arriving, he stopped and said, "O people, take your wealth. Do you still have anything left with me?"

They replied, "No, nothing remains. The best of loyalty."

Abu al-'As said, "Then I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

He then entered the city at dawn, went to the Prophet, and said, "O Messenger of God, you granted me protection yesterday, and today I come to say it truthfully. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah."

He then asked, "O Messenger of God, will you permit me to take Zaynab back as my wife?"

The Prophet took Abu al-'As to Zaynab's house, knocked on the door, and said, "O Zaynab, your cousin has come to me today, asking my permission for you to return to him. Do you accept?" Her face flushed, and she smiled.

A year after this incident, Zaynab passed away, and Abu al-'As wept bitterly, saying, "By God, O Messenger of God, I can no longer bear this world without Zaynab." He died a year after her... May God be pleased with them both.

■ They asked him, "Why don't you take revenge on your enemy?"

He replied, "If a dog bites you, it is not permissible to bite it back."



■ They say, "If a stranger compliments you, check your pockets when you leave, and make sure your ring is still on your finger after shaking hands."



■ In truth, no one but you can feel the pain of your shoes. So bear the pain until you can change them.



■ If you don't remind a thief of his true nature and tell him you know him well, he will lecture you on morality and honesty.



■ When you trust yourself, the presence of others becomes insignificant. Their absence then does not harm you.



■ Sometimes you need to distance yourself from evil and create a barrier between yourself and it.



■ Let the sheep graze freely, for every living thing has an end.



KUNA photo  
Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Saleem Al-Sabah visits the Kuwait Armed Forces Supply and Logistics Authority.

## Minister ensures continuous food, logistics help for army

KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Saleem Al-Sabah visited the Kuwait Armed Forces Supply and Logistics Authority to review workflow and assess logistical readiness.

According to a statement issued by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense, the minister received a briefing on the supply situation, the level of logistical preparedness, and the authority's role in supporting the armed forces amid current security developments.

The visit included a tour of ware-

houses and several key facilities within the authority, where Sheikh Abdullah reviewed operational procedures and safety measures in storage facilities, as well as preparations to ensure the continuity of supply and logistical support for the armed forces under various circumstances.

The defense minister praised the authority's role in supporting the armed forces and enhancing their readiness, stressing the importance of maintaining preparedness to confront different challenges.

## 'Pre-Saray' season ushers in unstable climate, dust storms

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Bader Al-Amira, a member of the Arab Union for Astronomy and Space Sciences, confirmed that next Sunday marks the beginning of the pre-Saray season, known locally as "Al-Sabq," characterized by fluctuating spring-like weather, reports Al-Rai daily.

He explained that winds will be active, variable, and dust-raising, with chances of thunderstorms, resulting in hot days and cool nights. This season witnesses unusual weather phenomena such as thunderstorms and

dust storms due to the sun's proximity to the celestial equator, resulting in equal day and night lengths and balanced atmospheric pressure between north and south winds. This creates fluctuating winds, and all four seasons can be experienced in one day due to these changes. These conditions will continue until the start of the Sarayat season in mid-April.

Al-Amira stated that the pre-Saray season is the first true spring season, characterized by rapid fluctuations in temperature and dust-raising winds.

## Demand for bread rises

'Over 5m loaves daily'

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Nabil Al-Hujail, Sales Manager at Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company (KFMB), confirmed that the company has significantly increased its bread production in recent days to meet the surge in market demand, reports Al-Rai daily.

During an interview on Kuwait TV, Al-Hujail explained that bread production on normal days ranges between 4 and 4.5 million loaves daily, and it typically decreases during Ramadan to around 2.3 to 2.5 million loaves daily. With the recent increase in demand, production has risen to over 5.3 million loaves daily, more than double the usual Ramadan quantities.

Emphasizing the readiness of the company's production lines to meet the needs of the local market, he affirmed that the company possesses operational flexibility that allows it to increase production to even higher levels if needed.

Regarding the phenomenon of hoarding or purchasing large quantities of bread, Al-Hujail urged consumers to buy only what they actually need.

He explained that the bread production chain begins with importing wheat and storing it in modern silos for periods that can reach up to three years. This wheat is then processed into flour, which has a shelf life of approximately six months, while bread itself has a shelf life of only one day.

Al-Hujail stressed that purchasing quantities of bread exceeding daily needs leads to product waste and places undue pressure on the production system.

He affirmed that the company has contingency and alternative plans in place to deal with various circumstances, highlighting that all stages of the process, from importing wheat and raw materials to storage, production, and distribution, are carried out according to well-studied and previously tested plans.

Al-Hujail revealed that the company's teams work around the clock to ensure a continuous supply, noting that the distribution network covers approximately 3,000 points of sale daily throughout Kuwait, including cooperative societies, grocery stores, restaurants, and delivery services.

## Municipality preps facilities for 'Qiyam'

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Kuwait Municipality affirmed its commitment Tuesday to deploying all resources and field capabilities to serve the large number of worshippers in all six governorates for the Qiyam prayers during the last ten nights of Ramadan, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the municipality explained that teams from the Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy Departments in its branches in all the governorates conducted cleaning operations on Monday, removing abandoned vehicles, cars offered for sale, and trucks parked near major mosques to complete preparations for the Qiyam prayers. A total of 15 hygiene inspectors, 10 cleaning centers, 300 cleaning workers, 70 half-trucks, 14 large dump trucks, and 11 bulldozers were deployed, along with six road occupancy centers providing ten cranes, six forklifts, and six water tankers in all governorates.

## Crisis fails to stop cleaning job

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The Kuwait Municipality confirmed the continuation of its activities and the smooth and efficient progress of cleaning operations despite the current circumstances in the country.

In a report, the Municipality stated that 1,333 workers participated in cleaning campaigns in the six governorates in the first 10 days of this month, utilizing 179 pieces of equipment and machinery, in addition to the

distribution of 741 waste containers in the governorates.

Data obtained by the newspaper showed that the Ahmadi Governorate Municipality branch recorded the highest volume of work completed with 724 operations involving 354 workers, 99 pieces of equipment and machinery, and 271 garbage containers. The Hawally Governorate Municipality branch came in second with a total of 681 operations, 650 workers and 31 pieces of machinery, followed by the Capital Governorate branch with 597 operations.

# MoH rolls out mental health care in 75 clinics nationwide

Ministry imposes strict attendance rules

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

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The Ministry of Health announced the provision of 75 mental health clinics in a number of primary healthcare centers in all governorates of Kuwait to enhance mental health services and improve patient access.**

The ministry explained that the clinics provide both pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments, and offer comprehensive care for children and adults during morning working hours in Ramadan.

The clinics receive patients with a range of mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, panic attacks, phobias, sleep disorders, and other mental health issues. Patients can visit the health center directly or book an appointment in advance through the Ministry of Health's website using the primary healthcare center appointment service.

The Ministry of Health has issued a memo to all its departments, mandating strict compliance with regulations governing the calculation of lateness and absences during official working hours. This follows the provisions of Civil Service Council Resolution No. 41/2006, which

sets out the rules, regulations, and controls for official work.

The memo, which was addressed to assistant undersecretaries, directors of health zones, and directors of central departments, emphasized the application of Articles 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23 of the resolution, which outline the procedures for calculating periods of lateness and absence from work.

Article 18 specifies that periods of lateness are to be accumulated at the end of each month. An employee will not face penalties if the total lateness for the month amounts to a quarter of a working day or less. However, if total lateness exceeds a quarter of a day but is less than half a day, the employee will be penalized with a deduction of a quarter of a day's pay.

If lateness exceeds half a day but is less than three-quarters of a day, the deduction increases to half a day's pay.

The deduction continues to rise with each additional period of lateness, calculated at a rate of one-quarter of a day.

The article clarifies that this penalty is not considered a disciplinary action, does not require an investigation, and is applied based on the principle of "equal pay for equal work."

Article 19 stipulates that, if total lateness during the month exceeds the hours of a full working day, the employee will face a salary deduction and be referred for a formal review. During the review, the employee's statement will be

heard and their defense reviewed before any appropriate penalty is imposed if the violation is confirmed.

Article 20 clarifies that penalties are applied according to a graduated system - the first violation results in a warning, the second incurs a one-day salary deduction, the third a two-day deduction, and the fourth a maximum three-day deduction.

If the violation is repeated thereafter, a written review will be conducted in accordance with general rules to consider imposing harsher penalties.

Article 21 allows female employees to leave 15 minutes before the official end of the workday, including during working days in the holy month of Ramadan.

Regarding leaving without permission, Article 22 stipulates that if an employee leaves during working hours without authorization, whether they return and sign out or not, the direct supervisor must initiate a review after verifying the time of departure and return. The period of absence will be counted toward the monthly lateness allowance.

Article 23 states that if an employee signs in upon arrival but immediately leaves without permission and does not begin work, they are considered absent for the day without authorization. Consequently, they forfeit their salary for that day and may also face disciplinary action in accordance with the Civil Service Law.

## Technical Committee approves zoning, site requests

By Inaas Awadh  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The Technical Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Munira Al-Amir, approved the following during its meeting on Wednesday:**

- Request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to allocate sites for buildings within the security wall project in the Diplomatic Quarter,
- Request of the Ministry of Interior to expand the surface parking area adjacent to Saad Bin Ubadah Primary School for Boys in Adailiya, Block Three and relocate the existing parking entrance,
- Subdivide Plot No. 69 in Salmiya,

- Request of Kuwait Public Transport Company (KPTC) to change the use of Doha Garage into a bus terminal and to develop the site,

- Amend the distribution schedule for plots in the Hawally development project (plots 132-135),

- Request of plot owners (plots 1-55) to revert the designated use of plots 1 and 40 in Dasman, Block Three to the original investment use as per Schedule Two and redistribute the commercial spaces (shops) to the remaining sections.

Meanwhile, the committee shelved the proposal of Municipal Council Chairman Abdullah Al-Muhairi to add gold workshop to the list of approved commercial activities.

### Pakistan, Australia reaffirm support

Kuwait and Jordan stress solidarity against heinous Iranian aggression

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA):** Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi affirmed their countries' solidarity to face the ongoing atrocious Iranian aggression.

This came during a telephone call the Kuwaiti minister received from his Jordanian peer, Kuwait's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Tuesday.

During the call, both sides reaffirmed the condemnation of the heinous Iranian aggression against Kuwait and Jordan, and the region's countries, it added.

They stressed the right of countries being targeted to take all measures required to safeguard their sovereignty and territories.

The two ministers further discussed the impacts of this aggression on the region's states, and its dangerous repercussions on regional stability and security, it noted.



Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs



Ayman Al-Safadi, Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister

Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received separate telephone calls on Tuesday from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Foreign Minister of Australia Penny Wong.

During the high-level exchange, Deputy Prime Minister Dar conveyed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the State of Kuwait in the wake of recent hostilities and Iranian aggression. He emphasized the imperative of upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait.

In a subsequent call, Minister Wong reaffirmed Australia's support for Kuwait after the Iranian acts of aggression targeting the nation. She underscored the critical importance of respecting international norms and maintaining regional stability.

### Grave breach of international law

## Kuwait sends 2nd identical letter to UN, UNSC chiefs on Iranian attacks

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA):** The State of Kuwait sent, on Monday, two identical letters to UN Secretary General and the President of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), reiterating its concerns about the continued Iranian attacks against its territory and airspace since 28 February.

According to a Foreign Ministry statement issued Tuesday, the letters underscore that Kuwait has been the target of an armed assault by the Islamic Republic of Iran, involving ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) that struck Kuwaiti territory and violated its airspace.

Kuwait described the attacks as a blatant breach of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, a grave violation of the United Nations Charter - particularly Article 2(4), which prohibits the use of force - and a dangerous escalation undermining regional and international peace and security.

Kuwait affirmed in both letters that it is not a party to any conflict in the region, stressing the unlawful and unjustified nature of these attacks.

The letters noted that the assaults have targeted military bases, critical infrastructure, and civilian facilities inside Kuwait.

Kuwaiti air defenses and the Kuwait Armed Forces have successfully intercepted the majority of incoming projectiles and drones in accordance with approved operational procedures and rules of engagement.

The letters confirmed that several civilian facilities and vital infrastructure were struck, including Kuwait International Airport, fuel tanks there, and the main headquarters of the Public Institution for Social Security.

Kuwait stressed that targeting such civilian infrastructure constitutes a viola-

tion of international law and international humanitarian law, which protect civilian facilities and critical infrastructure from attack.

Since Kuwait's previous letters sent on 3 March, the letters noted that additional casualties have occurred. Two members of the General Directorate of Land Border Security at the Ministry of Interior were killed while on duty, bringing the total number of killed among Kuwaiti Armed Forces and security personnel to four.

Reports also indicate civilian fatalities and injuries linked to the ongoing assault.

The letters also referred to attacks on the United States Embassy in Kuwait, describing such acts as a serious violation of international law and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961).

The State of Kuwait added in the two letters that the total number of missiles and drones it was exposed to since the beginning of this aggression on February 28 until 12:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 8, amounted to 234 missiles and 422 drones.

Reaffirming its inherent right to self defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, Kuwait reiterated that it reserves the right to take all necessary measures to defend its sovereignty, territory, and people in accordance with international law.

The letters urged the UNSC to fulfill its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security by taking immediate actions to halt the aggression.

Kuwait called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to cease its unlawful attacks against Kuwait, other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, and other regional countries not party to the conflict - and to be held fully accountable for the human and material losses resulting from this hostile conduct.

### MoHE suspends in-person services

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

**KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The Ministry of Higher Education has announced the temporary suspension of in-person services at the Citizen Service Center in its main building.**

This decision is part of the national responsibility and commitment to prioritize public safety in light of the current circumstances in the country.

To ensure the continuous provision of services, the ministry said it is handling applications and inquiries

remotely.

For this purpose, the email addresses of the departments were published through the official channels.

These organizational procedures are being implemented during this period to safeguard the well-being of everyone and guarantee the completion of transactions through the approved electronic channels.

Individuals wishing to follow up their transactions are advised to use the specified department email addresses, through which inquiries will be dealt with as promptly as possible.

## Kuwait pushes for tougher child protection at UNHRC

**GENEVA, March 11, (KUNA):** The Permanent Mission of Kuwait to the UN in Geneva highlighted the importance of combating child trafficking, describing these acts as serious violations of human rights and international law.

This statement was made by Second Secretary Lulwa Khaled Al-Dosari during an interactive dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on the protection of children at the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Al-Dosari emphasized Kuwait's commitment to safeguarding children's rights through accession to relevant international conventions and the implementation of a comprehensive national legislative frame-

work.

Key measures include the Child Protection Law of 2015 and the 2025 legislation raising the legal age of marriage to 18.

She also highlighted Kuwait's strict penalties for human trafficking and sexual exploitation offenses, as well as the adoption of the 2025-2028 National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking, with a focus on child protection.

Al-Dosari called for enhanced international cooperation and joint efforts to protect children from all forms of exploitation and abuse, particularly in the context of rapid technological developments that increase the risk of such crimes.



Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)	Price
One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 46.000
One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 102.148 / Net
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)	Price
One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 53.361 / Net
One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast	BHD 119.173 / Net

Terms & conditions apply



Ministry of Social Affairs photo  
Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, inspects the Supreme Council for Family Affairs shelter center.

### Plans guarantee beneficiary safety

## Minister Al-Huwaila checks emergency preparedness at Family Affairs' shelter

KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila on Wednesday inspected the Supreme Council for Family Affairs' shelter center to review the level of readiness and preparations made to deal with any emergency circumstances.

In a press statement, the ministry said that Minister Al-Huwaila stressed the importance of continuously monitoring the readiness of the center's facilities and emergency plans to ensure full preparedness to deal with any emergency and to provide a safe environment in the affiliated accommodation facilities.

She praised the efforts of the center's staff and their commitment to performing their duties efficiently and responsibly.

The statement pointed out that during the visit, Minister Al-Huwaila reviewed the approved emergency plans and their implementation mechanisms within the center.

She also inspected the emergency shelter, ensuring its readiness to receive emergency cases and confirming the availability of all necessary requirements to guarantee the safety of beneficiaries.

Al-Huwaila was briefed about the procedures followed in emergency situations and the coordination mechanisms to ensure a rapid response and the continuity of service provision. In addition, she also met with a number of employees and listened to their opinions and observations about the workflow and the center's readiness to deal with any new developments.

Continued from Page 1

### The Iranian

For years, Gulf leaders extended a hand of cooperation to Iran as a neighboring state.

However, Iran responded with further sectarian and political interference, going so far as to threaten the region's capitals with destruction.

The current war has revealed the ugly and sinister face of Tehran, as the Gulf states were targeted by more than three thousand drones and missiles.

While it is true that GCC armies intercepted most of the missiles and drones, it is also clear that Iran is not fighting Israel or the United States, but rather attacking secure and stable countries whose leaders spared no effort to help Iran out of the predicament it created for itself.

The aggression and brutality that the Gulf states have endured from Iran far exceed the attacks Iran has launched against Israel.

So what does this mean? Can things return to normal after this systematic Iranian aggression against Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain, and Oman?

Furthermore, Iran's attacks on maritime navigation and its obstruction of passage through the Strait of Hormuz constitute a grave crime and a blatant disregard for international law. Such actions necessitate a unified global stance to oppose Iran and hold it accountable.

The friendship the Gulf states sought to establish with Iran has been shattered by the Revolutionary Guard.

Nevertheless, wisdom and political prudence remain the foundation of the region's leaders' efforts to end this war, as they are people of peace who seek good neighborly relations. Will the new Supreme Leader grasp this reality?

### Safe, controlled

He clarified that the sounds of explosions heard in some parts of the country were the result of air defense systems intercepting hostile aerial targets, as confirmed by the General Staff of the Army.

He urged everyone to fully abide by the security and safety instructions issued by the relevant authorities, emphasizing that the Kuwaiti Armed Forces is fully prepared to deal with threats and anything aimed at destabilizing national security, thereby, ensuring the preservation of its sovereignty, security and stability.

Furthermore, in a media briefing earlier, Al-Atwan reaffirmed the high efficiency and readiness of the military and security forces. He stated that they are closely monitoring regional developments, taking the necessary defensive measures to protect the airspace of the country, and maintaining the security and safety of its citizens and residents.

He reported that two ballistic missiles were detected penetrating the airspace of the country over the past 24 hours. He said the air defense systems intercepted and destroyed the missiles in the southern part of the country.

He added that the Kuwait Armed Forces destroyed a drone in the North, while the National Guard, in cooperation with other military branches, destroyed six drones in the South.

He also affirmed the coordination of the Armed Forces with other military sectors. He said His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, issued a directive to work with full integration

and readiness to ensure the security and safety of everyone under all circumstances.

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah stressed on Wednesday the importance of redoubling efforts in light of the current situation in Kuwait and the region, as the current stage requires the highest levels of vigilance and readiness as he praised the high morale and unwavering resolve he witnessed among the members of the Kuwaiti army.

This came in a press release by the Ministry of Defense after the Minister's inspection visit to a number of units and sites that belong to the Kuwaiti army to review the progress of work and monitor the level of combat readiness and preparedness.

The Minister expressed his deep pride and appreciation for the sincere efforts made by the Kuwaiti army in their various positions, commending their dedication, sincerity, and high sense of responsibility in performing their national duty.

He affirmed that the armed forces will always remain a strong fortress for the nation, and that they are a source of pride and appreciation and they embody the highest meanings of loyalty, belonging and sacrifice for the sake of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Interior Ministry spokesman Brigadier General Nasser Bousalib said the security forces are monitoring developments round the clock, stressing that the internal situation remains under control and that the readiness level to protect the public is high.

He revealed that the bomb disposal teams responded to 15 field reports about shrapnel from defensive interception operations over the past 24 hours, bringing the total to 329 since the start of the aggression.

He added that sirens were activated twice and the total number of activations since the beginning of the aggression reached 82.

In related news, Interior Ministry Undersecretary Major-General Abdulwahhab Al-Wuhaib has underlined importance of providing all facilities for citizens and residents returning to Kuwait via border crossings, out of keenness on safety of all.

He made the statement following visit to the department of security of facilities and Nuwaiseeb crossing, late Tuesday, to see first-hand procedures and how personnel readiness level.

He called for vigilance and application of all on all, a ministry statement said.

Al-Wuhaib, who thanked the personnel for their dedication, urged them to exert further efforts to safeguard the nation's security and stability.

On Tuesday, Kuwait's Ministry of Social Affairs affirmed that the social support system in Kuwait remains fully prepared, with all concerned entities working in close coordination to ensure the continued provision of essential services.

The remarks were made by Director General of the Social Welfare Department Dr. Jassim Al-Kandari during a media briefing on the latest developments in light of the ongoing regional situation.

Al-Kandari said Kuwait's strategic reserves remain sufficient, stressing that food supplies, consumer goods, gas, and ration items are available as usual, noting there is no need for panic buying or stockpiling.

He expressed confidence in the awareness of Kuwaiti society regarding moderate consumption and community solidarity.

He added that the ministry has taken swift action on several fronts, activat-

ing its approved emergency plan to ensure the safety of residents in social care facilities and the continuity of services under all circumstances.

Al-Kandari stressed that protecting individuals under social care is a national responsibility, noting that the ministry has implemented a comprehensive emergency plan to strengthen readiness in residential care homes and ensure uninterrupted services.

### Justice Ministry

He explained that arrest warrants have been lifted in 371 enforcement cases, including 53 involving debtors who were previously imprisoned. The total amount paid in these cases reached KD 231,526, of which KD 114,779 came from the donations fund of the General Department for Sentences Enforcement.

Counselor Al-Sumait affirmed that all actions were carried out in coordination with the Head of the General Department for Sentences Enforcement, Counselor Abdullah Al-Qasimi.

In other news, the Ministry of Justice has stopped receiving applications for the position of Junior Legal Researcher (qualifying for the position of Public Prosecutor) for the 2024-2025 cohort, following the end of the application period on the ministry's website, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement on Tuesday, the ministry explained that a total of 855 applications were received. These applications will be reviewed and verified according to the established criteria and conditions in preparation for the remaining stages of the selection process.

The ministry stated that this step is part of the state's plan to apply Kuwaitization policy in the judiciary sector, and enhance reliance on qualified and competent nationals to support the justice system.

### Report unlicensed

The Central Bank clarified that unlicensed activities include money transfers, granting funds, or providing electronic payment links by entities not licensed by the bank.

It urged anyone with information about these practices to report it through the designated channels by calling the number 22972999 or emailing unlicensed@cbk.gov.kw.

### Kuwait intensifies

In Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate, inspectors issued 18 violation reports for raising prices of local vegetables and one report for increasing chicken prices in violation of approved regulations.

In Jahra Governorate, 13 violation reports were recorded and violators were referred to the Commercial Prosecution, while seven central markets were closed for breaching the ministerial decision on price stabilization and artificially raising prices.

Separately, the ministry said a joint inspection campaign with the Ministry of Health led to the closure of an unlicensed warehouse storing medical solutions and supplies in Shuwaikh Industrial Area after authorities found it operating without the required permits and violating health and technical storage requirements.

The ministry affirmed that these measures are part of ongoing efforts to strengthen market oversight, curb violations, ensure compliance with approved prices, protect consumers and safeguard public health.

# Islamic Affairs tightens mosque security rules

Iftar and Ramadan tents banned

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Minister of Islamic Affairs Dr. Mohammad Al-Wasmi conducted an inspection tour of the monitoring center at Jaber Al-Ali Mosque in Al-Shuhada as part of preparations for the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement issued on Tuesday, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs explained that Minister Al-Wasmi, accompanied by the acting Undersecretary Eng. Suleiman Al-Suwailem, reviewed the monitoring center, which oversees operations in mosques and the

services provided to worshippers. The visit was conducted in light of the current situation in Kuwait and the necessary security precautions it requires.

They also followed up on the compliance with regulations governing the duration of Taraweeh prayers, which are set at 20 minutes after Isha prayer, and Qiyam prayers, which are set for half an hour starting at midnight.

The Ministry of Islamic Affairs affirmed its commitment to the safety of worshippers and mosque visitors

in light of the current security situation in Kuwait and the region.

In an administrative circular, the ministry explained that setting up Iftar tables or distributing meals inside mosques or in their courtyards is strictly prohibited. The use of external courtyards for prayers or any other activity is also banned.

In addition, holding prayers in Ramadan tents outside mosques is not allowed. It is also important to adhere to the requirement for Taraweeh prayers during the last ten nights of Ramadan, starting at midnight and lasting for half an hour.

The ministry warned that anyone who violates the circular will face legal accountability, insisting that these measures aim to protect worshippers and mosque visitors and ensure their safety.



Dr. Al-Wasmi



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with board members and staff of Sabah Al-Nasser Cooperative Society during his inspection visit.



Left: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah reviews the arrangement of goods and supervises stock availability at the cooperative. Right: The governor examines essential food supplies, emphasizing the importance of maintaining steady availability for residents.



### Sheikh Athbi urges joint action on essentials

## Farwaniya Governor reviews food security at Sabah Al-Nasser Co-op

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah conducted an inspection visit on Monday evening to the Sabah Al-Nasser Cooperative Society where he was received by Saud Al-Muraikhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the cooperative society, along with board members.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the visit was part of his field tours to monitor work progress and the availability of essential goods and materials amid the current circumstances in the country.

The governor reviewed the mechanism in place for providing essential goods and organizing work in the cooperative society to ensure the continuous availability of food and consumer products for citizens and residents.

At the end of the visit, Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser emphasized the importance of joint efforts and en-



Farwaniya Governorate photos  
Farwaniya Governor during his inspection visit of the Sabah Al-Nasser Cooperative Society.

hanced coordination among relevant authorities to maintain market stability and secure basic necessities.

He praised the role of cooperative societies in serving local residents and meeting their needs.

## Private Universities under safety review

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Secretary General of the Secretariat General of the Council of Private Universities Dr. Jassim Al-Ali disclosed that the Secretariat has started conducting field visits in private universities and colleges to assess their emergency plans and the implementation of safety procedures.

Al-Ali said this initiative is included in the mechanism for the continuous monitoring of the current situation and the commitment of the Secretariat to guarantee the safety of everyone. He stated that the field visits began at the American International University and Kuwait College of Science and

Technology.

During these visits, Al-Ali reviewed the preparedness of the educational institutions, the readiness of their facilities, and their plans for dealing with emergencies to guarantee the safety of students, faculty members and administrative staff, as well as the continuity of the educational process.

He pointed out this is a manifestation of the coordinated efforts of the Secretariat and private universities and colleges to guarantee

institutional preparedness and create a safe learning environment in accordance with the highest standards of safety and prevention.

He affirmed that the Secretariat is committed to monitoring and activating emergency plans in coordination with private universities and colleges.

He indicated that field visits in the remaining private universities and colleges will be conducted in the coming days. He stressed that the safety of students and employees in higher education institutions remains a top priority, praying to Almighty Allah to protect Kuwait, its leaders and its people from all forms of harm and to continue bestowing upon it the blessings of security and stability.



Dr. Al-Ali

Let's go for the gold: Trump

## Senate to consider voting bill but pushes back on demands for talking filibuster: Thune

WASHINGTON, March 11, (AP) - Majority Leader John Thune said that the Senate will consider a bill to impose strict new proof-of-citizenship requirements in elections, but says "the votes aren't there" to pass it through a marathon talking filibuster sought by President Donald Trump.

Trump has said he won't sign any other legislation until the bill - known as the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility or SAVE America Act - is passed. But it faces unified opposition from Democrats, meaning that the Senate can't pass it unless Republicans change the rules and eliminate the filibuster.

Thune has said there aren't enough votes to do that, or to launch a talking filibuster that would force Democrats to hold the floor indefinitely to block the bill.

"That is just a function of math," Thune told reporters on Tuesday, making his strongest statements yet after weeks of discussions among GOP senators. "For better or worse, I'm the one who has to be a clear-eyed realist about what we can achieve here."

Republican senators are discussing, instead, voting on the legislation as soon as next week under regular procedure - meaning it will likely fail. Thune said that Republicans are "going to

have a fight on the floor" and will force Democrats to vote on "whether they think noncitizens should vote in American elections."

Trump's aggressive effort to dictate Senate procedure has put Thune in an awkward position as he has tried to appease the president and increasingly angry base voters who have called for Republicans to do whatever they can to pass it ahead of the midterm elections. But most Republican senators appear to be backing Thune's approach.

"There's been enough dithering," said Sen. John Kennedy, R-La. "It's time to go and let the chips fall where they may."

Trump has made the SAVE America Act a priority ahead of the midterm elections, arguing that Republicans need it to win - even as his party won the presidency and congressional majorities in 2024 without it. Federal law already requires that voters in national elections be US citizens.

"It'll guarantee the midterms," he told House Republicans Monday at their annual retreat at his Florida golf club. "If you don't get it, big trouble."

But Trump's push is running into the realities of the Senate, where minority Democrats can filibuster any piece of legislation and force Republicans to find 60 votes when they only hold 53



US Senate Majority Leader John Thune, flanked by Sen. John Barrasso and Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, speaks to reporters after a weekly Republican policy luncheon, at the Capitol in Washington on March 10. (AP)

seats. Democrats uniformly oppose the legislation, arguing that it would disenfranchise some 20 million American voters who don't have birth certificates or other documents readily available.

Republicans could change the rules and eliminate the filibuster to pass it, or they could attempt the talking filibuster. But Thune says they don't have

enough support within the GOP conference to do either.

Even if they did, a talking filibuster would not guarantee passage. Supporters of that approach say that Democrats would eventually tire of speaking or allow the legislation to pass. But Democrats would also be allowed to bring up an indefinite number of

amendments on any subject, forcing Republicans to take hard votes in an election year and delaying the process even more.

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

Utah Sen. Mike Lee, who has led the talking filibuster push with Trump, posted on X Tuesday that the "Senate should do everything it can in an effort to pass" the bill.

"While passage isn't guaranteed, we can be certain that failure will be the outcome if we don't try," Lee wrote.

But leaving a GOP conference meeting on Tuesday, several senators said it was time to move on the legislation, even if they couldn't accommodate the president's procedural demands.

"I think we just go ahead and try to get on the bill," said Sen. Roger Marshall, R-Kansas.

Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson suggested that they should debate the bill on the floor for an extended time. There should not be a "one and done vote," he said.

"Our base would scream about that and that wouldn't be smart," Johnson said.

There was little anger at Thune, as many of his GOP colleagues agree that eliminating the filibuster would

be unwise and the talking filibuster would be risky. Republicans have long pushed back on efforts to "nuke" the filibuster, arguing that minority rights need to be preserved for legislation.

"There's a right way to do it, there's a wrong way to do it," said Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina. "Nuking the filibuster doesn't work. The talking filibuster would be a goat rodeo."

Tillis said Thune "has the toughest job in Washington, DC. He's doing just fine. And he, quite honestly, has taken on a lot for the members."

Trump said over the weekend that he also wants to add new priorities to the legislation, including a ban on mail-in ballots that he has pushed since losing the 2020 presidential election.

"Let's go for the gold," Trump told the House Republicans.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said Tuesday at the Florida retreat that they are "looking at mechanisms" to do that, even though the House has already passed the bill and sent it to the Senate. But it's unclear if a ban on mail-in ballots would pass the House, as they are popular in many states.

Thune said that the House would probably have to pass a new bill to add those issues. "It would probably make sense for them to send over another version," he said.



This image from video by the United States Geological Survey shows lava erupting from Kilauea volcano on March 10, in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii. (AP)

## Lava fountains of Hawaii's Kilauea trigger park, highway closures

The latest lava fountaining episode of an erupting Hawaii volcano reached 1,000 feet (300 meters) high Tuesday, prompting temporary closures at a national park and part of an important highway because of falling glassy volcanic fragments, including ash.

Kilauea, on Hawaii's Big Island, has been dazzling residents and visitors for more than year with an

on-and-off eruption that periodically sends fountains of lava soaring into the sky.

The fountaining that began Tuesday morning marked the eruption's 43rd episode since it began in December 2024. A livestream showed two fountains of bright-red lava and smoke. It's unclear how long the fountaining will last. Some episodes have lasted a few days and

others a few hours.

Like other times, the molten rock was confined within Kilauea's summit crater inside Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and hasn't threatened homes or buildings.

But the lava fountains were creating trouble for neighboring communities and a highway where the volcanic fragments and ash, known as tephra, was falling. (AP)

## Smartmatic says Trump's 'campaign of retribution' driving criminal prosecution

MIAMI, March 11, (AP) - Voting technology firm Smartmatic is seeking to dismiss a criminal indictment for money laundering, blaming US President Donald Trump and his allies for seeking its prosecution as part of a "campaign of retribution" against those they blame for his 2020 election loss.

Smartmatic's parent company, UK-based SGO Corporation, was added to a criminal indictment last fall previously charging several executives with paying \$1 million in bribes to election officials in the Philippines.

In a motion to dismiss the indictment filed Tuesday, attorneys for Smartmatic said the company had been cooperating with the Justice Department since it first learned of its investigation in 2021, including by producing millions of pages of documents and making presentations to federal agents. A trial date for the executives, including co-founder Roger Pinate, had been set and the company believed that it was in the clear.

But when Trump returned to the White House, the Justice Department reversed course and decided to press charges against Smartmatic. Attorneys for the company said the decision was prompted by Trump's demands to prosecute his perceived enemies and his "mantra" that Smartmatic helped rig the 2020 U.S. presidential election won by Joe Biden - allegations that are at the heart of a \$2.7 billion lawsuit filed by Smartmatic against the president's allies in the media.

"The prosecution of SGO furthers



US President Donald Trump waves on the South Lawn as he returns to the White House following a trip to Florida on March 9, in Washington. (AP)

their collective false narrative that President Trump did not actually lose the 2020 election," Smartmatic said in the filing in Miami federal court.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Attorneys likened the prosecution to the Justice Department's targeting of Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran migrant who was criminally charged for conduct years earlier after he successfully sued the Trump administration over its decision to deport him.

In the years since the election, the filing states, "Smartmatic USA has ex-

ercised its right to hold those individuals and entities legally accountable for their deluge of defamatory statements and the attendant damage inflicts on its business, putting it squarely in the crosshairs for retribution."

The criminal case against Smartmatic and its employees stem from payments, between 2015 and 2018, that were allegedly made to obtain a contract with the Philippines government to help run that country's 2016 presidential election. Pinate, who no longer works for Smartmatic but remains a shareholder, has pleaded not guilty.

## Canada's Liberals closer to majority govt after another opposition defection

TORONTO, March 11, (AP) - Another opposition lawmaker in Canada has defected to Prime Minister Mark Carney's governing Liberals, all but assuring he will soon have a majority government.

Opposition New Democratic interim leader Don Davies said in a statement late Tuesday he was very disappointed Member of Parliament Lori Idlout has decided to join the Liberals.

That puts the Liberals closer to having a majority government and being able to pass any bill without opposition party support.

Liberal Cabinet minister Sean Fraser welcomed Idlout to the party in a social media post.

Three opposition Conservative members also defected to Carney's Liberals in recent months.

With another lawmaker decamping from the leftist New Democratic party, the Liberals would have 170 Members of Parliament in the House of Commons. They need 172 to secure a majority government, which would allow them to unilaterally pass any bill.

A spokeswoman for Carney did not



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney makes his way towards West Block on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ontario on March 10. (AP)

immediately respond to a message seeking comment. A message left at Idlout's office was not immediately returned.

Carney has called special elections for three districts that would give the Liberals a majority government if his party wins two of them.

The prime minister announced March 8 that votes will be cast April 13 in the Toronto-area districts of Scarborough Southwest and University-Rosedale, which are considered safe seats for the Liberals, and in the Montreal-area riding of Terrebonne, which is considered a toss up.

The three Conservative Members of Parliament who defected from their party to join the Liberals in recent months were Chris d'Entremont, Michael Ma and Matt Jeneroux.

Jeneroux referenced Carney's speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos as helping his decision. In the speech, Carney condemned economic coercion by great powers against smaller countries and received widespread praise and attention for his remarks, upstaging US President Donald Trump at the gathering.

Carney has moved the Liberals to the center since replacing Justin Trudeau as prime minister in 2025 and winning national elections.



General view at the Elizabeth Tower, known as Big Ben, and House of Parliament in London on Feb 11. (AP)

## Lords a-leaving: Britain ejecting hereditary nobles from Parliament after 700 years

LONDON, March 11, (AP) - Centuries of British political tradition will end within weeks after Parliament voted to remove hereditary aristocrats from the unelected House of Lords.

On Tuesday night members of the upper chamber dropped objections to legislation passed by the House of Commons ousting dozens of dukes, earls and viscounts who inherited seats in Parliament along with their aristocratic titles.

Government minister Nick Thomas-Symonds said the change put an end to "an archaic and undemocratic principle."

"Our parliament should always be a place where talents are recognized and merit counts," he said. "It should never be a gallery of old boys' networks, nor a place where titles, many of which were handed out centuries ago, hold power over the will of the people."

The House of Lords plays an important role in Britain's parliamentary democracy, scrutinizing legislation passed by the elected House of Commons. But critics have long argued that it is unwieldy and undemocratic.

The case of Peter Mandelson, who resigned from the Lords in February after revelations about his friendship with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, drew renewed attention to the upper chamber and the problem of lords behaving badly.

The chamber currently has more

than 800 members, making it the second-largest legislative chamber in the world after China's National People's Congress.

For most of its 700-year history, its membership was composed of noblemen - almost never women - who inherited their seats, alongside a smattering of bishops. In the 1950s, these were joined by "life peers" - retired politicians, civic leaders and other notables appointed by the government, who now make up the vast majority of the chamber. Roughly 1 in 10 members are currently hereditary peers.

In 1999, the Labour government of then-Prime Minister Tony Blair evicted most of the 750 hereditary peers, though 92 were allowed to remain temporarily to avoid an aristocrats' rebellion.

It was another 25 years before Prime Minister Keir Starmer's current Labour government introduced legislation to oust the remaining "hereditaries."

The lords put up a fight, forcing a compromise that will see an undisclosed number of hereditary members allowed to stay by being "recycled" into life peers.

The bill will become law once King Charles III grants royal assent - a formality - and the hereditary peers will leave at the end of the current session of Parliament this spring, completing a political process begun a quarter century ago. In Lords terms, that is speedy.

Labour remains committed to eventually replacing the House of Lords with an alternative second chamber that is "more representative of the UK". If past experience is anything to go by, change will come slowly.

"So, here we are at the end of well over seven centuries of service by hereditary peers in this Parliament," Nicholas True, the opposition Conservative Party leader in the Lords, told the chamber.

"Many thousands of peers served their nation here and thousands of improvements to law were made," he said. "It wasn't all a stereotypical history of reaction in ermine. Many of those people, no doubt, were flawed but for the most part, they served their nation faithfully and well."

Also:

LONDON: The British government said it would publish files related to the appointment of Peter Mandelson as ambassador to the US on Wednesday, as police investigate potential misconduct stemming from the ex-diplomat's ties to the late Jeffrey Epstein.

Lawmakers have forced Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government to disclose thousands of files about the decision to name Mandelson to the key diplomatic post at the start of US President Donald Trump's second term, despite a past friendship with the convicted offender.

## Next round of talks may be held next week: Ukraine's Zelenskyy

KYIV, March 11, (Agencies) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that the United States has proposed holding another round of talks involving Ukraine, the United States and Russia next week.

According to the Ukrinform news agency, Zelenskyy said that the meeting was postponed by the US side and would depend on developments in the Middle East, adding that the talks were originally planned to take place on Tuesday or Wednesday in Türkiye.

Earlier on Tuesday, Zelenskyy said on social media that he had spoken with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan about the situation in Iran. Erdogan said Türkiye was ready to host



Zelenskyy

the next round of trilateral talks among Ukraine, the United States and Russia, Zelenskyy said, adding that Ukraine welcomed the proposal.

Also:

BUDAPEST, Hungary: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has ordered that a shipment of Ukrainian cash and gold seized last week by Hungarian authorities be held in custody for up to 60 days while his country's tax authority investigates the case.

The gold and the money was being transported through Hungary by road when Hungary seized it last Thursday. Authorities said they suspected money laundering.

The shipment included \$40 million and 35 million euros in cash, as well as 9 kilograms (19.8 pounds) of gold - worth, based on the current exchange rates, about \$82 million.

The seizure has outraged Ukrainian authorities who accused Hungary's Russia-friendly government of acting illegally.

## Switzerland bus fire kills at least 6

GENEVA, March 11, (AP) - Police are investigating whether a bus fire in a town west of the Swiss capital that killed at least six people was started deliberately.

Police spokesperson Frédéric Papaux of Fribourg canton, or region, said an unspecified "voluntary act" could have caused the fire Tuesday evening in the town of Kerzers, about 25 kilometers (15 miles) west of Bern.

Five people were also injured in the fire, which for locals echoed a New Year's Eve fire in the Swiss ski resort of Crans-Montana that killed 41 young people.

Christa Bielmann, representing the Fribourg police, told Swiss broadcaster SRF: "There is information circulating that a person poured flammable liquid over themselves on the bus and that this caused the fire. But this is part of the ongoing investigation and is being clarified."

## INTERNATIONAL



This photo provided by the North Korean government shows its leader Kim Jong Un, (right), and his daughter, (left), watch what it says the cruise missile launches from the naval destroyer, the Choe Hyon, via video Tuesday, March 10, 2026, in North Korea. (AP)

## N.Korea's Kim watches cruise missile tests with daughter

SEOUL, South Korea, March 11, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his teenage daughter observed tests of strategic cruise missiles fired from a warship, state media reported Wednesday, as North Korea threatened responses to US-South Korean military drills.

Images sent by the Korean Central News Agency showed the two in a conference room looking at a screen showing weapons being fired from the Choe Hyon, a year-old naval destroyer.

Kim Jong Un watched the missiles launches via video on Tuesday and underscored the need to maintain "a powerful and reliable nuclear war de-

terrent," KCNA reported in a dispatch that did not mention his daughter.

The girl, reportedly named Kim Ju Ae and about 13, has accompanied her father at numerous prominent events including military parades and weapons launches since late 2022. South Korea's spy agency assessed last month Kim Jong Un was close to designating her as his heir.

KCNA said the missiles hit target islands off North Korea's west coast. It quoted Kim Jong Un as saying the launches were meant to demonstrate the navy's strategic offensive posture and get troops familiarized with weapons firings.

## Asia

**Cambodia stresses enhancing proactive foreign policy:** Cambodian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Prak Sokhonn has emphasized the importance of enhancing the country's proactive foreign policy and strategic engagement to strengthen resilience in safeguarding its core national interests.

Sokhonn, who is also a deputy prime minister, made the remarks during the foreign ministry's two-day annual conference that concluded last Friday, said a foreign ministry press release on Tuesday.

He underscored Cambodia's evolving role as a proactive and law-abiding actor on the global stage and efforts to broaden its diplomatic engagement.

The minister highlighted Cambodia's steadfast commitment to multilateralism and its proactive role in upholding the international rules-based order, the press release said.

Sokhonn said the Southeast Asian country is committed to maintaining its neutrality, independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, while promoting peace, unity, and socio-economic progress.

On relations with neighboring countries, he said that Cambodia holds a principled position to seek a peaceful resolution to all border disputes and differences in accordance with international law and bilateral agreements, and to promote trust and confidence, good neighborliness, and win-win cooperation, the press release said. (Xinhua)

**Mount Semeru erupts in Indonesia:** Mount Semeru in Indonesia's East Java province erupted on Tuesday evening, sending an ash column about 1,000 meters above its summit, the country's volcanology agency said.

The eruption also produced a hot avalanche cloud that traveled about three kilometers to the southeast along the Besuk Kobokan river channel.

Monitoring officials said the thick gray ash drifted to the northeast and east, and the eruption lasted nearly five minutes with a maximum seismic amplitude of 12 mm.

Authorities urged residents to avoid activities within a five-kilometer radius of the crater and in the southeastern sector along the Besuk Kobokan river channel, extending up to 13 kilometers from the summit, due to the risk of pyroclastic flows, lava avalanches, and lahars. (Xinhua)

**4 dead in Philippine vehicles collision:** Four people were killed and two others were critically injured after a wing van truck collided with a motorcycle in the central Philippine city of Cebu on Tuesday, police said.

Police said the crash occurred on Tuesday afternoon, involving a motorcycle carrying three people and a wing van truck with a driver and two crew members.

Initial investigation indicated that the motorcycle was traveling uphill when the wing van, traveling downhill, overshot into the opposite lane, collided with the motorcycle, killing the motorcycle's driver and two passengers at the scene.



In this photo released by the Geological Agency (Badan Geologi) of Indonesia's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Mount Semeru releases volcanic materials during an eruption in Lumajang, East Java, Indonesia on Nov 19, 2025. (AP)

The wing van driver was rushed to a local hospital but was declared dead on arrival, police said.

Two helpers who were riding in the truck were critically injured and taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.

An investigation is ongoing to determine the exact cause of the crash. (Xinhua)

**Woman arrested in Australia shooting:** A woman has been arrested after allegedly firing multiple gunshots at police during a pursuit in eastern Australia on Tuesday night.

The police force in the town of Grafton, 490 km northeast of Sydney, stopped a vehicle at around 8:50 p.m. on Tuesday and located and seized a knife as well as a small amount of ammunition during a subsequent search.

The driver, a 31-year-old woman with a learner's permit, was issued a future court notice and had her permit suspended.

Around one hour later, police located the same woman driving the same vehicle and initiated a pursuit when she failed to stop as directed.

During the pursuit, the woman allegedly fired multiple shots at police. The vehicle stopped a short time later and the woman exited and pointed a pistol at officers and herself before re-entering the car and driving from the scene.

She was arrested when she stopped and again pointed the pistol at police before attempting to break into a home. (Xinhua)

Thousands rally in Tokyo to protest PM's dangerous policies

## Japan marks 15 years since tsunami disaster as Takaichi pushes more nuke energy use

TOKYO, March 11, (Agencies): Japan marked the 15th anniversary of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster on its northeastern coast Wednesday as the government pushes for more use of atomic energy.

The magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011, ravaged parts of the region, caused more than 22,000 deaths and forced nearly half a million people to flee their homes, most of them due to tsunami damage.

Some 160,000 people fled their homes in Fukushima because of the radiation spewed from the tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. About 26,000 of them haven't returned because they resettled elsewhere, their hometowns remain off-limits or they have lingering concerns about radiation.

Japan observed a moment of silence at 2:46 pm, the moment the quake occurred 15 years earlier.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, at a ceremony in Fukushima, pledged to do the utmost to accelerate the region's recovery within the next five years and reinforce "the valuable lessons we learned from the huge sacrifice of the disaster."

Takaichi has pushed to accelerate reactor restarts and sought to bolster nuclear power as a stable energy source, in line with the major reversal of policy in 2022 that ended a decade-long nuclear phase-out plan.

Some residents in the tsunami-ravaged areas walked down to the coast early morning to pray for their loved ones and others whose remains are still missing.

More than 1 million homes, offices and schools were damaged or destroyed in the quake and tsunami in Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima and other coastal areas. Key infrastructure has been rebuilt, but communities and local economies have been slow to recover.

The Fukushima Daiichi plant lost its power and cooling functions, causing meltdowns in three of its six reactors. The three reactors contain at least 880 tons of melted fuel debris, but details of the state inside them are little known due to the still-dangerous radiation levels.

Fuller-scale removal of melted fuel debris has been delayed until 2037 or later. At Unit 1 which just got a new roof, workers will shortly start taking out top-floor



Balloons are released at a park in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, northern Japan on March 11, as the country marked the 15th anniversary of the massive earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster. (AP)

debris ahead of the planned spent fuel removal from its cooling pool, which will begin around 2027-2028.

There's also a massive amount of slightly radioactive soil, enough to fill 11 baseball stadiums, from the decontamination efforts across the area.

The government has pledged to move the soil and has sought to use some for

road construction and other public works projects but has faced public resistance.

Meanwhile, nearly 10,000 people gathered in central Tokyo on Tuesday night to protest the dangerous policies pursued by the government of Takaichi, including the deployment of missiles and the push to ease lethal arms exports.

Despite the cold weather, demonstrators outside Japan's National Diet Building held placards reading "No to war!" and "Stop trampling on the Constitution!" They also collectively read aloud Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, reaffirming their commitment to the country's pacifist principles.

Organizers said about 8,000 people attended the rally in person, while approximately another 1,000 participated online.

Taku Yamazoe, policy chief of the Japanese Communist Party, told Xinhua at the scene that amid the United States pursuing hegemonic policies, Japan has chosen to closely align its actions with Washington while advancing related policies premised on military expansion. This approach runs counter to the goal of maintaining regional peace and stability.

Yamazoe noted that Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution clearly stipulates that Japan renounces war and will not maintain war potential. "If the spirit of the Constitution were truly upheld, Japan should not pursue diplomacy based on preparations for war, but instead promote diplomacy aimed at resolving issues through dialogue," he said.

Compared with previous protests, the rally saw a larger number of young participants. One demonstrator, Aya Yasui, expressed concern over the recent deployment of long-range missile launchers by Japan's Defense Ministry in Kumamoto Prefecture. "I think this is an extremely dangerous situation," she said.

Recently, the Takaichi government has moved to revise the operational guidelines of the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, further easing restrictions on arms exports. At the same time, it has accelerated plans to deploy long-range missiles across Japan and is seeking to promote constitutional revision, moves that have sparked widespread concern and criticism among various sectors of Japanese society.



Paraguayan lawmakers from the Chamber of Deputies meet for a final vote on the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) military agreement between the U.S. and Paraguay in Asuncion, Paraguay on March 10. (AP)

## Paraguay lawmakers OK defense deal allowing increased US military presence

ASUNCION, Paraguay, March 11, (AP): Paraguay's Chamber of Deputies approved a defense agreement allowing the temporary presence of US military and civilian personnel inside its borders, widely seen as a victory for the Trump administration, which has sought to strengthen its presence in Latin America.

The Status of Forces Agreement, or SOFA, was approved by a large majority of lawmakers and now awaits the signature of President Santiago Peña to take effect. Peña, one of Trump's closest allies in the region, is expected to sign the deal in the coming days.

The agreement passed with 53 votes in favor and eight against, and four abstentions out of a total 80 lawmakers. Fifteen were not present for the vote.

Signed by both countries in Washington in December, the agreement establishes a legal framework for the presence of

U.S. security forces in Paraguay for training, joint exercises, and humanitarian assistance. It also authorizes the United States to have criminal jurisdiction over its personnel while in the country.

The treaty, praised as "historic" by both the US State Department and Paraguayan Foreign Minister Rubén Ramírez Lezcano, was approved by the Paraguayan Senate last week, where debate was more polarized due to concerns over potential violations of sovereignty.

Some legislators argued against the agreement, citing a controversial provision to grant foreign troops immunity from prosecution, equivalent to that handed to diplomatic personnel. "We believe in international cooperation, but we also believe in strong states, respected institutions and real democratic sovereignty," said independent congressman Raúl Benítez.

the troops lost an unspecified number of soldiers and a military officer, without providing further details. It adds to a death toll of several soldiers and at least one officer in the past week. Security analysts estimate at least four military officers have been killed in that period. (AP)

**Death toll rises to 49 as floods hit Kenya:** At least 49 people have died, thousands displaced, and property destroyed, since March 6 when heavy downpour triggered massive flooding in more than a dozen Kenyan counties, including the capital, Nairobi.

As of Tuesday, flooding had killed 49 people, displaced over 2,600 families, and claimed more than 600 livestock countrywide, while the search for the missing had intensified, according to a joint-agency response secretariat.

Kenya Meteorological Department clarified that though the rains will subside this week, the risk of flooding remained high during the onset of the March-to-May rain season amid saturated soils. (Xinhua)

## Afghanistan rejects US allegations it engages in 'hostage diplomacy'

KABUL, Afghanistan, March 11, (AP): Afghanistan's Taliban government has rejected US allegations that it detains foreigners to obtain leverage over other countries, saying Afghan authorities arrest people for violating laws not to make a deal.

The US State Department on Monday announced the designation of Afghanistan as a sponsor of wrongful detention, accusing it of engaging in "hostage diplomacy." Afghanistan joined Iran as countries singled out by the US in the past two weeks for detaining Americans in hopes of extracting policy concessions.

On Tuesday, Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul called that designation "regrettable."

In July, the Taliban delegation to a UN-led meeting in Doha said that Afghans detained at the US military base in Guantanamo Bay should be exchanged for Americans detained in Afghanistan. The ministry on Tuesday described ongoing diplomatic discussions with the US on the matter as constructive. But it underlined that any foreigners detained in Afghanistan had violated Afghan law.

"The government of Afghanistan underscores that no foreign nationals have been detained for purposes of a deal," the ministry said. "Certain individuals have been detained on charges of violating established laws, and in many instances, they have been released in the normal course following the completion of legal procedures."



Afghan Taliban soldiers look toward the Pakistani side, on the Afghan side of the Torkham border crossing with Pakistan in Torkham, Afghanistan on Feb 27. (AP)

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday warned Americans not to travel to Afghanistan, saying that the Taliban "continues to unjustly detain our fellow Americans and other foreign nationals."

"The Taliban continues to use terrorist tactics, kidnapping individuals for ransom or to seek policy concessions. These despicable tactics need to end," Rubio said.

Nation marks sharpest shift to right since dictatorship

## José Antonio Kast takes office as Chile prez

SANTIAGO, Chile, March 11, (AP): Chile's ultraconservative José Antonio Kast takes office as president Wednesday in what will mark the Latin American nation's most pronounced shift to the right since the return of democracy in 1990.

The Trump-inspired political veteran won a landslide victory in December against government-backed communist candidate Jeannette Jara with the promise of fighting crime and curbing illegal immigration, a project that holds similarities to policies adopted by his US counterpart.

On the international stage, the lawyer and leader of the Chilean Republican Party comes to power at a geopolitical crossroads, caught between the United States striving to regain its influence in Latin America and China, the main trading partner for both Chile and much of the region.

"U.S.-China rivalry in Latin America has moved from rhetoric to implementation," said Mariano Machado, an analyst with risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft.

The inauguration of Kast, 60, comes with great anticipation, he said, noting



Chile's President-elect Jose Antonio Kast, (center right), talks with Spain's King Felipe during a meeting ahead of his inauguration in Santiago, Chile on March 10. (AP)

that the focus remains on both a closer alignment with the White House and the administration's capacity to negotiate with other key partners.

While Kast has avoided commenting on controversial issues at home

and abroad, he has made overtures to US President Donald Trump's administration and praised the U.S. operation that culminated in the capture of former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

## Africa

**Jihadis up attacks against Nigeria army:** Jihadist extremist groups, including Boko Haram and one of its factions, have been blamed for intensified attacks targeting Nigeria's military bases in the northeast of the country in the last week.

At least two officers and several soldiers have been killed in the attacks, which analysts say shows a remarkable level of coordination.

Over the weekend, Islamic extremists launched at least six attacks in Borno and Yobe states and in the wider Lake Chad region, spiriting away trucks and military hardware from the bases, according to security analysts and security reports.

The Nigerian military said in a statement that the latest attacks between Sunday and Monday were an "attempt by the terrorists to overwhelm troop positions."

Military spokesman Sani Uba said late Monday that

## Kuwait oil plunges to \$113.13 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil plunged USD 9.81 during Tuesday's trading to reach USD 113.13 per barrel compared with USD 122.94 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corpo-

ration (KPC) said Wednesday. Brent futures dropped USD 7.50 to USD 91.40 and West Texas Intermediate futures lost 7.42 to USD 87.35 pb.

Credibility built on data, not relationships

## Sheikha Munira Al-Sabah highlights resilience & challenges in real estate



Marwa Al-Bahrawi with Sheikha Munira Al-Sabah.

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Real estate appraiser Sheikha Munira Al-Sabah emphasized the real estate sector's extreme sensitivity to regional and regulatory shifts, describing the current economic climate as one marked by uncertainty.

She noted that geopolitical tensions create a psychological effect on investors, leading them to adopt a cautious and vigilant stance, particularly in the real estate market.

In an exclusive interview with the daily, Sheikha Munira affirmed that despite the sector's challenges, driven by the confluence of geopolitical variables with economic and legislative changes, the Kuwaiti and Gulf markets possess the resilience to absorb shocks. This resilience is supported by the countries' strong financial solvency, sustained infrastructure investment, and the robustness of their financial centers.

She also shared insights from her professional journey in real estate appraisal, including the obstacles she overcame as a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field.

Furthermore, Sheikha Munira provided an analysis of significant recent real estate decisions and offered a forecast for the future of real estate investment in Kuwait, considering the ongoing digital and regulatory transformations in the sector.

Below is the interview with Sheikha Munira Al-Sabah:

**Question:** Considering the current geopolitical tensions in the region, what is your assessment of the impact these developments will have on the country's economy and the performance of its real estate market?

**Answer:** With the escalation of geopolitical developments and the recent missile attacks targeting Kuwait, the economic arena is shrouded in uncertainty. These events psychologically affect investors, prompting them to adopt a cautious and watchful approach, particularly in the real estate sector.

Despite these challenges, the economic fundamentals of the Kuwaiti and Gulf markets are strong.

Oil continues to be the primary pillar of financial support in the GCC countries, and with the potential for rising oil prices, revenues will increase in the short term, despite the possible impact on inflation and operating costs.

Past experience proved the Kuwaiti and Gulf markets' ability to absorb shocks, with the support of the countries' financial solvency, continued investment in infrastructure, and strong financial centers.

The current phase requires a measured approach, and investors who monitor indicators and reassess their positions will find opportunities during these uncertain times.

The real estate market is experiencing a relative slowdown in investment and commercial transactions due to security uncertainties, while the residential sector remains more stable due to genuine demand linked to population growth and family needs.

### A Prominent Historical Presence

**Q:** You belong to a family with a prominent historical and political presence. What prompted you to choose a technical and specialized career path like real estate appraisal rather than the expected traditional paths?

**A:** Belonging to a family with a historical and political presence doesn't mean my path has to be traditional. I believe that every generation has its own way of serving its country.

Therefore, I chose real estate appraisal because it is a precise scientific field that combines financial analysis, economic insight, and an understanding of investment behavior.

I found in it a space where I could prove myself through competence, not just name.

**Q:** Did you encounter any preconceived notions or judgments related to your family affiliation when you entered the real estate sector? How did you deal with them professionally?

**A:** Yes, initially there were preconceived notions, some positive and some skeptical. Some expected doors to open automatically, while others tested me with extra rigor.

Between these two extremes, I handled it simply and let the numbers speak for themselves.

In the appraisal profession, there is no room for favoritism; a report is either professional or it is not.

**Q:** To what extent do you place an additional responsibility on you to prove your competence

and professional independence?

**A:** Undoubtedly, a family name is a responsibility before it is an advantage. I felt I had to be more disciplined and precise because any mistake would not be attributed to me alone.

Therefore, I focused on building an independent career path based on certifications, experience, and a professional reputation.

### The Real Estate Landscape

**Q:** What challenges did you face in your early days as a woman working in a "male-dominated" sector? Has the landscape changed today?

**A:** Initially, the biggest challenge was dealing with society's perception that real estate is a male-dominated field. This required me to prove my competence and professionalism more than others.

However, today the landscape is gradually changing, and we see more women participating in the sector and proving themselves. But success still requires patience, professionalism, and a commitment to integrity at every step.

**Q:** How would you describe your experience building your credibility as a real estate appraiser in a market that relies heavily on relationships and personal trust?

**A:** As a real estate appraiser, I believe that true credibility is built on accurate valuations and in-depth professional analysis, not just on relationships.

Therefore, I always rely on accurate data, comprehensive reports, and clear professional standards so that any investor or decision-maker can trust my appraisal.

Relationships can open doors, but what truly establishes my name in the market is my commitment to objectivity and transparency in every appraisal I provide.

**Q:** Do you think women's presence in the real estate appraisal and investment sector is still limited? What does the market need for greater empowerment?

**A:** Yes, it is still relatively limited, but opportunities exist. The market needs greater encouragement for professional specialization and the provision of training and qualifications, in addition to promoting an investment culture among women.

When the knowledge and the appropriate professional environment are available, women can be influential players in this sector.

### Digital Transformation

**Q:** In light of the digital transformation, will real estate appraisal remain dependent on human expertise? Or are we entering a phase where algorithms will play a dominant role?

**A:** Even with the digital transformation, real estate appraisal will still require human expertise.

Algorithms can analyze data and provide price indicators, but they cannot interpret qualitative factors such as location quality, urban planning changes, or the nature of demand in each area. Therefore, the future will be a blend of digital analysis and professional expertise.

**Q:** Do you believe that the Kuwaiti real estate market has become more legislatively mature in recent years, or does it still need further reforms?

**A:** The Kuwaiti real estate market has witnessed significant legislative development in recent years, but it still needs a more transparent and organized data infrastructure for real estate-related professions such as appraisal, brokerage, and asset management.

The more transparent the information, the more mature and stable the market will become.

### The Real Estate Investor

**Q:** In your opinion, what are the most common mistakes made by local real estate investors today?

**A:** One of the most common mistakes made by some local investors is relying on general expectations instead of rigorous financial analysis.

Many investment decisions are based on impressions or short-term market movements, while true real estate investment requires studying cash flows, operating costs, and market risks.

**Q:** How do you see the future of investment real estate in light of rising operating costs and the restructuring of subsidies?

**A:** Investment real estate will remain a leading sector, but profitability will depend on operational efficiency and cost management.

I believe the next phase will be one of smart management, not haphazard expansion.

# Business

## Company posts KD 8.9 million net profit for 2025

## KIC Board of Directors recommends cash dividend of 40 fils per share & bonus shares for capital increase

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Kuwait Insurance Company announced its financial results for the year ended 31 December 2025, reporting a gross profit of KD 11 million (USD 36 million). Net profit reached KD 8.9 million (USD 29.2 million), representing earnings per share of 48.53 fils.

The Board of Directors has recommended the distribution of cash dividends of 40% of the nominal share value, equivalent to 40 fils per share, for the financial year ended 31 December 2025. In addition, the Board recommended the distribution of bonus shares in order to increase the Company's capital from KD 19 million to KD 25 million, subject to the approval of the General Assembly and the relevant regulatory authorities.

This capital increase aims to support the Company's plans to expand its activities through the addition of a reinsurance license.

During the year, gross written premiums amounted to KD 60.6 million (USD 198.6 million), while insurance revenue reached KD 60.9 million (USD 199.5 million). Net operating profit stood at KD 3.2 million (USD 10.5 million).

The Company also recorded growth in net investment income, which increased to KD 5.9 million (USD 19.3 million) compared to KD 5.5 million (USD 18 million) in the previous year, representing an increase of 7.2%.

Retained earnings rose to KD 88.8



Sami Sharif and Ali Behbehani

million (USD 291 million) in 2025 compared to KD 85.2 million (USD 279 million) in the previous year, an increase of KD 3.6 million (USD 11.8 million), representing a growth rate of 4.2%.

Commenting on the results, Mr. Sami Sharif, Chief Executive Officer, stated that the Company's achievements are the result of sustained efforts made over previous years to build strong foundations enabling continued growth in both profits and premiums. He noted that the Company enjoys a solid and stable financial base.

Mr. Sharif added that Kuwait Insurance Company was awarded "Most Trusted Comprehensive Insurance Company 2025" by The Global Economics,

the international publication specializing in annual rankings across the fields of economics and business. This followed the Company's receipt of the "Most Trusted Insurance Company 2024" award from the same publication.

He further noted that the Company continues to maintain its strong credit ratings of A- from AM Best and A3 from Moody's, both with a stable outlook, reflecting the Company's financial strength and positioning it among the leading insurance companies locally and regionally.

This year, Kuwait Insurance Company also celebrates 65 years since its establishment, being the first insurance company founded in Kuwait and the

GCC. To mark this milestone, the Company launched a marketing campaign across billboards, outdoor media, and social media platforms throughout Kuwait.

In line with its commitment to developing national talent, the Company has also launched a Kuwaiti Actuary Development Program, offering specialized training and career opportunities in actuarial science, one of the rarest professional disciplines globally. The initiative aims to prepare a new generation of actuarial professionals within the insurance sector.

As part of its commitment to corporate social responsibility, the Company renewed its cooperation agreement with Omnia Recycling for plastic waste recycling, supporting environmental awareness and sustainability initiatives.

Kuwait Insurance Company also continues to invest in the development of its human capital through specialized training and educational programs aimed at enhancing employees' capabilities in delivering high-quality insurance services to institutions, individuals, and stakeholders, contributing to the advancement of society and the State of Kuwait.

Mr. Sharif concluded by expressing the Company's optimism for the future and extended his appreciation to the Board of Directors, shareholders, and employees for their continued support and contribution to the Company's achievements.

## Firms suffer losses

## Regional war grounds Kuwait's travel sector

By Najeh Bilal  
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The exchange of missiles and drones in the ongoing American-Israeli war against Iran has severely impacted the Gulf tourism and travel sector, bringing it to a temporary standstill and causing losses amounting to tens of billions of dollars in the first 10 days of the conflict.

On the extent of losses in Kuwait and the Gulf, two experts confirmed to the newspaper that the losses are ongoing, particularly since the air travel disruption has led to the paralysis of airlines and tourism activities due to fears of further missile strikes between the warring parties.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Federation of Travel and Tourism Offices Mohammad Al-Mutairi revealed that 650 local travel and tourism companies are incurring daily losses as a result of the precautionary measures taken by the State of Kuwait to protect public, the first of which is the suspension of flights.

He said the tourism sector is also suffering from stagnation, similar to the situation in other Gulf countries.

He stated that it is difficult to estimate the losses incurred by the tourism and travel sector in Kuwait now, but the losses are certainly enormous due to the suspension and cancellation of bookings.

He indicated that the continuation of this war will increase the losses, considering the travel and tourism offices must pay rent, which constitutes a large portion of their revenues, in addition to their obligation to pay salaries.

Meanwhile, economist Sultan Al-Jazzaf stated that the ongoing war put the Gulf states into a severe economic crisis, particularly affecting the tourism and travel sector, which is considered the most important economic sector in the Gulf after oil.

He said travel is an important pillar of the Gulf economy, pointing out that reports issued by international financial institutions predicted financial losses in the tourism and shopping sec-

tors in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries exceeding \$10 billion in the initial days of the war.

He cited data from the World Travel and Tourism Council, indicating that the travel and tourism revenues in Middle Eastern economies reach about \$370 billion annually, with the Gulf states accounting for at least \$195 billion of this amount.

He warned that if the war continues for more than two months, it will reduce global tourism revenues, which exceed \$11 trillion annually, according to the same data. He said the suspension of 30,000 Gulf flights in the first week of the war, in addition to disrupting millions of passengers, inflicted enormous losses on airlines, especially since the Gulf region is a transit hub between the East and West and it is home to some of the world's largest airlines. He added that the suspension of air traffic in Kuwait and the other

Gulf countries will lead to a recession in the hotel and retail sectors in the Gulf states.

He explained that a prolonged war will disrupt the Kuwaiti, Gulf and global economies, and its repercussions on the aviation sector will persist for a considerable period even after the war ends due to the congestion and overcrowding that Gulf airports will experience once the crisis subsides and flights are rescheduled.

He disclosed that among the losses suffered by the average person is the rise in global airfare prices resulting from the increase in jet fuel prices—which rose from between \$85 and \$90 per barrel in February to between \$150 and \$190 per barrel—in addition to the rise in insurance and shipping costs.

He stressed that the losses will not stop there, but will lead to tourists fearing the Gulf countries due to geopolitical tensions. "This will cause other indirect losses, including market contraction, especially since stimulating tourism is the main factor that stimulates all markets. When most markets are affected by recession, it could result in the termination of services for many workers," he concluded.

## 145 passengers safely transferred from Kuwait to Qaisumah by bus

## Jazeera Airways launches Qaisumah-Cairo flights following Kuwait airport suspension

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: Jazeera Airways earlier today, successfully operated its first flight from Qaisumah Airport (AQI) in Hafar Al Batin, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to Cairo International Airport (CAI) in Egypt, marking an important step in facilitating safe travel for passengers during the current operational situation in the region.

Earlier today, a total of 145 passengers were safely transported in a convoy of four buses from Kuwait to Qaisumah to board the outbound flight to Cairo. The initiative forms part of Jazeera Airways' efforts to support passenger mobility and ensure continuity of travel while operations from Kuwait International Airport remain temporarily suspended for safety reasons.

Jazeera Airways is also facilitating the return of passengers from Cairo to Kuwait through the same route.

The airline plans to gradually increase frequencies and expand the number of destinations served from Qaisumah, with additional flights to Egypt and Jordan being served while other flights to Turkey, India and other cities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expected to be added soon.

Commenting on the development Barathan Pappathi, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways, who is on the ground at Qaisumah Airport said:

"We are pleased to be able to facilitate a safe movement for passengers in the current circumstances. There is naturally a strong demand from passengers looking to travel and return home to Kuwait or back home and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible within the number of seats we have on offer at the moment. Our teams are continuing to work closely with government authorities and stakeholders in both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to ensure the smooth coordination of these journeys while we progressively add additional flights and new destinations. As we continue operations, the safety of our people and crew remains our highest priority. We would also like to thank General Authority for Civil Aviation (GACA), Dammam Airports Company (DACO), Saudi Ground Services (SGS), Kuwait DGCA, Ministry of Interior, and all other stakeholders for making this possible."

Passengers wishing to travel are encouraged to book their journeys through the Jazeera Airways website or mobile app. The Jazeera Airways call center is also available at 177 within Kuwait or +965 2205 4944 internationally, however waiting times may be longer than usual due to the high volume of calls.



Jazeera at Qaisumah Airport for 1st Flight to CAI.

## BUSINESS

Board of Directors recommends cash dividends of 3% &amp; 3% bonus shares

## The Commercial Real Estate Company (Al-Tijaria) achieves 2025 net profit growth of 4.6%

KUWAIT CITY, March 11: The Commercial Real Estate Company ("Al-Tijaria") announced its financial results for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2025, demonstrating growth in net profits and affirming the strength and efficiency of its operational and investment strategies. The company reported net profits of 16,314,480 Kuwaiti Dinars, marking an increase of 4.6% compared to the previous year.

Mr. Abdulfatah Marafie, Chairman of Al Tijaria, highlighted that in 2025, the Company achieved stable net revenues from operating activities, supported by high occupancy rates and consistent contributions from associate companies. While profits from investments were affected by lower valuation gains on certain assets, valuation gains from investment properties increased compared to the previous year, reflecting the Company's ongoing focus on strategic asset management.

Mr. Marafie also drew attention to other key performance indicators including return on equity, the aggregate return on total assets, and return on paid-up capital, which all showed improvements, emphasizing Al-Tijaria's commitment to continuing growth and enhancing returns for its shareholders in the coming years. The return on equity was 5.4% with an increase of 0.3% from the aggregate return on total assets was 3.1% with an increase of 0.1% and the return on paid-up capital was 8.6% with an increase of 0.6% compared to the previous year.

Based on these results, the company's board of directors recommended a cash dividend dis-

tribution of 3% of the nominal share value and a bonus share distribution of 3 (3 shares for every hundred shares held).

This announcement serves as a strong testament to Al-Tijaria Real Estate's ability and its commitment to the shareholders for seeking to achieve sustainable growth and further solidify its leading position in the real estate market.

Mr. Marafie emphasized that Al-Tijaria is closely monitoring the current geopolitical developments in the region and assessing their potential impact on the local market and regional and global markets. He noted that the Company enjoys a solid financial position and a flexible investment strategy that enables it to effectively navigate various market changes. He added that Al-Tijaria remains committed to executing its plans to achieve sustainable growth by enhancing operational performance and diversifying its income sources locally and internationally, ensuring the protection of shareholders' rights and the creation of long-term value.

In line with this strategy, during 2025 Al-Tijaria and its subsidiaries invested in the GCC warehouse and logistics sector, targeting logistics assets across Saudi Arabia and the GCC. This investment reflects the Company's commitment to expanding its regional portfolio and capitalizing on the growing demand for logistics infrastructure. In addition, Al-Tijaria is acting as a technical advisor to one of the investment managers in Saudi Arabia in this sector.

During 2025, Al-Tijaria also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with China State Construction Engineering Corporation



Abdulfatah Marafie

Ltd. (CSCEC) to jointly explore selected development opportunities and potential government-tendered projects in Kuwait.

Additionally, in July 2025, a subsidiary of Al-Tijaria signed a partnership agreement with the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) to develop a 22-year project in the Qairawan area in Kuwait, comprising a commercial complex, a health club, and public parking facilities.

Mr. Marafie emphasized that despite challenges, Al-Tijaria remained committed to social

responsibility, guided by corporate governance principles. Under the "We Care" banner, the company marked the tenth edition of "Ishraqet Amal," celebrating the talents of determined children through artistic and theatrical performances that highlighted their role in societal progress. In line with this commitment, Al-Tijaria also accommodated the first edition of the Ishraqet Amal Art Exhibition, organized to support and empower individuals of determination, further reinforcing its dedication to fostering inclusion and enabling their active participation in the community.

Al-Tijaria reinforced its commitment to CSR through a wide range of social, environmental, educational, and health initiatives. The ninth edition of the "Plant a Tree in My Country" initiative, alongside a "Beach Cleanup" campaign at Kuwait Towers Beach, encouraged volunteers, individuals, and schools to engage in environmental activities, promoting sustainability and community awareness. The Company also expanded its cultural and community outreach by holding the third edition of the "Arabic Is My Language" program at Symphony Complex, aimed at strengthening Arabic identity and developing language skills among children and the younger generation. In addition, the Company organized a visit to NBK Children's Hospital that included interactive and recreational activities and the distribution of gifts to children with cancer, bringing joy to their hearts and alleviating their suffering, reflecting the Company's ongoing commitment to supporting the most vulnerable segments of

society.

In support of youth empowerment, Al-Tijaria sponsored the graduation projects of students from the College of Engineering at Kuwait University, in addition to participating in the Internship Fair organized by INJAZ Kuwait in 2025. The Company also sponsored the Sustainability Award under the INJAZ Kuwait Company Program, as part of its commitment to promoting the principles of sustainable entrepreneurship.

Health awareness remained a priority through hosting public campaigns at Boulevard Mall, organizing employee sessions with New Mowasat Hospital and the Dasman Diabetes Institute, and conducting blood donation drives in partnership with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank across Company properties.

Mr. Marafie expressed profound thanks to the shareholders, board of directors, executive team, and employees for their steadfast support and dedication. He concluded with a prayer for the safety and prosperity of Kuwait, its rulers, its people, and the global community.

Marafie concluded his statement by praying to God to protect Kuwait and its people from all harm and for Kuwait to enjoy security, safety and stability under the wise leadership of His Highness, the Emir of the country, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, may God preserve and protect them.

## Trading value hits KD 61.5 million

## Boursa Kuwait closes higher, gains 49 points

KUWAIT CITY, March 11, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed trading on Wednesday with its general index inclining by 49.45 points, or 0.58 percent, to reach 8,641.68 points, with 195.2 million shares traded through 15,306 cash deals, valued at KD 61.5 million (about USD 188 million).

The Main Market Index inclined by 60.38 points, or 0.76 percent, to reach 7,990.36 points, through trading of 82.7 million shares across 7,531 cash deals, valued at KD 14.3 million (about USD 437

million).

The Premier Market Index also rose by 49.64 points, or 0.54 percent, to reach 9,228.41 points, through trading of 112.5 million shares across 7,775 deals, valued at KD 47.2 million (about USD 144.4 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index increased by 73.74 points, or 0.90 percent, to reach 8,303.97 points, through trading of 74.2 million shares across 6,263 cash deals, valued at KD 12.11 million (about USD 37 million).

## Nikkei &amp; Kospi up, Hang Seng down

## Stocks steady but oil rises as Iran conflict rattles markets

BANGKOK, March 11, (AP): World shares were mixed on Wednesday as the rally of the past two days faded and oil prices resumed climbing with no end to the war with Iran in sight.

Oil prices have remained sharply below their peaks near \$120 a barrel hit on Monday. Such spikes have been rocking financial markets worldwide because of worries that the war could block the global flow of oil and natural gas for a long time.

Early Wednesday, the price for a barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, was up 2% at \$89.52. U.S. benchmark crude oil was up 2.5% at \$85.55 per barrel.

Crude prices had traded higher, but moderated after Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told reporters her government would release emergency oil reserves as soon as Monday.

The future for the S&P 500 was 0.2% higher and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 0.1%.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX slipped 1.5% to 23,613.47, while the CAC 40 in Paris fell 0.9% to 7,986.41. Britain's FTSE 100 also shed 0.9%, to 10,285.50.

Markets were mixed in Asia, where Tokyo's Nikkei 225 gained 1.4% to 55,025.37.

South Korea's Kospi picked up 1.4% to 5,609.95 after gaining more than 3% earlier in the day.

In Hong Kong, the Hang Seng fell back, slipping 0.2% to 25,898.76, while the Shanghai Composite index climbed 0.3% to 4,133.43.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.6% to \$8,743.50.

Taiwan's benchmark climbed 4.1% and the Sensex in India fell 1.8%. In Thailand, where worries over oil and gas supplies have prompted the government to order energy-saving measures, Bangkok's SET gained 0.1%.

Oil prices plunged Monday after hitting their most expensive level since 2022 as President Donald Trump raised hopes that the war may end soon when he told CBS News that he thought "the war is very complete, pretty much."

Both sides have since sharpened their rhetoric.

The U.S. said it took out more than a dozen minelaying Iranian vessels Tuesday, and the Islamic Republic vowed to block the re-

gion's oil exports, saying it would not allow "even a single liter" to be shipped to its enemies.

"With Iran continuing to threaten vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz, the focus will be on how the U.S. and other major economies will ensure the flowing of crude oil via this narrow passage and alternative routes to help stabilize prices," Fawad Razaqzada of Forex.com wrote in a market report.

The International Energy Agency is considering a major release of emergency oil reserves but that will only buy time, he said. "The real issue is the disruption to supply flows, and the longer that continues unresolved, the higher oil prices are likely to go if the Iran war continues."

Trump has remained clear about his desire to keep the Strait of Hormuz open. The war has effectively blocked the waterway off Iran's coast, where a fifth of the world's oil sails on a typical day.

On Tuesday, the S&P 500 dipped 0.2%, a day after its latest wild swings caused by extreme moves in the oil market. The Dow fell 0.1% and the Nasdaq composite edged less than 0.1% higher.

Oracle's shares on the Nasdaq surged 11% in premarket trading early Wednesday after the company reported its earnings and revenue jumped 20% in the last quarter, much better than analysts had forecast.

Stock markets have a history of bouncing back relatively quickly from military conflicts, as long as oil prices don't stay too high for too long. Uncertainty about whether that may happen this time around has led to stunning swings up and down for markets worldwide, often hour-to-hour.

If oil prices do stay high for long, household budgets already stretched by high inflation could snap under the pressure. Companies would see their own bills jump for fuel and to stock items on their store shelves or in their data warehouses. It all raises the possibility of a worst-case scenario for the global economy, "stagflation," where growth stagnates and inflation remains high.

In other dealings early Wednesday, the dollar rose to 158.41 Japanese yen from 158.05 yen. The euro fell to \$1.1605 from \$1.1610.

## Global economy faces stagflation risk as energy prices stay high: NBK report

By National Bank of Kuwait

If the current energy price shock is sustained, the global economy is bound to face a stagflationary hit. Global bond yields are up sharply since the onset of the military conflict in the Middle East on 28 February, reflecting higher expected inflation. Obviously, this energy price shock greatly complicates monetary policy for all central banks. The key question is how long will this military conflict last. Of course, it is difficult to predict that with a high level of certainty. However, irrespective of the military developments and whether or not the goals of the war will be achieved, we believe the below points are important to keep an eye on. The higher oil prices go, and the longer they stay elevated, the greater the economic pressure on President Trump to stop the war. This should be seen hand in hand with the fact that there are midterm elections in the US in November. The current affordability problem in the US is central to this thinking: higher inflation and especially higher gasoline prices (which have an outsized impact on inflation perceptions) will deliver a further hit to affordability. Also, and related to oil prices, a sharp drawdown in the stock market and spiking government bond yields will add to the economic pressures, not to mention the concurrent hit to economic growth. Finally, Trump has a key visit to China scheduled for the end of March, and we think that is another factor that has some weight in determining the war's end.

US: Economy likely to stay resilient despite a weak jobs market; Middle East war refuels inflation worries

Continued robust household spending, the ongoing tech/AI investment boom, the fiscal policy boost, and the prior easing in monetary policy should keep the economy resilient. The job market continues to be weak with subdued hiring (an average monthly increase of only 6K jobs in the past three months), but also low firing keeping the unemployment rate (4.4%) relatively low. However, inflation concerns, which never really abated, have been re-ignited given the spike in global energy prices, risking inflation (latest core PCE inflation at 3%) remaining firmly above the Fed's 2% target in 2026. The futures market now indicates just one 25-bps interest rate cut in 2026. The dependence on GCC oil is limited given imports are at near multi-decade lows while US oil production is close to record highs. Meanwhile, the US Supreme Court's cancellation of IEEPA tariffs is unlikely to change the broader picture given President Trump's resolve to recreate the tariff wall through other legal means. Hence, average tariff rates will likely end up being similar to the ones prevailing pre-court decision. However, rebuilding the tariff wall is a process that will be complex as well as lengthy and uncertainty is higher in the interim.

With the end of Chair Powell's term in May, the Fed is set to face challenging times given the US administration's repeated attempts to influence monetary policy. The nomination of Kevin Warsh as the next Fed Chair likely amplifies the challenges. We think that his prior scathing criticism of the Fed, the fact that he is coming with a pre-set mandate to steeply cut rates, his pledge for "regime change" at the Fed, and the fact that some of his monetary policy views are starkly different than those of other FOMC members are matters that will likely complicate Warsh's job.

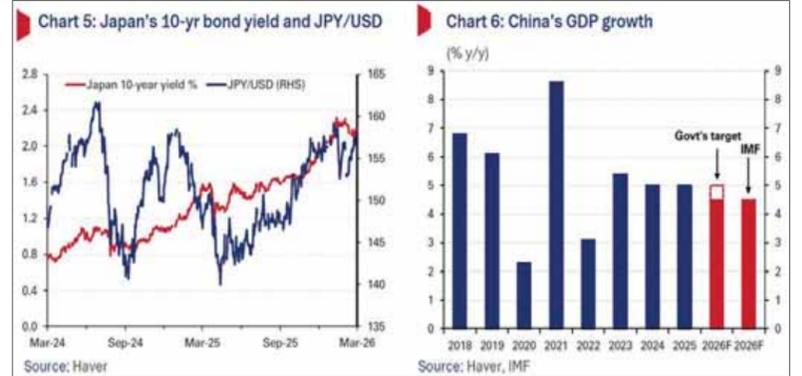
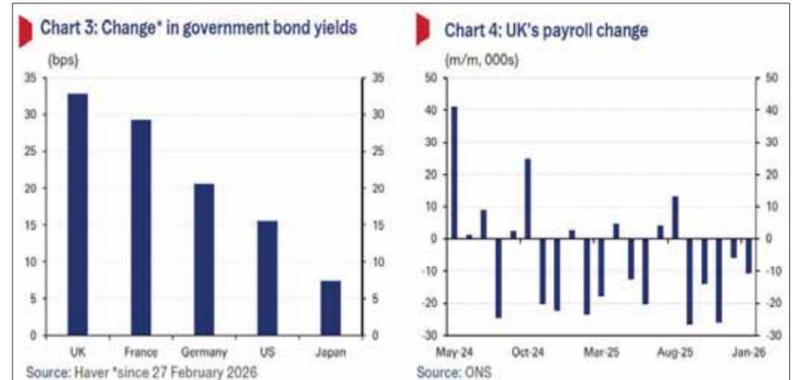
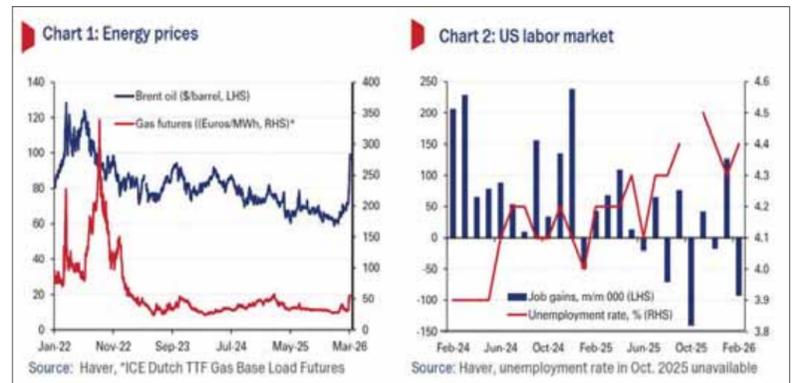
Eurozone: 2025 growth stronger than expected but energy shock hits confidence and may alter ECB policy

The Eurozone ended 2025 with GDP growth of 0.2% q/q in Q4, driving full-year growth to 1.4%, up from 0.9% in 2024, and much better than earlier expectations. Before the current energy price shock, economic activities had likely been steady with even improving manufacturing output (February's PMI at 50.8, the highest since 2022). Inflation has continued to be at or near target since early 2025 (latest at 1.9%), but is bound to strengthen given much higher energy prices, a relatively high weight for energy (9%) in the CPI basket, and the indirect impact on non-energy goods and services. As a reminder, in 2022, the energy price shock contributed to inflation surpassing 10% during that year. In terms of energy dependence, EU imports of GCC oil are limited but LNG imports (from Qatar and the UAE) account for around 12%-14% of total LNG imports. For the ECB, the higher expected inflation may drive a shift in policy after expectations had been for no-change in policy in the remainder of 2026. On the trade deal with the US, the EU has paused its ratification given the Supreme Court ruling. While the expectation remains that the US-EU trading status quo can still be endured, the uncertainty has definitely increased.

UK: Signs of recovery in growth but the energy price shock renews the caution

Before the Middle East conflict commenced and

## Bond yields surge on inflation fears



the subsequent spike in global energy prices, the UK's economy signaled a recovery in growth supported by the unwinding of budget-related anxiety, with business activity expanding robustly (February's PMI at 53.7, near the highest since April 2024) and January's retail sales growth at a 20-month high. However, the job market remains weak, with a five-year high unemployment rate (5.2%) in October-December and sustained job losses (cumulative 173K since November 2024), resulting in a lower-than-expected 0.1% q/q GDP growth in Q4, matching Q3's. While the UK has insignificant dependence on GCC's oil and gas flows (1% of total energy needs), the economy's vulnerability through higher energy prices has raised uncertainty about 2026. The BoE had previously projected inflation falling to around its 2% target from April helped by budgetary measures. However, if elevated energy prices persist, inflation will re-accelerate over the coming period, putting the bank in a difficult situation. The futures market, before the start of the Middle East conflict, had indicated two bank rate cuts in 2026, but now the rate outlook is dependent on the duration of the energy price shock. Finally, PM Starmer seems to be struggling to maintain his premiership amid the Mandelson-Epstein links fallout, Labor's recent poor by-election performance, and some opposition within his party.

Japan: PM Takaichi's policies to lift growth; Japan significantly exposed to GCC oil

The Japanese economy ended the year on a relatively weak note, with GDP increasing a lower-than-expected 0.3% q/q in Q4, putting full-year 2025 growth at 1.2%. The BoJ, in January, upgraded FY2026 (ending March 2027) growth to 1% from 0.7%. The growth outlook could get a further uplift given PM Takaichi's ambitious fiscal agenda, which includes a suspension of the consumption tax and increases to government spending. Optimism has been on the rise following the LDP's historic win in Feb-

ruary's snap parliamentary elections with the composite PMI hitting a 33-month high of 53.9 in February. Despite that, Takaichi's policies could still face roadblocks if fiscal pressures intensify and government bond yields continue to rise. Meanwhile, inflation continued to moderate, with the headline rate in January below the BoJ's 2% target for the first time in nearly four years although a measure of core inflation (excluding fresh food and energy) remains at 2.6%. With the majority of Japan's oil imports coming from the GCC, the country will be sharply impacted by the current crisis, although its ample stockpiles will lessen the blow.

China: 2026 growth target set at 4.5% to 5%; all eyes on President Trump's end-March visit to China

The Chinese economy grew by 4.5% y/y in Q4, the slowest pace in three years, but full-year 2025 growth was 5%, hitting the government's target. Investment activity continued to deteriorate with a fixed asset investment falling 3.8% in 2025, a first annual decline since the pandemic. Housing prices extended their downturn, with the drop in new home prices widening to 3.1% y/y in January, reflecting Beijing's difficulty in stabilizing the sector. The PBoC left the LPR rates steady in February, keeping them unchanged since May 2025. Authorities set a growth target of 4.5% to 5% for 2026, the lowest since 1991. However, given the challenges and the steadily decreasing population, achieving such growth is still considered very positive in our view. China is highly reliant on GCC energy imports and will be significantly impacted if the conflict drags. However, China's ample oil inventories and its strong leverage over Iran should soften the blow. All eyes will be on President Trump's visit to China which is scheduled for 31 March - 02 April, and which, at a bare minimum, will cement and extend the truce currently on hold between the two countries.

## BUSINESS

## Trump announces first new US oil refinery in 50 years

WASHINGTON, March 11, (KUNA): US President Donald Trump unveiled a landmark deal with India on Tuesday to construct the first major oil refinery on US soil in half a century.

"America is returning to real energy dominance," Trump posted on his Truth Social account. "Today, I am proud to announce that America First Refining is opening the first new U.S. oil refinery in 50 years in Brownsville, Texas."

The President estimated the deal's value at USD 300 billion, calling

it the largest in U.S. history and a "massive win for American workers, energy, and the people of South Texas."

The project will be a joint venture with Reliance Industries, India's largest privately-held energy company.

Trump projected that the facility would strengthen national security, bolster domestic production, and be the "cleanest refinery in the world."

"It will power global exports and bring thousands of long-overdue jobs to a region that deserves it," he concluded.

## Germany, Austria release oil reserves after International Energy Agency call

G7 ministers back strategic energy measures amid Iran war

**BERLIN, March 11, (AP): Germany and Austria said Wednesday they are releasing parts of their oil reserves following an International Energy Agency request for members to release a record 400 million barrels to help temper energy price spikes due to the Iran war.**

Japan also said it will release some of its reserves starting Monday.

Group of Seven energy ministers met Tuesday at IEA headquarters in Paris. IEA executive director Fatih Birol said afterwards they had discussed all available options, including making IEA emergency oil stocks available to the market.

The largest-ever previous collective release of emergency stocks by IEA member countries was 182.7 million barrels, in the wake of the energy shock prompted by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

IEA members currently hold over 1.2 billion barrels of public emergency oil stocks, with a further 600 million barrels of industry stocks held under

government obligation.

It was not immediately clear how much Germany and Austria were releasing.

Germany's economy minister Katherina Reiche said the country would release parts of its oil reserves following the IEA request "to release oil reserves amounting to 400 million barrels, which is a good 54 million tons."

She added it would take a couple of days before the delivery of the first quantities.

"Germany stands behind the IEA's most important principle of mutual solidarity," Reiche said.

In response to U.S. and Israeli strikes, Iran has attacked commercial ships across the Persian Gulf, escalating a campaign of squeezing the oil-rich region as global energy concerns mount. Iran has effectively stopped cargo traffic in the Strait of Hormuz through which about a fifth of all oil is shipped from the Persian Gulf toward the Indian Ocean.

Iran has also targeted oil fields and refineries in Gulf Arab nations, aiming at generating enough global economic pain to pressure the United States and Israel to end their strikes. Reports of sea mines

allegedly laid by Iran in the Strait of Hormuz have also fueled concerns about the security of international energy supplies.

G7 energy ministers on Tuesday announced they supported in principle "the implementation of proactive measures to address the situation, including the use of strategic reserves."

According to the IEA, export volumes of crude and refined products are currently at less than 10% of pre-war levels.

Austrian Economy Minister Wolfgang Hattmannsdorfer said his country was releasing part of the emergency oil reserve and extending the national strategic gas reserve, adding: "One thing is clear: in a crisis, there must be no crisis winners at the expense of commuters and businesses."

The German government also said it will introduce a measure to allow gas stations in Germany to raise fuel prices no more than once a day. The federal government wants to introduce this as quickly as possible, Reiche said.

In Austria, starting Monday, price increases at gas stations will be allowed only three times a week, the country's economy minister said.

## Mortgage rates dip below 6%

## US existing home sales rise 1.7% in February

WASHINGTON, March 11, (AP): Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes picked up in February from the previous month as home shoppers took advantage of easing mortgage rates and a modest increase in properties on the market heading into the spring homebuying season.

Existing home sales rose 1.7% last month from January to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.09 million units, the National Association of Realtors said Tuesday.

Sales fell 1.4% compared with February last year, with every region except the South posting lower sales versus a year earlier. The latest sales figure topped the 3.84 million pace economists were expecting, according to FactSet.

"Good momentum, but nonetheless sales are still below one year ago," Lawrence Yun, NAR's chief economist, said during a conference call.

Home prices continued to rise last month, albeit more slowly. The national median sales price increased 0.3% in February from a year earlier to \$398,000, an all-time high for any February on data going back to 1999, NAR said. Home prices have risen on an annual basis for 32 months in a row.

The latest sales trends follow a dismal January, when existing home sales posted their biggest monthly decline in nearly four years and the slowest annualized sales pace in more than two years, although NAR has since revised January's sales data modestly higher.

The U.S. housing market has been in a slump dating back to 2022, when mortgage rates began to climb from pandemic-era lows. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes remained stuck last year at 30-year lows.

Sales have been hovering close to a 4-million annual pace now going back to 2023. That's well short of the 5.2-million annual pace that's historically been the norm.

A sharp run-up in home prices, especially in the early years of this decade, and a chronic shortage of homes nationally worsened by years of below-average home construction have left many aspiring homeowners priced out of the market.

At the same time, mortgage rates have been trending lower, boosting the purchasing power for home shoppers who can afford to buy at cur-

rent rates.

The average rate on a 30-year mortgage dropped two weeks ago to just under 6% for the first time since late 2022, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac.

First-time buyers were among those who took advantage last month of easing mortgage rates. They made up 34% of all home purchases in February, matching the highest level in the last five years, Yun said.

However, the 10-year Treasury yield, which lenders use to price home loans, has climbed following the spike in oil prices since the Iran war started, which could lead to higher mortgage rates just as the spring homebuying season gets going.

"Despite mortgage rates falling below 6% briefly, international conflict has sent them higher in recent days," Lisa Sturtevant, chief economist at Bright MLS, said in an email. "If the conflict with Iran is limited, the housing market could rebound quickly. However, a prolonged conflict could stall home sales activity this spring."

Affordability remains a challenge for many aspiring homeowners, especially first-time buyers who don't have equity from an existing home to put toward a new home purchase. Uncertainty over the economy and a job market increasingly showing signs of strain is also keeping many would-be buyers on the sidelines, economists say.

Those who can afford to buy are benefiting from more properties on the market, although home inventory levels remain well below historical norms.

There were 1.29 million unsold homes at the end of February, up 2.4% from January and up 4.9% from February last year, NAR said. That's still well short of the roughly 2 million homes for sale that was typical before the COVID-19 pandemic.

February's month-end inventory translates to a 3.8-month supply at the current sales pace. Traditionally, a 5- to 6-month supply is considered a balanced market between buyers and sellers.

"We really do need more inventory to show up," Yun said, noting that if it doesn't improve come spring, and more buyers jump into the market, it could push up home prices.

## Oil prices up 20%, gas prices up 50%

## UK inflation could rise to 3% amid Middle East conflict

LONDON, March 11, (KUNA): Inflation in the UK might increase from the roughly predicted two percent to reach three if energy prices remain at what they are due to the ongoing situation in the Middle East, said an official from the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) on Tuesday.

Speaking to British lawmakers following OBR's forecast, a member of the office committee, David Miles, pointed out that the impact of the US-Israeli occupations military strikes against Iran and the latter's closure of the Strait of Hormuz will have a significant impact on UK prices and was "completely unwelcome".

"Right now, if prices don't change from where they are - both the spot prices and market expectations for futures prices, which is particularly important for the Ofgem price cap - we think the inflation rate would end the year not near 2 percent, but nearer 3 percent," he added.

He indicated that oil prices were about 20 percent higher from where they were before the military action, adding that gas prices were up by 50 percent.

"If there's no change in the picture on prices from now on forward, we estimate something like a 1 percent higher level of consumer prices in the UK by the end of the year," he said.

"We had thought, without taking all this into account, that the inflation rate in the UK might be pretty close to 2 percent".

Yesterday, Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that the British government was assessing the impact of the Iran war in the Middle East and would work with partners in the region and Europe to mitigate its effects especially within the economic domain.

Despite the reassurance, it remains to be seen whether Britain could handle situation, following Starmer's recent during calls with Germany and Italy, stressing the importance of keeping navigation in the Strait of Hormuz free.

## China's auto sales dip in February as phase out of subsidies for trade-ins hits demand

HONG KONG, March 11, (AP): China's domestic passenger car sales fell sharply in February from a year earlier, industry figures showed Wednesday, reflecting weakening demand as some trade-in subsidies are phased out.

Only 950,000 units of passenger cars were sold in China last month, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, down from nearly 1.4 million vehicles sold in January. It was the fourth straight month of year-on-year declines.

Overall passenger car sales including exports dropped 15.4% year-on-year, even as shipments overseas jumped 58% to 586,000, highlighting the challenges for Chinese carmakers trying to offset sluggish domestic sales by expanding into foreign markets.

Automakers have been struggling with

weak demand as some local governments have been phasing out trade-in subsidies to encourage purchases of electric vehicles. Chinese consumers have also been steering clear of big purchases, feeling a pinch from a slowing economy and protracted property slump.

The Lunar New Year festival, China's biggest holiday, took place in February, which also likely hurt sales.

Domestic car sales in China will likely continue to weaken this year due to the reductions of government subsidies, said Chris Liu, a Shanghai-based senior analyst at advisory group Omdia.

Chinese automakers make far more vehicles than the home market can absorb and that has led to a fierce price war as they compete for market share.

BYD, which overtook Tesla in 2025 as

the world's biggest EV maker, said its sales fell 41% in February from a year earlier to 190,190 vehicles. Geely Auto, another Chinese auto group, reported a modest 1% rise in sales in February to 206,160.

To help offset domestic weakness, Chinese carmakers will continue to boost exports this year, analysts said.

China's overall passenger car exports could grow roughly 20% in 2026 from last year, according to Yichao Zhang, a partner at AlixPartners. Developing regions such as Southeast Asia are key markets for Chinese automakers seeking to expand sales.

Chinese vehicle manufacturers are likely adapt by cutting costs and shifting toward more high-end models with bigger profit margins, said Claire Yuan, director of corporate ratings for China autos at S&P Global Ratings.

## War sparks debate over energy policy

## Americans feel economic strain as Iran war drives up gas prices

DE SOTO, March 11, (AP): Standing alongside his son's Ford pickup truck at a central Iowa gas station off Interstate 80, Francisco Castillo was not happy.

He had voted for President Donald Trump in the last election. He believed Trump had strengthened the economy in his first term, and he wanted more of that.

"I thought that he was going to bring some of those things back," said Castillo, a 43-year-old factory worker. And now? "He said he was going to bring gas down, but the war in Iran is now making everything worse."

It seems a country divided on so many fronts is finding common ground in pain at the pump, where the cost of the Iran war is hitting Americans squarely in the wallet and aggravating people across the political spectrum.

For Castillo and many others filling their tanks on Monday at gas stations in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Florida, North Carolina and Iowa, it was a reminder that politicians' promises aren't going to pay the bills.

"They do what benefits them," Castillo said. "I have to go to work every day no matter what."

Some are optimistic that the sticker shock will be short-lived. Others blame corporate interests rather than the president. Electric vehicle owners are especially grateful about their decision as they cruise past gas stations with escalating prices.

The national average gas price was \$3.48 a gallon on Monday, up from \$2.90 a month ago, before the war, according to tracking by AAA.

The higher prices are a reminder of how Trump has veered from his campaign promises. Not only were Americans embroiled in a new war overseas, they were paying for it every time they filled up their tanks.

The Republican president insisted the conflict was worth it.

"We're putting an end to all of this threat once and for all, and the result will be lower oil prices, oil and gas prices for American families," he said at a news conference Monday. The war, he said, is "just an excursion into something that had to be done."

Robert Coon from Omaha, Nebraska, filled up on his way to Ames, Iowa. Though not a Trump voter, he believed the strikes in Iran needed to happen.

Even so, he fears U.S. involvement is not going to go the way he wants, which is "in, out, over."

A Quinnipiac poll conducted over the weekend found about half of registered voters oppose the U.S. military action against Iran while about 4 in 10 support it. The vast majority of Democrats were against it (89%), the vast majority of Republicans for it (85%) and independents against it (60%).

Overall, three-quarters were concerned about the war raising gas and oil prices. Recent polling also suggests that the vast majority of voters expect the U.S. action against Iran to last months or longer, and many worry it is making the U.S. less safe.

For now, surging prices aren't keeping Ray Albrecht from hauling his 32-foot (11 meter) camper on his Silverado pickup truck around the country as he attended motorcycle festivals like Bike Week in Florida's Daytona Beach.

However, he said he would stop traveling if the price reached \$5 a gallon since he only gets 8 miles per gallon with his truck and camper. He stopped at a Speedway gas station off Interstate 4 in Winter Park, Florida, paying \$3.59 per gallon for half a tank to keep him rolling toward his home in Wisconsin.

"I've been pretty grateful that the gas prices have been really reasonable" at least until the last week, said Albrecht, 67, who identified as an independent voter.

At the same gas station, Republican-leaning Tyler Nepple, 23, said the price of gas for his Toyota Tacoma may shape his vote in the midterm

elections this fall but won't change his driving habits.

"You've just got to fill it up and bite the bullet and hope that the prices go back down - that's all I can really do," said Nepple, who runs a startup in the Orlando, Florida, area. "I still have to get from point A to point B, and I need gas to do that."

Kathryn Price Engelhard, 70, gassed up her Subaru Forester at a Wawa in Morrisville, Pennsylvania, in the Philadelphia suburbs. A retired nonprofit executive director and "strong Democrat," she said she had to stop at over a half a tank because she's on a fixed income. Last week, she paid only \$30 to top herself off.

Similarly, she cut her order for home heating oil by half because that cost is up, too. "I look at the prices of oil in the past and the stupid war, how did we - how did anybody - think that that was not going to impact oil?" she asked. "Of course it's impacting oil."

In Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania, Vivian Knight, 53, is hoping her fill-up last week will last her a month. She is a former exterminator out on disability. "If I had to go to work or something like that, gas prices would be ridiculous," she said.

Speaking of Trump, she said "he kind of starts some problems that really don't need to be started," and she puts the Iran war in that category.

The saga will have no effect on how Joey Perillo, 74, will vote in November.

"The gas price could have gone down to two cents a gallon and I'd vote against him," said the volunteer firefighter, retired actor and political independent from Yardley, Pennsylvania.

In the Detroit suburb of Livonia, Anthony Gooden, 57, sized up the plight of gas-powered vehicle owners while waiting for his Chevy Equinox EV to charge at a station.

"Whoa, they're going through it right now," said Gooden, 57, from nearby Redford Township. "And it's only getting worse."

Gooden ditched his internal combustion engine vehicle over a year ago and said days like these reinforce that decision. "You're happier now," he said. "No comparison."

In Ann Arbor, Michigan, Elvana Hammoud, 55, a diversity strategist, drives a Mach-E electric SUV as well as a Ford Raptor truck that costs \$100 to fill up when gas is over \$3. It's an easy choice which to use more now.

"I mostly drive the EV, especially to work because I have a long commute," she said. The Raptor is for snowy days, short errands or when moving something big. "I used it more frequently just for fun when gas prices were lower."

Trump has put up a number of roadblocks to rapid expansion of electric vehicles in favor of policies promoting gasoline-powered ones. Among them, his tax and spending bill passed by Congress last year eliminated federal tax credits that saved buyers up to \$7,500 off new and used EV purchases.

Kevin Kertes, 65, filled his pickup at a Shell station in Graham, North Carolina, where unleaded started at \$3.34 per gallon, up from \$2.59 in the area last week.

The Republican retiree asserted that "everyone who is selling fuel for these elevated prices is price gouging, and there's nothing we can do about it because we all have to have gasoline to keep driving."

Ken Shuttlesworth, a 70-year-old IT manager from Graham who described himself as an independent Democrat, said he can absorb higher gas costs but worries about his children and grandchildren and others who live closer to the financial margins.

Trump, he said, should have consulted Congress and had a more public discussion before taking the country to war.

"We have somebody who doesn't follow the policy," he said. "He follows his instincts."

## Q4 GDP up 0.4%

## S. Africa's economy grows 1.1%

JOHANNESBURG, March 11, (Xinhua): Though South Africa's economy grew by 1.1 percent in 2025, an economist warned Tuesday that the pace of expansion remains "slow and uneven" amid persistent structural challenges.

According to the latest data released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), the country's gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 0.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2025, marking the fifth consecutive quarter of economic growth.

Raymond Parsons, an economist at the North-West University Business School, said the latest data confirm that South Africa has been experiencing a slow and uneven economic recovery over the past year.

Data from Stats SA show that household final consumption expenditure increased by about 3.6 percent in 2025, contributing roughly 2.4 percentage points to overall GDP growth.

Parsons noted that household consumption spending continued to carry much of the burden in sustaining economic activity, while the improvement in fixed capital formation, including infrastructure investment, was encouraging for long-term growth prospects.

However, he cautioned that the 1.1 percent expansion remains disappointing when compared with the 1.6 percent growth forecast for 2026 in the recent national budget. "The Budget revenue projections also depend on the anticipated economic growth rate be-

ing realized," he said.

Stats SA also reported that nominal GDP at market prices reached about 7.6 trillion rand (about 469 billion U.S. dollars) in 2025, roughly 289 billion rand higher than in 2024, reflecting expansion across several major industries, including finance, trade, personal services, and mining.

Despite these improvements, Parsons said that South Africa is still struggling to generate the momentum needed to expand the economy faster and meet socioeconomic expectations. Although the macroeconomic environment has improved, the country still faces the challenge of making faster progress toward the government's target of reaching 3.5 percent growth by 2030.

He also warned that the domestic outlook remains vulnerable to global uncertainty, including potential economic fallout from geopolitical tensions involving the United States, Israel, and Iran.

In a worst-case scenario, Parsons said a prolonged conflict could reduce South Africa's growth by about 0.1 percentage points in 2026, while also adding to inflationary pressures.

"The global and South African economies have entered a period of heightened uncertainty," he said, adding that the situation underscores the need for accelerated structural reforms to strengthen economic resilience and support sustained, job-creating growth.

## Academy leaders promise spectacular show this year

# Oscars countdown begins with O'Brien return, 'moving' tribute

LOS ANGELES, March 11. (AP): Lynette Howell Taylor has seen the Oscars from a few different vantage points: As a nominee, in 2019 for "A Star is Born," as a producer of the broadcast in 2020, as a member of the film academy's board of governors and, for the last three years, as awards chair. It's made her first year as the president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences feel like a natural transition. And one thing she is certain of is that every Oscars is unique.

"Every year is different," Taylor said in a recent interview alongside film Academy CEO Bill Kramer. "Every season is different. Every set of movies is different. And so, the show is always different every year."

It's a tricky thing to both honor the people in the room while also making an entertaining show for a home audience. But behind the scenes, from returning host Conan O'Brien to the producers and Emmy-winning production design team, is a group of people who know how to dazzle a global audience.

"I think we, in the past couple of years, have really hit that balance right," Kramer said. "We're looking at that puzzle constantly and this year is going to be spectacular."

Final preparations are underway for the 98th Academy Awards on Sunday and everyone is feeling good about what they have planned, including performances, tributes and a special spotlight for their newest award for casting. It helps that the top nominees, "Sinners" and "One Battle After Another," happen to be great.

"It's always about the movies and the movies this year? They're all the things," Taylor said. "There are escapist

movies, big commercial movies, there are movies that are really brave and really bold in their storytelling ... I get really emotional when I talk about the quality of this year's films."

The ratings for the Oscars have been ticking up since plummeting to an all-time low in 2021 during the pandemic. The winning movie last year, "Anora," might have been smaller than "Oppenheimer" the previous year, but ratings still went up slightly from 19.5 million in 2024 to 19.7 million in 2025.

The show had an especially big lift among people ages 18 to 49, driven by mobile and laptop watches from younger viewers. Last year was the first time the ceremony was available to stream live on Hulu. They've also been partnering with popular internet personalities like Amelia Dimoldenberg in an effort to reach new audiences in a way that still feels "Academy appropriate."

"Our audiences are growing," Kramer said. "And young people are watching the show in ways that we've not seen before and that's really great."

Boosted ratings might not be a coincidence with the fact that planning for the show has been starting earlier and earlier in recent years.

"It gives us time to talk through so many things pre-nominations. So once the nominations happen, we can start focusing on what that means for the show," Kramer said. "There's not a lot of last-minute panicking over anything."

One of the ways that will manifest in this year's show is the production design, from the set to the red carpet, details are pored over for many months.

"They've done such beautiful work ... and this year,



Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences President Lynette Howell Taylor, (left), and CEO of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Bill Kramer, appear during the 98th Academy Awards nominations announcement in Beverly Hills, Calif., on Jan. 22, 2026. (AP)

they've just gone a whole step further with a different feel that's very intimate and warm," Taylor said. "It's a bit of a departure."

Though a lot is pre-planned, they're also always thinking of ways to meet the moment, which has led to some major showstoppers. Last year's big opener with Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande was a relatively late addition and ended up being one of the more memorable parts.

"We're open to pivoting, depending on what's going on in the world," Kramer said.

The deaths of many beloved figures in the film world over the past year have hit hard, including Robert Redford, Diane Keaton, Rob Reiner, Catherine O'Hara, Robert Duvall, Val Kilmer, Malcolm-Jamal Warner, James Van Der Beek and Claudia Cardinale, just to name a few.

Last year Morgan Freeman took the stage to honor Gene Hackman, who had been found dead just days earlier, and others. This year there have been rumors about Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal joining forces for Reiner, but the organizers are neither confirming nor denying that reunion.

"Obviously we're paying special attention to the in memoriam this year. It's going to be robust and beautiful and very, very moving," Kramer said. "We won't give away any secrets. You'll have to tune in."

As always, there will be a longer version of the in memoriam available online to recognize people who might not make the broadcast cut.

The longest broadcast in Oscars history, the 74th show in 2002 hosted by Whoopi Goldberg, clocked in at four hours and 23 minutes. But even with a new category, the people behind the show are striving to do it in three-and-a-half hours, or less.

"It's a lot of moving pieces, but it's totally doable," Kramer said. "And casting's going to get a gorgeous moment on the show."

Taylor added that awards shows are like movies. Sometimes a long film can feel like "watching paint dry." Other times, it flies by.

### People

## Opens NY Phil tenure

# Dudamel calls Chalamet opera remark 'ignorant'

NEW YORK, March 11. (AP): Famed conductor Gustavo Dudamel said Timothée Chalamet showed ignorance when the Oscar-nominated actor claimed "no one cares" about opera and ballet.

"Sadly sometimes it's a little bit of ignorance but, look, that is why we have to open more spaces for people to connect with classical music," Dudamel said Tuesday night at an event to announce the programming of his first season as the New York Philharmonic's music director.

Dudamel spoke from the stage of Lincoln Center's David Geffen to an audience that included donors, musicians, the orchestra board, community leaders and composers in addition to journalists. Dudamel's remarks sparked loud applause.

During a conversation with fellow actor Matthew McConaughey at a CNN and Variety town hall at the University of Texas at Austin's Moody College of Communication in February, the 30-year-old Chalamet was asked by McConaughey about whether shortened audience attention spans have impacted studio decisions about the content of theatrical films, forcing more early action.

"I admire people, and I've done it myself, to go on a talk show and go: Hey, we've got to keep movie theaters alive. We got to keep this genre alive," Chalamet said. "And another part of me feels like if people want to see it, like 'Barbie,' like 'Oppenheimer,' they're going to go see it and go out of their way to be loud and proud about it. And I don't want

to be working in ballet or opera or things where it's like where it's like, 'Hey! Keep this thing alive,' even though no one cares about this anymore. All respect to the ballet and opera people out there. I just lost 14 cents in viewership."

Chalamet received his third Academy Award nomination, for "Marty Supreme." His comments sparked an online backlash from arts organizations.

"Everybody has the right to say, but you have to do things with knowledge, with facts. I think we have to say to the young generation, the opposite," Dudamel said. "It's very funny. Cinema is a result of opera, of music, of all of these kind of things."

Matias Tarnopolsky, the New York Philharmonic CEO, was seated next to Dudamel and issued a public offer to Chalamet.

"He can sit with me anytime," Tarnopolsky said. "I'll give him a free ticket and he's invited to come and hear the New York Philharmonic."

Dudamel, 45, is among the world's most famous conductors. He is leaving the Los Angeles Philharmonic this summer after 17 seasons as music director to become the music director of the New York orchestra.

At one point, Dudamel feigned not knowing Chalamet, saying: "Which is the name of that?" before cutting off as the audience laughed.

"That way of thinking has to end," he said. "Music is reborn all the time and it brings us the values of empathy through the beauty of what it is. So this is the reality of music. This is the real dimension of music and we need that more for our young people."

### Premiere

When Dudamel first walked into the New York Philharmonic music director's office, he noticed black-and-white photos that included Leonard Bernstein, Gustav Mahler and Willem Mengelberg.

Ready to succeed them as music director on Sept. 1, he added the only color shot in the room: himself with his mentor, José Antonio Abreu.

Dudamel plans on a colorful tenure atop one of the world's premiere podiums, realizing times have changed in the seven decades since Bernstein injected his energetic personality into the orchestra and audience.

"It's very fast," Dudamel said of contemporary culture during a Jan. 23 interview with The Associated Press. "We have social media, it is a different world. Everything is very ephemeral."

Dudamel's first season will have a triple opening, the orchestra announced Tuesday.

The 45-year-old Venezuelan begins as music director with a performance at 6,000-capacity Radio City Music Hall on Sept. 10 followed by a 9-11 25th anniversary concert the next day at the World Trade Center's Perelman Performing Arts Center.

Dudamel's subscription concerts at Lincoln Center's 2,200-capacity David Geffen Hall start Sept. 16 with John Adams' Pulitzer Prize-winning "On the Transmigration of Souls," written following the terrorist attacks; a Zosha Di Castri world premiere; and Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony, conducted by Dudamel during his New York Philharmonic debut on Nov. 29, 2007.

Dudamel's season includes the world premiere of Tania León's "of Imágenes mestizas" (Sept. 25) paired with Mahler's Fifth Symphony, which he conducted during his second appearances with the New York Philharmonic in January 2009.

"New York, is a very symbolic place," he said. "This is the orchestra of the Americas."

He is appointing Serbian performer Marina Abramović and Argentine composer Gustavo Santaolalla as artists in residence.

Dudamel will conduct the world premiere of Santaolalla's "El Payador perseguido" to video and still images by Venezuelan director Alberto Arvelo (starting March 3, 2027) and Abramović's staged production of Stravinsky's "The Soldier's Tale" and de Falla's "El Amor brujo" (March 10, 2027).

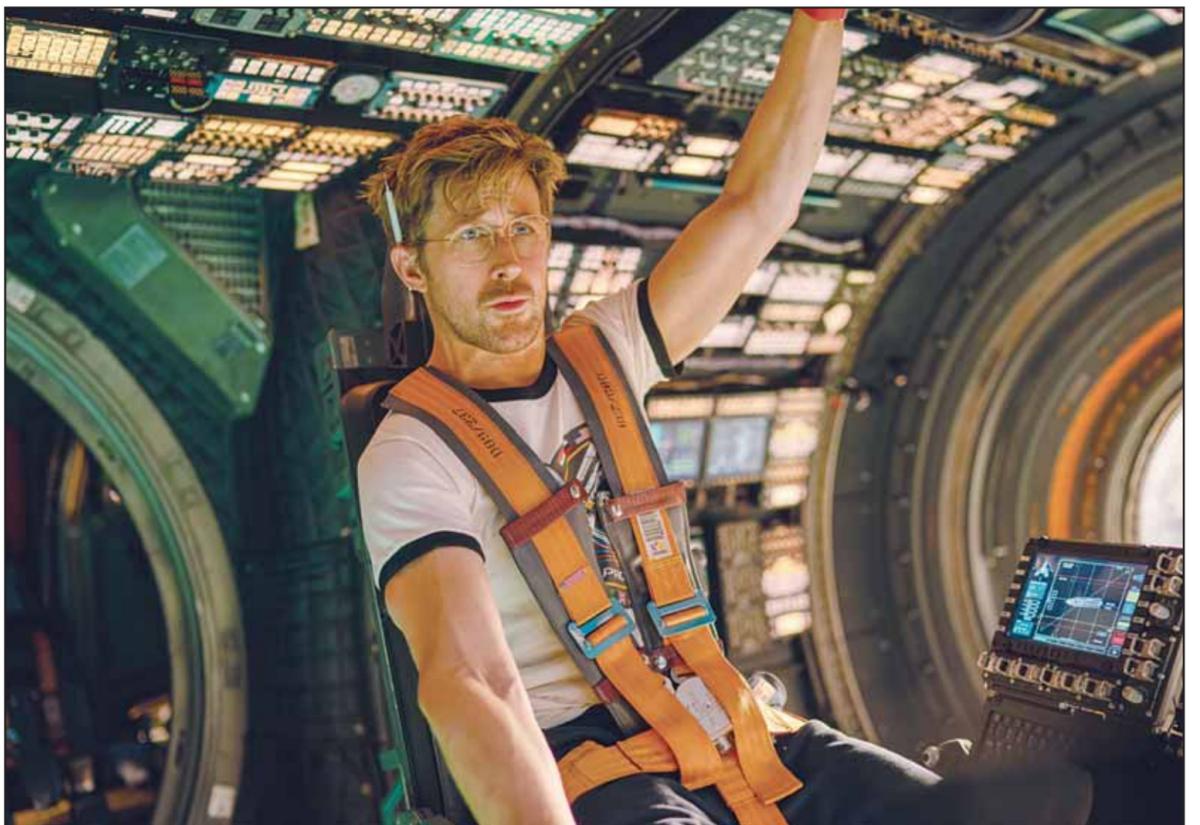
His initial season includes a 10-concert European tour from Oct. 9-22; Puccini's "Tosca" with tenor Jonas Kaufmann (Nov. 13) that begins a five-year concert opera commitment at Carnegie Hall; and the orchestra's first performances of Bernstein's "MASS," commissioned to open the Kennedy Center in 1971 (June 9, 2027).

"What's powerful is the vision and the inspiration that we're conveying, and everything else falls into place," said Matias Tarnopolsky, who became the New York Philharmonic's CEO last year.

Hired in February 2023 to start this fall, Dudamel spoke with 83-year-old conductor Daniel Barenboim about the challenges of a 21st-century music director.

"The orchestras, a little bit they sound the same. Everything is becoming very uniform," Dudamel quoted Barenboim as saying. "In the past you didn't have access to recordings. It was very difficult to listen to another orchestra. So we have to go back to build that culture -- not only about making a sound, understanding why we make the sound."

### Film



This image released by Amazon MGM Studios shows Ryan Gosling in a scene from 'Project Hail Mary.' (AP)

## Gosling, Lord and Miller make science fun

# 'Project' delivers thrilling space adventure

LOS ANGELES, March 11. (AP): It's been a minute since we've had a big screen space epic that's as fun as it is awe inspiring. The last memorable one might have been "The Martian," so perhaps it shouldn't be all that surprising that the drought is ending with another Andy Weir story adapted by Drew Goddard.

"Project Hail Mary," directed by Phil Lord and Chris Miller, is the kind of spectacular cinematic adventure that we've been missing: A clever, sincere, most-ages crowd-pleaser that's full of life, energy and a love of science, quirky T-shirts and "Interstellar." It's the kind of movie Disney really should be making, but, in this case, we have Amazon MGM to thank. And it will probably just get better with age and repeat viewings.

Ryan Gosling is put to the ultimate movie star test as the only person on the screen for a large part of the picture. It begins with his character, Ryland Grace, waking up from an extended sleep in a spaceship. His long hair and bushy beard suggest he's been sleeping for quite some time (his highlights may tell a different story, but maybe I should repeat to myself it's just a show and really just relax). Even worse, he's alone and he has no idea how he got there or who he is.

The movie's not out to annoy you with wheelspinning: There are soon flashbacks and an alien friend added to the mix as he starts to piece together a picture of who he was on Earth ("Am I smart?" he wonders out loud) and try to complete his apparent mission to save the sun.

Except there's the small matter that Grace is pretty sure he's not a hero. On Earth, he was a middle school science teacher. When his students ask about the strange dots that have appeared outside the Earth's atmosphere that seem to be causing the sun to die, he assures them that the world's top minds are figuring it out. Against all movie logic when it comes to the extraordinary nobody, he's not excited to discover that he might be their only hope.

Some government types have found an old paper he wrote while getting his doctorate, an idea that made him the laughingstock of the scientific community. He tries to tell them at every step of the way that they've got the wrong guy for the job. "I ride a bike to work ... and it's not for exercise," he tells Sandra Hüller's project manager Eva Strat. But he's scrappy and keeps working the problem.

"Project Hail Mary" does make you wonder whether a guy who looks like Ryan Gosling could disappear into the backdrop of his own life the way Grace has. But really what's the point of that thought exercise? It doesn't require too much suspension of disbelief to get invested in the journey of someone who essentially has to learn to believe in himself. And it doesn't hurt when it also comes with an improbably cute alien sidekick who we'll come to know as Rocky. He's voiced by James Ortiz and is kind of like a golden retriever crossed with a genius architect. They soon become the best of friends, which can only mean one thing: You're probably going to cry at some point.

While Grace and Rocky are the main show, Hüller is a particular standout as the dry, practical head of the operation. Gosling already spoiled her big, irresistible karaoke moment in his "Saturday Night Live" monologue, but I suspect it'll still be a highlight. "The Bear's" Lionel Boyce also lights up every scene he's in as a private security/bodyguard type.

Lord and Miller haven't directed a live action movie in some time, whether or not you count the "Solo" Star Wars debacle, and it's nice to have them back and teaming with a cinematographer with a keen grasp of scale and visual effects like Greig Fraser.

As in Lord and Miller's animated movies, their tone and pace remain singular. "Project Hail Mary" might blow past a two-hour runtime and yet there's rarely a dull moment with all the problem-solving, earnest irreverence and unabashed commitment to imbuing life and wit into every molecule of the story. Daniel Pemberton's unusual, buoyant score and Joel Negron's sharp editing are key.

So many filmmakers feel the need to overwhelm their intergalactic spectacles with pathos to match the cosmos. It's kind of refreshing that "Project Hail Mary" doesn't have a dead wife or kid weighing down our protagonist - just an alien friend and all of life on Earth.

"Project Hail Mary," an Amazon MGM release in theaters March 20, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "some thematic material and suggestive references." Running time: 156 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

### Variety

LOS ANGELES: Is an "Iron Man" reunion coming to the Oscars? Gwyneth Paltrow and Robert Downey Jr. are both set to present at the Oscars on March 15.

The show's executive producers revealed a new batch of presenters Thursday, including Anne Hathaway, Will Arnett, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, and Paul Mescal.

They join the previously announced group of last year's best actor winners Adrien Brody and Mikey Madison and supporting actor winners Kieran Culkin and Zoe Saldana, as well as Chris Evans, Javier Bardem and Maya Rudolph, who will also present trophies at the 98th annual Academy Awards.

Here's everything else you need to know. The Academy Awards will be held on Sunday, March 15, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. The show, to be broadcast live by ABC, is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. Eastern/4 p.m. Pacific.

After successfully presiding over the 97th Oscars, Conan O'Brien is returning to host for the second year. His return to the Oscars stage was announced almost a year ago. In a statement last March, he said "The only reason I'm hosting the Oscars next year is

that I want to hear Adrien Brody finish his speech."

Like last year, the Oscars will be streamed live on Hulu. You can also watch via Hulu Live TV, YouTubeTV, AT&T TV and FuboTV. With authentication from your provider, you can watch on ABC.com and the ABC app.

This year's nominees for best actress are Jessie Buckley for "Hamnet," Rose Byrne for "If I Had Legs I'd Kick You," Renate Reinsve for "Sentimental Value," Emma Stone for "Bugonia" and Kate Hudson for "Song Sung Blue."

The best actor nominees are Timothée Chalamet for "Marty Supreme," Leonardo DiCaprio for "One Battle After Another," Ethan Hawke for "Blue Moon," Michael B. Jordan for "Sinners" and Wagner Moura for "The Secret Agent."

In the supporting actor categories, the nominees are Jacob Elordi for "Frankenstein," Sean Penn and Benicio Del Toro for "One Battle After Another," Stellan Skarsgård for "Sentimental Value" and Delroy Lindo for "Sinners."

The supporting actress nominees are Elle Fanning

and Inga Ibsdotter Lilleaas for "Sentimental Value," Amy Madigan for "Weapons," Wunmi Mosaku for "Sinners" and Teyana Taylor for "One Battle After Another."

For months, "One Battle After Another" has been the clear front-runner for best picture and best director but in the past week it's looking like it might be a closer race in a showdown with "Sinners," which is this year's leading nominee, breaking the record for most nominations by a single film with 16. Associated Press Film Writers Jake Coyle and Lindsey Bahr predict that "One Battle After Another" will still take best picture and best director. They also think Buckley will win best actress, Jordan will get best actor and Taylor supporting actress, but they're split on supporting actor: Coyle thinks it will go to Penn, Bahr is staking her bet on Lindo.

The show will feature live performances of best song nominees "Golden," from "KPop Demon Hunters," and "I Lied to You," from "Sinners."

Some of the nominees are still in theaters, but many of this year's Oscar nominees are streaming on various platforms. The AP has a handy guide available here.

Also confirmed to present at the show are Chris Evans, Javier Bardem, Maya Rudolph, Chase Ininiti, Demi Moore and Kumail Nanjiani. (AP)

## Egypt and China celebrate rare festival overlap

## Two celebrations, one spirit: Ramadan, Spring Festival in Cairo

By Xu Haofu

This year, the celestial clocks of the East and the Middle East staged an unusual, beautiful convergence. In the bustling streets of Cairo, the crescent moon of Ramadan and the lanterns of the Chinese Spring Festival arrived almost in tandem.

As a Chinese correspondent based here, I initially felt the sting of homesickness as February approached. However, this rare overlap quickly turned my assignment into a personal lesson in how much our cultures share beneath the surface: festivals, in their essence, are not just dates on a calendar, but also bridges.

It started with simple greetings. My "Ramadan Kareem" (Have a generous Ramadan) to Egyptian friends was often returned with a warm "Chun Jie Kuai Le!" (Happy Spring Festival). These small exchanges opened doors. My friends asked about our traditions; I learned about theirs.

A deeper understanding of the common ground came from the dinner table. On the evening of Feb. 20, my friend

Ahmed Gomma invited me to a public Iftar, the meal that breaks the daily fast.

Fawaneez (traditional Egyptian Ramadan lanterns) cast warm amber light over long tables laden with dates, fruits, and sweets like kunafa. People began with a date and water, then prayed before eating.

"In my home," I told Gomma, "our New Year tables are also filled with candies, nuts, and dried fruits. They're not just snacks. They're wishes for a sweet and abundant year ahead."

Gomma nodded, his smile carrying recognition. "It is very much the same for us," he said. "Ramadan teaches us to share our blessings. These sweets are for everyone - family, neighbors, anyone in need." At that moment, I was no longer an observer of a foreign custom. I was part of a universal ritual: using food to express hope and bind a community together.

Several days earlier, I visited a Chinese-style milk tea shop near the Saladin Citadel. There I met Aya Mohamed El Wardany, who co-founded the shop with her Chinese partner. When the topic of the Spring Festival came up,



Female whirling dervish Afnan Shaher, spins as she is greeted by fans during a performance to mark the holy month of Ramadan in Cairo, Egypt, Friday, Feb. 27, 2026. (AP)

she joked, "I hope my Chinese partner will give me a 'hongbao' (red envelope) this year!"

When I explained that these red envelopes are more than just money, but also a way for elders to pass protection

and luck to children, her eyes lit up. "We have 'Eidi'!" she said, referring to the gifts or money Egyptian children receive during Ramadan.

The parallel is striking. Whether it is a red paper envelope in Beijing or a crisp banknote in Cairo, the meaning is identical: an investment in the happiness of the next generation.

Beyond the food and gifts, I discovered a deeper common thread: the yearning for reunion.

At a lively Spring Festival market in the heart of Cairo, I met Mohamed Zakary amid the cheerful chaos of calligraphy and traditional Chinese attire. He was demonstrating an artificial intelligence-powered Chinese-learning software program he had developed.

"During Ramadan, no matter how far apart family members are, they gather together," he told me, standing under a canopy of crimson lanterns. "This is very similar to the Spring Festival's emphasis on reunion."

This impulse to understand and relate was perhaps most visible at the Egyptian Museum. There, I encountered Han Shu, a literature teacher

from China, who was carefully explaining a statue to his young son.

Han hadn't just come for the photos; he told me he had prepared by reading Naguib Mahfouz, the Egyptian Nobel laureate, whose work captures Cairo's life and rhythms. "His descriptions of old Cairo during Ramadan are beautiful," he said. "I want to understand the soul of the place, not just see its face."

As the festivals unfold, the spirit of mutual understanding seems to be growing stronger. A professor earnestly asked me about the "God of Wealth" in China; a neighbor asked if the Chinese New Year begins with the new moon; and university students, holding red couplets and the character "Fu" (good fortune), sought advice on where to hang them properly in their homes.

This year in Cairo, I have come to see that these two great festivals share more than a coincidental spot on the calendar. They share a soul: we both build our celebrations around sharing what we have, we both center them on family and community, and we both pass our hopes for the future to the younger generations. (Xinhua)

## Fashion

Paris Fashion Week wraps with a starry finale

## Louis Vuitton and Miu Miu bring competing visions of nature to Paris

PARIS, March 11, (AP) — Louis Vuitton's Nicolas Ghesquière built a fake mountain range inside the Louvre and sent models climbing through it.

On Tuesday he closed out a starry Paris Fashion Week with folklore treated as high fashion - capes, cowbells, shearing caps and walking sticks draped with handbags.

Ghesquière called the collection "Super Nature" and said he wanted to find what mountain people from the Alps to Central Asia to the Andes all have in common: clothes shaped by weather, altitude and the need to keep moving.

Zendaya, Ana de Armas, Jennifer Connelly and Jaden Smith sat in the front row.

The set, designed by "Severance" production designer Jeremy Hindle, turned the Louvre's oldest courtyard - the Cour Carrée - into something between a sci-fi landscape and an Alpine postcard.

The show opened with shaggy capes and exaggerated shoulders.

Fur epaulettes swallowed models' arms and cone-shaped hats recalled the paper sailor hats kids fold for fun. Some models hoisted enormous wicker baskets overhead. Others carried branches.

Wolves, sheep and rabbits appeared embroidered across jackets and skirts.

Ukrainian artist Nazar Streliaev-Nazarko painted the lambs. Ghesquière reinterpreted a Man Ray parure once worn by Catherine Deneuve, studding it with the nailheads of a Louis Vuitton trunk.

The Noé returned in its original 1932 shape. Mini Malles came in soft new versions. Heels were carved to look like antlers.

Where the clothes pushed toward the conceptual, the accessories pulled everything back to earth.

Tuxedo trousers swapped satin side-stripes for strips of fluff and rain capes in scarlet and baby blue crackled against the earthy palette. Coats were lined in hemp-based faux fur.

The house called its material approach "hyper-craft" - not imitation of nature but sublimation of it.

K-pop stars Felix and Lisa, the band Haim, Phoebe Dymov, Ava DuVernay, Alicia Vikander, Chase Infiniti, Chloe Grace Moretz, Erin Doherty, Katherine LaNasa and Olympic gold medalist figure skater Alysa Liu were also in attendance.

Ghesquière has led Louis Vuitton womenswear since 2013, outlasting more than a dozen creative directors at rival houses.

Across town a few hours later, the runway at Miu Miu looked like a churned forest floor.

Staff scattered twigs and moss by hand right up until



A model presents a creation from the Ready-to-Wear Fall/Winter 2026-2027 collections by Miu Miu during the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris, France, on March 10. (Xinhua)

showtime.

Where Ghesquière built a world, Miuccia Prada took one away.

"You, as a human person, you are enough," Prada said. "You have your mind. That should be enough against whatever happens."

The clothes looked like the last things left in someone's wardrobe. Tiny tank dresses. Shrunken washed-leather jackets. Crinkled cotton blazers soft from wear.

Slim coats worn to a sheen, matched with flared pants that dragged through the dirt.



A model wears a creation from the Louis Vuitton Fall/Winter 2026-2027 Women's collection presented in Paris, Tuesday, March 10. (AP)

## 'Stepping into iconic role very cool'

## DWTS pro Ballas leaps back to Broadway in 'Chicago'

NEW YORK, March 11, (AP) — Mark Ballas is returning to Broadway in "Chicago" and the "Dancing with the Stars" pro will be reuniting with an old friend.

Ballas, playing slippery lawyer Billy Flynn starting April 6, will share the stage with his Roxie, Whitney Leavitt, the "Secret Lives of Mormon Wives" star who was his dancing partner on "Dancing with the Stars" (DWTS) last year.

"I think it's going to be so fun. We work so well together," says Ballas, a three-time Mirrorball Trophy winner who has won stints on Broadway before in "Jersey Boys" and "Kinky Boots." "I never thought I'd be surprised by things that come from the show, but here we are."

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: You were originally a theater

kid, right?

**Ballas:** Yeah, I started when I was 11 at the Italia Conti Academy of Theater Arts in the UK. They have a high school portion and a college portion. So I did the high school for five years and then I did college for three years. Musical theater and music were my majors.

**AP:** How did you start your career?

**Ballas:** I grew up in England, so I was out there auditioning for West End shows. This is actually a wild, full-circle moment: One of the first shows I auditioned for was "Chicago" in the West End. I got right down to the end. I was only 18, still paying my dues, trying to figure it out. So this is super full circle.

**AP:** You didn't get it back then?

**Ballas:** No. I went in for the ensemble. I got right down to the end. I think I had like four or five callbacks and in



This image released by Disney shows Mark Ballas from the dancing competition series "Dancing with the Stars." (AP)

the end, I was too short. I was joking with them. I was like, "You know, my height was on the resume!"

**AP:** The stars seemed to aligning when you and Whitney performed "Cell Block Tango" from "Chicago" on "Dancing with the Stars."

**Ballas:** We did "Cell Block Tango"

because we had to pick a song that a previous couple had danced to. "Dancing with the Stars" has a bit of strategy to it and you want to have your banger numbers at the right time. So when I saw the list of music, "Cell Block Tango" was on that list. We just picked that song and it's all very serendipitous. The next week, Whitney was going to audition.

**AP:** Now you're together again, this time on Broadway.

**Ballas:** I had been in talks with "Chicago" on and off over the years. The timing just didn't really work out. Whitney booked the gig and then I sent in tapes, went in for my audition and that tango happened. Whitney went in for it and then they were interested in having me. So it just like it was meant to be, you know.

**AP:** You were in New York recently to get ready?

## One of the largest payouts for a single work

## Italy buys rare Caravaggio painting for about \$35 million

ROME, March 11, (AP) — Italy has bought a rare portrait by Baroque painter Caravaggio for 30 million euros (about \$35 million), one of the largest state investments ever for a single artwork, the country's Culture Ministry said Tuesday.

The portrait, painted around 1598 and attributed to Caravaggio in 1963, depicts Maffeo Barberini, a nobleman who later became Pope Urban VIII.

The painting was acquired from a private collection by the Italian state over a year of negotiations and will now enter Rome's Palazzo Barberini permanent collection.

"This is a work of exceptional importance," Culture Minister Alessandro Giuliani said in a statement, noting the painting was a turning point in Caravaggio's modern rediscovery and

its purchase has helped strengthen the presence of his works in Italian public collections.

The new acquisition follows a recent one of Antonello da Messina's "Ecce Homo," and is part of Italy's broader project to strengthen the national cultural heritage, making some art history masterpieces accessible to scholars and the public.

The "Portrait of Monsignor Maffeo Barberini" depicts the future pope in his 30s, dressed as a cleric of the Apostolic Chamber, at a crucial moment in his rise to power.

The work was made famous by art critic Roberto Longhi in his 1963 article "The True 'Maffeo Barberini' of Caravaggio," and has since been widely recognized by critics as a work by Caravaggio, also known as Michelangelo Merisi.

Longhi called the painting "one of the founding moments of modern portraiture," emphasizing how Caravaggio ushered in a new psychological intensity.

Caravaggio revolutionized painting at the turn of the 17th century by introducing a dramatic use of light that became the cornerstone of the Baroque style. He is currently one of the most studied artists in the world, yet the number of his confirmed works remains extremely limited.

At Palazzo Barberini, the portrait will be displayed alongside Caravaggio's other works - one of the world's most important collections - in particular along another of Caravaggio's masterpieces, "Judith Slaying Holofernes," also purchased by the Italian state in 1971.

## Variety

NEW YORK: The son of Cher was scheduled to be in court Wednesday for a hearing over allegations he broke into a New Hampshire home earlier this month.

It was the second arrest in a matter of days for Elijah Allman, 49, of Malibu, California, who was detained Feb. 27 after allegedly acting belligerently at a prestigious prep school in New Hampshire. It was unclear if All-

man had any connection to either St. Paul's School or the home in Windham, New Hampshire.

Allman remains in the Rockingham County Department of Corrections in what is called preventive detention, Superintendent Jonathan Banville said. (AP)

Cher

ADDIS ABABA: A total of 18 Chinese TV programs will be screened on Fana, a leading Ethiopian media platform, over the coming weeks in March, to promote cultural exchanges between China and Ethiopia.

This decision was announced at a launch ceremony at the headquarters of Fana Media Corporation (FMC) Tuesday in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, in the presence of Chinese diplomats and media, along with leaders of the FMC.

Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia Chen Hai, on the occasion, said that in recent years, under the strategic guidance of the leaders of both countries, media and cultural exchanges between China and Ethiopia have become increasingly close.

The FMC, being a mainstream media organization of Ethiopia, has played a significant role as a bridge in enhancing mutual understanding and trust between the peoples of the two countries, according to the ambassador. (Xinhua)

LOS ANGELES: Disney and Pixar's animated film "Hoppers" took the top spot at the North American box office with an estimated three-day cume of 46 million U.S. dollars in its opening weekend, according to figures released by Comscore on Sunday.

The all-new feature film also earned an estimated 42 million dollars overseas, pushing its global total to 88 million dollars.

"Hoppers" holds a positive approval rating of 94 percent on review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes currently and received an "A" grade from audiences on an "A+" to "F" scale polled by CinemaScore.

Paramount Pictures and Spyglass Media Group's slasher film "Scream 7" came in second with 17.3 million dollars in its second weekend. The film has grossed 93.4 million dollars in North America and 149.5 million dollars worldwide through Sunday. (Xinhua)

NAIROBI: Growing up in the Mathare slums of Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, 16-year-old Kessy Ann Anyango dreams of becoming a doctor, a goal she hopes to achieve through science education at a China-backed school.

Kessy is a student at MCEDO Beijing School, located just a few kilometers from the temporary structure her parents rent. She is convinced that academic excellence is the key to changing not only her life but also the future of her family.

While the slum environment poses significant challenges for many girls like Kessy, school provides a safe space where they can pursue their aspirations. With the support of the Chinese community, including programs such as the Chinese Ambassador Scholarship, students like Kessy are able to nurture their dreams with guidance from dedicated teachers.

"This year I am not worried about my school fees because I was awarded a scholarship that will cover my entire 2026 academic year," Kessy told Xinhua in a recent interview. (Xinhua)



This image released by the Italian Culture Ministry on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, shows the oil-on-canvas painting "Portrait of Monsignor Maffeo Barberini" by Italian Baroque painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (16th century). (AP)

## Timely prenatal care crucial to preventing pregnancy-related deaths

## Mobile clinics provide vital maternal care in underserved areas

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



By Adetola F. Louis-Jacques, Arielle Ayotte and Michelle Nail

University of Florida

Only three of the 14 counties in north-central Florida provide full access to obstetric care. Six have low access to care - meaning there are fewer than two hospitals offering obstetric care or birth centers per 10,000 births and fewer than 60 obstetric providers. The remaining five counties are maternity care deserts. Approximately 3,400 women of childbearing age live in those deserts.

In 2024, a report found that hospitals across Florida were discontinuing obstetric care due to lack of funding. Eighteen of the state's 21 rural hospitals no longer provide obstetric care.

To address this gap in care, in February 2025 the University of Florida established the OB/GYN Mobile Outreach Clinic. The mobile clinic provides comprehensive maternal health services, including prenatal and postpartum care, breastfeeding support, family planning, annual gynecological exams and preventive health screenings. The only services not offered on-site are deliveries.

We are the director and assistant director of the clinic and at the University of Florida. Outside of our work with

the mobile clinic, we also research interventions to improve maternal health in low-resource settings.

We launched the clinic in February 2025. By the end of 2025, we had provided care to 194 women in 616 visits.

Based on our experience, we believe that mobile clinics focused on maternal health could be an effective way to reach more rural and low-income communities.

Two and a half million American women of childbearing age - nearly 4% - live in a maternity care desert: a county without a single hospital, birthing center or obstetric health care professional.

Over the past decade, the closure of hundreds of obstetric units has exacerbated this problem, particularly in rural regions. Women in maternity care deserts travel an average of 35 miles to reach a birthing hospital, compared to an average of 9 miles for women in full-access counties.

The maternal mortality rate in the US, which peaked during COVID, remains higher than that of most other high-income nations. Access to timely prenatal and postpartum care is crucial to preventing pregnancy-related deaths. Studies have shown that traveling longer distances for obstetric care is associated with worse infant and maternal health outcomes.

Mobile health clinics are vehicles, such as buses or vans, equipped with medical tools and supplies to deliver health care services.

The University of Florida OB/GYN Mobile Outreach Clinic is a retrofitted bus with two exam rooms, an ultrasound machine and supplies for serum and urine testing for

prenatal labs. A small dispensary allows providers to give prenatal vitamins and medications for common conditions, such as vaginitis or urinary tract infections. This reduces the need for patients to make additional pharmacy or lab visits or pay for medication.

Care provided at the mobile clinic is free to the patient. If patients are eligible for Medicaid or other health insurance, our team assists them in applying for benefits. In 2023, about 1 in 7 women of childbearing age in Florida were uninsured.

The Mobile Outreach Clinic operates twice weekly in consistent, rotating locations, including northeast Gainesville in Alachua County, Lake City in Columbia County, Bronson in Levy County and Trenton in Gilchrist County. Of these locations, only Levy County is a maternity care desert, but all of these locations were selected to care for patients of low socioeconomic status and limited access to care.

We set up the clinic at sites that are already trusted or frequently visited by our target population. This includes family resource centers, churches and public libraries. Patients and families know they can expect us on a consistent day of the week. A core principle of our program is that we show up, no matter what. This ethos has helped us establish and maintain trust with our patients.

Appointments are walk-in or scheduled, with wait times significantly shorter than traditional clinics. Patients are scheduled within a week, generally through referrals from trusted partner agencies or from other patients.

Unlike traditional clinics, which schedule for 15- to 20-minute appointments, the mobile clinic allots 30-60

minutes for patient visits. This allows time to address social needs, transportation barriers, food insecurity or housing needs. The clinical care team is led by nurse-midwives and includes a physician assistant, certified nurse-midwives, nurses, a nurse practitioner and lactation consultant, medical assistants and promotoras, community health workers who act as peer educators and patient liaisons in Hispanic communities. Maternal-fetal medicine physicians review ultrasound images remotely.

Operating outside a traditional clinical setting sometimes requires our staff to be flexible and creative to meet the needs of our patients. For instance, the week before Thanksgiving, our clinic was at capacity while parked in a church lot in Trenton. One of our patients needed a nonstress test, and with space limited, the nurse and health educator interpreter worked together to complete the test in a quiet area within the church. The patient received timely care despite the full schedule and space constraints.

Currently, there are approximately 3,600 mobile health clinics in the United States, with 1,319 tracked through the Mobile Health Map.

These clinics can provide a wide range of services, from disaster relief and mental health care to mammography and dental care, to primary and preventive care. They particularly target low-income and uninsured populations. A study of 811 mobile clinics found that among patients treated between 2007 and 2017, 36% were from rural areas, 38% were homeless, 55% were low income and 56% were uninsured. (AP)

## Critical data

## China team maps lunar chemistry

BEIJING, March 11, (Xinhua): A team of Chinese scientists has unveiled a high-resolution atlas detailing the global distribution of lunar surface chemistry, a significant advance that fills a critical data gap in the geological study of the moon's far side.

Mapping the chemistry across the lunar global surface is essential for understanding the moon's magmatic evolution and geological history, and holds profound implications for studying the Earth-moon system.

Previous estimates of elemental abundances relied primarily on remote sensing data calibrated with sample-based ground truth information from the lunar nearside, according to a recent research article published in the journal Nature Sensors. This left the far side of the moon largely uncharted, introducing substantial uncertainties in geological models for terrains with complex compositions, especially within the scientifically vital South Pole-Aitken (SPA) basin.

To overcome this long-standing challenge, the research team, led by the Shanghai Institute of Technical Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, developed an intelligent inversion framework for lunar chemical components leveraging a residual convolutional neural network, on the basis of farside ground truth data from the samples taken back by the Chang'e-6 mission and combining high-resolution visible-to-near-infrared multispectral-band image data from the lunar orbiter.

By employing a model-fine-tuning strategy to optimally calibrate elemental abundances, the team generated high-precision global maps of major elemental oxides that incorporate farside ground truth information. This breakthrough successfully constrains the extent and composition of farside terranes and precisely reveals deep-seated materials exposed within the SPA basin and highlands.

The maps quantitatively demonstrate that the proportion of exposed magnesian anorthosite in the farside highlands is significantly higher than on the nearside. This provides new measured evidence supporting the hypothesis of asymmetric crystallization and differentiation of the lunar magma ocean between the two hemispheres.

By integrating farside ground truth information into global geochemical mapping, this study deepens the understanding of crust-mantle structure, hemispherical evolutionary differences, and the formation and evolution of the SPA basin.

It provides high-precision, quantitative guidance for future landing site selection, resource exploration, and the planning of lunar exploration missions.



This photo taken on March 7, 2026, shows smokes billowing after Israeli airstrikes in Tehran, Iran. (Xinhua)

## Health, environment in danger

## UN warns of 'toxic rain' risk from ME oil depot strikes

GENEVA, March 11, (Xinhua): UN humanitarian officials said on Tuesday that 10 days of war in the Middle East are upending lives across the region and beyond, with toxic "black rain" linked to strikes on oil depots, and disruption to humanitarian supply chains causing widespread impacts.

Speaking at a press conference in Geneva, Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the UN Human Rights Office, raised concerns about the health and environmental impacts of Israeli and US strikes on oil depots in Iran as toxic pollutants spread in the air.

She said that these impacts raise "serious questions as to whether the proportionality and precaution obligations under international humanitarian law were met" in the attacks, stressing that the sites hit "do not appear to be of military exclusive usage."

Christian Lindmeier, the World Health Organization spokesperson, warned that the "black rain" and "acidic rain" that have been falling in Tehran after the strikes are "indeed a danger" for Iranians.

"We are in touch with the hospitals and with the authorities, and the Iranian authorities have issued an alert advising people to stay indoors, in light of the attacks on oil warehouses especially," he said.

Lindmeier added that reported strikes on oil infrastructures in Bahrain and in Saudi Arabia also raised concerns of "wider regional pollution exposure."

Karolina Lindholm Billing, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) representative in Lebanon, said more than 100,000 people have been displaced by Israeli strikes and evacuation orders in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of people uprooted by the conflict to almost 700,000.

"We see cars lined along the street with people sleeping in them," she said. "Most fled in a rush with almost nothing. They're seeking safety in Beirut, the Mount Lebanon region, in northern Lebanon and parts of the Bekaa."

Jean-Martin Bauer, director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP)'s Food and Nutrition Analysis Service, warned of the impacts of the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz and in the Bab El-Mandeb strait off the coast of the Horn of Africa.

"Two key points of the global supply chain set-up are affected by restrictions and by risk, and shipping lines are diverting their services," Bauer said, adding that the need for war risk insurance for shipments means an additional cost of 2,000 to 4,000 US dollars for each container in areas that are at risk.

## 'Talk to doctors about cancer risk'

## Jackson joins AZ to promote cancer screenings

WILMINGTON, Del., March 11, (AP): AstraZeneca and Joshua Jackson have teamed up as part of a national public health campaign designed to encourage fans to Get Body Checked Against Cancer and be proactive in speaking with their doctor. Joshua Jackson brings a unique cultural relevance to the initiative, resonating with a generation that grew up watching him on screen and is now entering a life stage where conversations about cancer risk and screenings become increasingly important.

To help bring the message to life in a way that feels accessible, engaging and familiar, Joshua Jackson is joined by Gritty, the iconic mascot of the Philadelphia Flyers, to capture why it's so important to get body checked. The pairing draws a parallel between a well-timed body check on the ice and a timely check-in with a doctor—both moments when taking action can make a meaningful difference.

Mohit Manrao, Senior Vice President, Head of US Oncology, AstraZeneca, said: "Beating cancer takes a team—and action saves lives. By teaming up with Joshua Jackson and Gritty, we're calling on fans to get informed and get screened. With an estimated 65% of Americans behind on recommended screenings and cancer rates rising among people under 50, now is the time to talk to your doc-



Joshua Jackson teams up with Gritty and AstraZeneca to encourage fans to Get Body Checked Against Cancer. (AP)

tor about your risk and the screenings that are right for you. Don't wait—get body checked."

Actor/Producer Joshua Jackson said: "People close to me have been diagnosed with cancer, and I'm at an age where I should know my own risks. So, if you watched me when I was a kid and you were a kid, it's time to talk to your doctor about getting screened. Together with AstraZeneca and my good friend, Gritty,

we don't want you to wait to talk to your doctor."

The Get Body Checked Against Cancer campaign encourages people to take control of their health by talking with their doctors about their cancer risk factors and whether cancer screenings are right for them. The campaign supports Hockey Fights Cancer™, a joint initiative of the National Hockey League (NHL) and the National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA) powered by the V Foundation for Cancer Research. Since 2023, AstraZeneca has proudly served as the first-ever official national partner of Hockey Fights Cancer.

Gritty, mascot of the Philadelphia Flyers, said: "There's a lot of important checks out there—poke checks, paychecks, rain checks—but here's a reality check...Get body checked. Checkmate."

To date, AstraZeneca has donated \$1.1 million to Hockey Fights Cancer through the V Foundation to help fund game-changing cancer research.

For more information about what screenings may be right for you, to find a screening provider near you and for a list of questions you and your loved ones can ask your doctor, visit Getbodychecked.com. Follow AstraZeneca on Instagram and YouTube to see all the content with Joshua Jackson and Gritty.

## Leucovorin approved for rare brain disorder

## Little evidence Trump-backed drug can help people with autism: FDA

WASHINGTON, March 11, (AP): The Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday approved a generic medication for a rare brain disorder, while walking back statements by President Donald Trump and other administration officials that the drug showed great promise for people with autism.

The agency said it approved leucovorin for children and adults with a genetic condition that limits delivery of folate, a form of vitamin B, to the brain. FDA officials estimate the ultra-rare condition impacts fewer than 1 in a million people in the US.

It's a major step back from comments made at a White House news conference in September, when Trump and FDA commissioner Marty Makary announced the drug was under review to benefit patients with autism, some of whom have a form of the vitamin brain deficiency.

"It might be 20, 40, 50% of kids with autism," Makary said at the news conference.

But senior FDA officials told reporters Monday that their review was narrowed to focus on the strongest evidence, which only supported the drug's use by patients with the rare mutation that impacts folate levels in the brain.

The FDA officials also pointed out that one study supporting the drug's use for autism was retracted earlier this year.

Autism researchers on Tuesday reiterated that the drug has not been shown safe or effective for the vast majority of people with the brain disorder.

"There is no evidence to say that leucovorin will help most people with autism, and there's certainly no evidence to say it's safe," said Dr. Alycia Halladay of the Autism Science Foundation, in an interview.

Halladay noted there is also no established figure for how many people with autism have a form of the folate brain disorder. Some doctors diagnose



President Donald Trump listens as Dr. Marty Makary, commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, speaks in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, Monday, Sept. 22, 2025, in Washington. (AP)

the folate condition using a specialty laboratory test that isn't FDA-approved.

The administration's White House event touting the drug last year followed promises from Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to determine the cause of autism by September.

Leucovorin is a synthetic metabolite of folate, which is essential for healthy pregnancies and is recommended for women before conception and during pregnancy. The drug's current FDA label covers leucovorin's use in reducing side effects of certain chemotherapy drugs and treating a rare blood disorder.

Patients affected by the condition targeted by Tuesday's approval experience movement disorders, seizures and other neurological problems that can resemble symptoms of autism.

But professional medical societies say it's far from clear whether the drug helps people with autism.

## AI used for more accurate cancer detection

## China highlights digital health innovation at UN event on women's empowerment

UNITED NATIONS, March 11, (Xinhua): Digital technologies are emerging as an important tool to advance gender equality and improve women's health, with China's experience in digital health drawing attention from international organizations.

A symposium on "Digital Intelligence Empowers Women's Health and Development" was convened on Tuesday at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on the sidelines of the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, drawing more than 50 UN officials, experts and representatives from medical and digital health sectors.

In a video message, Chairperson of the China Women's Development Foundation (CWDF) Chen Xiaoxia said the foundation has long focused on empowering women and promoting sustainable development through public welfare programs.

"In recent years, we have actively embraced digital transformation and explored innovative applications of digital technologies in health education, screening and women's empowerment," Chen said.

"Digital innovation is transforming women's health in several profound ways," said Soyoltuya Bayaraa, deputy director of the Program Division at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

"We're seeing greater precision in diagnostics. For example, artificial intelligence in China is being used to detect breast cancer and cervical cancer with fewer false positives than traditional methods," Bayaraa said.

She noted that digital technologies are helping break geographic barriers in healthcare delivery. "Through remote and digital consultations, people in remote or hard-to-reach areas are able to receive attention," she said.

"In countries like China, the use of modern robotics is transforming healthcare," Bayaraa said, adding that technologies such as humanoid and



A visitor takes photos of an AI interactive screen during an exhibition showcasing China's progress in digital and intelligent empowerment for women and girls, in Beijing, capital of China, Oct. 14, 2025. (Xinhua)

assistive robots are being explored to support care services in response to aging populations.

Chinese experts also shared examples of how digital technologies are being used in disease prevention. Zhu Lan, an obstetrics and gynecology specialist at Peking Union Medical College Hospital, introduced how technologies such as artificial intelligence are supporting cervical cancer screening, diagnosis and professional training in China.

Lily Gray, senior liaison officer at the New York office of UNESCO, noted that for women artists, designers, artisans and entrepreneurs, digital platforms open doors to "new audiences, new markets and new opportunities."

"Digital tools can help document, protect and transmit traditional knowledge, while giving women practitioners greater recognition and new opportunities," she said, noting that many women serve as custodians of intangible cultural heritage.

During a panel discussion, experts

The American Academy of Pediatrics doesn't recommend routine use of leucovorin for autistic children, including those with the brain condition known as cerebral folate deficiency.

Unresolved questions about the drug haven't stopped U.S. doctors from prescribing it.

A paper published in The Lancet last week found that leucovorin prescriptions for children aged 5 to 17 were 71% higher than normal in the three months immediately following Trump's late September news conference.

"We've seen huge increases in leucovorin prescriptions for autism because of the initial premature and ill-informed announcement that it can treat autism symptoms," said David Mandell, an autism expert at the University of Pennsylvania. "Now families are experiencing whiplash about what constitutes best practice for their children."

from Peking Union Medical College and Harvard Medical School discussed how digital health tools can expand cervical cancer screening and improve healthcare access for women in remote areas.

On Tuesday evening, the CWDF also held an exhibition on women's public welfare achievements, featuring programs on women's health and empowerment, as well as hand-embroidered works and the mianianqun, or "horse-face skirt."

Female artisans specializing in intangible cultural heritage, including Xiang embroidery from China's Hunan province, Chao embroidery from Guangdong province, Su embroidery from Jiangsu province and Miao paper-cutting, also demonstrated their crafts and interacted with visitors.

The event was jointly organized by the CWDF, the UNFPA and the Inclusive Health Lab of Tencent's Sustainable Social Value initiative, with support from the Sino-American Friendship Association.

## SPORTS

# Adebayo goes for 83, records 2nd-highest score in NBA history

Lakers sweep Timberwolves; Wembanyama powers Spurs through physical victory over Celtics

**MIAMI, March 11, (AP):** Bam Adebayo scored 83 points, the second-best scoring effort in NBA history, to carry the Miami Heat to a 150-129 win over the Washington Wizards.

Adebayo had 31 points in the first quarter, 43 by halftime and 62 by the end of the third quarter. He finished 20 for 43 from the field, 36 for 43 from the foul line and 7 for 22 from 3-point range.

Adebayo's free throw makes and attempts both set NBA records for a game. The record for attempts was 39 by Dwight Howard - who got to the line that many times on two occasions. The record for free throws made in a game was 28, set by Wilt Chamberlain and Adrian Dantley.

Chamberlain got the 28 free throws on the night he scored 100 points in 1962 - the only game better than Adebayo in NBA history. Adebayo passed his basketball idol, Kobe Bryant, for the second-highest scoring game ever; Bryant's career-best was 81.

## Lakers 120, Timberwolves 106

In Los Angeles, Luka Doncic had 31 points, 11 assists and 11 rebounds in his seventh triple-double of the season, and the Los Angeles Lakers overcame LeBron James' latest injury absence to sweep their season series with the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Austin Reaves scored 29 of his 31 points in a scorching second half for the Lakers (40-25), who pulled even with Minnesota for fourth place in the Western Conference standings after their third straight win over the team that knocked them out of the first round of last season's playoffs.

Doncic secured the 89th triple-double of his career - seventh-most in NBA history - early in the fourth quarter. Deandre Ayton had 14 points and 12 rebounds in a strong effort with both of his backup big men sidelined.

James sat out for the third straight game with injuries for the Lakers, who have still won three straight and six of seven. He also missed the Lakers' first two wins over Minnesota this season back in October.

The Lakers improved to 13-8 without the top scorer in NBA history in their lineup, including 10-2 when Doncic and Reaves both play without James.



Washington Wizards guard Bilal Coulibaly (0) is stripped of the ball by Miami Heat center Bam Adebayo, right, as forward Myron Gardner (15) and guard Kasparas Jakucionis, back, also defend during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Miami. (AP)

## Spurs 125, Celtics 116

In San Antonio, Victor Wembanyama matched a career-high with eight 3-pointers, scoring 39 points and grabbing 11 rebounds and the San Antonio Spurs beat Boston 125-116 on Tuesday night to sweep a contentious two-game season series with the Celtics.

De'Aaron Fox had 25 points and Stephon Castle added 18 points in San Antonio's fifth straight victory.

Derrick White had 34 points to lead Boston, which had won two straight. Jayson Tatum had 24 points in his third game since returning from a ruptured right Achilles tendon suffered May 12.

Tatum's fourth and final 3-pointer cut the Celtics' deficit to 118-113 with 1:43 remaining, but Spurs Castle followed 18 seconds later with his own 3 to secure the victory.

The battle between the No. 2 teams

in each conference was physical and chippy.

Boston All-Star Jaylen Brown was ejected after becoming incensed when no foul was called after he lost the ball out of bounds with 3:42 remaining in the first half.

## Pistons 138, Nets 100

In New York, Jalen Duren scored 26 points, Cade Cunningham had 21 points and 15 assists, and the Detroit Pistons snapped a season-worst four-game skid, beating the Brooklyn Nets.

Duren shot 9 of 10 from the field and Cunningham was 8 of 10, including 4 of 5 from 3-point range. Duncan Robinson added 15 points and Marcus Sasser finished with 14 for the Eastern Conference-leading Pistons, who never trailed.

Michael Porter Jr. had 19 points and Jalen Wilson added 14 for the Nets, who saw their two-game win-

ning streak end.

Part of Detroit's skid was an improbable loss to visiting Brooklyn on Saturday night in a game it led by 23 points midway through the third quarter. The Nets ended a 10-game skid with that victory.

## 76ers 139, Grizzlies 129

In Philadelphia, Cam Payne scored 13 of his 32 points in the fourth quarter, rookie VJ Edgecombe added 21 points in his return to the lineup and the Philadelphia 76ers rallied to beat the Memphis Grizzlies.

Kelly Oubre Jr. had 31 points and 12 rebounds and Quentin Grimes scored 22 points for the 76ers, who were without All-Star guard Tyrese Maxey and Joel Embiid. Maxey will be sidelined for at least three weeks because of a tendon injury on the small finger of his right hand, the team announced before the game.

## Bulls 130, Warriors 124 OT

In San Francisco, Matas Buzelis scored a career-high 41 points and hit a key 3-pointer with 2:20 left in overtime, Josh Giddey had a triple-double of 21 points, 17 assists and 13 rebounds, and the Chicago Bulls beat the undermanned Golden State Warriors 130-124 on Tuesday night.

Chicago's Jalen Smith converted two free throws with 1.4 seconds left in regulation to send the game into OT, and Tre Jones contributed 22 points for the Bulls, who bounced back from a tough 126-110 loss at Sacramento on Sunday.

Kristaps Porzingis scored 17 points and blocked four shots and Pat Spencer had 17 points and six assists.

## Rockets 113, Raptors 99

In Houston, Kevin Durant scored 29 points and Amen Thompson scored 23 points as the Houston Rockets beat the Toronto Raptors.

## Not a major, still golf's premier tournament

# The Players Championship debate: Old topic as PGA Tour looks ahead

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla., March 11, (AP): The PGA Tour is all about moving forward these days, especially this week. On the day before the premier championship of golf's most powerful circuit, CEO Brian Rolapp plans to share part of the vision to modernize the competition model.

So it was a peculiar decision to begin the promotional campaign for The Players Championship by going back in time.

"March is going to be major," was the tagline for a commercial that first aired Feb. 5.

Not this again.

The Players being looked upon as a major hasn't been a big topic for some 20 years. The notion seemingly was put to bed with a variety of smart comments, including this description from Tiger Woods in 2003: "The highest tournament in the world - next to the majors."

Justin Leonard once was asked to compare his British Open title in 1997 with winning The Players a year later. "Apples and oranges," he said. "But this is one hell of an orange."

Once the discussion abated, The Players began to flourish. It moved to May in 2007. Over the next several years, more time was spent discussing what it is (the biggest event on the biggest tour) instead of what isn't (a major).

That the tour is pushing the envelope now should not be a surprise.

It has the \$1.5 billion investment of Strategic Sports Group, a consortium of North American sports owners whose love of golf is surpassed only by its love for a return on its investment. One look around the golf landscape was a reminder that the PGA Tour did



In this file photo, players work on their putting on the 13th green during a practice round for The Players championship golf tournament at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. (AP)

not own the four biggest tournaments in golf (five including the Ryder Cup). The Players certainly has all the trappings of a major - a dynamic course at TPC Sawgrass since 1982, a long list of memorable shots, a roll call of winners that includes 28 major champions and a few surprises (the majors have those, too).

The Players offers a five-year exemption on the tour, just like the majors. It used to be given equal credit as the majors in World Golf Hall of Fame criteria, as it should have.

But it wasn't a major.

"I think The Players is one of the best golf tournaments in the world. I don't think anyone disputes that," defending champion Rory McIlroy said last month. "I'm a traditionalist, I'm

a historian of the game. We have four major championships."

That brought to mind an observation long ago by former PGA champion Jeff Sluman: "When you go to Denny's and order the Grand Slam breakfast, they don't give you five things, do they?"

The four majors date to Bobby Jones winning the U.S. Open and British Open, U.S. Amateur and British Amateur in 1930 for what was called the "impregnable quadrilateral."

Arnold Palmer gave birth to the modern Grand Slam in 1960. He was playing with President Dwight D. Eisenhower at Augusta National the day after he won the Masters when Charles Bartlett of the Chicago Tribune wrote that Palmer was determined to win "a grand slam of professional golf."

# Ten months after her heart stopped during a game, King returns to the pitch

LOS ANGELES, March 11, (AP): That Savy King not only survived a life-threatening on-field cardiac event but is now poised to return this season for Angel City is nothing short of miraculous, and she knows it.

During the second half of Angel City's home match against the Utah Royals last May 9, King sat on the field in the 74th minute, appearing dazed. Then everything went black.

The 20-year-old's heart had stopped.

Trainers rushed to King's side and she was given CPR. Fans and fellow players were shaken as she was treated on the field for some 11 minutes before she was rushed away. Once at the hospital, King underwent surgery to repair an anomalous left coronary artery, a rare congenital defect that had previously gone undetected.

Ten months later, King is preparing for the National Women's Soccer League season.

"I for sure have gone through ups and downs, but for the most part, I just am grateful that I'm able to play again," she said. "I feel like that comes from my perspective of life just completely changing. I feel like sometimes when you do something over and over again, you get comfortable and not necessarily complacent, but you take things for granted of being able to just go out there and do what you love every day. And for a second I thought that that was taken from me."

While King was hospitalized, there was a controversy brewing. The NWSL

Players Association was among those that said Angel City's match should have been suspended after King's collapse. Instead, the game was continued with some 12 minutes of stoppage time.

The league said later the match should have been suspended. Another player, Racing Louisville's Savannah DeMelo, collapsed during a game later in the season against the Reign in Seattle and the remainder of that match was postponed. NWSL Commissioner Jessica Berman said the league learned from those experiences and new procedures were put in place to determine the best course of action when such incidents arise.

King spent the summer at home watching her teammates on television and re-learning to do the things that had once come naturally to her.

She had six weeks of physical therapy to get back on her feet, then went into a cardiac rehabilitation process. Three days a week for three months she exercised while doctors closely monitored her heart. By September she was able to do limited training with her team.

As she worked her way back, she was also hatching a plan.

Through King's leadership, all 16 NWSL teams gave their players, coaches and staff training this year on hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation and use of an automatic external defibrillator (AED). The NWSL is the only professional sports league in the nation to implement CPR training at that scale.

## 'Special feeling to go out the right way'

# Gonzaga beats Santa Clara to win WCC tournament in final appearance

LAS VEGAS, March 11, (AP): Gonzaga has dominated the West Coast Conference since coach Mark Few took over at the turn of the century.

The Bulldogs are leaving for the Pac-12 Conference next season and made sure to go out winners.

Mario Saint-Supéry scored 21 points, Tyon Grant-Foster had 20 and No. 12 Gonzaga defeated Santa Clara 79-68 on Tuesday night to win the WCC Tournament.

"It's a special feeling to go out the right way," said Gonzaga's Graham Ike, voted the tournament Most Outstanding Player. "Ultimately, we ended where we started this. It started out with championships and those teams that came before us. We just wanted to continue the success that they had. We were proud we could do that."

The Bulldogs (30-3) received the conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament, though the only mystery was what seed they will get. This was their sixth WCC tournament title in seven years and 12th in the last 14.

Santa Clara (26-8) will wait until Sunday to see if it is in the 68-team field, but the WCC appears to be a three-bid league. Gonzaga, Santa Clara and No. 21 Saint Mary's were in the top 38 of the NCAA's NET rankings entering this game and in the top 35 in Kenpom.

Four players scored in double figures for the Zags, who made 52.8% of their shots. Ike made all seven of his shots in scoring 15 points.

Christian Hammond led the Broncos with 24 points, and Allen Graves scored 11.

Sash Gavalyugov, who scored 23 points that included the dagger 3-pointer in the closing seconds to beat Saint



Gonzaga guard Davis Fogle (4) celebrates after a play against Santa Clara during the second half of an NCAA college basketball final game in the West Coast Conference men's tournament in Las Vegas. (AP)

Mary's 76-71 in the semifinals, was held to eight. He was 3 of 13, including 2 of 9 from 3-point range.

"Sash had some tough shots tonight," Santa Clara coach Herb Sendek said. "He does have the ability to make some of those shots, but I don't know that things were engineered to simply take him out."

The Broncos made Gonzaga earn this victory. They led 52-50 nearly midway through the second half before the Bulldogs scored seven straight points to go ahead for good.

After dominating the WCC, Gonzaga will see if it can continue to assert itself against San Diego State, Boise State and Utah State in the revamped Pac-12 beginning next season.

That will come later. Gonzaga has

Durant shot 12 of 16 from the field while adding seven rebounds. He scored 22 of his points in the first half.

Thompson eclipsed the 20-point mark for the fifth time in six games. He converted on 6 of his 10 field goal attempts while making 10 free throws.

Jabari Smith Jr. also added 23 points for the Rockets, who pulled into a tie for third place in the Western Conference standings. Alperen Sengun scored 14 points and grabbed 12 rebounds.

## Suns 129, Bucks 114

In Milwaukee, Devin Booker scored 27 points, Jalen Green had 25 and Royce O'Neale 21 as the Phoenix Suns pulled away in the fourth quarter to win a 129-114 shootout with the Milwaukee Bucks.

Phoenix shot 53.9% and made a season-high 24 3-pointers on 51 attempts. Milwaukee shot 51.2% and went 16 of 38 from 3-point range.

In a game that featured 16 ties and 12 lead changes, O'Neale put the Suns ahead for good with a tiebreaking buzzer-beater from about 50 feet to end the third quarter. Phoenix then scored the first seven points of the final period to extend its lead to 107-97.

Phoenix stayed in front by at least seven points the rest of the way.

## Hawks 124, Mavericks 112

In Atlanta, Nickeril Alexander-Walker scored 29 points, Jalen Johnson had 27 and the Atlanta Hawks won their seventh in a row, holding off the Dallas Mavericks.

The Hawks, who have the NBA's longest active winning streak, led nearly the entire game but couldn't pull away from the Mavericks until the final period.

Dallas tied the score at 97 on Khris Middleton's step-back jumper with just over nine minutes remaining. Atlanta took control from there to hand Dallas its eighth straight loss.

## Kings 114, Pacers 109

In Sacramento, Devin Carter scored 22 of his career-best 24 points in the fourth quarter to power the Sacramento Kings to a 114-109 comeback win over the Indiana Pacers.

Carter scored 13 straight points down the stretch for Sacramento, who trailed by as many as 20 points and were down by 10 heading into the final frame.

The Kings shot 46% from the field and 35% from deep, while the Pacers shot 41% and 30% respectively. Carter was 9 of 13 from the field and 3 for 4 from beyond the arc.

## SPORTS

## 'Results hugely disappointing'

## Borthwick defends England tactics as struggles deepen

VERONA, Italy, March 11, (AP): Embattled coach Steve Borthwick has defended his game plan amid England's Six Nations nosedive and believes his players have buckled under expectations.

England entered the championship with title aspirations but consecutive defeats to Scotland, Ireland and Italy have shattered those hopes. England is fifth in the table and facing title-chasing France in Paris this Saturday in the final round. The visitor's final placing is limited to fourth, fifth or last.

The historic first loss to Italy last weekend in Rome prompted Rugby Football Union chief executive Bill Sweeney the next day to give Borthwick a vote of confidence but only to the end of the July tour, while acknowledging the results were "hugely disappointing."

Borthwick has been scorned for England's kick-heavy approach, lack of ambition and leadership, sloppiness in front of the tryline and ill-discipline following a 12-test winning streak. He denied he was stifling creativity, saying instead the players were not taking his game plan from practices into the matches.

"There's probably a slight misunderstanding about what our game plan is," he said Tuesday. "With an international team, you have an overview, a structure of this is how we want to approach the different aspects of the game. And then we talk

about the players bringing their points of difference.

"I think that the England shirt can, at times, weigh heavy. And I think we've worked exceptionally hard to try and alleviate that, to try and get the players to play fast rugby. I want the ball to move. I want them to be brave. And I talk about playing brave. I talk about playing big.

"In the last two or three weeks, there's been times where the shirt looks like it's weighed a bit heavy. We're working on converting opportunities, and we're all after the transfer from the training field into the test match arena."

The statistics show England has been the second best team in attacks into the opposition 22, but the second worst team for points per entry. The defense has conceded the fewest entries into its own 22, but has allowed the most points per entry. England has been the worst team in conceding turnovers in the opposition 22, forced (5) and unforced (9) according to Opta. England scored seven tries in the opening win over Wales and has only seven tries since.

"I respect there's lots of discussion around tactical plans," Borthwick said. "I think it's more about improving that incisiveness with our attack and getting over the tryline rather than any major overhaul being necessary."

He also believed the players have been trying too hard, leading to ill-discipline and lack of composure; 32 penalties in the three defeats.



England coach Steve Borthwick gives instructions to his players prior to the start of the Six Nations rugby union match between Italy and England in Rome. (AP)

## Both thrilled to end lengthy retirements

## Double-comeback bout with Carano biggest fight in MMA right now: Ronda

INGLEWOOD, Calif., March 11, (AP): Ronda Rousey says her bout with Gina Carano on May 16 is the biggest fight that can be made in mixed martial arts, and they're both thrilled to end their lengthy retirements for this long-awaited showdown.

Rousey and Carano made their first public appearance on Tuesday to promote their comeback bout at Intuit Dome, Los Angeles Clippers owner Steve Ballmer's sparkling new arena.

While Carano expressed gratitude and excitement about her first fight in 17 years, the ever-feisty Rousey sees the bout as the opening strike in an attempt to challenge the UFC "monolith" for dominance in the sport.

"This is the biggest fight in MMA right now," Rousey said. "There are no two people in this sport with more international name recognition than me and Gina - except Conor (McGregor), but no one is going to sanction that. This isn't a charity card. This isn't a throwback, nostalgia card. This is the biggest fight in the sport right now, and it needed to happen now. This is fate between us. We have been on a collision course ever since I sat on a couch watching her on TV, just in complete awe what this woman was doing."

Both fighters were pioneers in the nascent days of women's MMA. Carano was the sport's biggest early television star in the 2000s - and Rousey said she became aware of the sport by watching Carano, eventually picking it up and honing the talent that single-handedly persuaded the UFC to create women's divisions in the 2010s.

But the sport accelerated past the MMA icons, who both moved on to entertainment careers after their star power appeared to exceed their cage abilities. Carano, who turns 44 next month, hasn't fought at all since 2009, while the 39-year-old Rousey last competed in 2016 before having two children.

Both fighters say they had never fully given up on MMA, and this bout was too tantalizing to pass up.

"We only get to live once, and this makes me feel so alive," said Carano, who also revealed for the first time that she has married her longtime partner, muay thai fighter Kevin Ross. "It's pretty incredible and surreal to be here today. It's healing. It's exciting. It's everything I could have hoped for. I didn't know I needed this so bad."

Rousey and Carano have finally decided to return for a fight that's been anticipated and predicted for many years, despite their long career detours.

Carano said that while she never formally retired, she was persuaded to return after lengthy conversations with Rousey, who was nine months pregnant when she initially proposed the bout in December 2024. Rousey

had no interest in fighting for several years while focused on professional wrestling and her family with former UFC heavyweight Travis Browne, but she got the itch after helping her coach in judo training.

Rousey said she retired a decade ago not because of back-to-back losses to Holly Holm and Amanda Nunes, but because of neurological issues "that I didn't really have any clarity about, and it just hurt to be around (the sport)."

Carano also said she has been through several years of medical problems before feeling good enough recently to entertain a return to fighting. "We both need to rewrite our own endings together," Rousey said. "So I reached out to her, and it's been such a journey to get here. So many obstacles. So many people tried to get between us. We went from barely knowing each other to being like, 'You know what? We're going to fight each other.'"

As to those obstacles, Rousey sharply criticized the UFC for a financial offer that she says was much smaller than what they'll get from Netflix and Jake Paul's promotional company.

Rousey initially wanted to make her comeback with MMA's dominant promotion on its final pay-per-view card, but she sees the UFC's offer as part of a corporate sickness in the company for which she made untold millions.

Rousey said she still loves UFC President Dana White, but the promotion's corporate overlords have strangled fighter pay. Rousey even joined the sport-wide criticism of the fights announced for the high-profile UFC show at the White House this summer.

"Now it's become about changing the entire landscape of the sport and challenging the monolith that the UFC has become," Rousey said. "Of course, I just wanted to do something fun. I don't have to change the world, but that's the way that we do it. I'm so happy that we're here, and I'm so grateful that Gina trusted me."

The Netflix show is being promoted by YouTuber-turned-boxer Paul's Most Valuable Promotions, but Rousey made it clear she is heavily involved in the promotional end. Paul hopes to promote many more MMA shows in the future, and Rousey said she hopes to fill MVP's version of White's role in the company.

Former UFC heavyweight champion Francis Ngannou also will appear on the card, fighting 40-year-old Philippe Lins. The 39-year-old Ngannou left the Professional Fighters League last week, and he said MVP's initial plan was for him to fight Dutch kickboxer Rico Verhoeven before heavyweight boxing champion Oleksandr Usyk made a deal to fight Verhoeven in Egypt.

## Brazil earns first Winter Paralympics medal to match Olympics milestone



Oksana Masters of the US celebrates as she crosses the finish line to win the Para Cross Country Skiing Women's Sprint Sitting Final competition at the 2026 Winter Paralympics, in Tesero, Italy. (AP)

## Masters roars to Paralympic redemption with 11th gold medal

TESERO, Italy, March 11, (AP): Less than a month after Brazil won its first medal at the Winter Olympics, the tropical nation claimed its first piece of hardware at the Winter Paralympics.

Cristian Westemaier Ribera finished second in the men's sprint sitting discipline in Para cross-country skiing to become Brazil's first-ever Winter Paralympic medalist.

That came hot on the heels of Brazilian ski racer Lucas Pinheiro Braathen's gold medal in the men's giant slalom at the recently concluded Olympics.

Both were also South America's first medals at the Winter Olympics and Paralympics.

"It was always my dream," the 23-year-old Ribera said. "When I started to compete in this sport, I thought I would be a Paralympian. After I did that, my goal was to win a medal. And now it's happened, so I'm very, very proud."

"We always train so hard in Brazil. We don't have snow so we have to train on roller skis. It's very different, it's very difficult, but I'm here, representing Brazil and I'm very happy."

Ribera was introduced to Para cross-country skiing in 2015 as part of a project put together by the Brazilian Snow Sports Federation with the support of the International Paralympic Committee's development arm.

The project's aim was to have a Brazilian athlete contending for a medal at the 2030 Paralympic Winter Games.

But Ribera is ahead of schedule, although he wasn't completely satisfied with silver.

"It is so emotional. It was very good. I would've wanted to come away with a gold medal but the Chinese (gold medalist Liu Zixu) was very strong," Ribera said.

Ribera, who was born with arthrogryposis multiplex congenita, is competing at his third Winter Paralympics after making his debut as a teenager at Pyeongchang in 2018.

Oksana Masters' 11th Paralympic gold medal was "redemption" for the most decorated American Winter Paralympian.

And it was clear just how much it meant to her.

Masters screamed loudly several times in delight after winning the women's sprint sitting discipline in Para cross-country skiing on Tuesday at Milan Cortina.

She finished second in the event four years ago.

"It was just such a relief and redemption from Beijing. It was the one that got away. I love sprints and I hate sprints because there's so much stress," Masters said.

"I struggle with believing in myself and that was a big thing. The team believed in me, so I wanted to show up for my team."

Masters was 40 meters (131 feet) behind

leader Yunji Kim at the start of the final incline but powered up the ascent to overtake her rival as they crested the summit.

"I hate chasing. I would rather be chased, but I do realize that I do well with chasing and reeling people in, one by one, staying smooth and relaxed," Masters added.

It was a second gold medal at Milan Cortina for Masters, who won the women's sprint sitting discipline in Para biathlon on Saturday. The 36-year-old was coming off a difficult season that included surgery, a bone infection and a concussion.

"I feel absolutely on top of the world right now, just in complete shock, and so, so happy," she added.

Masters now has seven Winter Paralympic gold medals to go along with her four victories at the Summer Paralympics. She has competed in every Paralympics since 2012, earning medals in Para cross-country and Para biathlon in the winter and Para cycling and Para rowing in the summer.

Her total medal haul stands at 21 - 16 in the Winter Games and five in the Summer Games.

Masters was born in Ukraine with birth defects believed to be related to the Chernobyl nuclear accident. She had to go through orphanages at an early age in Ukraine before being adopted by an American mother. She had her left leg amputated at age 9, and her right leg amputated at age 14.

## 'We're both at a high level'

## US-Canada gold medal match looms again

MILAN, March 11, (AP): Three weeks after the United States and Canada clashed in the Olympic hockey finals, they are on course to face off for gold again. This time at the Paralympics.

The U.S. is looking to cement itself as the top hockey nation. Canada is determined to prevent its neighbors from doing the Olympic and Paralympic sweep at Milan Cortina.

It looks set to be another chapter of the famed rivalry between the two hockey powerhouses.

"It's one of the best rivalries in sport and we're so fortunate that we have the opportunity to be a part of it," Canada captain Tyler McGregor told The Associated Press. "Those are games that they're just different as an athlete: they're more emotional, they're chaotic at times, there's so many momentum swings over the course of a game."

"When the pressure is on you really need to be able to manage that emotionally. And those games, they're fast, they're physical, they test you in ways that is so incredible as an athlete and we can't wait to potentially have that opportunity later in the tournament."

Both nations topped their groups in the para ice hockey round-robin stage, winning all three of their matches comprehensively.

Four-time defending champion U.S., which has scored 34 goals and let in just two, will face the Czech Republic in Friday's semifinals, when Canada, which has allowed just one goal and scored 26, will play China.

"We're both at a high level, their guys care just as much as we do, they train just as hard," U.S. forward Kevin McKee said. "And then, obviously, we play such tight games so you build that, not



United States' Kevin McKee, left, challenges for the puck with China's Wang Zhidong during the Group A ice hockey match between United States and China at the 2026 Winter Paralympics, in Milan, Italy. (AP)

necessarily hatred, but that competition. Like you like to compete against them, because they're just good games."

The U.S. is also aiming for hockey history, looking to become the first country to do the threepeat after winning gold in both the men's and women's competitions at the Olympics.

The Americans swept all four world championships last year. There is currently no women's division at the Paralympics, with it classified as an open-gender sport.

"No team's ever won all three hockey gold medals in the Olympics and Paralympics so I think it's a lofty goal but I think, obviously the men and

women got it done so we just got to keep building every game and hopefully we can bring one home," U.S. captain Josh Pauls said.

Teammate Jack Wallace believes the Canadians "are licking the wounds right now after the Olympics," having lost to the Americans in both gold medal matches.

"I know we're trying to stop that (run) right here," Canada goalkeeper Corbin Watson said. "We're coming in as a renewed force. I know last year wasn't the greatest... but this year we pushed really hard, we did a lot of good things in our training throughout the year."

"So we're eyeing that gold medal game... eyeing Team USA to come for them."

While the Olympics saw the U.S. men win gold for the first time since the "Miracle on Ice" in 1980, it's a different story at the Paralympics.

The U.S. has triumphed at five of the past six editions of the Winter Paralympics and several of its players are targeting a fourth straight gold medal, with Pauls incredibly targeting a fifth.

Canada finished runner-up at the past two Paralympics but Italian ice may just prove lucky as the team won its only gold medal in Turin in 2006.

Greg Westlake, a member of that gold medal team, announced in August that he would step down from his assistant coaching role with the national team to come out of retirement and rejoin his teammates on the ice.

"One of the reasons I came back to play this year was I thought it would just be really cool to kind of wrap up where it all started," the 39-year-old said. "I have such great memories of 2006."

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Bayern's Jamal Musiala scores his side's sixth goal during the Champions League round of 16 soccer match between Atalanta and FC Bayern Munich in Bergamo, Italy. (AP)

# Sports

## Bayern blitzes Atalanta, Atletico rocks Tottenham

Galatasaray upsets Liverpool loses, Barca held

**MADRID, March 11, (AP): Bayern Munich and Atletico Madrid took giant strides toward the UEFA Champions League quarterfinals with big wins, while Liverpool and FC Barcelona still have work to do.**

Bayern thrashed Atalanta 6-1 without top scorer Harry Kane in the starting lineup. Atletico made under-pressure Tottenham Hotspur coach Igor Tudor pay for his bold decision to drop first-choice goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario, racing to a 3-0 lead inside 15 minutes. The Spanish giant eventually won 5-2.

Liverpool must overturn a 1-0 defeat to Galatasaray in next week's second leg at Anfield, while Barcelona needed a last-gasp penalty from Lamine Yamal to rescue a 1-1 draw at Newcastle United.

Even without the prolific Kane, Bayern all but sealed its place in the last eight with a dominant win in Bergamo.

England captain Kane has scored 47 goals this season for club and country but was only fit enough for the bench. In his absence, Michael Olise scored twice. Serge Gnabry and Nicolas Jackson each scored and set up goals, while Josip Stanisic and Jamal Musiala also found the net for the German champion.

Tottenham endured a nightmare start in Madrid, with backup keeper Antonin Kinsky substituted in the 17th minute after mistakes led to two of Atletico's three early goals.

Spurs coach Tudor had opted to leave out first-choice keeper Vicario – a decision that backfired spectacularly. Kinsky, making his Champions League debut, slipped and miskicked in the sixth minute, giving Marcos Llorente the chance to open the scoring.

Antoine Griezmann made it 2-0 for Atletico before Kinsky miskicked again and Julian Alvarez slotted into an empty net.

Kinsky looked inconsolable when he was replaced by Vicario, who conceded just five minutes after coming on, with Robin Le Normand scoring Atletico's fourth.

"We knew how to take advantage of our opponents' mistakes to gain a good lead, and now we go into the second leg with a three-goal advantage," Alvarez said.

Spurs rallied, but it will take an unlikely comeback in the second leg to avoid elimination.

"We gave away three goals at the start, and then it became very difficult for us," Tudor said.

According to stats provider Opta Sports, this was the first time in Tottenham's history that it has lost six games in a row.

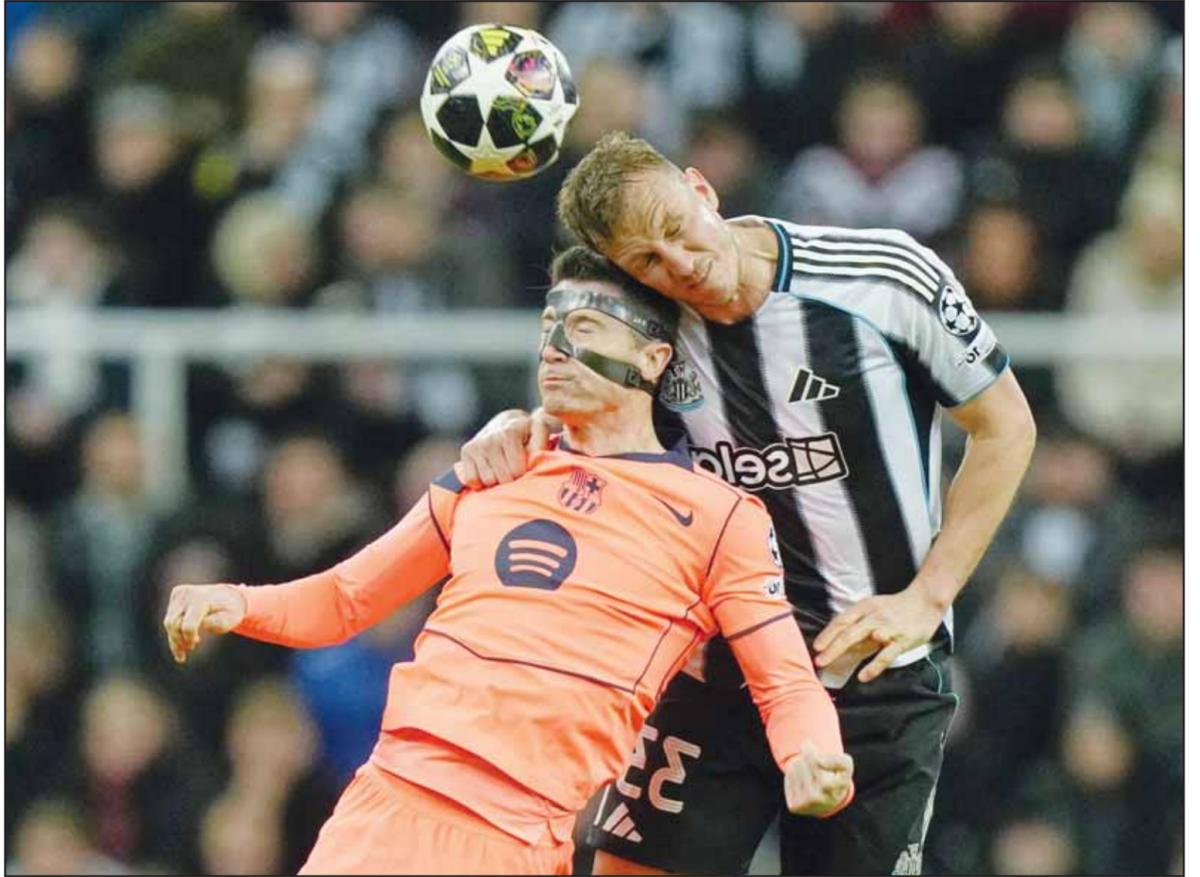
Five-time European champion Barcelona was seconds away from defeat when Malick Thiaw brought down Dani Olmo in the box.

Referee Marco Guida pointed to the spot, and 18-year-old Yamal kept his composure to beat Aaron Ramsdale with the home fans hoping he would miss. His goal came in the 96th minute, and the final whistle was blown immediately after his penalty.

"It wasn't a great game from us, but we have a young team," Barcelona coach Hansi Flick said. "We have to improve, but we have a lot of potential. We will make things better."

Newcastle had taken the lead through Harvey Barnes' close-range effort in the 86th minute. The forward had also hit the post earlier with a curling shot.

"It's tough. You score and it's an amazing feeling – you can't let the fans. We'd played really well," Barnes said. "To concede late on is really hard to take, but the



Newcastle's Dan Burn, left, and Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski battle for the ball during the Champions League round of 16 first leg soccer match between Newcastle United and Barcelona in Newcastle, England. (AP)

score is level and we have a second leg to come."

First it was Juventus, and now Liverpool – Galatasaray is making a statement against Europe's giants.

A 1-0 first-leg win in Istanbul gave the Turkish champion the advantage in this round-of-16 tie.

Mario Lemina's seventh-minute header secured the victory for Galatasaray, which had earlier stunned Juventus with a 7-5 aggregate win in the playoffs.

"We want to win there too – we want to reach the quarterfinals," Lemina said.

It is the second time Galatasaray has beaten Liverpool this season, having won by the same scoreline in the league phase.

The Turkish side had chances to take an even bigger lead to Merseyside, with Victor Osimhen's second-half strike ruled out for offside. Liverpool also saw Ibrahima Konate's effort disallowed by VAR for handball.

"What I do know is that it's halftime," Liverpool coach Arne Slot said. "We've lost here twice 1-0, but the good thing is the next game will be at Anfield, where our fans can create a similar atmosphere."

Cote d'Ivoire, Canada seek to strengthen sports cooperation ahead of WC

## Mexico grants visas to some Iraqi players for qualifier

**MEXICO CITY, March 11, (Agencies):** Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has begun granting visas to players from Iraq's national team ahead of the World Cup intercontinental qualifier scheduled March 31 in Monterrey.

The Iraqi team is facing logistical issues because of disruptions caused by the Iran war.

"On March 8, some players were processed at the Mexican Embassy in Saudi Arabia, and tomorrow other people are scheduled to be processed at the Embassy in Qatar," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported in a statement late Monday.

The government did not specify the names or how many players were granted visas.

Iraq is set to face the winner of the match between Suriname and Bolivia for a spot in the World Cup – to be in the group with France, Norway and Senegal.

Mexico, the United States and Canada are co-hosting the World Cup, which begins June 11.

Iraq head coach Graham Arnold has asked FIFA to postpone the intercontinental qualifier. With Iraqi airspace closed, Arnold's squad – containing predominantly players from the domestic league – is unable to fully gather.

Mexico does not have an embassy in Iraq.



In this file photo, Iraqi's Mohanad Ali, left, celebrates with teammates after scoring his side's first goal during the 2026 World Cup play off second leg match between Iraq and UAE, in Basra, Iraq. (AP)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs added that it is in contact with the Iraqi Embassy in Mexico and that they are willing "to provide all necessary assistance in documenting the members of the Iraqi national team."



Cote d'Ivoire and Canada are seeking to strengthen cooperation in sports ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The prospects for cooperation were discussed on Tuesday in Abidjan during a meeting between Ivorian Minister of Sports Adje

Silas Metch and Canadian Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire Sandra Choufani.

"Our discussions focused on initiatives that could support Cote d'Ivoire's participation in the next World Cup, which will be jointly hosted by Canada, the United States and Mexico," Metch said.

The minister reaffirmed the Ivorian government's commitment to further strengthening friendship and cooperation with Canada, particularly in the sports sector.

Choufani said the talks also covered activities planned around the group-stage match between Cote d'Ivoire and Germany, scheduled for June 20, 2026 in Toronto.

"The idea is to organize several activities both in Cote d'Ivoire and in Canada to highlight this major sporting event and further strengthen the ties between our two nations," the ambassador said.

She added that she would soon meet officials of the Ivorian Football Federation to discuss the modalities of these activities.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will be jointly hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19. Cote d'Ivoire's national team, the Elephants, will compete in Group E alongside Germany, Ecuador and Curacao.

## Al Ahly punishes players after disappointing league results



Al Ahly and El Ghaish players vie for the ball during league game.

**CAIRO, March 11:** Al Ahly, Egypt's most decorated football club, has imposed financial penalties on its players and launched a full review of all football departments following a disappointing run in the domestic league. The club now turns its attention to a crucial CAF Champions League quarterfinal against Tunisia's Etoile du Sahel, in which Al Ahly holds the record for the most titles.

On Monday, Al Ahly fell 2-1 to Tala'ea El Ghaish in a postponed match, dropping to third place in the league behind rivals Zamalek and Pyramids. Al Ahly now has 40 points from 20 games, while Pyramids and Zamalek top the table with 43 points. Zamalek also has a postponed match against ENPPI pending.

The club announced on its social media platforms that President Mahmoud El Khatib has decided to deduct 30% of first-team players' salaries and suspend 25% of their contract value until the team's position in the league and CAF Champions League is clarified.

In addition, Al Ahly has moved up its travel to Tunisia, with the squad departing Cairo Airport on Thursday instead of Friday, giving the coaching staff extra time to prepare for the first leg against Etoile du Sahel.

Vice President Yasser Mansour and board member Sayed Abdel Hafiz have begun evaluating all football department staff, including technical, administrative, and medical teams, and will restructure the sector at all levels—first team, youth teams, women's football, and academies—to align with the club's ambitions and satisfy fans' expectations.

## Neymar vents frustration amid World Cup doubts

**RIO DE JANEIRO, March 11, (Xinhua):** Neymar voiced frustration on Tuesday after he was left out of Santos' squad for its away clash with Mirassol, raising fresh doubts about his fitness ahead of this year's FIFA World Cup.

The 34-year-old had been expected to return from his latest injury absence in Tuesday night's Serie A fixture.

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) had previously said national team manager Carlo Ancelotti would attend the match to assess Neymar before naming his squad for World Cup warm-up matches against France and Croatia later this month.

But the decision fueled concerns about whether the former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star would be ready for football's

showpiece tournament in June and July.

"Since a lot of people are creating theories about what's happening with me: nothing is happening," Neymar said in a video on social media.

"If I play injured, like they said last year, I'm wrong. If I only think about myself, I'm wrong. If I hold myself back, I'm wrong. If I play with pain or something that could make it worse, I'm wrong. It's complicated, huh?"

Very hard to get it right, man. Very hard, very hard to please everyone," Neymar, who is Brazil's all-time leading scorer with 79 goals in 128 games, said he felt let down by people close to him but did not provide details.

"What surprises me the most, well, actually it doesn't surprise me, are people who seem to

be by my side every day and start making up stories, saying this and that as if it were the absolute truth, as if they were the ones who know everything," he said.

"It's very complicated to be me, my goodness. I have to have a lot of patience to put up with you all." Neymar has made just three appearances for Santos this year after undergoing arthroscopic surgery on his left knee in December.

He has not played for Brazil since suffering a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament in a World Cup qualifier against Uruguay in October 2023, an injury that left him sidelined for more than a year.

Ancelotti has said he will only consider players who are playing regularly for their clubs when picking his World Cup squad.

## Chinese players vow to keep pushing forward at Asian Cup

**PERTH, March 11, (Xinhua):** The Chinese women's national football team arrived in Perth on Tuesday evening to prepare for its AFC Women's Asian Cup quarterfinal against Chinese Taipei.

Before the first training session after arriving, players said the team would keep pushing in the knockout stage, respect every opponent and focus on its own game.

Yuan Cong said the win over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the final group match was important for confidence and "could be helpful for the upcoming matches." "No matter how many matches we play in Perth, we hope to return to Sydney for

the final," she said.

Yuan, born in 2000, joined Western Sydney Wanderers of Australia's A-League Women in September 2025. In January 2026, she scored for the club in an away match in Perth.

She said she still needs to improve in areas such as physical contests and the tempo of play in the A-League Women, and wants to "proceed steadily and take one step at a time" to improve.

Wang Aifang, one of the youngest players in the Chinese squad, said she was a little nervous in the first group match but then focused on giving her all and showing the energy of a young player.