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Opinion

Legacy of Khomeini, who killed his comrades, exists today

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

ALL indicators suggest that everything the Iranian regime has caused since 1979 is beginning to unravel. This means that the transformations in the region will be significant after the removal of a violence-based regime that extended its influence throughout the region to control Arab states through terrorism and the incitement of sectarian strife, which has dis-

rupted all attempts at comprehensive development in the region.

We must acknowledge that since the seventh century AD, the Persians have been working on reviving the empire that fell under the hooves of the Arab horses. From that day until now, they have worked to turn back the clock. Regardless of political ideologies or the form of the regime, the deeply ingrained belief among Iranians is that the Arabs brought down the Persian Empire, and the Persians must seek revenge.

We have discussed this many times, explicitly or symbolically. The current regime, born from that ideological womb and hidden behind an Islamic veneer, is merely a fig leaf that exposes its nakedness more than it conceals it.

Looking back at recent history, I recall how the

Shah dealt with Khomeini when he sought to incite unrest in Iran. The Shah aimed to export the crisis to Iraq by exiling Khomeini there. From the moment Khomeini set foot on Iraqi soil, unrest erupted, to the extent that the former Iraqi regime considered executing him. When the Shah learned of this, he forbade any harm from befalling him.

In 1978, when Khomeini was expelled from Iraq, he attempted to enter Kuwait, but Kuwait refused him entry, fearing it would become a haven for a terrorist movement. France, however, welcomed him.

Khomeini was known for his hatred of everyone - the Shah, the Iraqis among whom he had lived for years, Kuwait, and the Arabs in general. He harbored resentment toward all who had aided his movement, including political forces opposed to the Shah and even members of his own camp.

Former President Abolhassan Banisadr is the clearest example of this issue, having fled Iran when he learned that Khomeini wanted to kill him.

This is not surprising, as the founder of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Ismail I, son of Heydar, killed approximately one million people to impose his ideological vision, which contradicted the beliefs of the majority of the Iranian people in the 16th century.

This history is closely linked to what is happening in the region today.

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In crisis, rumors can trigger panic

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): Amid rapid spread of information on social media platforms, rumors have become a growing challenge for societies, causing confusion and anxiety, potentially affecting security, military, political, economic and social stability, particularly amid ongoing regional developments.

The ease of publishing and sharing content with a single click has created fertile ground for unverified information to spread online. Within seconds, inaccurate news may circulate widely without verification, amplifying events and stirring fear or doubt, particularly during crises and emergencies.

Officials from several concerned authorities told KUNA that confronting rumors is a shared responsibility beginning with individual awareness of verifying information before sharing it, warning against its broad impact as it may undermine trust between society and state institutions.

Official spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense Colonel Staff Saud Al-Atwan stressed to KUNA that national responsibility requires refraining from filming incident locations or circulating footage, urging the public to rely on official sources for information during sensitive situations.

Al-Atwan noted that what may appear as an ordinary image could be valuable information to hostile parties, as publishing even a single clip might reveal geographic coordinates or operational details that help identify sensitive sites and analyze potential targets.

He said that some videos or posts circulated on social media may contain inaccurate or misleading information that could cause unnecessary concern among the public, stressing the importance of verifying information and avoiding the spread of unconfirmed reports.

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UK envoy reassures citizens in Kuwait amid regional conflict

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: British Ambassador to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed addressed the British community in the country, acknowledging the anxiety felt by many British citizens as the regional conflict enters its second week amid the ongoing uncertainty.

In a video published on the social media platforms of the British Embassy, Rasheed pointed out that although attacks from Iran are continuing, their frequency has decreased significantly.



Rasheed

remains closed.

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Kuwait-Greece ties expanding across multiple sectors: envoy

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Amid the rapid developments sweeping the region and the political and economic challenges that call for stronger cooperation among nations, the Kuwaiti-Greek relations stand out as a steadily expanding partnership in multiple sectors.



Plotas

tries remain committed to strengthening their partnership and broadening the scope of political, economic and cultural cooperation. This shared commitment reflects a strong mutual understanding and a common determination to build deeper ties that advance the interests of both nations.

Greek Ambassador to Kuwait Ioannis Plotas spoke with the newspaper about the pillars of bilateral relations and the opportunities for further development in various fields, such as investment, energy, tourism and culture, in addition to the positions of his country on a number of regional and international issues.

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HAMAS URGES IRAN TO SPARE NEIGHBORS

Kuwait remains vigilant, neutralizes hostile drone



Right: HH the PM listens to a briefing from officials on the procedures followed to regulate entry and exit movement during a visit to Nuwaiseeb Border Crossing on Saturday. Left: HH the PM visits the Ministry of Health's Emergency medical Department, accompanied by Minister of Health.



PM checks borders, hospitals and utilities

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Spokesperson of Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Brigadier Jadaan Fadhel revealed that the KNG forces shot down a hostile drone in their area of responsibility.

In a press statement on Saturday morning, Fadhel stressed that this step is in accordance with the ongoing efforts of the Armed Forces to guarantee national security and protect the vital sites against external threats.

He said the National Guard remains vigilant and fully prepared to maintain national security and stability under the current circumstances. He asserted "the National Guard forces are always ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the homeland and stand as one to protect the national security under the wise leadership."

He advised everybody to strictly comply with the safety instructions of the concerned authorities and cooperate with the military and police officers in maintaining the stability of the nation.

Earlier on Friday, Fadhel also announced shooting down a drone at a site protected by the forces. He said the National Guard is coordinating with the Kuwait Armed Forces, police and Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) in dealing with threats and confronting attempts to destabilize the

national security.

On the same day, the ministries of Defense and Interior conducted a joint security briefing, during which Defense Ministry spokesperson Colonel Saud Al-Atwan revealed that the air defense systems detected one hostile ballistic missile over the past 24 hours.

Al-Atwan reassured the public that the missile was outside the threat zone and it neither posed danger nor caused damage.

He affirmed that the Armed Forces continue to track aerial threats as part of ongoing security surveillance and airspace defense measures, in light of the Iranian aggression against Kuwait.

Moreover, Brigadier General Nasser Bousalib, spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior, reported that the security forces noticed many individuals using drones for aerial photography in violation of previously announced instructions.

He warned that such unauthorized practices negatively affect the efforts of security and military forces, adding that those responsible will face legal action and will be referred to the competent authorities.

He said the explosive ordnance disposal teams handled 16 reports related to falling shrapnel resulting from defensive interception operations during the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of shrapnel reports since the beginning of the aggression to 372.

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Ramadan Timings

Imsak..... Sunday 04:40
Iftar Sunday 17:56
Imsak..... Monday 04:38

Other Voices

When a single word becomes a legal case

By Dr. Fawaz Khaled Alkhateeb

In the age of social media, words travel faster than ever before. A message written in seconds can reach thousands of people within minutes. What once might have been a private conversation is now a public statement, preserved permanently in the digital space.

Yet many people still underestimate how powerful - and sometimes how dangerous - a single sentence can be.

Over the past two weeks, I have observed several cases in Kuwait where individuals were referred to State Security and later to the Public Prosecution because of words they posted online. The circumstances varied, but the central element in each case was the same: a short message shared on

social media.

In some instances, these posts were messages of condolence or expressions of sympathy related to religious figures. To the individuals who wrote them, the intention may have been personal or emotional. But once those words entered the public domain, they became subject to interpretation within a broader legal and political context.



Dr. Alkhateeb

From the perspective of investigators, certain expressions may be interpreted as sympathy toward entities associated with hostile states during a period of heightened regional tension. From a prosecutorial perspective, similar statements may be examined under laws related to sectarian incitement or the promotion of hatred.

This is where Kuwait's Decree-Law No. 19 of 2012 on the Protection of National Unity becomes relevant.

Article 1 of the law prohibits acts or expressions that may incite hatred, provoke sectarian or tribal division, or threaten national unity and social cohesion. The scope of the law is intentionally broad. It covers speech, writing, and all forms of publication, including digital communication and social media platforms.

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Kuwait Eid break may run March 19 until 24

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced that all ministries, government agencies, and public institutions will be closed on Thursday, March 19, on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr for the year 1447 AH, reports Al-Seyassah daily. In a press release issued on Thursday, CSC explained that if Ramadan this year has 30 days, Thursday, March 19 will be the last day of Ramadan, and the holiday will extend consecutively from Thursday to Monday.

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Give way, no crowds and share facts: KFF

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) urged the public to give way to fire trucks and avoid gathering at accident scenes, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an awareness post on its social media account, KFF highlighted three important points:

■ Give way to fire trucks. Ensure the road is clear so fire trucks can reach the scene promptly.

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Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:40	Asr	15:20
Sunrise ..	06:10	Maghrib ..	17:56
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

Capital flight from war zones to safer havens

Global financial markets in disarray

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: With escalating tensions surrounding the war in Iran, old fears have resurfaced in global financial markets. Attention has turned to the flight of capital from conflict zones to safe havens.

This development raises profound questions about the fate of trillions of dollars in Gulf sovereign wealth funds and the ability of global financial markets to absorb any sudden shifts in investment flows.

According to a report published by Logos Press, any change in the investment strategies of Gulf sovereign wealth funds could have far-reaching consequences for the global financial system, given the enormous size of the assets these funds manage.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries possess some of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds, which play a pivotal role in financing major corporations, infrastructure and international financial markets.

Economic estimates indicate that these funds collectively manage several trillion dollars, making any adjustment to their investment policies a significant factor in global capital flows. In times of geopolitical crisis, investors typically flock to deeper, more liquid and more stable markets. This is why the United States remains the most likely destination for any potential redirection of capital.

Plans

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) previously announced plans to invest up to \$1.4 trillion in the US economy, while Qatar plans to invest around \$500 billion in the United States over the next decade. This trend reinforces the dollar's historical role as a safe-haven currency.

Reserve Bank of Australia Deputy Governor Andrew Hauser said the dollar continues to demonstrate "stability as a hedge currency in times of uncertainty," according to Reuters.

Despite the seriousness of the scenarios being discussed, current data indicate that global financial markets have not yet reacted sharply to developments related to the war.

Goldman Sachs CEO David Solomon said at an investment summit in Sydney that the market reaction has been surprisingly muted so far, ac-

ording to the New York Post. Analysts believe that investors typically change their strategies when conflict begins to impact global economic growth or international energy and trade chains.

Is a silent 'capital flight' beginning? Despite the lack of conclusive evidence of a widespread capital exodus from the Gulf, some indicators suggest a gradual shift in investor behavior. These include increased demand for US bonds, a rise in the share of liquid assets in investment portfolios, and the postponement of long-term investments in areas of tension.

System

Economic experts emphasize that the Gulf financial system is deeply integrated into global markets, allowing its sovereign wealth funds to quickly restructure their investments should circumstances require it.

In spite of the geographical proximity of Gulf states to the epicenter of tension, their economies have several factors that mitigate the impact. These factors include substantial government financial reserves, diversified foreign investments through sovereign wealth funds, and a strong banking sector and liquidity in financial markets.

However, the region remains vulnerable to any disruptions that could affect energy markets or shipping lanes in the Gulf, which could, in turn, impact global investments.

Reports from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank indicate that the Gulf region has become one of the largest sources of global investment capital over the past decade, making its financial stability a crucial factor in the equilibrium of international markets.

Analysts believe that the decisive factor in the coming period will be the decisions of the investment committees of Gulf sovereign wealth funds.

In a world governed by trillions of dollars, a single investment decision could redirect enormous capital flows between markets. This is why major investment banks are currently monitoring two key indicators — the volume of inflows into US Treasury bonds and new investments in Middle Eastern funds. If these indicators accelerate, talk of 'capital flight' could transform from a mere hypothesis into a new reality that reshapes the global financial landscape.

Reports from Goldman Sachs and the news agencies Reuters and the Associated Press indicate that historical experience suggests financial markets often go through three phases when wars break out: an initial decline due to fear, followed by a period of volatility, and then a gradual recovery as the conflict's contours become clearer.

Global market data provides several examples as follows:

- During the 1990 Gulf War, following the invasion of Kuwait, the S&P 500 index fell by about 16 percent between July and October 1990 due to the oil shock and recession fears, before recovering strongly and rising by about 26 percent during 1991.

- When the Iraq War broke out in 2003, US stocks subsequently rose, with the index ending the year with gains of nearly 26 percent after the uncertainty subsided.

- After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, US markets fell by about 3.8 percent on the first day, and the decline later reached about 19.8 percent before recovering.

- In the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian War, global markets initially fell by about six to seven percent before recovering a significant portion of their losses within weeks.

Investment studies indicate that the average decline in global markets during major military events is only about four to six percent before a recovery phase begins.

Also, oil is the first market to be affected by any conflict in the Middle East, given that the region produces about a third of the world's oil supply and controls strategic maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz.

Oil price

Historical data revealed sharp price spikes during wars:

- During the 1990-1991 Gulf War, prices rose from \$17 to \$41 per barrel, an increase of 141 percent.

- During the 2003 Iraq War, oil prices climbed from about \$25 to \$35, an increase of nearly 40 percent.

- During the 2011 Libyan Crisis, oil prices rose from \$95 to \$125 per barrel.

- After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2012, oil prices jumped from \$75 to \$130 per barrel.

Moreover, investors are currently focusing on three key indicators to assess the repercussions of the war: oil prices and the possibility of them exceeding \$110 or \$120, or higher, investment flows toward the dollar and US bonds as safe havens, and the performance of Gulf stock exchanges and energy markets, which are most closely linked to the event.

History suggests that financial markets often adapt to conflicts quickly, tending to recover once uncertainty subsides and investors return to reassessing economic fundamentals.

CAA Sri Lanka, Jazeera Airways ponder Kuwait-Colombo flights

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka (CAASL) held a high-level discussion with senior representatives of Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost carrier, regarding the potential resumption of air services between Kuwait City and Colombo, with possible onward connectivity to India.

The meeting was attended by Mr. Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways, and Capt. Daminda Rambukwella, Director General of Civil Aviation and Chief Executive Officer of CAASL. Discussions focused on regulatory facilitation, operational considerations, and strengthening bilateral aviation cooperation in response to the current operational environment affecting aviation activities in Kuwait and the broader region.

During the meeting, Capt. Rambukwella conveyed the Government of Sri Lanka's commitment to supporting international carriers that contribute to maintaining and enhancing air connectivity with Sri Lanka while ensuring full compliance with international aviation safety, security, and regulatory standards.

Capt. Rambukwella stated: "The Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka warmly welcomes the continued engagement of Jazeera Airways in strengthening air connectivity between Kuwait and Sri Lanka. In my capacity as the Director General of Civil Aviation, I wish to reaffirm CAASL's commitment to facilitating the necessary regulatory processes, consistent with international civil aviation standards and recommended practices.

We appreciate the constructive dialogue with Mr. Barathan Pasupathi and his team, and we remain ready to extend our fullest cooperation to support the safe, secure, and efficient resumption of operations be-



Capt. Rambukwella

tween Kuwait and Colombo for the benefit of passengers, the Sri Lankan diaspora, and the broader regional aviation network."

Mr. Pasupathi expressed appreciation for the proactive engagement of the Sri Lankan authorities and noted the airline's interest in restoring services between Kuwait and Colombo, with potential extensions to India to further enhance connectivity within

the region. "We appreciate the openness and prompt engagement of the Sri Lankan authorities in supporting the restoration of services between Kuwait and Colombo, with the possibility of extending connectivity to India. I would like to thank Capt. Rambukwella and his team for their cooperation throughout this process, and we look forward to making a formal announcement once the necessary regulatory processes are completed."

As part of its operational assessment, Jazeera Airways is evaluating the possibility of operating scheduled services to Colombo while exploring opportunities to extend connectivity onward to India. Such an initiative would support the growing travel demand among the Sri Lankan and Indian diaspora communities in the Gulf region.

The proposed collaboration is also expected to facilitate the safe and timely return of Kuwaiti citizens and residents currently in Sri Lanka or India, thereby supporting passenger mobility during the present period of regional operational disruption.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with international aviation partners and regulatory authorities to ensure the continued safety, security, and resilience of global air transport operations.

Stuck in Kuwait will get allowance

MoE: Students abroad to get stipend despite crisis

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education Dr. Bader Al-Buseiri said the social allowance of scholarship students will not be suspended.

In a press statement, Al-Buseiri affirmed the commitment of the ministry to reassure students about their financial entitlements in view of the current regional developments. He stated that since the beginning of the crisis, the ministry has been monitoring the situation of Kuwaitis studying abroad or in the country. He explained that this monitoring includes tracking their number and maintaining direct communication with them through the cultural attachés and email. He added the ministry established direct communication channels via WhatsApp to receive student inquiries and accurately collect their data.

He clarified that the ministry addresses the situation of these students according to their categories, which include students who returned to their host countries and resumed studies normally, students with travel reservations for whom return arrangements are being made, and students unable to travel due to flight cancellations or airspace closures.

He pointed out that direct communication with students helps the ministry deal with their universities accurately, noting that universities in students' host countries differ in their policies and procedures. He said some

have allowed studies to continue through distance learning, while others stipulated the students' return to campus. Some have set deadlines for students' return, after which their studies will be temporarily suspended.

He added the ministry will negotiate with universities to explain the circumstances of Kuwaiti students who could not return on time due to the emergency situation. He said some universities requested documents proving the reasons for the delay — such as canceled travel tickets or proof of the student's presence in Kuwait — to be submitted to the relevant authorities in those countries, especially regarding student visa procedures.

He indicated that the ministry has reached agreements with several universities to extend student enrollment dates. He stated that some universities in Australia agreed to extend return deadlines, while universities in other countries confirmed understanding the exceptional circumstances that the students are experiencing.

He added the ministry has accurate statistics on the number of students currently in Kuwait, indicating that more than a thousand scholarship students from the United Kingdom are in the country now, as well as students from other countries like Ireland. "Determining their return plans requires direct communication to ascertain their travel dates and study options. The ministry prioritizes students' well-being and academic stability," he stressed.

He reiterated that the financial entitlements of the students will be disbursed in full this month and will not be affected by their presence in Kuwait. He said this is in accordance with the directives of the minister, taking into account the financial obligations of the students, such as rent and other expenses.



Dr. Al-Buseiri

Embassy eyes weekly info

and contact information weekly. The office explained that updates can be made via the designated website - id.kwalexculture.org.

This process aims to facilitate communication and expedite coordination with universities, ensuring monitoring of students' academic progress and providing necessary support in various as-

pects of their studies. This step is part of ongoing efforts to oversee the affairs of Kuwaiti students in Egypt.

The office expressed appreciation for the students' cooperation and prompt response in updating their information, and wished them continued success in their academic journey.

Syria support vowed

Kuwait strongly raps Israeli strike on southern Lebanon

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA) : Kuwait strongly condemned Israeli occupation's attacks on southern Lebanon, as they are a flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law, and a clear breach of UNSC resolutions, particularly Resolution 1701.

In a statement on Friday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated Kuwait's call on the international community to fulfill its responsibilities in deterring Israeli occupations' authorities from repeated attacks on Lebanese territory.

It emphasized the importance of respecting Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and adherence to relevant international resolutions and charters.

Kuwait affirmed its firm and supportive stance toward Lebanon, stressing its solidarity with Lebanon in preserving its sovereignty, territorial integrity, security, and stability.

The State of Kuwait, meanwhile, reaffirmed on Friday its firm support for Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and welcomed the positive steps Syria has taken towards strengthening security and rebuilding the state.

This was said in a statement delivered by Second Secretary of Kuwait's Permanent Mission in the UN Haya Al-Durei during an interactive dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria at the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council which is taking place in Geneva.

Al-Durei called for collective efforts to end Syria's humanitarian suffering, stressing that protecting civilians and preserving national unity are essential to regional stability.

She emphasized the importance of creating real conditions for refugees and displaced persons to return home voluntarily, safely, and with dignity, and of avoiding the politicization of humanitarian issues.

She also praised initiatives supporting Syria's economic recovery, and reaffirmed Kuwait's support for all efforts prioritizing dialogue.

Update personal status, students in Egypt urged

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Cultural Office of the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Egypt has called on Kuwaiti students studying in the Arab Republic of Egypt to update their personal

Other Voices

Carlson ... and the end of war

By Ahmad alsarraf

Tucker Carlson is considered one of the most important American media figures and commentators, often described as right-leaning and isolationist.

However, he has shifted significantly over time towards criticizing US foreign policy, especially after the events of October 7. Carlson is a staunch opponent of American military interventions, which is why he opposed the Israeli-American war on Iran and rejected unconditional support for Ukraine and Israel, which he accuses of exploiting his country.

He believes that America's recent wars are driven by Israeli pressure. He is a critic of illegal immigration and attacks liberal elites, mainstream media, and large corporations. He adopts the "America First" principle and rejects accusations of anti-Semitism despite his criticism of Israel.

Carlson warns against the trends of Islamophobia and the use of it in political propaganda.

He has previously promoted conspiracy theories about election fraud in 2020. He also criticized COVID-19 measures and the Capitol attack as part of a far-right discourse.

Despite all this, many of his opinions are worth considering. Carlson questions the reasons behind the launch of the latest war, what its objectives are, where it is headed, and how the United States should respond.

He argues that the war erupted precisely because Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu wanted it. Therefore, this war is not about American national security or nuclear weapons, but rather about Israel's quest for regional hege-



alsarraf

mony in the Middle East.

Carlson claims that Netanyahu called for regime change in Iran and pressured Trump to achieve this goal.

He stated that American leaders were aware of the risks, including excessive military expansion and regional destabilization, but proceeded anyway.

He also argues that the public discourse about Iran seeking a nuclear weapon is misleading, and that Iran was not on the verge of deploying such a weapon.

Carlson states that the broader objective of the war is regional dominance, and believes that Israel seeks to eliminate its rivals, weaken Iran, and reshape the balance of power in the Middle East. He added that destabilizing Iran could lead to chaos, crises, waves of refugees, and economic turmoil, particularly in Europe and the Gulf states.

He asserts that the Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait, are harmed by the war through missile strikes, instability, and threats to their energy infrastructure, and that these countries might begin to view the United States as an unreliable ally if they feel unprotected.

Regarding military escalation, Carlson cites Senator Tom Cotton's remarks, arguing that while officials publicly deny plans for a large-scale ground troop deployment, regime change requires land forces on the ground.

Although American public opinion is generally against war, political leaders are not aligned with the views of voters.

Carlson suggests that Europe could face dire consequences, including energy shortages and a new refugee crisis, if Iran is destabilized. He warns that future generations may misunderstand how and why the war broke out.

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Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of State for Youth and Sports Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma said Friday that the Kuwait Youth Day marks an opportunity to honor young people, highlight their achievements and promote their role in sustainable development.

In a press statement marking the Kuwait Youth Day, which falls on March 13, the minister said Kuwaiti young people are greatly backed by the country's political leadership on the basis that they represent the largest segment of the Kuwaiti society.

He underlined Kuwait's commitment to supporting and empowering them through various programs and activities that are annually organized in the context of the national policy of youth, mainly aiming at developing skills and capabilities.

The minister commended Kuwaiti youth's support for their nation as an effective partner in addressing challenges amid the current circumstances and the recurrent aggression on the country.

In this context, he quoted His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as having stressed, in a national address marking the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan, the significance of raising public awareness about the rapid regional developments and growing tensions.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Thanks to loyal people of Kuwait for fostering unity

"MY deepest gratitude and appreciation to the loyal people of Kuwait and to all residents of this blessed land for their kind congratulations to His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince (May God protect them), as well as to the esteemed members of the Al-Sabah family on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan," Kuwaiti writer Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.



Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber

"I also renew my sincere thanks for their continued communication with the diwanias of the Al-Sabah family, which affirms the spirit that binds this nation together as one family. We pray to Almighty God to preserve this blessing upon us and to return this holy month to us with goodness, prosperity, and abundant blessings, and to grant everyone lasting health and well-being.

"One of the cousins from the family says that His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled (May God protect and preserve them), and before them the rulers of Kuwait (May God have mercy on them), have always kept their hearts open before their offices to the sons of the ruling families in the Gulf countries, in appreciation and love when they visit Kuwait, because of their great position in our hearts, whether they are officials in the state or outside it.

"However, we do not find the same attention, but rather difficulty in receiving a response when requesting to meet their officials from ruling family members and sheikhs, knowing that we are not less kind, less generous, or less loving than them. So what is the reason, I wonder? In a previous article, we wrote about the overcrowding at the cemetery during condolences. Today, we write about the same issue at homes, after some families added a day or two in the afternoon at the cemetery, which is a welcome and appreciated step for those offering condolences.

"It is worth noting that the crowds at homes are no different from those at the cemetery, especially when the address is in an area that is difficult to access due to narrow streets and limited parking. This is a real challenge that must be addressed, particularly after families rejected wedding halls as an alternative venue for condolences. As for condolences held at the same address for both men and women, we suggest, after Ramadan, designating the mornings for women and the evenings for men. This would make it easier to fulfill the duty and allow for greater reward.

"We hope that the parking lot will accommodate 500 cars, and more on both the north and south sides, for the Friendship and Peace Park, located in South Shuwaikh. Its age, as indicated on the sign, is comparable to half the size of some residential areas, but its current state reflects the local proverb - "Adding kohl to a sore eye is a waste," due to the spending on it without any benefit.

"Therefore, the park is in dire need of intervention by the Amiri Diwan to rescue it from neglect, after introducing some activities, similar to what was done with the Shaheed Park following its reorganization and landscaping, so it could surpass Hyde Park in England and become a strong competitor to Shaheed Park in size and prime location. We hope for this outcome.

"As for some people, I have found no explanation for their actions other than this verse - "In their hearts is a disease, so Allah has increased their disease." May God protect Kuwait, its people, and its leadership from all evil and harm."

Also:

"His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's speech on the occasion of the last ten days of Ramadan affirmed the strength of the home front in the face of the current crisis and reinforced the concept that Kuwait is a red line," Kuwaiti journalist Salem Al-Wawan wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"The wise Amiri speech reassured everyone and included a clear warning against rumors that contribute to weakening the home front. We must be patient and aware, and our efforts must be combined to close the door on those who seek to exploit the situation. We need unity, cohesion, and strength in confronting our enemies.

"His Highness's speech defined Kuwait's unwavering stance in the face of repeated attacks on its territory and institutions, attacks for which members of the military and an innocent child have paid the price. His Highness's speech reassured everyone in Kuwait and emphasized that the situation does not allow for

complacency. We all stand behind His Highness the Amir, and we will not fear Iranian aggression. We say to everyone that Kuwait is resilient. Thanks to the strength of its people and the wisdom of our leader, Kuwait will emerge from this ordeal stronger."

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"We can say that the claims about Iraq's right to the shared waters with Kuwait, especially Abdullah Bay, are nothing but empty rhetoric used by some parties to agitate public opinion and stir up the streets and social media, particularly in southern regions like Basra and its surroundings," Kuwaiti journalist Hassan Ali Karam wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"The issue is merely a political game exploited by certain parties for domestic purposes. It is a story woven from flimsy threads. The root of the matter is that the Baathists have returned to power in Iraq, but with a different face.

"This is not my opinion, but that of an Iraqi politician who stated that they are Baathists from the younger generation, who constitute the majority of parliament members. Thus, we are facing an old version, a black-and-white image of Iraq.

"Amer Abdul-Jabbar, who won in the last parliamentary elections, is the one raising these claims, even though the parliament has not yet convened and no speaker, prime minister, or president has been elected. The Iraqi political system is parliamentary, meaning that the prime minister bears political responsibility, heads the executive branch and the army, and represents the state. The prime minister forms the government in agreement with parliament and the parliamentary parties.

"The political game in Iraq is based on distributing top positions along sectarian lines, similar to Lebanon. In Iraq, the president is Kurdish, the speaker of parliament is Sunni Muslim, and the prime minister is Shia. There are also other religious groups, including Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Yazidis. According to a recent census, the population exceeds 45 million. This census is inaccurate because it includes residents of other nationalities, most of whom are migrant workers.

"To date, no agreement has been reached on who will form the next government. There were reports that former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was being considered, but it was said that US President Donald Trump objected. Hence, the Shia's failure to agree on a prime minister could create a vacuum that others might try to fill. Among those who announced their intention to run for prime minister was Basra MP Amer Abdul-Jabbar, who heads a small party, but he was unable to enter the race because he did not receive enough votes.

"However, Abdul-Jabbar and his small party are attempting to infiltrate the parliamentary majority by employing a deceptive and misleading tactic - claiming Iraq's right to

Khor Abdullah and offshore oil and gas fields, such as the Kuwaiti-Saudi Durra field. Abdul-Jabbar and his party have resorted to manipulating the maritime agreements signed between Iraq and Kuwait

after the invasion and the liberation of Kuwait, under the auspices of the Security Council.

"The claims that Amer Abdul-Jabbar and other Iraqi parties possess documents and maps pertaining to the maritime borders are mere fabrications intended to deceive the public. The Security Council has not discussed Iraq's request, nor has Iraq recovered any of the Kuwaiti waters or oil and gas fields claimed by these Iraqi parties. This entire charade is simply a ploy to secure Amer Abdul-Jabbar a lucrative position.

"Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a clear statement affirming Kuwait's categorical rejection of Iraqi claims to Kuwaiti waters. We thank the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab States that have supported Kuwait's historical rights. However, we must not become complacent or neglect to follow up on this matter. We must not allow the Iraqis to infringe upon Kuwait's rights. The United Nations is not a court of judges. International relations are governed by interests. Yesterday's enemy may become today's friend, and vice versa. We must not compromise our rights by any means necessary.

"It is noteworthy that these alleged Iraqi claims come at an unusual regional and global juncture. Does this behavior suggest that something is being plotted for this region?"

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

KUNA photo
Undersecretary of the Kuwait National Guard shakes hands with a Guard Lt Gen Hamad Salem Al-Barjas during his visit to a military site in north Kuwait.Al-Seyassah photo
Ministry of Commerce and Industry inspectors verifying the rates of commodities at one of the supermarkets in Al-Ahmadi Governorate.

Homeland has heroes ready to sacrifice lives

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The National Guard posted a video on its X account under the slogan "The Nation Has Heroes Who Protect It." The video highlights the success of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit of the Engineering Battalion in extracting warhead fragments from a drone that had fallen into a fuel tank, using standardized technical methods, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

The National Guard affirmed that its personnel are always on high alert and at the highest level of readiness to answer the nation's call and are prepared to sacrifice for its security and stability.

In a statement on its X account, the National Guard explained that the video showcases the achievements and continuous efforts of its members, and reflects teamwork and a unified spirit, where roles are integrated and efforts are combined.

Al-Seyassah photo
The evacuation drill in progress.

PAMA conducts mock evacuation 'exercise'

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Public Authority for Minors' Affairs (PAMA) conducted a mock evacuation drill for its employees on Friday in cooperation with the General Directorate of Civil Defense in order to enhance preparedness in light of the current situation in the country and the region, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

In a press release, PAMA explained that the drill aimed to enhance awareness of safety procedures and ensure employees' readiness to respond to emergencies. The drill included implementing evacuation procedures along designated routes to approved assembly points, under the supervision of Civil Defense teams. This was done to test the effectiveness of emergency plans and ensure the efficiency of safety systems in PAMA's building.

Judiciary bags over KD6m revenues in Dec last year

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Statistics and Research Department at the Ministry of Justice revealed that the total revenues collected by the Judicial Fees Department in December 2025 reached KD6,101,605.

The Capital Governorate Court recorded the highest revenue with 61.3 percent of the total, followed by the Farwaniya with 29.5 percent, Hawally with 4.1 percent, Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer with 3.7 percent each, and Jahra with 1.5 percent.

The statistics showed that the total expenditure on bail and deposits at the Capital Governorate Court reached KD963,533 within the same period.

It indicated that a total of 19,741 writs were submitted for fee assessment. Farwaniya Governorate recorded the highest with 31.3 percent, followed by the Capital with 25.2 percent, Hawally with 20.6 percent, Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer with 11.3 percent each, Jahra with 9.4 percent, and Kuwait Lawyers Association with 2.2 percent.

The Case Review Department received 9,825 cases. The Capital Governorate Court topped the list with 5,420 cases, followed by Hawally with 1,800, Farwaniya with 1,435, Jahra with 866, and Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer with 304 each. The number of cases reviewed reached 9,798.

The Audit and Review Department received 6,226 cases, while 7,963 cases were reviewed. The Farwaniya Court had the highest number of cases with 2,932, followed by the Capital with 2,568.

In the Claims Department, 3,017 case fee assessment orders were issued. The Capital Governorate had the highest number with 1,187, followed by Farwaniya with 1,030, Hawally with 432, Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer with 282 each, and Jahra with 86.

Leave home in eruption of fire

Report falling debris on 112

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) reported that its teams responded to 20 routine and four unusual fire calls between midnight and 4:00 pm (local time) on Thursday.



Al-Gharib

Three of the unusual calls involved falling debris, and one involved a direct fire resulting from a hostile drone strike on a residential building. The fire was extinguished, and the building was evacuated to ensure the safety of its residents.

The fire resulted in two injuries, said Brig. Gen. Mohammad Al-Gharib, Director

of Public Relations and Media and official KFF spokesperson during a media briefing on current events and the latest developments considering the Iranian aggression against the State of Kuwait.

Al-Gharib advised citizens and residents that in the event of a house fire, they should evacuate immediately without delay, using the nearest safe exit such as the main door or an emergency exit.

He also advised them to call the emergency number (112) for assistance, avoid using elevators, and close doors if possible, to minimize the spread of fire and smoke. He further advised them to gather at a designated assembly point outside the house, such as a nearby yard or in front of the building, away from danger.

"We advise citizens and residents to keep a fire extinguisher at home, as it is crucial for initial response to small fires and for quickly controlling them, thus minimizing loss of life and property and limiting the spread of the fire".

MoCI conducts multiple raids

Many shops violating price rules

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Commerce and Industry said on Friday that the emergency teams in Farwaniya and Al-Ahmadi governorates carried out a field inspection campaign to commercial shops, registering 36 various violations.

Violations included failure to comply with decisions to fix the prices of food items, selling some goods at prices higher than the approved price, not pricing, promotional offers, not issuing invoices, and not

specifying the country of origin, Ministry said in a statement to KUNA.

Furthermore, a violation notice was issued because of the incompatibility between the actual commercial activity and the licensed activity, it said, referring to taking necessary legal action against the violators.

The ministry affirmed that it would continue its inspection campaigns aimed at controlling prices and ensuring that shops comply with decisions regulating market.

LOCAL

Property Description Certificate amended

Reform eases real estate procedures

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Head of the Kuwaiti Federation of Real Estate Brokers Emad Haidar confirmed the amendment of procedures for issuing the 'Certificate of Description.'



Haidar

In a statement to the newspaper, Haidar disclosed that the certificate will now be issued once the electronic contract is finalized, instead of requiring it before the contract is signed, as was the practice before. He explained this amendment fol-

lowed a coordination meeting held via video conference between representatives of the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Kuwaiti Federation of Real Estate Brokers. He said the aim is to facilitate and expedite real estate registration procedures.

He added that the meeting also resulted in activating the new procedure and taking the necessary technical steps for its implementation. He pointed out that this will facilitate entering transactions into the real estate registration system and save time and effort for those involved in the real estate market.

He affirmed that coordination between the relevant government agencies and the real estate sector contributes to developing regulatory procedures for the market and raises the efficiency of completing real estate transactions online, in line with the move towards digital transformation in government services.

Precautionary safety measures

Social Affairs closes halls for weddings and parties

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Ministry of Social Affairs announced on Thursday the suspension of weddings and parties in its wedding halls, effective immediately and until further notice, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the ministry explained that the decision comes in light of the current situation in the country and in accordance with the circular issued by the Ministry of Interior regarding precautionary

measures during this period, based on its commitment to supporting government efforts to enhance security and public safety.

The ministry urged those with prior reservations in its wedding halls who wish to cancel to contact the Women and Children's Affairs and Community Development Department in Yarmouk, Block 3, next to the Yarmouk Cooperative Society, to initiate cancellation procedures and complete the necessary requirements.

Leaders condemn Iranian aggression

FM discusses regional tensions with Spain, Malta

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber AlAhmad Al-Sabah received on Friday two telephone calls from Spanish foreign minister and Maltese deputy prime minister, and minister of tourism and foreign affairs.

During a call, Sheikh Jarrah and Spain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation Jose Albares discussed growing military escalation in the region due to the heinous Iranian aggression on countries and its

dangerous and worrying impacts on regional and international security and stability, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

In another call, Maltese deputy prime minister and foreign minister Ian Borg condemned the Iranian aggression that targeted Kuwait and the region's countries, stressing the rights of the states targeted to take all required measures to safeguard their sovereignty and territories, the statement added.

Calls for review of criminal procedure provisions to strengthen defendants' rights

Lawyer presence during CID interrogations vital to protect justice, says Reform Committee head

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Dr. Fawaz Khaled Alkhateeb, Head of the Committee for the Amendment of the Penal Code and Criminal Procedures Law at the Kuwait Lawyers Association, has emphasized the need to review certain provisions of the Criminal Procedures Law, particularly those related to the presence of a lawyer with the accused during interrogations at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and during subsequent investigations.

In a press statement, Dr. Alkhateeb stressed the importance of educating defendants about their legal rights and maintaining a proper balance between the requirements of security and the guarantees of rights and freedoms. He noted that strengthening legal safeguards for defendants represents a fundamental pillar for achieving criminal justice and protecting the truth.

Dr. Alkhateeb explained that many defendants are often unaware of their most



Dr. Fawaz Khaled Alkhateeb

basic legal rights, such as the right to remain silent until the presence of a lawyer, the right to obtain legal advice, and the right of their lawyer to review case documents. He pointed out that investigations are legally open to the parties involved, while confidentiality applies only to the public and does not extend to the accused or their legal counsel.

He also noted that pressures sometimes faced by defendants during the CID in-

terrogation stage may lead to statements that do not accurately reflect the truth, but instead arise from fear or psychological pressure. Such circumstances, he said, do not serve justice and may hinder efforts to uncover the facts.

Dr. Alkhateeb stressed that criminal justice should not be built on strictness or intimidation, but rather on clear, lawful, and transparent procedures. The clearer and fairer the procedures are, he noted, the greater the public's confidence in the judiciary and the stronger the respect for the justice system.

He concluded by emphasizing the importance of ensuring the presence of a lawyer from the earliest stages of criminal proceedings, including during CID interrogations, enabling defendants to communicate with their lawyer and family and ensuring they are informed of their legal rights. Such measures, he said, are essential to safeguarding rights and achieving genuine justice.

Health Minister visits Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Amiri Hospitals

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi paid on Friday a field tour to the Mubarak al-Kabeer and Amiri Hospitals where he inspected emergency departments and followed the levels of readiness at these facilities.

In a news statement, the Ministry of Health said that the minister reviewed

preparedness the engineering systems and shelters plans at hospitals. Al-Awadhi was briefed on recovery rooms and the provision of medicine and medical supplies as well as emergency plans and the mechanisms of implementing them, it stated. He commended the efforts by medical, engineering and administrative teams to serve the homeland, it pointed out.

Al-Salmiya SC's admin building named after martyr Al-Majmad

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Board of Directors of Al-Salmiya Sports Club decided to name the administration building of the club after the martyr, Fahad Al-Majmad, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Secretary General of the club Ahmed Ayed stated that the board made this decision to honor and commemorate the martyr, based on the proposal of Club Chairman Sheikh Turki Al-Yousef.

Fahad Al-Majmad, 33, was martyred along with his colleague, Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Emad Al-Sharrah, when shrapnel from an Iranian missile struck the Mutlaa Road while performing their duties at the Land Border Security General Department.

He played his farewell match on Feb 23 against Al-Arabi Sports Club in the Zain Premier League.

KU launches awareness initiative

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): The Kuwait University announced Friday the launch of an initiative as part of its commitment to societal responsibility and boosting awareness in current circumstances facing the country and region.

In a press statement, the university said the step came as part of a series of awareness messages provided by some academics and specialists, out of the institution's cultural and scientific role in

serving society.

The step also is within the keenness of university to spread awareness which enhances tranquility and how to deal with accelerated incidents and challenges, it noted.

These messages focus on some varied topics, with the participation of a galaxy of professors and specialists, to boost society and positive values, it stated.

PACI launches service to update Arabic names through Sahel app

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) announced the launch of a service to update Arabic names via the Sahel app, as part of its commitment to facilitating transactions and enhancing the use of electronic services under the current exceptional cir-

cumstances, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PACI explained that this service allows users to complete their transactions electronically without visiting PACI's offices, which helps in reducing congestion and streamlining procedures to ensure everyone's safety.

Cultural Attaché reviews welfare

Kuwaiti students' academic journey at Alexandria University supported

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Dr. Khaled Al-Muhareb, Head of the Cultural Office at the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Cairo, visited the Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry at Alexandria University to follow up on the conditions of Kuwaiti students and review their academic progress.

The visit included meetings with the academic leadership of both faculties, during which the students' situations and



Dr. Al-Muhareb

the academic and training aspects of their study programs were discussed. Ways to enhance cooperation and coordination were also explored to support the students' educational journey and provide a suitable environment for completing their studies.

The Cultural Office's commitment to maintaining continuous communication with Egyptian universities hosting Kuwaiti students and to monitoring their academic and training affairs was highlighted. This aims to ensure students achieve the best possible academic results, enhance the quality of educational outcomes, and emphasize cooperation with faculty administrations in addressing any issues or challenges students may face, thus guaranteeing their continued academic progress in accordance with approved academic regulations and procedures.

MoCI sets Ramadan food branch hours

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced the working hours for food distribution branches during the last week of the holy month of Ramadan, starting Saturday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement issued on Thurs-

day, the ministry explained that morning hours will be from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm, and evening hours will be from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm. Food distribution branches will operate daily according to these hours, except on Friday, which is an official holiday.



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Iranian attacks 'blatant' violation of Kuwait, GCC sovereignty: Sheikh Jarrah

Kuwait's FM condemns Iran's aggression, lauds Egypt's solidarity

KUWAIT CITY, March 14, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday renewed Kuwait's condemnation of the Iranian aggression targeting Kuwait and fellow Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states.

Addressing the fourth joint ministerial meeting between the GCC and the Arab Republic of Egypt via video conference, Sheikh Jarrah lauded the solidarity shown by Cairo in the face of these "blatant" attacks.

The Foreign Minister characterized the Iranian actions as a "flagrant violation" of the sovereignty of Kuwait and the GCC, describing them as a clear breach of international law, international humanitarian law, and the Charter of the United Nations.

In his address, the Minister reaffirmed the State of Kuwait's "inherent right to self-defense" under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

He emphasized that Kuwait remains committed to taking all necessary measures to safeguard its territorial integrity and ensure the security of its citizens and residents.

Sheikh Jarrah further welcomed the UN Security Council's adoption of Resolution 2817, which denounced Iranian attacks against the GCC and Jordan.

He noted that the resolution reinforces the principle of respect for state sovereignty and categorically rejects the targeting of civilians and vital infrastructure.

Concluding his remarks, the Foreign Minister stressed that Gulf-Egyptian relations remain a fundamental pillar of regional security and stability, representing a strategic partnership based on shared history and complementary interests.

Sheikh Jarrah reiterated Kuwait's condemnation of the Iranian attacks targeting Kuwait and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states since February 28, considering them a blatant violation of Kuwait's sovereignty and that of the GCC states.

In a speech delivered while heading Kuwait's delegation to the joint ministerial meeting between the GCC and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, held virtually, the Kuwaiti top diplomat noted that the attacks are a flagrant breach of international law,



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

international humanitarian law, and the UN Charter.

He affirmed Kuwait's commitment to its right to self-defense, based on Article 51 of the UN Charter, and its intention to take all necessary measures to safeguard its

sovereignty, protect its territory, and ensure the security of its citizens and residents.

He added that the Iranian threat to maritime security and shipping extends to global energy security, the stability of the international economy, and the sustainability of supply chains. He welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of Resolution 2817, which condemned the Iranian attacks targeting the GCC states and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as the resolution's emphasis on respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and rejecting the targeting of civilians and vital infrastructure.

The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister also commended the position of the friendly United Kingdom in solidarity with the GCC states in the face of the blatant Iranian attacks.

He further affirmed the strategic partnership between the GCC states and the United Kingdom, expressing his aspiration to work towards building closer relations in all fields, including political, security, and economic cooperation.

Continued from Page 1

Legacy of

The current Iranian regime, established by Khomeini, has consistently worked to impose its sectarian vision on the peoples of the region, beginning with Iraq.

The period after 2003 was the golden age for the Iranian regime in forming sectarian terrorist groups and establishing sectarian factions as the ruling powers in Iraq.

The United States contributed to the implementation of this plan by establishing a constitution that enshrined the division of power among the components of the Iraqi people. This was an attempt to impose the Lebanese model on the region in service of Israel's interests.

From the very first day of the rise of the mullahs' regime, the Gulf states were aware of this plan and worked hard to thwart Iran's ambitions.

However, several groups responded to Iran out of greed for gains. In Yemen, a group subservient to the Iranian regime was established.

In Lebanon, the ground was fertile for the cultivation of Hezbollah. I do not need to elaborate on what Hezbollah has done and continues to do. Hezbollah represents the clearest evidence of Iran's intentions toward Arab countries.

Similarly, in Syria, the Iranian regime attempted to impose systematic terrorism by exploiting the contradictions that the Assad regime had fueled among the various components of the Syrian people.

However, the Syrian revolution ignited and saved the Syrian state and people.

Today, we see the consequences of Iran's actions over the past 47 years. Its destructive influence reached every corner of the world, even extending to Argentina and other Latin American countries. This is why the world is united in its desire to overthrow this regime, as no one can accept living in a perpetual nightmare of terrorism.

The United States will not accept being a target of terrorism and will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon that threatens it and its allies.

The international community will not accept being used as a tool for Iranian blackmail.

The Gulf states will no longer endure the suffering caused by Iranian actions. Iran took a reckless step that proved it had embarked on a path far beyond its capabilities. It is now facing the consequences, and the coming days may mark the end of this regime.

When a

The rationale behind such legislation is clear. Kuwait, like many diverse societies, relies on a delicate balance of coexistence between communities. Laws protecting national unity are designed to prevent rhetoric that could disrupt that balance and threaten social stability.

At the same time, the digital era has introduced new challenges. The speed and reach of online communication mean that statements are often interpreted far beyond the context in which they were written.

A message intended as a gesture of sympathy may be perceived by others as a political statement. A religious expression may be interpreted as a sign of ideological alignment. In an environment shaped by regional tensions and geopolitical sensitivities, these interpretations can carry significant legal implications.

What is particularly striking in some of the recent cases is the diversity of those involved. They are not confined to one age group or social category. Among them are young individuals at the beginning of their lives, as well as elderly citizens in their seventies. The common denominator is not background or ideology, but simply the act of posting words online.

This reality reflects a broader transformation in how society functions in the digital age.

Social media has given individuals an unprecedented ability to express their views publicly. But it has also blurred the boundaries between personal opinion and public communication. Once a message is posted online, it no longer belongs solely to the author. It becomes part of a wider public conversation, open to interpretation, scrutiny, and sometimes legal evaluation.

None of this suggests that people should stop expressing themselves. Freedom of expression remains a vital element of any modern society. But it does suggest that expression today requires a higher degree of awareness than ever before.

The law does not simply examine what someone intended to say. It also

considers how those words might affect social harmony, public order, or national security.

In a region where political developments can rapidly influence public sentiment, the difference between personal expression and public consequence can become very small.

The lesson is therefore not one of fear, but of responsibility.

Words have always carried power. What has changed is the scale of their impact.

A sentence written on a phone can now cross social boundaries, cultural sensitivities, and legal frameworks within seconds.

For that reason, it is worth remembering a simple principle that has become increasingly relevant in the digital era:

Before posting a word online, it may be wise to pause and ask not only what we mean to say, but also how those words might be understood by others - and sometimes, by the law itself.

Because in today's interconnected world, a single word can travel much further than its author ever expected.

Fawaz@tahergp.org

Kuwait remains

He disclosed that the warning sirens were activated once and the total number of activations since the start of the aggression has reached 88.

"Several other reports concerning shrapnel or objects falling outside the threat area were assessed," he concluded.

In other news, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited the Nuwaiseeb Border Crossing on Saturday.

During the visit, His Highness listened to a briefing from officials on the procedures followed to regulate entry and exit movement, the approved operational plans and the level of readiness to deal with various situations and developments.

The briefing also covered coordination mechanisms among the relevant authorities to ensure smooth traffic flow and enhance the efficiency of movement through the crossing.

His Highness expressed appreciation for the efforts exerted by the national cadres working at border crossings, praising their dedication and sense of responsibility in performing their national duty.

He stressed the importance of coordination among the concerned authorities to contribute to maintaining the country's security.

On Friday, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited the Ministry of Health's Emergency Medical Department, accompanied by Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi.

His Highness the Prime Minister saw first-hand operations room, preparedness of medical teams, ambulance and emergency services.

He was briefed by the Department officials about operations of ambulances and operational plans to deal with calls and emergencies.

The Department officials also briefed His Highness the Prime Minister about the technical and human resources to guarantee fast response and proper medical care in current circumstances.

His Highness the Prime Minister expressed gratitude for teams of the Department who were working in different circumstances, as well as their dedication in their humanitarian and national duty.

He emphasized importance they continue working with a high sense of responsibility in a drive to secure proper response to emergency cases, and protect safety of the citizens and residents.

On Thursday, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah conducted an inspection visit to the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to oversee operational readiness and emergency preparedness.

Accompanied by the Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Dr. Subaih Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem, and Ministry Undersecretary Dr. Adel Mohammad Al-Zamil, His Highness toured the ministry's emergency shelter facilities.

During the visit, he was briefed on streamlined operational procedures, safety systems, and logistical preparations designed for "exceptional circumstances."

In a subsequent meeting with senior ministry officials, His Highness reviewed comprehensive measures aimed at ensuring the uninterrupted efficiency of national power and water

services.

The discussions centered on enhancing inter-agency coordination to fortify the national grid's stability and safeguard vital infrastructure against potential disruptions.

His Highness the Prime Minister lauded the unwavering dedication of the ministry's personnel in maintaining grid integrity during the current regional climate.

He further reaffirmed the government's full support for all strategic measures taken to ensure the sustainability of the nation's vital utility services.

Mol inspects malls

Also on Thursday, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib, conducted an inspection tour of several shopping malls to assess security preparedness and oversee the deployment of foot patrols and external security cordons.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Interior noted that Maj. Gen. Al-Wuhaib was briefed on comprehensive security frameworks designed to protect shoppers.

He also reviewed approved civil defense protocols and emergency contingency plans in detail.

These measures encompass strategic evacuation procedures and the readiness of designated shelters to facilitate immediate responses to potential threats.

The Ministry emphasized that these protocols aim to maintain the highest levels of alert and operational efficiency in light of the current regional landscape.

During his inspection of security checkpoints, Maj. Gen. Al-Wuhaib underscored the imperative of heightened vigilance, rapid response capabilities, and the firm enforcement of the law.

He stressed that maintaining public order and curbing negative phenomena are essential to providing a secure environment for both citizens and residents.

The Undersecretary commended the high morale and professional readiness of the security personnel, lauding their dedicated efforts in executing their mandates.

He urged them to sustain their commitment to enhancing security performance, upholding the rule of law, and safeguarding the nation's stability.

Maj. Gen. Al-Wuhaib was accompanied during the tour by the Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations, Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Ateeqi.

Fresh food shipments

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry participated in receiving the first Kuwait Airways flights carrying fresh food shipments to the State of Kuwait.

The shipments, which arrived at Kuwait International Airport on Friday, included fresh meat, fruits, vegetables, and other food items. They were immediately transferred to prepared storage facilities equipped with all necessary requirements to preserve the food according to approved standards, in preparation for distribution to points of sale across the country. This helps in ensuring the availability of food products and maintaining stable supplies in local markets.

The ministry explained that this step was carried out in coordination with the private sector to expedite the arrival of food shipments in the country and enhance the supply of goods to the markets. It aims to strengthen market stability, ensure the availability of food commodities, and meet consumer needs.

MoH launches hotline 151

The official spokesperson for the Ministry of Health, Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad, announced the launch of a psychological support service through the hotline No. 151 to enhance community well-being, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Dr. Al-Sanad revealed that the service receives calls 24/7 and connects callers with mental health specialists to provide appropriate consultation and support.

He explained that mental health care in Kuwait is based on an integrated system comprising three levels - primary healthcare, general hospitals, and the Kuwait Center for Mental Health. Mental health is a fundamental pillar of the healthcare system and is no less important than physical medical care.

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday renewed the State of Kuwait's condemnation of the ongoing Iranian aggression targeting Kuwait, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan since February 28.

Addressing the eighth joint ministerial meeting between the GCC and

Jordan via video conference, Sheikh Jarrah characterized the Iranian offensive as a "flagrant violation" of the sovereignty of Kuwait, the GCC states, and Jordan.

He added that the Iranian aggression is also a "blatant breach" of international law, international humanitarian law, and the UN Charter.

The Foreign Minister reaffirmed Kuwait's "inherent right to self-defense" under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

He emphasized the Kuwait's unwavering commitment to taking all necessary measures to safeguard its territorial integrity and ensure the security of its citizens and residents.

Furthermore, Sheikh Jarrah welcomed the UN Security Council's adoption of Resolution 2817, which denounces Iranian attacks against the GCC and Jordan.

He noted that the resolution reinforces the principle of respect for state sovereignty and categorically rejects the targeting of civilians and vital infrastructure.

The Minister lauded the "deep-rooted and historical" GCC-Jordanian ties, expressing Kuwait's aspiration to further bolster strategic cooperation and coordination frameworks to serve shared regional interests.

In latest developments, Hamas on Saturday called on Iran to refrain from targeting neighboring countries and urged regional states to cooperate to end the war and preserve fraternal ties.

In a statement, Hamas said, "While affirming the right of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to aggression by all available means in accordance with international norms and laws, we call on our brothers in Iran not to target neighboring countries and urge all countries in the region to cooperate to stop this aggression and preserve fraternal ties."

The movement said it is "following with grave concern" the ongoing war in the region and strongly condemned what it described as "the American-Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran," saying it violates international law and international humanitarian law and threatens regional and global security.

Hamas added that "the interest of the Islamic nation and the region necessitates an end to this war," calling on all countries and international organizations to work toward an immediate halt to the conflict and praising efforts aimed at prioritizing dialogue and diplomacy.

The statement came amid heightened tensions following joint U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran starting on Feb. 28, to which Iran and its regional proxies responded with attacks on Israeli and U.S. interests across the Middle East.

Kuwait-Greece

He affirmed that Greece regards Kuwait as a key partner in the Gulf region and the Middle East. He pointed out that Greece and Kuwait are maritime nations, a characteristic that further strengthens their relationship, given their shared outlook and mutual understanding on a wide range of issues.

He added that the two countries have similar perspectives on many of the challenges the region is currently facing and remain firm advocates of resolving disputes through peaceful means, in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter.

He stated that the two countries are working hard to promote regional cooperation in ways that contribute to peace, stability and sustainable development in the entire region. He highlighted the potential for strengthening bilateral relations and expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest, in ways that serve the shared goals and priorities of both countries.

He pointed out that Greece, within the framework of promoting stronger people-to-people connections, supports the lifting of visa requirements for the citizens of Kuwait and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries due to their value in terms of stimulating tourism flows and encouraging cultural exchange.

He stressed the need to intensify efforts to re-launch the joint archaeological program on Failaka Island, indicating the shared desire to fortify cooperation in preserving archaeological heritage and enhancing its cultural visibility.

He confirmed that his country aspires to see a stronger presence of Greek businesses and companies in Kuwait. He revealed that the updated legal framework for foreign direct investment (FDI) in Greece, which focuses on strategic investment initiatives, offers an encouraging, secure

and reliable investment environment for all types of FDI projects. He then invited Kuwaiti companies and investment funds to explore opportunities in Greece and take advantage of the diverse prospects in the Greek market.

He added that the successive upgrades to Greece's credit rating by international rating agencies, particularly the recent upgrade restoring the country to investment-grade status, underscore the strength of its financial position and the improvement of its economic fundamentals. He said this progress is evident in the growing international market confidence in the Greek economy.

He also cited the significant potential for Greek companies to participate in projects linked to Kuwait Vision 2035, particularly in real estate development and infrastructure initiatives.

He affirmed that the non-permanent membership of Greece in the United Nations Security Council for the period 2025-2026 gives the country an opportunity to solidify its diplomatic role and contribute effectively to addressing major international issues. He added that during this membership, Greece focuses on several major priorities, including combating discrimination, addressing the climate crisis, protecting children's rights, strengthening the role of women in global peace and security, and advancing maritime security.

He stated that strengthening cooperation in the tourism sector is the priority of both countries, particularly in light of the longstanding friendly relations between their peoples. He expressed his desire to enhance collaboration in this field, focusing on the exchange of expertise in tourism marketing, specialized tourism segments, and tourism investment projects such as hotels, resorts and marinas.

He confirmed that strengthening cooperation between Europe and the Middle East remains a priority for Greece, especially in light of the evolving international landscape.

He disclosed that Greece took significant steps in recent years to diversify its sources of natural gas and to position itself as a regional energy hub. He said his country has achieved remarkable progress in the field of renewable energy, reaching a record high in 2023 with 57 percent of its electricity generation coming from renewable sources due to substantial investments in clean energy facilities and the continuous development of modern power grids.

He asserted that Greece is among the leading countries in implementing policies aimed at decarbonizing its islands. He reaffirmed his country's openness to any interest from Kuwait in developing cooperation in the fields of renewable and green energy.

On regional issues, he expressed his country's concern over the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, stressing the importance of providing a clear political horizon for the Palestinian people and working toward the establishment of a Palestinian state in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

He also voiced concern over the continuing Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, which have resulted in the deaths of several sailors and pose a serious threat to the security of international navigation. He revealed that Greece, as the lead member-state in the European Union's new maritime operation "Aspidis", has provided the operational headquarters in Larissa and deployed a frigate to the region to help safeguard maritime navigation. He emphasized that Operation Aspidis is purely defensive in nature, aimed at protecting maritime security, and does not, in any way, pursue offensive objectives.

He confirmed the readiness of his country to serve as a bridge between the European Union, Kuwait and the rest of the GCC countries, thereby, strengthening cooperation and partnership between the two sides.

He believes that stronger trade and investment relations between the European Union and the GCC countries will generate mutual benefits for all parties, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are vital for economic growth.

In crisis,

Al-Atwan called on everyone to act responsibly when sharing information and cooperate with the relevant authorities, emphasizing that such awareness contributes to preserving national security and maintaining the country's stability.

Meanwhile, official spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior Brigadier Nasser Bousalaib stressed the importance of obtaining information

from official sources and avoiding rumors or unverified reports circulated through various social media platforms.

Bousalaib urged the public to remain calm under the current circumstances, noting that competent authorities are monitoring developments around the clock and taking the necessary measures to maintain security and stability.

He added that state institutions are working in full coordination and maintaining a high level of readiness to ensure public safety under all circumstances, warning against circulating inaccurate information.

For his part, official spokesperson for the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Brigadier General Dr. Jadaan Fadhel Jadaan emphasized the importance of obtaining information from reliable official sources and avoiding rumors or inaccurate news circulating online.

He added that military and security agencies continue exerting significant efforts to safeguard the country and protect its stability in light of current regional developments.

Director of Public Relations and Media and official spokesperson for the Kuwait Fire Force Brigadier General Mohammad Al-Ghareeb warned that filming incident locations or sharing videos could spread inaccurate information and raise unnecessary public concern.

Al-Ghareeb added that circulating such footage may disrupt the work of specialized teams and contribute to the spread of rumors or misleading information that does not reflect the actual situation on the ground.

He affirmed that firefighting teams remain fully prepared to respond to reports received by the operations room according to approved professional procedures and in coordination with military and security authorities to ensure the safety of lives and property.

Kuwait Eid

Thursday will be a day off, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday will be official Eid al-Fitr holidays, and Monday will be a substitute for Friday. Regular working hours will resume on Tuesday, March 24.

If Ramadan this year has 29 days, Thursday, March 19 will be the first day of Eid al-Fitr, and the holiday will run consecutively from Thursday to Sunday. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday will be official Eid al-Fitr holidays, while Sunday will serve as a substitute for Friday, which is considered a day of rest. Regular working hours will resume on Monday, March 23.

CSC stressed that agencies and entities with special work requirements will have their holidays determined by their respective authorities, taking into account the public interest.

UK envoy

He also advised those wishing to travel to obtain an electronic visa in advance whenever possible. He added that flights from Saudi Arabia to the United Kingdom, both direct and indirect, remain available, confirming that a number of British citizens recently returned home through this route.

He said that meetings have been held with members of the British community - including the British Business Forum, administrations of British schools, and members of the British Armed Forces and their families - to listen to their concerns and keep them informed on the latest developments.

He affirmed that the embassy team is working round the clock to support British citizens, assist them during emergencies, and help them navigate the current situation.

He added that a series of explanatory videos will be released to respond to frequently asked questions.

He urged anyone requiring urgent assistance to contact the embassy and to continue trying if they are unable to reach it, wishing that everyone is safe and well.

Give way,

■ Avoid gathering at the scene. Do not congregate near the accident site as it can obstruct firefighters' work.

■ Provide accurate information when contacting emergency services. When calling the emergency number, provide the address clearly and accurately, and give correct and detailed information about the incident.

INTERNATIONAL

I can guarantee that we are going to put Democrats on the record: Thune

Under pressure from Trump, US Republicans plan long talkathon on voting bill

WASHINGTON, March 14, (AP): Under pressure from US President Donald Trump, Senate Republicans plan to launch a "full and robust debate" next week on legislation to impose strict new proof-of-citizenship requirements, an effort to show Trump that they are serious about the bill even though it doesn't have enough support to pass.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., is planning a talkathon on the Senate floor for an indefinite period of time, though it won't officially be the "talking filibuster" that Trump has suggested. Republicans plan to hold the floor for days, if not weeks, to pressure Democrats.

"I can guarantee that we are going to put Democrats on the record," Thune said on the Senate floor Thursday as he announced the plan to take up the bill, which has already passed the House.

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. It faces unified opposition from Democrats, meaning that the Senate likely can't approve

it unless Republicans change the rules and eliminate the filibuster. Many GOP senators are unwilling to go that far.

Trump has made the bill 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 affirm under oath, at the risk of prosecution, that they are U.S. citizens.

The bill would also require that voters provide a photo ID when casting ballots, as many states already require.

The president's insistence on the bill, and an energized push from the GOP base, has put pressure on Thune. The GOP leader has repeatedly said they don't have the votes to eliminate the filibuster, which triggers a 60-vote threshold, or even to move to the talking filibuster that Trump has aggressively lobbied them to deploy.

Even if they did have the votes, a talking filibuster would not guarantee passage. Supporters of that approach



US Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-SD, speaks to reporters after a weekly Republican luncheon, at the Capitol in Washington on March 10. (AP)

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.

Caught between Trump and Democratic opposition, Republican senators have come up with an alternate plan to hold the floor themselves - denying Democrats the opportunity for a weeklong stage to talk. The strategy avoids the procedural pitfalls, even if the process is likely to end with a failed vote. Republicans are also expected to consider several amendments on issues that Trump has named as priorities, including an end to most mail-in balloting.

"Republicans are looking forward to this debate," Thune said. Similar to the talking filibuster, though, the plan does have risks - mainly that it won't satisfy Trump, who has demanded passage and threatened to hold up almost everything else in Congress.

Utah Sen. Mike Lee, a Republican who has led the effort with Trump to pass the SAVE America Act and has pushed for the talking filibuster, said Thursday that it's not yet clear how it will play out.

"I think he understands that we need to put in an aggressive effort here," Lee said of Trump. "And a lot of that is going to have to be determined in real time as we go about it."

The extent of Trump's satisfaction with the process, Lee said, "will depend on whether in his view, we

gave it everything we have."

Republican Sen. Katie Britt of Alabama said the goal is to figure out how to put it on the floor and "actually achieve a result."

"We're working through what that means and what we need to be prepared to do," Britt said.

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.

Sen. Alex Padilla, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Rules Committee, said his side of the aisle is organizing "to bring our arguments - and the facts - to the floor as well."

He said it would be more accurate to call it the "Save Trump's Ass Act," because the only way he said Republicans can try to hold on to power in this November's elections is to make it harder for eligible people to vote.

Padilla said the SAVE America Act "is not a voter ID bill. It is a voter suppression bill. It is a voter purging bill."

America

Lawmakers grill ex-special prosecutor: State senators on Friday grilled the former special prosecutor who led the Georgia election interference case against President Donald Trump about communications his team had with federal investigators. But their efforts were largely frustrated by his repeated assertions that he couldn't remember details.



Wade

Nathan Wade appeared before a subcommittee of the Special Committee on Investigations, which was created by the Republican-dominated state Senate in January 2024 to examine various allegations of misconduct against Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, an elected Democrat, with regard to her prosecution of Trump.

While the committee has met multiple times to hear from witnesses, including a combative appearance by Willis in December, it has unearthed little that wasn't already known. Republicans expanded the committee's mission to also look into Democrat Stacey Abrams, but the committee has thus far done nothing publicly with her.

Willis obtained an indictment against Trump and 18 others in August 2023. Using Georgia's anti-racketeering law, she alleged that they had participated in a wide-ranging conspiracy to illegally overturn Trump's narrow loss in Georgia. Four people pleaded guilty in the months that followed after reaching deals with prosecutors.

The resolution creating the committee focused on Wade's hiring as a special prosecutor, saying a romantic relationship between him and Willis amounted to a "clear conflict of interest and a fraud upon the taxpayers" of the county and state. (AP)

Wisconsin legislator pleads guilty: A Wisconsin legislator has pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor count of disorderly conduct in connection with a bitter feud with her caucus over being excluded from resolutions

honoring Hispanics and breaking with her party on state budget and legislative district boundary votes.

Prosecutors in Milwaukee County charged state Rep. Sylvia Ortiz-Velez in February. Online court records show the Milwaukee Democrat entered the guilty plea Friday, and Judge Paul Malloy ordered her to pay a \$300 fine and submit a DNA sample. She could have faced up to 90 days in jail.

Ortiz-Velez said in a statement after the sentencing that she will pay the fine and remains focused on her constituents, not caucus fighting.

"My voting choices caused a rift that has been ugly and bitter," she said. "My constituents did not send me to Madison to litigate internal caucus disputes or be distracted by the personal feuds - they sent me there to deliver results." A spokesperson from Assembly Democratic Minority Leader Greta Neubauer did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

The feud began in August as Democratic members of the state Assembly were planning resolutions honoring Hispanic heritage and Hispanic veterans in observance of Hispanic Heritage Month in September, according to the criminal complaint. (AP)

1 victim dies in US campus shooting: One of three victims in a shooting on the campus of Old Dominion University in the US state of Virginia has died, the university's police said.

At a news conference Thursday afternoon, Garrett Shelton, the university's chief of police, said that there was a third victim who went to the hospital independently, noting that the two surviving victims appear to be in stable condition.

Shelton added that authorities are "very early" in the investigation.

An earlier alert from the university said that two people were injured and the shooter was neutralized.

"Earlier today, an armed individual opened fire at Old Dominion University, leaving one person dead and two others wounded," FBI Director Kash Patel said on X.

"The shooter is now deceased thanks to a group of brave students who stepped in and subdued him - actions that undoubtedly saved lives along with the quick response of law enforcement," he said.

Patel also noted that the FBI is now investigating the shooting as "an act of terrorism." (AP)

State Dept slashes fee to renounce US citizenship by 80% to \$450

WASHINGTON, March 14, (AP): The State Department has slashed by about 80% the fee for Americans to formally renounce their US citizenship.

After years of legal battles with several groups representing Americans wanting to give up their citizenship, the department on Friday published a final rule in the Federal Register that reduces the cost from \$2,350 to \$450.

The new fee, which took effect on Friday, had been promised in 2023 but had never been implemented. The cost is now the same as it was when the State Department first started charging Americans to formally renounce their citizenship in 2010.

Renouncing US citizenship can be an intensive and lengthy process. Applicants must repeatedly confirm in multiple written and verbal attestations to a State Department consular officer that they understand the implications of the step before being allowed to take a formal oath of renunciation. It must then be reviewed by the department.

The fee was raised from \$450 to \$2,350 in 2015 to cover the administrative expenses as the number of people wanting to renounce their citizenship surged in part due to new US tax reporting requirements for American expatriates that angered many.

That dramatic fee increase drew significant opposition from groups such



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio takes part in a US Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Flag Raising ceremony at the State Department on March 9 in Washington. (AP)

as the France-based Association of Accidental Americans, which represents people mainly living abroad whose US citizenship is due purely to their having been born in the United States.

The association filed several lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of the fee, including one that remains pending that argues there should be no cost at all for renouncing one's citizenship.

"The Association of Accidental

Americans welcomes this decision, which acknowledges the necessity of making this fundamental right accessible to all," its president, Fabien Lehagre, said in a statement. "This victory is the direct result of six years of relentless legal action and advocacy."

In court, the association said since the 2023 announcement that the fee would be reduced at least 8,755 Americans had paid the full \$2,350 to renounce their citizenship.

Tusk vows to use EU defense loans despite Poland president's veto

WARSAW, Poland, March 14, (AP): Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk vowed on Friday to find ways to tap into 43.7 billion euros (\$50.1 billion) in defense loans from the European Union despite a veto by the country's president against a law enabling access to the funds.

Poland was set to be the largest beneficiary of the EU's 150 billion-euro Security Action for Europe initiative, or SAFE, which is designed to boost Europe's defense readiness at a time when the US has been diminishing its role in the continent's security.

But President Karol Nawrocki, who has positioned himself as a main opponent of Tusk, said Thursday he is vetoing the legislation allowing Poland to access the EU defense loans.

"Poland is in shock," Tusk said Friday. "People are wondering if this is treason, the work of lobbyists, or a lack of common sense."

Tusk said the presidential veto will not prevent the Polish government from taking advantage of the defense funds, but "it will be more difficult, sometimes slower, and it will take much more effort to convince everyone involved in this project."



Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk speaks with the media as he arrives for the EU Summit in Brussels on Dec 18, 2025. (AP)

A European Commission spokesman said on Friday that the EU was determined to continue implementing the plans it had made with Poland "without delay." An advance payment could be made as early as April, he said.

Successive Polish governments have

boosted the country's defense spending since Russia's full-scale invasion of neighboring Ukraine in 2022. But while Tusk's liberal government wants to coordinate efforts with the EU, the nationalist Nawrocki has proven more euro-skeptic and maintained a friendlier rapport with the Trump administration.

Nawrocki argues that Poland's participation in SAFE will increase the country's dependency on Germany.

On Tuesday, he proposed an alternative draft law suggesting national resources that could be used instead of European loans to pay for further investments in defense. Tusk has dismissed that option as unrealistic.

The U.S. has also openly criticized SAFE.

"The United States has expressed concerns about how EU defense initiatives like Security Action for Europe and the European Defense Industry Program restrict market access for American companies," Andrew Puzder, the U.S. ambassador to the EU, and Matthew Whitaker, the U.S. ambassador to NATO, wrote in an opinion piece published in February by Politico Europe.

Starmer's pick of Mandelson as top UK envoy haunts PM

LONDON, March 14, (AP): News that Prime Minister Keir Starmer ignored warnings of senior advisers and appointed Jeffrey Epstein's pal Peter Mandelson as Britain's ambassador to the US was bad for the embattled leader. It seems unlikely to improve.

Starmer continues to weather the fallout from Mandelson's appointment - and later sacking - but the nearly 150 pages of documents released by his government Wednesday were just a small fraction of the thousands of pages still to come.

"It's hard to believe that later releases are going to persuade anybody to see the PM's decision in a better light," said Tim Bale, politics professor at Queen Mary University of London. Documents confirmed what was already known: Starmer chose the savvy veteran politician in spite of a reputation tainted by previous scandals and ties to Epstein.

The due diligence checklist released from Mandelson's vetting highlighted in bold letters the red flags Starmer ignored, spelling out where his relationship with Epstein could expose the government to "reputational risk."

It also spelled out unrelated reputational issues over Mandelson's work in a previous Labour government - when he twice had to resign over financial matters - and his work at Global Counsel, a lobbying firm he co-founded.

In one document, Starmer was warned that making a political appointment to the post was riskier than choosing a veteran diplomat, as is more common in Britain.

"If anything goes wrong, you could be more exposed as the individual is more connected to you personally," then-Cabinet Secretary Simon Case advised.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer arrives to attend the annual Commonwealth Day Service of Celebration at Westminster Abbey in London on March 9. (AP)



Firefighters put out the fire at a residential neighbourhood following a Russia missile and drone attack, in Brovary, close to Kyiv, Ukraine on March 14. (AP)

Russian strike on Kyiv region kills four and wounds at least 15, with peace talks stalled

KYIV, Ukraine, March 14, (AP): A combined missile and drone attack on the Kyiv region killed at least four people and wounded at least 15 overnight into Saturday, according to the head of the regional administration for the Ukrainian capital.

Three of the wounded were in critical condition, of whom two were undergoing surgery, Mykola Kalashnyk reported on Saturday. The attack hit four districts, damaging residential buildings, educational institutions, enterprises and critical infrastructure, Kalashnyk added in a social media post.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the main target for the overnight strikes was "the energy infrastructure of the Kyiv region." He said Russia launched around 430 drones of various types during the night, as well as 68 missiles.

Russia's Defense Ministry on Saturday said the nighttime strikes targeted energy and industrial facilities serving Ukraine's armed forces, as well as military airfields.

The strikes came days after the US postponed peace talks between Russia and Ukraine scheduled for this week, citing the war in the Middle East.

As US and Israeli missiles and bombs rain on Iran, Russia has re-



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks during a joint presser with France's President Emmanuel Macron, not pictured, following a bilateral meeting at the Elysee Presidential Palace in Paris on March 13. (AP)

sponded with words of indignation but no action to support its ally. Moscow's failure to help another ally, after the 2024 ouster of former Syrian ruler Bashar Assad and January's US arrest of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro, highlighted the limits of its influence - but the Kremlin expects to reap benefits from the Iran war.

Russia is already profiting from a surge in global energy prices, and could hope that the Mideast war will

detract attention from Ukraine and deplete Western arsenals.

Zelenskyy on Saturday called on Kyiv's Western partners to pay "one hundred percent attention" to the need to boost the production of air defense missiles.

"Russia will try to exploit the war in the Middle East to cause even greater destruction here in Europe, in Ukraine," he said in a post on social media.

"We must be fully aware of the real level of the threat and prepare accordingly, namely: in Europe, we need to develop the production of air defense missiles - especially those capable of countering ballistic threats - as well as all other systems necessary to truly protect lives," he said.

Kyiv is also awaiting White House approval for a major drone production agreement proposed by Ukraine last year, Zelenskyy said Thursday, as countries scramble to modernize their air defenses after the Iran war exposed shortcomings.

Also on Thursday, Zelenskyy criticized the 30-day US waiver on Russian oil sanctions amid the war in the Middle East, saying it is "not the right decision" and won't help bring a stop to Russia's more than 4-year-old invasion of Ukraine.

INTERNATIONAL

Cambodia govt drafts its first law targeting online scam centers

SIEM REAP, Cambodia, March 14, (Agencies): Cambodia said Friday it has drafted its first law targeting online scam centers, after vowing to shut them down by the end of April.

Cambodia is a major hub for scam operations, which extort money from victims online through bogus investment schemes and feigned romances. Victims around the world are estimated to have been cheated out of tens of billions of dollars annually.

At the same time, thousands of people, especially from other Asian nations, have been recruited with false job offers and then forced to work in scam centers in conditions of near-slavery.

"This law is the most important legal instrument for Cambodia in combating scams online, fighting money laundering and demonstrating that Cambodia is not a paradise or a safe haven for criminals," Information

Minister Neth Pheaktra said in a statement.

The new legislation approved by the Cabinet sets five to 10 years in prison and a fine of 500 million to 1 billion riels (\$125,000-250,000) for organizing or directing a technology fraud site. In case of human trafficking or violence, detention or confinement, the penalties range from 10 to 20 years plus a fine of up to 2 billion riels (\$500,000). In case of a death linked to a scam center, the offense is punishable by imprisonment from 15 to 30 years, or life. Workers have died when they tried to escape.

The new legislation must be approved by Parliament.

Senior Minister Chhay Sinarith, in charge of the Commission for Combating Online Scams, told The Associated Press in an interview on Wednesday that the government since July had targeted 250 locations believed to be carrying out online scams, and has

shut down about 200.

Since last July, the government has filed 79 cases involving 697 alleged scam ringleaders and their associates, according to Chhay Sinarith.

Cambodia has repatriated almost 10,000 scam center workers from 23 countries, with fewer than 1,000 waiting to return home. Others who have escaped or been released from raided centers have returned on their own.

Neth Pheaktra said that the government "has made strong efforts to combat this crime in order to protect Cambodia's reputation and economy, which have previously been damaged by online scams, and the government does not receive any revenue from these activities."

Cambodia has launched previous crackdowns but without major effect on scam centers, and some experts are skeptical it can eliminate the criminal industry.



Journalists look at equipment confiscated in a raid by Cambodian police at a scam center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on March 11. (AP)

Weapons landed outside country's exclusive economic zone: Japan

North Korea fires about 10 ballistic missiles toward sea in show of force: Seoul

SEOUL, South Korea, March 14, (AP): North Korea on Saturday fired about 10 ballistic missiles toward the eastern sea, South Korea's military said, staging its own show of force as the rival South conducts a joint military exercise with the United States.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missiles were fired from an area in Sunan, the site of Pyongyang's international airport, and flew about 350 kilometers (220 miles).

Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said the weapons landed outside the country's exclusive economic zone and that there were no reports of damage to planes or ships.

The South's Joint Chiefs said the military has stepped up surveillance and is maintaining readiness against possible additional launches while closely sharing information with the US and Japan.

The launches came as the US and South Korean militaries conduct their annual springtime exercises involving thousands of troops while the Trump administration also wages an escalating war in the Middle East.

The war has raised concerns about potential security lapses in South Korea, as local media - citing security camera footage and other images - have speculated that the US is relocating some missile defense assets stationed in the country to support operations against Iran.

When asked by The Associated Press this week whether US Forces Korea was moving interceptor missiles from its Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, system in Seongju to the Middle East, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's office said it could not confirm details about US military operations.

The office said the potential relocation of US military assets would not affect the allies' defense posture against nuclear-armed North Korea, while also citing South Korea's conventional military strength. It earlier gave a similar response to reports about the possible relocation of Patriot missile defense systems from South Korea.

The launches came hours after South Korean Prime Minister Kim Min-seok,



South Korean army's K1A2 tanks move during a joint river-crossing exercise between South Korea and the United States as a part of the Freedom Shield military exercise in Yeoncheon, South Korea on March 14. (AP)

Seoul's No. 2 official after Lee, met US President Donald Trump in Washington and expressed hope for renewed diplomacy between Washington and Pyongyang. Lee seeks improved inter-Korean relations, and some of his top officials have said Trump's expected visit to China, starting March 31, may create an opening with Pyongyang.

But Saturday's launches appeared to dim such hopes, signaling defiance by Pyongyang, which in recent months has hardened its stance toward Seoul and urged Washington to drop denuclearization demands as a precondition for talks.

North Korea has long described the allies' drills as invasion rehearsals and often uses them as a pretext to dial up its own military demonstrations or weapons testing.

The North in previous years has conducted numerous salvo launches of missiles or artillery while describing them as simulations of nuclear attacks against targets in South Korea.

The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Tuesday criticized Washington and Seoul for proceeding with their drills at a perilous moment for global security, and warned that any challenge to the North's safety would bring "terrible consequences."

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

North Korea's Foreign Ministry has released separate statements denouncing the joint US-Israeli attacks on Iran and expressing support for Tehran's new supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei.

The 11-day Freedom Shield exercise, which runs through March 19, is one of two annual command post exercises conducted by the militaries of the United States and South Korea. The largely computer-simulated drills are designed to test the allies' joint operational capabilities, while incorporating evolving war scenarios and security challenges. Freedom Shield will be accompanied by a field training program called Warrior Shield.

North Korea has repeatedly rejected Washington and Seoul's calls to resume diplomacy aimed at winding down its nuclear program. Talks derailed in 2019 following the collapse of Kim Jong Un's second summit with Trump during his first term.

Landslides death toll in Ethiopia rises to 80

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, March 14, (AP): Ethiopia declared three days of mourning as the death toll from this week's landslides in the country's south climbed to 80.

Speaker of the House of Peoples' Representatives Tassese Chafa said the three days of mourning would begin Saturday.

At least 80 bodies have been recovered from the Gamo Zone area in southern Ethiopia where landslides triggered by heavy rains killed dozens of residents.

Many other people remained missing since the tragedy struck the Gamo Zone area on Tuesday, officials said. Search and recovery efforts have taken place for days and have been hampered by heavy rain still pounding the area.

Regional government communications head Hailemariam Tesfaye said that the search for remaining victims was intensified.

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission on Friday said that 3,461 people were displaced by the landslides.

The Government Communication Service said Thursday the government is mobilizing resources in coordination with regional authorities.

Donations from private citizens and business organizations are flowing into a fund announced by the regional government to provide relief items to those affected.

Heavy rains have pounded countries in East Africa, and in neighboring Kenya the death toll from Saturday's flash floods rose to 62.

The region is expected to see more rain given the rainy season and governments have urged residents to exercise caution.



Locals search for the bodies of mudslide victims in the Gacho Baba district of the Gamo Zone in southern Ethiopia on March 10. (AP)

Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of targeting civilians after six killed in airstrikes

KABUL, Afghanistan, March 14, (AP): Afghanistan's Taliban government accused Pakistan on Friday of targeting homes in overnight airstrikes on Kabul and other areas of the country, saying at least six civilians were killed and more than a dozen others were injured.

Pakistan denied targeting civilians, as fighting between the neighbors entered its third week.

Afghan government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Pakistani aircraft also struck fuel depots belonging to the private airline Kam Air near the airport in Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan. "This company supplies fuel to civilian airlines as well as to United Nations aircraft," he said on a post on X.

Pakistan's military carried out "successful airstrikes inside Afghanistan" as part of the ongoing operation, according to the Information Ministry. It said the strikes targeted four alleged militant hideouts and their support infrastructure in Afghanistan. The ministry said Pakistan did not target any civilian population.

On Friday, a roadside bomb targeting a police vehicle killed six officers in Lakki Marwat, a district in northwest Pakistan, police official Sajjad Khan said. No one claimed responsibility, but suspicion is likely to fall on the outlawed Pakistani Taliban, also known as Tehrik-e-Taleban Pakistan, or TTP, which often claim such attacks.

The developments come amid a dramatic increase in tensions between the two countries - which Pakistan has referred to as "open war" - adding to



Taliban police guard the area where a strike hit a house in the Momand Dara district of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, near the border with Pakistan on March 13. (AP)

concerns about the stability in the region as the US-Israeli war against Iran continues with no end in sight, generating great uncertainty.

Afghanistan's Defense Ministry said it responded to Pakistan's attacks by targeting Pakistani military installations in the Kohat district, causing heavy losses.

In a post on X, Khalil Hamraz, a spokesman for Afghanistan's General Directorate of Intelligence, said two drones were used to strike a military facility near Islamabad. But Pakistani police said two rudimentary drones were spotted in the area and brought down using electronic measures and that the

drones caused no damage.

Pakistan's Ministry of Information also said that the TTP attempted to deploy three rudimentary drones in Kohat, but that Pakistani forces shot them down. Two civilians were injured by falling debris, it said.

Mujahid claimed Pakistani strikes hit multiple civilian sites and uninhabited locations in Afghanistan's Paktia and Paktika provinces, as well as other areas. He said the attacks "will not go unanswered."

Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadran said at least four civilians, including children, were killed in the city and 15 others were injured.

Recent drone strikes and clashes in eastern Congo threaten region's peace efforts

GOMA, Congo, March 14, (AP): Congo's government and Rwanda-backed M23 rebels on Friday accused each other of violating terms of a ceasefire deal aimed at ending decadeslong fighting and bringing a permanent peace in the conflict-battered region.

Recent drone strikes and clashes have cast doubt over the peace deal and a separate minerals deal that Congo signed with the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump to enable the US access Congo's rich minerals.

Trump helped negotiate a peace deal between Congo and neighboring Rwanda, seen as an indirect but key player in the conflict, while Qatar and other partners have championed similar efforts involving direct negotiations between the government and the M23.

But neither track has halted the fighting. On Tuesday, a drone strike that the M23 blames on Congolese forces killed a French United Nations staffer in the key city of Goma, less than a month after a similar strike killed the rebel group's spokesperson and injured several others.

Residents continue to report clashes between the M23 and Congo's forces sometimes joined by the local Wazalendo militia group, with thousands displaced in recent weeks.



UN peacekeepers guard a house hit by a drone strike in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo on March 11. (AP)

M23 spokesperson Lawrence Kanyuka told The Associated Press that the group is still committed to peace efforts if Congo's army "refrains from attacking our positions and assassinating our leaders, soldiers, and innocent civilians."

Congolese government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said the government is investigating this week's strike that killed a French aid worker, but did not elaborate on other drone strikes.

He blamed the M23 for violating the ceasefire, but said that the government side would like to "reaffirm our commitment to respecting the ceasefire" and other agreements.

The AP could not independently verify events in affected localities in the region. The attacks have, however, complicated peace efforts in the region where mass graves were recently found.

Brazil's ex-president Bolsonaro in intensive care with pneumonia

RIO DE JANEIRO, March 14, (AP): Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro has pneumonia and is receiving treatment in an intensive care unit, a hospital in the capital, Brasilia, said Friday.

One of his doctors, Brasil Caiado, told journalists that the 70-year-old's medical situation was serious.

"Pneumonia in patients over 70 is always serious because it can progress to septicemia, since the bacteria can normally enter the bloodstream and cause an even more severe condition," Caiado said.

Earlier in the day, Bolsonaro's eldest son Flávio said on X that his father was being transferred from prison to a hospital after waking up with chills and vomiting.

"I ask for prayers that it not be anything serious," Flávio wrote. Flávio Bolsonaro has said he will run for president this year, and recent polls show him and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva almost tied.

Jair Bolsonaro is serving a 27-year sentence for attempting a coup after he was convicted last year by a panel of Supreme Court justices.

He was admitted to the hospital after experiencing high fever, low oxygen, sweating and chills, DF Star Hospital said in a statement. Exams confirmed bronchopneumonia, a type of pneumonia, likely caused by aspiration.



Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro points to his electronic ankle monitor that the Supreme Court ordered him to wear, at Congress in Brasilia, Brazil on July 21, 2025. (AP)

"He is currently hospitalized in the intensive care unit, receiving IV antibiotics and non-invasive clinical support," the hospital said.

Caiado, a cardiologist, said that it was unlikely that Bolsonaro would return to prison in the next few days because the treatment is intravenous and has to be done in a hospital setting.

The embattled ex-leader was trans-

ferred to a larger cell in January, but his relatives have repeatedly asked the Supreme Court to allow Bolsonaro to carry out his sentence under house arrest. They allege he is being mistreated and receiving insufficient medical attention.

On Friday, Carlos Bolsonaro - one of the former president's sons - said on X "the system, literally and insistently, (is) trying to kill" his father.

Shareholders approve all agenda items at the AGM

National Bank of Kuwait General Assembly approves 35 fils cash dividend per share and 5% bonus shares for FY 2025



Hamad Al-Bahar

Hamad Al-Bahar:

We continued executing our strategic priorities and strengthening our financial position despite the challenges facing the global economic environment

NBK stands out with a robust governance framework and disciplined risk management, under the oversight of a Board of Directors with diverse expertise and a highly professional executive management team

The Bank continues aligning its strategy with the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035 by directing capital and expertise toward supporting national priorities

NBK remains committed to strengthening its position as a leading institution contributing to shaping the future of responsible banking

We believe that creating long-term value requires a careful balance between financial performance and economic, social, and environmental responsibility



Isam Al-Sager

Al-Sager:

Once again, NBK has demonstrated its ability to navigate challenges, supported by the resilience of its business model, the strength of its balance sheet, and the effectiveness of its strategy

Our international footprint enables the Bank to capture growth opportunities while maintaining a well-balanced exposure across diverse markets

Major financing transactions have further reinforced our role as a trusted partner to leading institutions and corporations

We view sustainable finance as a long-term growth opportunity rather than an obligatory requirement

We remain optimistic about domestic opportunities despite ongoing global uncertainty, as the outlook for the Kuwaiti economy continues to improve

NBK is strongly positioned to play a central role in driving the next phase of economic growth



Shaikha Al-Bahar

Shaikha Al-Bahar:

In 2025, NBK further consolidated its leadership position in Kuwait, across the region, and throughout its international network

At NBK, we do not merely adapt to change; we actively work to shape the future of banking in the region

We accelerated our investments in advanced technologies, data analytics, artificial intelligence, and automation to enhance efficiency and deliver superior banking experiences for our customers

Our international banking operations increased its contribution to Group profits to 27% in 2025

NBK's international footprint positions the Bank as a strategic bridge linking regional capital with global markets

We remain confident in our ability to seize opportunities, navigate future challenges, and continue setting new benchmarks for banking excellence



Salah Al-Fulaij

Al-Fulaij:

We achieved a major leap forward by introducing more than 100 new features across our digital channels in 2025

We expanded our product ecosystem and partnerships, while strengthening our global collaboration in the cards business with leading brands

We maintained our strong presence as the key banking partner for leading local corporates and served 75% of foreign companies operating in Kuwait

We introduced Kuwait's first point-of-sale financing solution to better serve the financing needs of the SME sector

We delivered more than 147,000 training hours to employees, with satisfaction levels for training programs rising to 91%

National workforce representation reached 77.4% by the end of 2025, with 249 new hires during the year, 90% of whom were Kuwaiti nationals

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the financial year ended December 31, 2025, with a quorum representing 70.43% of the Bank's share capital.

During the meetings, shareholders approved all agenda items, including the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute a cash dividend of 35 fils per share and bonus shares of 5% (five shares for every 100 shares owned).

Delivering Strong Performance Amid Challenges

In his opening remarks during the General Assembly, Mr. Hamad Al-Bahar, NBK Group Chairman, said: "Amid the exceptional circumstances we are witnessing today, I pray that God continues to protect our country, Kuwait, from all harm and to preserve the blessings of security and stability that we enjoy."

Mr. Al-Bahar reviewed NBK's performance during 2025, emphasizing that the Bank delivered a series of notable achievements throughout the year despite the challenges facing the global economic environment, including trade tensions and geopolitical uncertainties.

"Over the past year, NBK continued to execute its strategic priorities with consistency, while strengthening its institutional capabilities and reinforcing the resilience of its financial position. This was made possible through a robust governance framework and disciplined risk management, under the oversight of a Board of Directors distinguished by the breadth and depth of its expertise, and an executive management team committed to the highest standards of professionalism and institutional discipline," Mr. Al-Bahar added.

Furthermore, he explained that, in line with the Bank's commitment to maximizing value for its shareholders, the Board of Directors recommended the distribution of a cash dividend of 35 fils per share for the financial year ended December 31, 2025, in addition to recommending the distribution of bonus shares at a rate of 5%. He noted that these recommendations reflect the Board's confidence in the Bank's strong financial position and its ability to continue delivering solid performance while maintaining the resilience of its capital base.

Decades of Progress

During the General Assembly, Mr. Al-Bahar highlighted NBK's continued journey of progress spanning more than seven decades, during which the Bank has helped shape Kuwait's financial landscape and played an active role in supporting economic development across the region.

He noted that since its establishment more than 73 years ago, NBK has not merely kept pace with change but has consistently anticipated and shaped it, evolving from a leading local banking institution into a regional powerhouse with a global presence and significant strategic influence.

Shaping the Future

"Today, NBK continues to respond to the evolving needs of its customers and the broader community amid a rapidly changing economic and financial landscape, while further strengthening its position as a leading institution contributing to shaping the future of responsible banking. This is achieved through sustained investment in innovation and advanced technologies, as well as the continued development of our digital infrastructure to enhance operational efficiency and elevate the customer experience," Al-Bahar noted.

Kuwait Vision 2035

Al-Bahar affirmed that the Bank continues to align its strategy with the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035 by directing capital and expertise toward supporting national priorities, including infrastructure development, private sector empowerment, and economic diversification, while strengthening connectivity with international capital markets to support long-term economic transformation.

He added that sustainability occupies a central place in NBK's strategy, reflecting the Bank's belief that creating long-term value requires balancing financial performance with economic, social, and environmental responsibility. He noted that the Bank continues to integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles into its operations and investment decisions.

Reinforcing Leadership Standards

On the Bank's future outlook, Al-Bahar said: "As we look ahead, NBK's ambition extends beyond maintaining its position in an increasingly dynamic financial landscape. Our goal is to deepen our impact, elevate our contributions, and continue reinforcing leadership standards in responsible banking for generations to come, while further strengthening our digital capabilities, expanding our presence across markets, and maintaining a strong focus on innovation,

national talent development, and sustainable finance."

Appreciation and Gratitude

Al-Bahar concluded his remarks, saying: "I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the executive management and all employees across the Group's various sectors for their dedicated efforts. I also express my gratitude to our valued shareholders and customers for their continued trust, to my fellow Board members and the Board's committees for their guidance and oversight, and to the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Capital Markets Authority for their role in supporting the stability of Kuwait's financial system."

Overcoming Challenges

Meanwhile, Mr. Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer of National Bank of Kuwait, said: "At the outset, and in light of the significant developments and challenges confronting the world and the region, we pray that this period passes peacefully, and that Kuwait, its leadership, and its people remain protected from all harm."

Al-Sager added in his remarks during the AGM: "Although 2025 was marked by global economic uncertainty, shifting monetary conditions, and evolving geopolitical dynamics, NBK once again demonstrated its ability to navigate challenges, supported by the resilience of its business model, the strength of its balance sheet, and the effectiveness of its long-term strategy."

He noted that the Bank's financial results reflect this resilience, as NBK recorded a net profit of KWD 575.6 million for the financial year ended December 31, 2025, supported by strong operating income and disciplined risk management. He added that this performance underscores the Bank's ability to operate effectively in complex economic environments while continuing to deliver sustainable value for its shareholders.

Al-Sager noted that operating income increased in 2025 to KWD 1.3 billion, driven by the continued strength of the Bank's core banking activities, the expansion of its international operations, and sustained momentum across the Group's diverse business lines.

Furthermore, he emphasized that what distinguishes NBK is not only the results it delivers each year, but the consistency and resilience with which it sustains that performance. Over the decades, the Bank's strategy has been anchored in clear fundamentals, including prudent risk management, strong capital and liquidity positions, a diversified business model spanning multiple markets and sectors, and sustained growth in its wealth management business.

Al-Sager noted that NBK today operates one of the largest international networks among Arab banks, with a presence in leading global financial centers. He emphasized that this international footprint enables the Bank to capture growth opportunities while maintaining a well-balanced exposure across diverse markets.

Supporting Economic Development

"At the same time, we remain firmly committed to supporting economic development in the State of Kuwait. During 2025, the Bank continued to play a leading role in financing strategic projects and supporting key sectors of the economy, including energy, infrastructure, and private sector development. Major financing transactions have further reinforced our role as a trusted partner to leading institutions and corporations in the country," Al-Sager continued.

Sustainable Assets

Al-Sager affirmed that sustainability represents a cornerstone of NBK's strategy, noting that the Bank views sustainable finance not as an obligatory requirement but rather as a long-term growth opportunity. He added that by the end of 2025, NBK's sustainable asset portfolio had exceeded USD 6 billion, marking tangible progress toward its target of reaching USD 10 billion by 2030.

Investing in Technology

Al-Sager emphasized that NBK continues to prioritize investment in technology and digital transformation as a key pillar of its strategy. He noted that the banking sector is undergoing rapid change, driven by digital innovation and evolving customer expectations. In this environment, NBK has remained at the forefront by investing in digital infrastructure, enhancing its platforms, and delivering seamless and secure banking experiences to its customers.

He added that these efforts have already begun to yield tangible benefits, including improved operational efficiency, broader access to financial services, and a strengthened competitive position for NBK.

Al-Sager further noted: "Of course, none of these achievements would have been possible without the dedication and professionalism of our employees. Our people remain the driving force behind our success. We take pride in continuing to invest in talent develop-

ment while maintaining one of the highest national workforce ratios in the private sector."

On the Bank's outlook, Al-Sager said: "Despite the continued uncertainty in the global economy, we remain optimistic about the opportunities ahead. The outlook for the Kuwaiti economy continues to improve, supported by ongoing reforms, investments in infrastructure, and initiatives aimed at economic diversification."

A Pivotal Role

Al-Sager noted that NBK is strongly positioned to play a central role in driving the next phase of growth, adding: "With our solid financial position, disciplined strategy, and deep market expertise, we are confident in our ability to continue creating long-term value for all our stakeholders."

Al-Sager also expressed his sincere appreciation to the Board of Directors for their guidance and strategic vision, to the regulatory authorities for their continued support, and to the Bank's shareholders for their enduring trust in NBK.

He concluded his remarks by addressing the Bank's shareholders: "Your trust inspires us to continue building on the Bank's distinguished legacy, which spans more than seven decades of leadership, innovation, and contribution to Kuwait's economic progress. Together, we will continue strengthening NBK's position as a leading financial institution in the region and a trusted partner for generations to come."

Strong Performance

In the meantime, Ms. Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer of National Bank of Kuwait, said: "2025 marked another year of strong performance and strategic progress for the Bank, as it continued to reinforce its leadership position in Kuwait, across the region, and throughout its international network."

She added that the global environment, marked by economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, and rapidly evolving financial market dynamics, did not prevent the Bank from demonstrating the resilience of its diversified business model and the strength of its long-term strategy.

Al-Bahar noted that the Bank's financial performance in 2025 reflects this resilience and disciplined execution, as the Group recorded profit before tax of KWD 734.6 million, representing a 5.4% year-on-year increase, driven by strong momentum across the Bank's key business segments.

She explained that these results underscore the effectiveness of NBK's diversified operating model and its disciplined risk management framework, in addition to the continued confidence placed in the Bank by its customers and investors.

Transformational Shift

Al-Bahar said: "One of the key pillars of our progress in 2025 was the continued advancement of the Bank's digital transformation strategy. The banking sector is undergoing a profound transformation toward AI-driven platforms, integrated digital ecosystems, and more personalized financial experiences for customers. At NBK, we do not merely adapt to these changes; we actively work to shape the future of banking in the region."

She emphasized that the Bank accelerated its investments in advanced technologies, data analytics, AI, and automation to enhance efficiency, improve decision-making, and deliver superior banking experiences for its customers.

"Our digital strategy is built on a dual-track approach, modernizing our core banking infrastructure on the one hand, while developing new digital platforms anchored in a 'digital-first' philosophy that moves beyond traditional banking models on the other," Al-Bahar added.

Al-Bahar further emphasized: "At the Group level, we have expanded our digital onboarding capabilities, enhanced mobile banking functionalities, and launched new digital solutions aimed at simplifying the customer journey and improving access to financial services." She noted that these initiatives not only strengthen customer engagement but also position NBK at the forefront as a technology-driven financial institution in the region.

International Operations

"At the same time, our international banking operations continued to play an increasingly important role in supporting revenue diversification and strengthening cross-border connectivity, with their contribution to Group profits rising to 27%. NBK's global network spans four continents and 13 countries, providing clients with access to international markets, trade finance services, and global wealth management solutions," Al-Bahar said:

Continued on Page 9

BUSINESS

Continued from Page 8

She added that during 2025, the Bank further strengthened collaboration across its international network, expanded cross-selling opportunities across different business lines, and exported its digital capabilities to several markets. Additionally, she noted that this approach enables the Bank to replicate scalable service models internationally, enhance operational efficiency, and deliver a consistent, high-quality customer experience across markets.

Al-Bahar also pointed out that NBK's international presence enables it to serve as a bridge between regional capital and global markets, supporting trade flows, investment opportunities, and wealth management solutions for NBK clients around the world.

Core Business Segments

"In addition to digital transformation and international expansion, we continue to strengthen our core business segments, including Corporate Banking, Consumer Banking, Wealth Management, and Islamic Banking. NBK Wealth, in particular, continues to grow as a strategic platform offering sophisticated investment solutions and advisory services to high-net-worth and institutional clients across key regional and international markets," Al-Bahar noted.

Furthermore, she pointed out that, looking ahead, NBK's strategy remains firmly anchored in sustainable growth, innovation, and long-term value creation.

"We will continue investing in technology, digital platforms, and advanced data analytics to enhance our operational resilience and deliver more personalized financial solutions to our clients. At the same time, we remain committed to expanding our regional and international presence in markets aligned with our competitive strengths. With our clear strategic vision, strong balance sheet, and exceptional talent, we are confident in our ability to seize new opportunities, navigate future challenges, and continue setting new benchmarks for banking excellence in Kuwait and across the region," Al-Bahar concluded.

A Major Leap Forward

Mr. Salah Al-Fulaij, Chief Executive Office, NBK- Kuwait noted that the Bank continued in 2025 to strengthen its leadership in the domestic market and deepen its relationships with customers by further developing its banking products and services, with a strong focus on enhancing quality and innovation in line with the rapidly evolving banking landscape.

"2025 marked a significant leap in the development of our digital services, with NBK launching more than 100 new features across its digital channels, making them easily and efficiently accessible to our customers. We also migrated from the traditional AIX WebSphere infrastructure to the Spring Boot 3.0 platform powered by the latest Intel processors. This important technological transformation has improved performance and scalability, accelerated release and deployment cycles, enhanced cost management efficiency, and ensured compatibility with container-based technology environments, thereby supporting greater operational flexibility," Al-Fulaij said.

He explained that the Bank's intensive investment in the NBK Mobile Banking App has had a direct impact on customer experience, with mobile transactions increasing fourteenfold, the number of users growing by 300%, customer satisfaction reaching 93%, and the app rating rising to 4.7.

"During 2025, the Bank also expanded its product ecosystem and strategic partnerships, while strengthening its global collaboration in the cards business with leading brands such as Avios, Harrods, and Aura. At the same time, we further developed our fintech services and modernized branch formats to support financial inclusion and contribute to the growth of the digital economy," Al-Fulaij added.

Prestigious Awards

Al-Fulaij noted that NBK received numerous prestigious international awards in 2025 in recognition of its achievements in innovation, digital transformation, and the quality of its banking services. These included Best Bank in Kuwait by Global Finance and MEED, Best Bank for Diversity and Inclusion and Best Bank for Large Corporates from Euromoney, as well as Best Retail Bank and Best Contactless Payment Experience from MEED.

The Bank also received Best Digital Payment Solutions and Best Trade Finance Provider in Kuwait, in addition to being named Safest Bank in Kuwait by Global Finance. Furthermore, NBK was awarded Best Bank for ESG in Kuwait by Euromoney.

Weyay Bank

Al-Fulaij noted that while NBK continues to deliver innovative and comprehensive financial solutions to its customers, it also places special emphasis on investing in the next generation of clients, particularly the youth segment. He highlighted that Weyay Bank,



Hamad Al-Bahar, Isam Al-Sager, Shaikha Al-Bahar, and Salah Al-Fulaij during the General Assembly meeting.



Hamad Al-Bahar, Isam Al-Sager, Shaikha Al-Bahar, and Salah Al-Fulaij



Hamad Al-Bahar, Shaikha Al-Bahar, and Ossama Al-Nakib



Yousef Al-Obaid, Farouq Ali Bastak, Haitham Al-Khaled, Muthana Al-Hamad, and Abdulwahab Al-Bader



Anas Al-Saleh and Salah Al-Fulaij



Faisal Al-Hamad and Mohammed Al-Othman



Zaid Al-Sager, Mohammad Al-Kharafi, and Ezzat Hallal



Farouq Ali Bastaki and Haitham Al-Khaled

as the first and only bank in Kuwait to offer fully digital personal loans through an end-to-end digital journey, from application to completion, launched in 2025 a fully integrated digital loan journey that meets international standards and is tailored for its customers without requiring salary transfer. This provides a fast and flexible financing experience, enabling customers to access financing services anytime and from anywhere, surpassing the traditional constraints associated with such transactions.

Al-Fulaij added that Weyay Bank's achievements in 2025 were further recognized through several prestigious awards, including being named Best Digital Bank in Kuwait by Global Finance and Euromoney.

Consumer Banking Services

Al-Fulaij noted that in 2025, the Consumer Banking Group launched its new vision and strategy for the period through 2030, centered on customer needs and aimed at delivering a more seamless and innovative banking experience across all channels.

He explained that the strategy is built on four key pillars: developing and empowering talent to deliver advanced banking services; modernizing digital infrastructure to support the next generation of banking solutions; enhancing payment systems in line with international standards; and strengthening the role of the Consumer Banking Group in the payments sector while accelerating digital growth.

Corporate Banking

With regard to Corporate Banking, Al-Fulaij said: "We continued to strengthen our leadership position by advancing our structured

financing capabilities and reinforcing our standing in transaction banking and trade finance services. At the same time, we maintained our strong presence as the key banking partner for leading local corporates, serving no less than 75% of foreign companies operating in Kuwait, while sustaining a market share exceeding 30% in trade finance activities."

Moreover, Al-Fulaij affirmed that NBK is placing increasing emphasis on the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector, noting the launch of Kuwait's first point-of-sale financing solution designed to meet the needs of this vital segment.

He added that the Bank's leadership in serving this sector was recognized through two prestigious awards, Best Bank for SMEs in Kuwait and Best Payment Solutions for SMEs in the Middle East and North Africa, by MEED as part of its Excellence Awards 2025.

Risk Management

On the risk management front, the Bank continued to strengthen its governance framework and institutional discipline by automating processes, implementing comprehensive stress testing supported by scenario analysis, and integrating ESG factors into its risk assessment processes. In addition, the Bank reinforced its fraud prevention controls and adopted a comprehensive IT risk management framework aligned with global best practices.

Training and Kuwaitization

Al-Fulaij emphasized that NBK's achievements would not be possible without the dedication and strength of its human capital, which represents the cornerstone of all its accomplishments. He noted that during 2025, the Bank continued investing in the development of its employees' capabilities while fostering a culture of innovation and continuous learning. Over 147,000 training hours were delivered during the year, with more than 5,320 participations in training and development programs, while satisfaction levels for these programs reached 91%.

He added that national workforce representation reached 77.4% of the Bank's total employees by the end of 2025. The Bank received more than 8,000 CVs during the year, resulting in the recruitment of 249 new employees, 90% of whom were Kuwaiti nationals, in addition to hiring 68 employees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

He also noted that as part of efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, women accounted for 42.5% of NBK's total workforce, while female representation in managerial positions reached 27.4%.

Additionally, Al-Fulaij affirmed that NBK's achievements in 2025 reflect the strength of its business model, the resilience of its strategy, and its ability to adapt to the rapidly evolving dynamics of the banking sector.

Landmark Financing Transactions

On the front of landmark transactions supporting Kuwait's economy, NBK led in 2025 a KWD 1.5 billion syndicated term financing facility for Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), the largest financing transaction ever denominated in Kuwaiti Dinars. NBK's participation amounted to KWD 495 million, making the Bank the largest lender within the conventional tranche of the facility.

ventional tranche of the facility.

A Leader in Corporate Social Responsibility

2025 marked another year of notable achievements for NBK in the field of corporate social responsibility, as the Bank launched a wide range of initiatives and projects spanning health, education, environmental, and sports sectors.

Among the key initiatives and projects launched and implemented by NBK in 2025 were the inauguration of the Shuwaikh Beach Development and Beautification Project funded by the Bank with a total value of KWD 3 million; the laying of the foundation stone for the expansion of the NBK Children's Hospital for pediatric haematology, oncology, and stem cell transplant, with an estimated cost of around KWD 19 million; as well as contributing to the development of Sharq district through the construction of a multi-storey parking facility and a public park, at a cost of nearly KWD 7 million.

In recognition of its outstanding efforts that have reinforced its position as the largest contributor to corporate social responsibility in Kuwait, NBK was awarded the Gold Medal in the Corporate Social Responsibility category at the Brandon Hall Group Excellence Awards 2025.

EGM to be held on March 28

The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced that its Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) has been postponed and rescheduled to take place on March 28.

The Ordinary General Assembly was held with a quorum of 77.3%

Gulf Bank approves the distribution of 9% cash dividends and 5% bonus shares

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Gulf Bank held its Ordinary General Assembly yesterday (Saturday), with a quorum of 77.3 %, approving the distribution of cash dividend of 9% per share, in addition to bonus shares of 5% for the financial year ended 31 December 2025.

In his statement to the shareholders, Gulf Bank's Chairman, Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Al Bahar said: "Over the past year, we have focused on strengthening the Bank's foundations and advancing key strategic priorities, and we have succeeded in achieving that despite the global geopolitical tension and the uncertain economic environment."

He mentioned that Gulf Bank maintained a strong financial position in 2025, driven by robust balance sheet growth, a high-quality loan portfolio, and well-capitalization levels that position the Bank for future growth.

He added: "We advanced our planned transition to a Sharia-compliant Bank following the Central Bank of Kuwait's initial approval to proceed with this conversion, an important milestone in the Bank's strategic evolution that supports a strong financial profile, customer service excellence, and long-term value creation."

"During the year, the Bank launched its 2030 five-year strategy, focused on reinforcing market position, promoting sustainable growth, and advancing its journey toward becoming a fully Sharia-compliant Islamic bank. Gulf Bank also continued to explore strategic opportunities, both organically and inorganically, aimed at enhancing long-term shareholder value."

He added: "The assessment of a potential merger with Warba Bank is ongoing and conducted in close coordination with regulators and specialized advisors, with a strong focus on transparency and institutional integrity."

Gulf Bank maintained a strong financial position in 2025, driven by robust balance sheet growth, a high-quality loan portfolio, and well-capitalization levels that position the Bank for future growth.

He concluded: "We enter the next phase with a clear strategic direction, supported by strong governance and a sound financial position. These elements provide a solid foundation for achieving long-term sustainable value for all stakeholders."

Financial Performance

Gulf Bank's Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer Mr. Faisal AlAdsani, presented the Bank's financial performance for 2025 by stating: "Gulf Bank's financial performance reflects a strong implementation and a balanced approach to growth. We have continued to strengthen our balance sheet while maintaining a high-quality loan portfolio based on prudent credit and proactive risk management."

"Last year, the Bank reported a net profit of KD 52.4 million, with earning per share of 13 fils. The Bank's asset quality indicators remained strong, with the non-performing loan (NPL) ratio at 1.1%, and ample NPL coverage ratio, which reached 370%, inclusive of total provisions and collateral. Total credit provisions reached KD 256 million, resulting in a substantial excess provision level of KD 90 million, over IFRS 9 accounting requirements. Total loans and advances increased by 7% to



Ahmad Al Bahar speaking at the assembly.

Ahmad Mohammad Al Bahar:

- We made tangible progress toward our planned conversion into a Sharia-compliant Bank.
- We enter the next phase with a clear strategic direction, supported by strong governance and a sound financial position.
- Our 2030 Strategy is focused on reinforcing our market position and promoting sustainable growth.



Faisal AlAdsani speaking at the assembly.

Faisal AlAdsani:

- Gulf Bank's financial performance in 2025 reflects a strong implementation and a balanced approach to growth.
- Our capital adequacy levels supported the balance sheet growth while maintaining healthy buffers above regulatory requirements.
- Significant progress has been made in assessing system requirements, strengthening governance frameworks, and building the necessary internal capabilities to become a Sharia-compliant Bank.



Ahmad Al Bahar presiding over the General Assembly.



Part of the audience.

KD 6.1 billion, an increase of KD 382 million compared to 2024.

Our capital adequacy levels supported our balance sheet growth while maintaining healthy buffers above regulatory requirements.

The Tier 1 Capital Ratio reached 14.8%, and the Capi-

tal Adequacy Ratio (CAR) stood at 16.9% as at 31 December 2025, both well above the minimum regulatory thresholds."

Strategic Outlook

Along these lines, Mr. Faisal AlAdsani stated: "Despite ongoing external pressures, Gulf

Bank maintained a strong focus on sustainable financial performance, balance sheet resilience, and the advancement of key operational initiatives aligned with its long-term strategic aspirations. Throughout the year, the Bank prioritized prudent risk management, funding diversifica-

tion, and talent development, to remain well positioned to meet evolving market conditions and regulatory requirements."

"We have concluded our five-year strategy for 2025 by completing several foundational initiatives that have strengthened our operat-

ing platform and positioned Gulf Bank for its next phase of growth. Key milestones included the completion of the core banking transformation, enhancements to our omni-channel capabilities, and continued expansion of the offering of our subsidiary InvestGB, all of which have improved scalability, service delivery, and product depth across the Bank.

In parallel, we continued to advance internal readiness for the Bank's planned transition to a Sharia-compliant Bank, following the Central Bank of Kuwait's preliminary approval to commence conversion activities. Dedicated governance structures and cross-functional teams have been established to oversee the program across operational, legal, technology, and product areas.

Significant progress has been made in assessing system requirements, strengthening governance frameworks, and building the necessary internal capabilities. We have also invested in targeted employee training programs to ensure readiness across the organization. Throughout this process, our focus remains firmly on maintaining business continuity, safeguarding asset quality, and delivering consistent service to our customers.

Dividends Payment Date on April 15th

The Bank's shareholders registered in the company's records as at the end of the record date, set on April 8th, are entitled to cash dividends and bonus shares, whereby the payment date is set on April 15th.

65 years of contribution to economic development

In 2025, Gulf Bank celebrated its 65th anniversary, a milestone that reflects more than six decades of continuity, resilience, and contribution to Kuwait's economic development. Since its establishment in 1960, the Bank has grown alongside the nation, supporting major development projects, expanding its financial services, and maintaining a strong and trusted presence within the community. This anniversary reflects Gulf Bank's enduring legacy and institutional maturity.

Prestigious Credit Ratings

Gulf Bank's creditworthiness continued to be well-recognized by leading international credit rating agencies. During the year, Fitch Ratings reaffirmed the Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A', while Moody's affirmed its long-term deposit rating at 'A3'. Capital Intelligence Ratings also reaffirmed the Bank's Long-Term Foreign Currency rating at 'A+', in addition to maintaining the rating on the Bank's Basel III-compliant Tier 2 Subordinated Bonds at 'BBB+'.

All ratings were assigned Stable Outlooks, underscoring Gulf Bank's resilient financial position, well-diversified and stable funding base, and robust domestic franchise.

Appreciation to Regulators

Mr. Ahmad Al Bahar expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Capital Markets Authority for their relentless support to the banking sector in the State of Kuwait. He also expressed his appreciation to the shareholders, customers, board members, executive management, and all employees for their continued trust and commitment to Gulf Bank.

Oman's Salalah port sees growth despite recent drone attack

Duqm port fuel tanks safe and fully operational

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company Abdullah Al-Ajmi confirmed that the Kuwaiti crude oil and Kuwaiti-Omani Duqm Refinery have not suffered any losses.

In an exclusive statement to the newspaper, Al-Ajmi stressed that the drone attack on fuel tanks at Salalah Port two days ago had no impact on the Duqm Port fuel tanks, which are located far from Salalah Port. He said the fuel tanks at Duqm Port are operating at full capacity, indicating the Duqm Refinery is conducting its operations normally, and the export of petroleum products is proceeding as usual.

He reassured the families of the

Kuwaiti staff working at the Duqm Refinery that there is no risk to any of the refinery's operations and that everything is proceeding smoothly.

According to the website of the Duqm Special Economic Zone in the Sultanate of Oman, the land distance between the ports of Salalah and Duqm is about 600 kilometers, and the journey takes about six and a half hours.

The port of Salalah is located in the Dhofar Governorate on the west coast, while the port of Duqm is located in the Wusta Governorate.

Following the drone attacks on the fuel tanks at the port of Salalah, the newspaper obtained official reports from the port stating that it has two berths for handling liquid bulk cargo, with a depth of 18 meters, a total length of 666 meters, and an annual

handling capacity of six million tons.

The liquid cargo berth at the port of Salalah currently handles a variety of goods, including fuel, methanol, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), diethylene glycol (DEG), vegetable oils and others, and it is experiencing steady growth year after year.

Given the increasing importance of sustainability, renewable energy initiatives are gaining momentum, supported by the government of the Sultanate of Oman, as the vision is for Salalah to become a hub for clean energy.

The pipeline at the Port of Salalah is 4.5 kilometers long, connecting the bulk liquids terminal to customers in the Salalah Free Zone.

The pipeline network has a total capacity of 4.5 million tons of liquid cargo, with a current utilization rate of

50 percent, allowing for future growth and expansion.

The general cargo terminal has 13 berths with a total length of about 3,000 meters and a draft ranging from 6.8 to 18 meters.

It has a handling capacity of 35 million tons of cargo, in addition to a terminal capable of handling container activities for around 15,000 TEUs and above annually, as well as a liquids terminal that supports the handling of the world's largest liquid tankers.

The annual growth of the terminal ranged between seven to 10 percent, driven by dry bulk cargo shipments, with an annual volume of 22.6 million metric tons in 2024. The shore handling equipment enables the largest dry bulk cargo vessels to handle up to 200,000 metric tons.

New ESG Guide aligns with global standards, ISSB IFRS S1 & S2

Boursa Kuwait issues updated version of its ESG Disclosure Guide for listed companies

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Boursa Kuwait released an updated edition of its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Reporting Guide, reflecting the latest developments in ESG reporting at both the local and international levels. The update forms part of the exchange's ongoing efforts to enhance transparency, support listed companies in improving the quality of their ESG disclosures in line with international best practices, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the Kuwaiti capital market.

The updated guide provides a comprehensive reference framework that enables listed companies to disclose their sustainability practices and performance in a clear, structured and transparent manner, enabling them to keep up with the growing expectations of investors, regulators and stakeholders for reliable and comparable information on ESG matters. It also reinforces confidence in Kuwait's capital market and supports the country's long-term sustainable economic development.

The 2026 ESG Disclosure Guide has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Bylaws of the Capital Markets Authority (CMA), particularly Article (1-17-3) of Book Twelve (Listing Rules), which stipulates that Boursa Kuwait develop a comprehensive guide to assist listed companies in the preparation of sustainability reports and takes into account the recent CMA requirement for companies listed on the Premier Market to disclose sustainability reports starting in 2026 for the 2025 financial year.

In addition, the guide reflects the latest updates to the Boursa Kuwait Rulebook related to sustainability requirements and integrates internationally recognized sustainability reporting standards and frameworks, including the disclosure standards issued by the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) under the IFRS Foundation, particularly IFRS S1 and IFRS S2, which represent the emerging global baseline for sustainability reporting.

The 2026 edition enhances the clarity and structure of the guide while aligning it with global ESG reporting practices, while maintaining its advisory nature for listed companies and encouraging them to adopt the practices outlined in the guide to support their competitiveness and meet the expectations of global



Boursa Kuwait



ESG Guide

investors. It also expands several ESG indicators and metrics, providing practical guidance on emerging topics such as climate scenario analysis, transition planning, and the disclosure of indirect emissions (Scope 3). These additions aim to further integrate sustainability practices within corporate governance frameworks.

Expanded guidance is provided on materiality assessments, enabling companies to identify and prioritize ESG issues that have the greatest impact on their operations and stakeholders. This supports the preparation of sustainability reports that focus on key

topics from a financial perspective and in terms of their impact on society and the environment, reflecting the concept of double materiality.

The guide also encourages companies to reference internationally recognized sustainability frameworks and standards, clearly define the scope and boundaries of disclosures and outline the methodologies used, along with the governance structures and oversight mechanisms in place for sustainability-related matters.

The issuance of the 2026 ESG Disclosure Guide forms part of Boursa Kuwait's broader efforts to support the objectives of Kuwait Vision 2035 and the national development plan, which aim to achieve sustainable and balanced economic growth alongside social progress and environmental protection, as the guide introduces an initial set of corporate sustainability indicators aligned with the priorities of Vision 2035 and Kuwait's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2060. These indicators are aligned with internationally recognized frameworks, including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Boursa Kuwait has continued to play a pivotal role in promoting sustainability concepts within capital markets since joining the United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges (SSE) initiative in 2017, which aims to strengthen collaboration between stock exchanges and market participants while advancing ESG practices.

Through this updated guide, the exchange remains committed to supporting listed companies in the adoption and disclosure of sustainability practices, beginning with a focus on the topics most material to companies' operations and stakeholders, with the scope and depth of disclosures expanding over time.

This approach helps enhance transparency, improve risk management practices and support sustainable long-term financial performance. It also strengthens the attractiveness of the Kuwaiti capital market for sustainable investment and aligns it with growing global trends toward integrating sustainability considerations into business strategies and investment decision-making in capital markets.

Enhancing digital experience for corporates

KFH empowers businesses with cutting-edge 'eCorp' solutions

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: Kuwait Finance House's (KFH) 'eCorp' platform for corporate customers has witnessed a remarkable increase in usage following the launch of its upgraded e-services and mobile app. The platform provides an exceptional banking experience tailored specifically for the corporate sector.

KFH has introduced a new suite of digital services designed to enhance user flexibility. These include full-authority individual accounts, electronic data updates, and "Zaheb" payment service. Additionally, users can now issue QR-verified IBAN certificates, manage credit facilities and limits, view transaction details, request new transactions and process outstanding payments.

The newly updated platform offers a wide array of services, ranging from salary transfers and checkbook requests to viewing account statements, tracking interbank transfers, and managing user permissions within a multi-registration system.



Furthermore, the platform offers a comprehensive suite of services, including standing order management, monthly statement subscriptions, and automated coverage services. Users can also issue balance verification certificates, reactivate dormant accounts, and execute transfers at direct rates (360T). Additionally, the platform supports clearing company distri-

bution subscriptions, the opening of new investment accounts and deposits, and the issuance of remittances, letters of credit, and guarantees. Other features include drawdowns from existing credit facilities, "Zaheb" payments, all types of transfers, beneficiary management (local and international), lost card reporting, and IBAN sharing.

The launch of our upgraded e-services and mobile app offers exceptional banking experience for corporate customers. By integrating cutting-edge technology with robust security, KFH enables modern financial management through tools that prioritize sustainability. This update reduces reliance on paper-based workflows by digitizing applications and transactions, directly supporting environmental goals. Furthermore, modern digital interface streamlines operations, enhance administrative performance and significantly reduce processing times.

M.P. Ahammad: From Indian entrepreneur to global jewellery leader

Malabar Group Chairman wins Business Bhushan Award

NEW DELHI, March 14: Mr. M.P. Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, has been honoured with the prestigious Business Bhushan Award at the Lokmat Maharashtra of the Year Awards 2026, in recognition of his visionary leadership and pivotal role in transforming the global jewellery retail landscape and society at large.

Held at the iconic Gateway of India, the awards ceremony brought together leading policymakers, industry leaders, and prominent personalities from business and entertainment. The event was attended by the Chief Minister, Sri. Devendra Fadnis, and Deputy Chief Minister, Sri. Eknath Shinde of Maharashtra, alongside Mr. Asher O, MD-India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, other ministers, bureaucrats, and distinguished figures from across sectors.

The awards celebrate individuals whose vision, leadership, and achievements have significantly shaped industries while contributing meaningfully to society. Mr. Ahammad's recognition highlights his remarkable entrepreneurial journey and the role he has played in building Malabar Gold & Diamonds to become the 5th largest global jewellery retailer and the largest jewellery retailer of Indian origin.

Expressing his gratitude on receiving the honour, Mr. M.P. Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, said, "I am deeply honoured to receive the Business Bhushan award at the Lokmat Maharashtra of the Year Awards. This recognition reflects the collective dedication of the entire Malabar family and the trust our customers have placed in us over the years. Our journey is founded on the principle of collective growth of all our stakeholders guided by responsibility, integrity, and a commitment to creating lasting value for society while continuing to pursue excellence in everything we do."

Founded in 1993, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has been a pioneer in fostering responsible and transparent jewellery retail, contributing significantly to



Deputy CM Maharashtra Eknath Shinde, Chairman M.P. Ahammad, Malabar Group, CM Maharashtra Devendra Fadnis, MD India, Asher O, Malabar Gold & Diamonds

employment generation, strengthening the organised retail ecosystem, and enhancing customer experience through access to world-class designs and services.

Today, the brand stands as a true flag bearer of India, showcasing the nation's craft and soul to the world through its 425 showrooms across 14 countries. The brand has reimagined the jewellery industry by integrating the entire value chain, from design and manufacturing to retail and beyond.

Maharashtra remains a key market for Malabar Gold & Diamonds, now with 34 showrooms across major cities. This growth has boosted employment, strengthened the organised jewellery ecosystem, and improved access to quality designs. His substantial contribution to the state earned him this honour, and

the Group is committed to further expansion, targeting 64 stores in Maharashtra by 2029.

Beyond business growth, Mr. Ahammad advanced a purpose-driven model by embedding CSR/ESG commitments into the company since inception, consistently contributing 5% of profits to education, healthcare, housing support and women's empowerment programmes, benefiting the society across regions of operations.

His recognition with the Business Bhushan Award further reinforces his stature as one of India's most respected business leaders whose entrepreneurial vision and values-driven leadership serve as an inspiration and a blueprint for collective progress for future global enterprises.

Other Voices

Oil on fire! The barrel is \$100

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

OIL disruptions and panic are causing uncertainties regarding supply. Arabian Gulf oil producers have reduced their crude oil production by more than 10 million barrels per day, or ten percent of total global demand, pushing oil prices above \$104 per barrel. Oil markets are in disarray and in need of assurances from major Arabian Gulf producers to maintain supply continuity.



Al-Harami

Now Russia is back in the oil market, with the US government giving the green light to buy and trade Russian oil. It is not the time to impose an embargo on the second-largest producer when prices are so high. By the time readers see this article, oil prices may have already surpassed the \$104 level.

The world is facing an oil crisis with no clear end in sight. The Strait of Hormuz is closed or controlled, allowing only ships flying the flags of countries friendly to Iran to pass through. This has made the Gulf unsafe for navigation, causing panic and a shortage of oil globally, with no certainty about how long the

crisis will last. International energy agencies have been forced to release more than 400 million barrels from strategic reserves to ease the situation, but with no information on how long this will last.

Oil prices have surged to three-digit levels as the unexpected happens. The Strait of Hormuz is effectively controlled by Iran, and permits are required to pass through. How long will oil remain at these high levels? The answer depends on the continuation of the ongoing war with Iran.

Disrupting oil supply from the Arabian Gulf, which is home to 20 percent of the world's oil, along with closing the Strait of Hormuz, is like declaring global war. The world depends heavily on Arabian Gulf oil. Is there no way to keep this region out of war to ensure the safe supply of crude oil, refined products, and gas without disruption? The world will increasingly rely on Arabian Gulf oil in the long term.

Today, crude oil is above \$102 per barrel and is likely to rise further with any escalation of war or threats that could lead to disaster, if not a full-scale war. At a minimum, closure of the Arabian Gulf would cause global oil disruptions and shortages. We hope it does not come to that.

Our Gulf is in crisis, and so is the oil supply.

Email: nafik Kuwaiti@yahoo.com

Zelensky criticizes US decision

US temporarily loosens sanctions on Russian oil

WASHINGTON, March 14, (AP): The U.S. is temporarily easing some sanctions on Russian oil shipments, reflecting global concerns over sharply higher crude prices due to supply shortages stemming from the Iran war.

The move, intended to soothe jittery markets over the disruption of Middle Eastern oil and gas supplies, underlines how the war has boosted Moscow's ability to profit from its energy exports, a pillar of the Kremlin's budget as it presses its invasion of Ukraine.

U.S. sanctions will not apply for 30 days on deliveries of Russian oil that's been loaded on tankers as of Thursday, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on X. That would give reluctant purchasers a green light to take the oil without worrying that they will run afoul of U.S. sanctions rules.

The Trump administration earlier had granted a 30-day reprieve to refineries in India.

Bessent said the "narrowly tailored, short-term measure" was part of President Donald Trump's "decisive steps to promote stability in global energy markets" and to "keep prices low."

Allowing the sale of stranded Russian oil would provide no additional financial benefit for the Russian government because the Kremlin already taxed the oil when it was extracted from the ground, Bessent said. Washington has sanctioned Russia's two biggest oil companies, Lukoil and Rosneft, as part of efforts to end the fighting in Ukraine. Except for the 30-day reprieve for floating oil, those sanctions remain in place.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday the move will help stabilize global energy markets, adding it was impossible to do so "without significant volumes of Russian oil."

But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the action "does not help peace."

"This easing alone by the United States could provide Russia with about \$10 billion for the war," Zelensky said. "It spends the money from energy sales on weapons, and all of this is then used against us."

The price of international benchmark Brent crude eased after the announcement but soon rose again, breaking through \$100 to trade at \$103.24 per barrel as of 1800 GMT (2 p.m. EDT) Friday. That is still well above \$72.87, where Brent traded on Feb. 27, the eve of the war.

The fighting has choked off most tanker transport through the Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, through which 20% of the world's oil supply typically passes. That has dealt a massive energy shock to the global economy and threatened increased inflation around the world.

"In the short term this slightly increases available supply on the global market, which helps contain the current spike in oil prices," said Simone Tagliapietra, an energy expert at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels. "The impact on prices should therefore be modestly downward, or at least stabilizing."

Analysts estimate about 125 million barrels of Russian oil are currently being shipped. That equals five or six days' worth of normal shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, or a bit over one day's worth of global consumption of about 101 million barrels per day.

After President Vladimir Putin

ordered his full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the European Union - once Moscow's biggest customer - stopped taking Russian oil, and many Western customers also shunned it.

Instead, the oil flowed to China and India, where it sold for a discount due to efforts by the U.S., the EU and Kyiv's other allies to impose a price cap on Russian oil that was enforced through shipping and insurance companies.

Over time, Russia was able to dodge the cap by lining up a fleet of used tankers with obscure ownership and insurance based in countries that weren't observing the cap.

Along with the sanctions on Lukoil and Rosneft, Ukraine's allies penalized more and more of the individual vessels in Russia's "shadow fleet." Customers in China and India started demanding even bigger discounts to compensate for the risk of running afoul of sanctions, for the hassle of concealing the origin of the oil, or for finding workarounds that skirted banks reluctant to handle payments for sanctioned oil.

In December, Russia's Urals blend traded under \$40 per barrel, some \$25 below Brent. That slashed the Kremlin's oil revenues to their lowest levels since the invasion. Oil and gas exports typically supply 20% to 30% of the federal budget.

Russian oil has risen along with oil prices generally and now trades at over \$80 per barrel - a boost to its financial fortunes if disruptions continue in the Strait of Hormuz and keep prices high while refineries in Asia need to replace supplies no longer available from the Middle East.

Russia's daily revenue from oil sales during the Iran war has been on average 14% higher than in February, according to the nonprofit Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air. Russia has been earning 510 million euros (\$588 million) every day this month from oil and liquefied natural gas exports, according to Isaac Levi of the CREA.

But there's still a big discount to Brent due to sanctions. The latest U.S. move "likely narrows the Urals discounts somewhat" by reducing sanctions risk, Tagliapietra said. But since it's limited, the U.S. move "does not fundamentally change the structure of longer-term Russian oil flows or sanctions pressure."

Former Russian Central Bank official Sergei Aleksashenko said the move "will not be a very significant boost" to the Russian budget because the oil was going to find buyers anyway - especially given the disruptions to the Strait of Hormuz.

The Trump administration may not have been ready for such a dramatic spike or for a prolonged war, said Aleksashenko, head of economics at the NEST Centre, founded by exiled Russian tycoon and opposition figure Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

Now that gasoline prices in the U.S. have risen along with oil, "the president should say something, that 'I'm dealing with the problem,'" he said. That includes the break for India and the release along with other countries of 400 million barrels of strategic oil reserves.

"In my view it's more rhetoric and perception," he said.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said leaders of the Group of Seven democracies discussed Russian oil with Trump this week and that "six members expressed a very clear view that this is not the right signal to send."



Actor Lazaro Ramos poses for photos after an interview in Rio de Janeiro, Thursday, March 12. (AP)



Brazilian actor Dira Paes smiles before an interview at the TV Globo studio in Rio de Janeiro, Thursday, March 12. (AP)

Brazil cinema's rise

Telenovelas help fuel 'top' films at Oscars

RIO DE JANEIRO, March 14, (AP): Hollywood actors might rule the silver screen - as Sunday's Academy Awards are poised to prove - but Brazil's path to stardom often starts under the bright lights of a TV studio rather than a sprawling movie set.

Since at least the 1960s, the telenovelas, Latin American TV series often compared to soap operas, produced by Brazil's leading broadcaster TV Globo have evolved from simple daily dramas into a multi-million-dollar industry with 13 studios, three set towns, 122 edit bays and reaching up to 60 million of Brazil's 213 million people every week.

Many Brazilian actors associated with Oscar-contending films - such as "Central Station" (1998), "I'm Still Here" (2024) and this year's four-category nominee "The Secret Agent" - first became household names via TV Globo. Actors like Wagner Moura and Fernanda Torres gained broad national visibility through telenovelas.

In contrast, Brazil only has about 3,500 movie theaters, mostly located in major cities and where US blockbusters feature prominently. This creates an ecosystem where success on TV may lead to big cinema roles, which then circle back to popular telenovelas, and then on to movies again.

Moura, the lead actor in "The Secret Agent," starred in the telenovela "A Lua Me Disse" (The Moon told Me) 21 years ago. Similarly, Fernanda Torres, the star of "I'm Still Here," which won Brazil's first best international feature Oscar, was already a beloved actor due to two major TV Globo comedy series that many in the public see as telenovelas.

"Globo's telenovelas are key for Brazil's audiovisual production," said Amauri Soares, director of TV Globo and Globo Studios, hailing them as "a continuous platform of creation and production of content."

"The Secret Agent" has actors and staffers who worked at Globo, who will work at Globo again and the film itself has Globo investment despite being independent," Soares said.

TV Globo broadcasts three telenovelas simultaneously from early evening to prime-time. They are produced at studios in Rio de Janeiro and often run for six months from Mondays to Saturdays, involving more than 1,000 people. A finale can turn into a national viewing event, with bars, restaurants and gyms airing main episodes.

The industry requires adaptability. With some episodes written only days in advance based on audience ratings, telenovelas allow viewers to indirectly co-create the narrative. And their economic impact is powerful: a remake of the hit "Vale Tudo" (Anything Goes) reportedly generated over 200 million reais (\$38 million) in advertising - fourfold the global box office of "The Secret Agent."

Each year, TV Globo recruits up to 70 new actors from theater, film and regional productions. Soares says they hone their skills with high-end equipment and new techniques for a year. Then many leave for other productions, some just stay at the broadcaster for more short series.

Dira Paes, a veteran actor and one of TV Globo's frequent pundits during Oscars' night, notes that Brazil's telenovelas and cinema industries are increasingly intertwined, as professionals can move from one to the other to create and also make more money. She was recently in another popular series, "Pantanal" (Wetlands), and in "Manas," a film praised by Julia Roberts and Sean Penn.

"Telenovelas are not only about ratings, but also heart and affection. When you do it on prime-time, you experience the power of an entire nation watching you. When the public loves your character... it is a very special popularity," said Paes, the star of "Tres Gracias" (Three Gracias), a show filmed in Rio but set in an impoverished area of Sao Paulo.

Mauricio Stycer, an author and critic of TV culture, says Brazil's inequality boosted free TV channels like Globo in a way that reduced the general public's interest in cinema. Ultimately, he argues, that led to "Brazilian cinema holding a grudge for not having the same reach of telenovelas."

Stycer added that many actors have a Hamletian dilemma whenever recruited for a telenovela.

"To be popular and have a sure income every month or to take risks in a career that involves theater and cinema? TV was always a safe haven for most actors," he said.

While rival Brazilian TV networks have tried to challenge Globo's supremacy in the genre, few have achieved success. But even TV Globo productions are no longer as dominant as they were up until the early 2010s. And company executives have acknowledged they face growing competition from streaming video.

Even so, "Globo is still Brazil's biggest company for actors," Stycer said. "Up until the year 2000, Globo alone was responsible for about 50% of TV ratings in Brazil."

Actor and director Lazaro Ramos first appeared in telenovelas after he had kicked off his career in theater and cinema. He says Brazilians have learned to love both telenovelas and films with the same intensity when they succeed in portraying the country's joyful and sometimes dark personality.



Actors film a scene of the soap opera 'A Nobreza do Amor,' at a TV Globo set in Rio de Janeiro, Thursday, March 12. (AP)

Filmmaker focused on 'Sinners' team before ceremony

Coogler aware of potential Oscar history ahead

LOS ANGELES, March 14, (AP): Ryan Coogler understands what Sunday night could mean for Oscar history. He's just not dwelling on it.

Instead, the Oscar-nominated filmmaker is looking forward to spending one more night with his "Sinners" collaborators who helped bring the film to life.

Coogler could become the first Black filmmaker to win best director in the Academy Awards' nearly century-long history. While speaking before the eighth annual Macro Pre-Oscars party Thursday night in Los Angeles, he said he's trying to stay present as the ceremony approaches.

"I'm just trying to enjoy the days as they come, stay present in the moment," Coogler told The Associated Press. "When Sunday comes, man, I'm pull up and enjoy celebrating all the movies that's being celebrated here, including our own."

For Coogler, the Oscars also mark the final stop in a monthslong journey shared with the cast and creative team behind "Sinners."

Since early January, the group has traveled the awards circuit together, appearing at major stops including the Golden Globes, Actors Awards and NAACP Image Awards as the film built momentum ahead of the Oscars, where it's the leading nominee with 16.

Coogler said that experience helped turn the production into something closer to a family.

"We made a big ole family," he said. "Sunday kind of represents the last time that we all get to hang with each other in an official capacity as the 'Sinners' team."

After the ceremony, those gatherings will likely



Ryan Coogler arrives at MACRO's 8th Annual Pre-Oscars Party celebrating nominees of color Thursday, March 12, 2026, at Audrey Irma Pavilion in Los Angeles. (AP)

become less frequent.

"The next time we see each other, it won't be for this movie unless it's doing like a reunion or something," Coogler said. "I'm looking forward to hanging out with a lot of people that I love. We were able to do something very specific together."

The cast and creative team of "Sinners" were among those honored Thursday at the Macro party, which celebrates nominees of color across the film industry.

Hosted by Macro founder and CEO Charles D. King and Chief Brand Officer Stacey Walker King, the eighth annual gathering has become a sought-after event, drawing more than 700 attendees - which included Damson Idris, Coco Jones and Janelle James.

"I could not be more excited about 'Sinners' nominations," Stacey Walker King said. "I could not be more excited about the way that we're showing up on these carpets and in these areas."

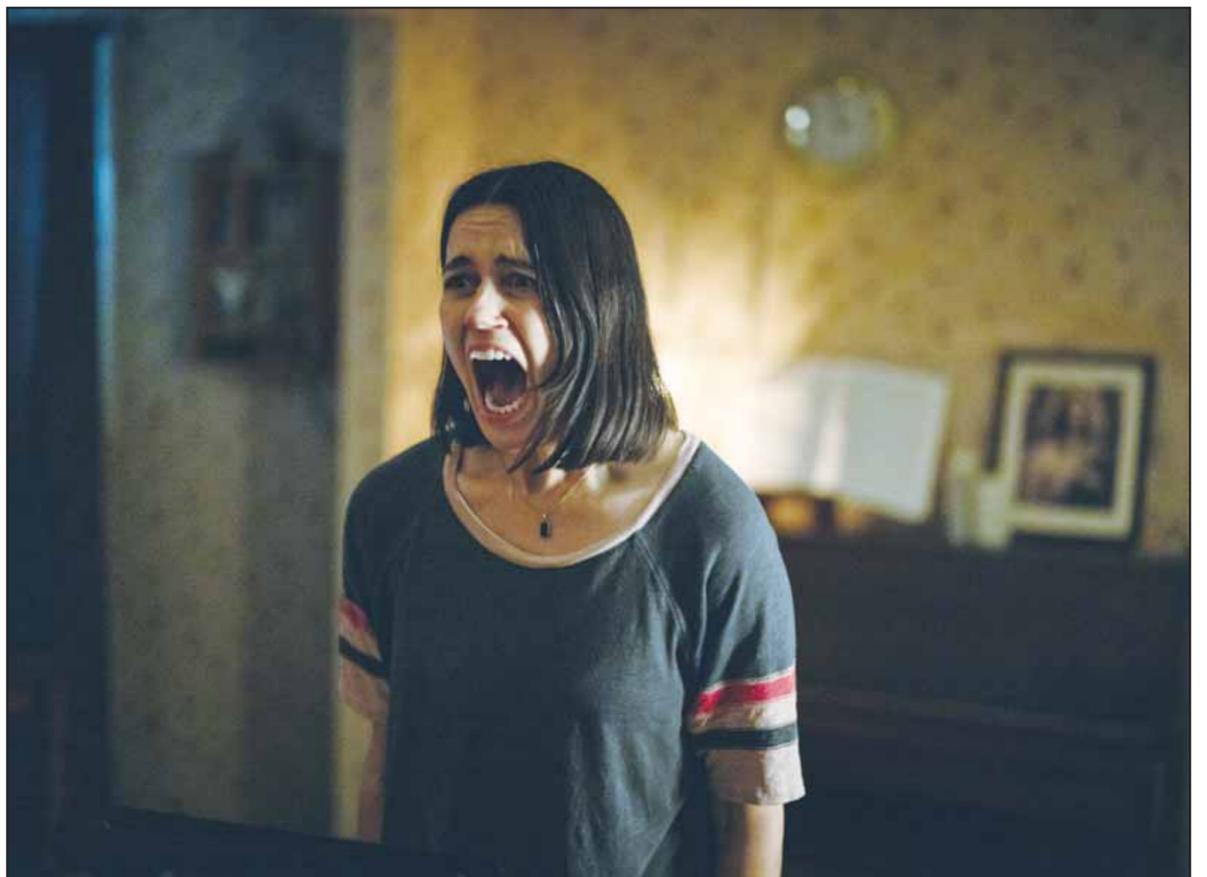
Charles D. King said Coogler's influence on the industry already represents a meaningful achievement.

"He's already winning," King said. "To be able to be this filmmaker who can inspire and entertain the world and then be acknowledged by their peers within our artistic industry is icing on the cake."

"Sinners," a supernatural drama set in the American South that blends historical storytelling, folklore and genre filmmaking, stars Michael B. Jordan in dual roles and continues the actor's long creative partnership with Coogler.

Previous Black filmmakers nominated for best director at the Oscars include John Singleton, Lee Daniels, Barry Jenkins, Jordan Peele and Spike Lee.

Film



This image released by A24 shows Nina Kiri in a scene from 'Undertone.' (AP)

Nina Kiri leads sparse, eerie horror thriller

In 'Undertone,' a podcast turns perilous

LOS ANGELES, March 14, (AP): Writer-director Ian Tuason's feature debut, the sonic-driven horror "Undertone," has, at least at the outset, an appealingly stripped-down quality.

The 30-something Evy Babic (Nina Kiri) lives with her dying, comatose mother (Michèle Duquet). The movie never leaves their small, two-story home. Upstairs, Evy's mother lies wordlessly in a bed. Downstairs, Evy, at 3 a.m. puts on headphones, sits in front of a microphone and calls up her paranormal podcast co-host Justin (Adam DiMarco's voice) to talk "all things creepy."

It's a testament to Tuason's evident filmmaking talent that, with these bare bones, "Undertone" swells into a gripping and unsettling experience. This is a movie that summons many of its scares with a sudden boost in audio levels, the thunderous tick of a clock or the scream of ... a tea kettle. It's even rated "R" not for bloodcurdling violence or satanic ghouls but, simply, "language."

It's these subtle qualities that make "Undertone" a spare but deftly dense film and Tuason a filmmaker to watch. It's the movie's disappointing second half, though, that breaks its quiet spell. After conjuring a tapestry of tension through narrative drips, as well as literal ones, Tuason throws in the whole kitchen sink, drowning out "Undertone" with a cacophony of genre clichés. Ancient Christian lore is invoked, as are children's lullabies, and the riveting nuance of "Undertone" slips away in

all the feedback.

"I want it to be over," Evy tells Justin. "Is that a bad thing to say?"

Evy's mother hasn't eaten in two days, and her emotional exhaustion is clear when she first connects with her London-based co-host. You might here be wondering if the movie digs into this guilt, but "Undertone" is better at leaving carefully placed clues than following through on them.

For the episode they begin taping, Justin tells Evy that an anonymous e-mailer has sent a mysterious message with 10 audio files. They begin listening to them one by one, while recording. In them, a married and pregnant couple, Jessa and Mike, are trying an experiment. Mike, who's doing the recording, says that Jessa talks in her sleep. In fact, it turns out she sings ("London Bridge Is Falling Down"), and it doesn't get better from there.

Our experience of this, and the eerie subsequent recordings, is entirely aural. While "Undertone" is far from the first horror film to grasp the power of sound design, it's cunning in its deployment of a found-footage tale that unspools through the ears.

This has to do with the recordings, themselves, but it's also due to the vulnerable place they put Evy. Some of the best moments in Tuason's film play on our anxiety for her, as she listens in the darkened night. As the unfolding story grows closer to her, we feel like someone, at any moment, is going to emerge from a shadow while Evy, una-

ware sits isolated by headphones. Call it noise-canceling horror.

One idea that "Undertone" plays is something Justin mentions: audio pareidolia, the term for when the brain imposes words or patterns out of random, disorganized sounds. As they investigate the recordings, Evy and Justin are often playing them backward. Their interpretations become ours. The movie, itself, is a jumble of auditory clues that may or may mean something.

I'd rather "Undertone" stayed on this track, but, as if fretful of being too minimalistic, Tuason piles on more layers. Evy finds out she's pregnant and isn't sure she wants to keep it. We can tell from all the Catholic accoutrements around the house, Evy's mother, if conscious, might have a strong opinion on this choice. The dark origins of the children's songs, too, relate to mothers and children.

But for a highly contemporary movie centered around podcasting, "Undertone" morphs into a quite old-fashioned thrill ride, full of Catholic idols and creaky doors and light bulbs that go in and out. Kiri is exceptional in carrying a film in which she's the only talking, present actor. But that a movie so threadbare manages to feel like too much is both the film's accomplishment and its failure.

"Undertone," an A24 release, opened in theaters Thursday. It's rated R by the Motion Picture Association for language. Running time: 94 minutes. Two and half stars out of four.

Variety

VALENCIA, Spain: British rock star Morrissey won't perform a concert in Valencia after festivities in the Spanish city kept him from getting a proper night's rest, the former frontman of The Smiths said Thursday.

A statement posted on Morrissey's website on the morning of the concert said that the "scheduled show in Valencia has been rendered impossible due to sleep deprivation."

Morrissey arrived to Valencia on Wednesday after a two-day drive from Milan, but he was disturbed during the night by the festival that included, the statement said, "loud techno singing (and) megaphone announcements"



Morrissey

that were audible from inside his hotel room.

The statement added in bold print that "The show is not canceled. Circumstances render the show impossible," making it unclear if it will be rescheduled or if ticket holders can request a refund. (AP)

COPENHAGEN, Denmark: René Redzepi, the founder and celebrity chef at the iconic Danish restaurant Noma that won three Michelin stars and other international accolades for its innovative "New Nordic" cuisine, has stepped down following allegations of abuse and assault at the Copenhagen landmark.

Redzepi has been dogged for years by reports of mistreatment of his staff as well as his yearslong use of unpaid interns to staff the pricey restaurant, which was ranked first on the World's 50 Best Restaurants List five times. But the criticism recently came to a head on social media, and an article in The New York Times detailed former employees' accounts of abuse just days ahead of the opening of a Noma pop-up in Los Angeles.

Sponsors have since pulled their funding for the

Southern California residency, which opened on Wednesday to a small gathering of protesters and where a meal will cost \$1,500. Redzepi announced his resignation on Instagram with a tearful video soon after. (AP)

WINDHOEK: The fifth edition of Namibia's Film Week opened in the capital city of Windhoek on Thursday, bringing together filmmakers, industry professionals and audiences for a four-day showcase of African cinema at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

According to organizers and local media reports, the festival will screen more than 150 films from 16 African countries, including 64 Namibian productions, alongside panel discussions, masterclasses and workshops.

The Film Week aims to promote Namibian and African storytelling while creating a platform for professional exchange, skills development and audience engagement. (Xinhua)

Fat emerges as an essential metabolic organ

Fat cells burn energy, paving way for new weight loss therapies

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



By Claudio Villanueva

University of California, Los Angeles

Over the past few years, a new class of medications has transformed the treatment of obesity. Drugs like Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro work primarily by reducing appetite, helping people eat less and feel full sooner. Their success has demonstrated something important: Body weight is biologically regulated, and targeting the right biological pathways can lead to meaningful weight loss that can help transform lives.

But appetite is only half of the equation. Your weight reflects a balance between the calories you consume through your diet and the energy you expend through movement, exercise and maintaining basic cellular function. While recent therapies have focused on controlling energy intake, scientists are increasingly turning their attention to the other side of the ledger: the tissues that burn energy.

At the center of this conversation is an organ most people misunderstand: fat. For decades, fat - also known as adipose tissue - was thought of as passive storage: a biological pantry for excess calories. Scientists now know this view is incomplete.

White adipose tissue, the most abundant type of fat in adults, does store energy in the form of triglycerides. But it also has several other functions.

For one, white fat is a powerful endocrine organ, releasing hormones like leptin that reduce appetite, as well as adiponectin, which regulates insulin and blood sugar levels. It

also cushions organs, insulates against heat loss and acts as a metabolic buffer, safely storing excess lipids that would otherwise accumulate in the liver or muscle.

When white adipose cells expand in a healthy, flexible way, they protect the body. When they become inflamed or dysfunctional, they contribute to insulin resistance, fatty liver disease and cardiovascular risk. Obesity arises from both the expansion of white adipose cells and an increase in their number.

In other words, fat is not inherently harmful. Its health impact depends on the size of adipose cells, and when they become too large, they are unable to function optimally. Increasing the number of new fat cells can sometimes improve metabolic function.

Moreover, there are additional types of fat, and they behave in different ways.

Unlike white fat, brown fat is specialized to burn energy. Brown adipose cells are packed with mitochondria - the tiny power plants inside cells - and contain a protein called UCP1 that allows them to convert chemical energy directly into heat. Instead of storing calories, brown fat dissipates them.

In infants, brown fat helps maintain body temperature. For years, scientists believed it largely disappeared in adulthood. But imaging studies in the late 2000s revealed that many adults retain metabolically active brown fat, particularly in the neck and upper chest.

Exposure to cold temperatures naturally triggers the brain to stimulate brown fat cells and generate heat. As energy use rises for this process, so does calorie-burning.

If activating brown fat increases energy expenditure, could it be harnessed to treat obesity?

The challenge is that human metabolism is tightly regulated. When energy expenditure increases, the body often

compensates by stimulating hunger. Studies in animals - and observations in humans - show that cold exposure not only activates brown fat but also increases appetite. The brain detects the higher energy demand and signals for greater food intake.

From an evolutionary perspective, this makes sense. For our human ancestors, cold environments meant survival required more fuel. A system that failed to replace calories burned to keep you warm would have been dangerous. This homeostatic defense of body weight is powerful. It is one reason why weight loss is difficult to sustain and why increasing energy expenditure alone may not be sufficient to lose weight.

But when coupled with GLP-1 drugs that suppress appetite, promoting energy expenditure could lead to therapies that are even more powerful at promoting weight loss.

Adding further complexity to fat's role in weight loss are beige fat cells. These cells arise within white fat depots under certain conditions - such as cold exposure or specific hormonal signals - and acquire some of the heat-producing properties of brown fat. This process, often called browning, reveals that adipose tissue is remarkably flexible.

Fat is not a static mass. It contains stem and progenitor cells capable of generating new adipocytes with distinct properties. That flexibility opens intriguing therapeutic possibilities: Instead of merely shrinking fat, could researchers reprogram it to become something else?

Researchers like me are exploring ways to safely enhance the heat-generating capacity of fat cells, potentially increasing energy expenditure without relying solely on environmental cold. Brown and beige fat are compelling targets because they are purpose-built for heat production, which is why my lab is focusing on harnessing them to treat metabolic disease.

But fat is not the only tissue in the body that consumes energy or can generate heat in the cold. Skeletal muscle accounts for a substantial portion of daily energy expenditure, particularly during activity. The liver continuously engages in metabolically expensive processes. Even subtle futile cycles - processes in which molecules are repeatedly built and broken down - consume energy and generate heat.

The future of metabolic therapeutics for weight loss may involve carefully increasing energy flux across multiple tissues. The challenge is doing so without triggering compensatory hunger or unintended side effects. Any intervention that dramatically raises metabolic demand risks being interpreted by the brain as a threat to survival.

The success of GLP-1-based medications has demonstrated that targeting appetite pathways can overcome some of the body's resistance to weight loss. The next generation of therapies may build on that foundation.

One possibility is combining medications that modulate appetite with interventions that enhance energy expenditure. By influencing both sides of the energy balance equation - intake and output - it might be possible to achieve more durable metabolic improvements.

Equally important is shifting the public narrative. Fat is not merely an enemy to eliminate. It is a dynamic, multi-functional organ that protects, communicates, adapts and, under the right conditions, burns energy.

Understanding that complexity moves society beyond simplistic views of weight regulation. It also points toward a future in which therapies are not just about eating less, but about strategically harnessing the body's own metabolic machinery.

The era of appetite control has begun. I believe the era of precision energy expenditure will be next. (AP)

NASA spacecraft re-enters Earth early

NASA clears moon rocket for April launch

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., March 14, (Agencies): NASA cleared its moon rocket on Thursday for an April launch with four astronauts after completing the latest round of repairs.

The 322-foot (98-meter) rocket will roll out of the hangar and back to the pad next week at Florida's Kennedy Space Center, leading to a launch attempt as early as April 1. It will mark humanity's first trip to the moon in more than 50 years.

The Artemis II crew should have blasted off on a lunar flyaround earlier this year, but fuel leaks and other problems with the Space Launch System rocket interfered.

Although NASA managed to plug the hydrogen fuel leaks at the pad in February, a helium-flow issue forced the space agency to return the rocket to the Vehicle Assembly Building for repairs, bumping the mission to April.

The space agency has only six days at the beginning of April to launch before standing down until April 30 into early May.

"It's a test flight and it is not without risk, but our team and our hardware are ready," NASA's Lori Glaze told reporters at the end of the two-day flight readiness review.

Glaze and other NASA officials declined to provide the risk probabilities for the upcoming mission.

History has shown that a new rocket has essentially a 50% chance of success, said John Honeycutt, chair of the mission management team.

There's so much gap since the only other SLS flight - more than three years ago without anyone on board - that it's difficult to understand any risk assessment numbers, Honeycutt said.

"It's not the first flight," Glaze said. "But we're also not in a regular cadence. So we definitely have significantly more risk than a flight system that's flying all the time."

Late last month NASA's new administrator, Jared Isaacman, announced a major overhaul of the Artemis program to speed things up and, by doing so, reduce risk.

Dissatisfied with the slow pace and lengthy gaps between lunar missions, he added an extra practice flight in orbit around Earth for next year. That is now the new Artemis III, with the



NASA's Artemis II SLS (Space Launch System) moon rocket with the Orion spacecraft slowly rolls back towards the Vehicle Assembly Building at the Kennedy Space Center, Feb. 25, 2026, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP)

moon landing by two astronauts shifted to Artemis IV. Isaacman is targeting one and maybe even two lunar landings in 2028.

NASA's Office of Inspector General warned in an audit this week that the space agency needs to come up with a rescue plan for its lunar crews. Landing near the moon's south pole will be riskier than it was for the Apollo astronauts closer to the equator given the rough polar terrain, according to the report.

The report cited the lunar landers as the top contributor for potential loss of crew during the first few Artemis moon landings. It listed the space agency's loss-of-crew threshold at 1-in-40 for lunar operations and 1-in-30 for Artemis missions overall.

Contracted by NASA to provide the moon landers for astronauts, Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin have accelerated work in order to meet the new 2028 target date. The inspector general's office said many technical challenges remain including refueling their landers in orbit around Earth before flying to the moon.

NASA sent 24 astronauts to the moon during Apollo, 12 of whom landed on it. All but one of the moonshots - Apollo 13 - achieved their prime objectives. The program ended

with Apollo 17 in 1972.

In a separate development, a NASA spacecraft re-entered Earth's atmosphere early Wednesday, years earlier than originally predicted, according to the U.S. space agency.

The spacecraft, Van Allen Probe A, re-entered the atmosphere at 6:37 a.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, nearly 14 years after its launch in August 2012, according to NASA.

The probe, together with its twin Van Allen Probe B, was designed to study the Van Allen radiation belts -- rings of charged particles trapped by Earth's magnetic field that shield the planet from harmful cosmic radiation and solar storms.

The U.S. Space Force confirmed that Van Allen Probe A re-entered the atmosphere over the eastern Pacific Ocean region, at approximately 2 degrees south latitude and 255.3 degrees east longitude.

NASA said most of the spacecraft was expected to burn up as it traveled through the atmosphere, though some components may have survived.

The Van Allen Probes operated from 2012 to 2019 and collected unprecedented data on Earth's radiation belts. During the mission, scientists discovered that a transient third radiation belt can form during periods of intense solar activity.

Shot shows one of worst seasons in decade

US flu vaccines didn't work that well against new strain: officials

NEW YORK, March 14, (AP): As the US flu season winds down, health officials say the flu vaccine didn't work very well, with one of its worst effectiveness rates in more than a decade.

A new strain that dominated the early winter was not well matched to the vaccine, leading to an intense early onslaught of flu.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday posted data that showed a continued decline in doctor's office and hospital visits for flu symptoms through last week. The number of states reporting high flu activity dropped to 16, many of them in a belt stretching from Colorado to Virginia.

"The winter respiratory virus season is slowly coming to a close, and we're all very grateful for that," said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University vaccine expert.

This season's vaccines were around 25% to 30% effective in preventing adults from getting sick enough from the flu that they had to go to a doctor's office, clinic or hospital, according to a CDC report this week. Children who were vaccinated were about 40% less likely to get treatment at a doctor's office or hospital.

Officials generally are pleased if a flu vaccine is 40% to 60% effective. Judging from past CDC research, this season saw one of the lowest effectiveness rates in the last two decades.

Flu infections surged in late December and were especially intense in some parts of the country. New York City health officials called it the most intense season in 20 years.

Relatively low flu vaccination rates did not help, but experts also blamed the new flu strain that was causing most infections.

The new strain belonged to a category of flu virus, called A H3N2. This new version, subclade K, seemed to spread more easily - though it did not



A pharmacist gives a patient a flu shot in Miami on Sept. 9, 2025. (AP)

necessarily cause more severe illness. The vaccine available for this season was built to address a different version of H3N2, and the new strain's explosion is a likely explanation for why the vaccine was less effective, Schaffner said.

CDC scientists estimate there have been at least 27 million illnesses, 350,000 hospitalizations and 22,000 deaths from flu so far this season. At the same point last year, the estimates were at least 40 million illnesses, 520,000 hospitalizations, but about the same number of deaths.

At least 101 children have died so far this season. For those whose vaccination status is known, about 85% were not fully vaccinated against flu.

The flu vaccine may not protect everyone from getting sick, but it can prevent people from becoming severely ill and dying. That's why getting a flu shot remains worthwhile, Schaffner said.

CDC data suggests adult vaccination rates are up slightly this season, to 46.5%, following an unusually bad

season last year that set a record for the most child deaths this century.

An estimated 48% of U.S. kids were vaccinated against flu around the end of last month. That's about the same as last year, but down from the 52% vaccinated at this point in 2024, according to CDC data.

Starting in 2010, the government recommended annual flu vaccinations for Americans 6 months and older. In January, however, the Trump administration stopped broadly recommending flu shots for all children, saying instead that it's up to parents and family doctors to decide.

Meanwhile, work is already underway for next winter's flu season. Last month, the World Health Organization announced its recommendations for which virus strains to address in the vaccines for the 2026-27 northern hemisphere flu season. The vaccines should be built to handle subclade K, the organization said. This week, a U.S. Food and Drug Administration advisory committee endorsed the WHO recommendations.

Telescopes, underground labs enter new phase

China advances major science facilities

BEIJING, March 14, (Xinhua): During the ongoing "two sessions," the annual meetings of China's top legislature and top political advisory body, several scientists have shared exciting updates about the country's major science and technology infrastructure projects.

These facilities, which include massive telescopes and deep underground laboratories, are entering a new phase of development during the country's 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030).

China has highlighted the importance of these facilities in the draft outline of its new five-year plan, calling for their continued construction and more efficient use.

Wang Chi, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) and an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, who also serves as the director of the National Space Science Center, noted a significant shift in how these projects are being planned, in an interview with China Science Daily.

"The approach to laying out our major science infrastructure has entered a new stage," he said, explaining that the focus has moved from being primarily for basic research to serving both basic and applied needs. The strategy is also shifting from individual projects to collaborative clusters, with better management throughout their entire lifecycles.

Good news came from several prominent projects. Wang, who also leads the Chinese Meridian Project-Phase II, noted that this project successfully passed national acceptance inspection in March 2025, marking the establishment of the world's most comprehensive ground-based regional monitoring network for space weather.

Looking ahead, plans are in place to use this network as



An aerial drone photo taken on Jan. 16, 2026 shows China's Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope (FAST) under maintenance in southwest China's Guizhou Province. (Xinhua)

a core for broad international collaboration, aiming to create a comprehensive monitoring chain around the globe. During the 15th Five-Year Plan period, the goal is to deepen the integration of the project's phases, improve its operational efficiency, and expand its applications to provide more accurate space weather warnings for spacecraft, Wang said.

Jiang Peng, an NPC deputy and the chief engineer of the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope (FAST), also shared updates about this world-famous "China Sky Eye." Since becoming fully operational in 2020, the telescope has consistently produced important scientific findings. Most recently, in January, it helped an international research team find key evidence about the origin of mysterious fast radio bursts.

Jiang revealed that his team is planning a major upgrade called the "Core Array." This would involve building dozens of antennas, each 40 meters in diameter, to work together with the main telescope. This will dramatically improve its resolution, like turning a "sketch pencil" into a high-definition "digital camera." The project is in its final evaluation stage, with key technologies already developed and tested.

Wang Yifang, an NPC deputy and the project manager for the Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory, revealed a major achievement from his project. In November 2025, the facility produced its first physical results, which measured two key parameters of neutrino oscillation with better precision. The achievement surpassed the progress made by similar international experiments over the past decade. Over the next three to four years, the experiment is expected to determine the mass order of neutrinos, a major unanswered question in physics.

Looking toward the future, Wang Chi believes that the fields of space science will enter a critical period of strategic transformation in its major scientific and technological infrastructure. He suggested that future space science facilities should be closely aligned with major national projects, like the crewed lunar missions and the International Lunar Research Station. He also recommended setting up special programs to support forward-looking research on concepts that could define the future of science, such as space particle manipulation and next-generation space observatories.

For particle physics, Wang Yifang emphasized that having built the necessary infrastructure, the priority must now be the pursuit of excellence.

Jiang echoed this sentiment, saying that his team is continuously working on key technologies, ensuring they are domestically produced and also exploring their applications for national strategic needs.

Livestock ban

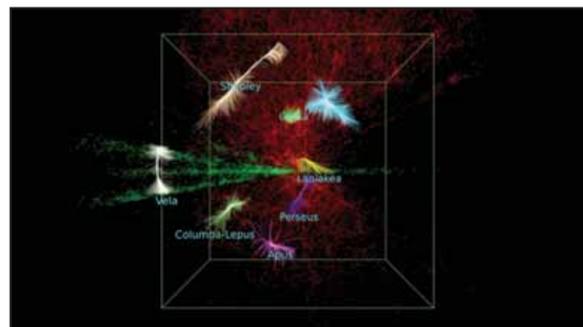
Namibia moves to prevent FMD

WINDHOEK, March 14, (Xinhua): The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform in Namibia has announced immediate restrictions on the importation and in-transit movement of cloven-hoofed animals and related products from several zones in neighboring Botswana following confirmed outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

In a veterinary public notification issued by the Directorate of Veterinary Services on Wednesday, authorities said the measure is aimed at preventing the introduction of the highly contagious livestock disease into Namibia.

The restriction affects the movement of cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, sheep and goats, as well as their products, including those intended for personal or household consumption, originating from several affected zones in Botswana, it said.

According to the ministry, the decision follows reports of foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks in Botswana that were communicated through the World Organization for Animal Health's information system and an updated report issued by Botswana's veterinary authorities on March 4. However, the movement of cloven-hoofed animals and related products from certain designated zones in Botswana will still be permitted, provided importers obtain a veterinary import permit from Namibian authorities, the ministry added.



An illustrated map provided by South Africa's University of Cape Town shows the Vela Supercluster on the left. (Xinhua)

Galaxy supercluster hidden behind Milky Way unveiled

CAPE TOWN, March 14, (Xinhua): Astronomers have revealed the true extent of a vast galaxy supercluster hidden behind the Milky Way, showing that the Vela Supercluster is far larger and more massive than previously thought.

The discovery was released Thursday by scientists at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and international collaborators, shedding new light on one of the largest structures in the nearby universe and helping explain large-scale motions of galaxies across hundreds of millions of light-years.

Astronomers said in a statement that the enormous concentration of galaxies had long remained largely hidden behind dense clouds of dust and billions of stars in the Milky Way's disk, in a region known as the "Zone of Avoidance."

The international research team developed a hybrid technique combining

multiple types of galaxy measurements. The method used galaxy redshifts, which show how fast galaxies are moving away as the universe expands, together with galaxy distance and motion measurements that reveal how gravity influences their movement through space.

By combining more than 65,000 galaxy distance measurements from the CosmicFlows catalogue with over 8,000 newly observed galaxy redshifts, researchers reconstructed the distribution of matter hidden behind the Milky Way.

Observations from the Southern African Large Telescope and the MeerKAT radio telescope have allowed researchers to detect galaxies deep inside the most obscured regions of the sky. MeerKAT's radio observations detected hydrogen gas at wavelengths that passed through dust, revealing galaxies that optical telescopes could not easily see.

SPORTS

Rockets outlast Pelicans to move into 3rd in West

HOUSTON, March 14, (AP): Kevin Durant hit a go-ahead 18-footer with 7.6 seconds left and the Houston Rockets outlasted the New Orleans Pelicans 107-105 to move into third place in the crowded Western Conference.

Durant scored 32 points two nights after matching his season low with 11 in a blowout loss at Denver. Against the Pelicans, he was 13 of 24 from the field and had six rebounds and five assists.

Amen Thompson added 23 points for Houston in the opener of five-game homestand. Reed Sheppard scored 18 points, and Jabari Smith Jr. had 16.

Dejounte Murray led New Orleans with 35 points, but stepped out of bounds with the Pelicans up a point with 13 seconds remaining. After Durant put the Rockets ahead, Zion Williamson threw the ball out of bounds, and Durant hit two free throws to put it away.

Pistons 126, Grizzlies 110

In Detroit, Jalen Duren had 30 points and 13 rebounds and Cade Cunningham added 17 points and 15 assists as the Detroit Pistons handed the Memphis Grizzlies their seventh straight loss.

The Pistons have won their last three games by an average of 25.3 points after a season-worst four-game losing streak.

Marcus Sasser had 16 points for the Pistons, which had seven players in double figures.

Javon Small led the Grizzlies with 23 points while Ty Jerome had 21. Taj Gibson made his season debut for the Grizzlies after signing with them in late February. The 40-year-old played nearly 12 minutes with three points and three rebounds.

Detroit led 98-84 at the end of



Minnesota Timberwolves guard Anthony Edwards (5) shoots while defended by Golden State Warriors forward Gui Santos (15) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

three quarters, thanks to 26 points from Duren, and quickly moved the advantage to 22 before coach J.B. Bickerstaff emptied the bench.

The Grizzlies started the game with the newest defensive strategy - blitzing and trapping Cunningham to keep him from shooting and force him into risky passes. It worked in the first half, when he only scored seven points and had nine turnovers and one assist.

Clippers 119, Bulls 108

In Los Angeles, Kawhi Leonard scored 28 points, Bennedict Mathurin had 26 and the Los Angeles Clippers extended their winning streak to four games with a victory over the Chicago Bulls.

Jordan Miller added 14 points to help the eighth-place Clippers win for the seventh time in eight games to solidify their hold on a spot in the Western Conference play-in tournament. After starting the season 6-21, Los Angeles is a season-best two games over .500 at 34-32.

Leonard scored at least 20 points for the 44th consecutive game to tie Bob McAdoo's franchise record set for the Buffalo Braves in 1974-75.

The Clippers were without trade-deadline acquisition Daruis Garland, who was listed with left toe injury management on the front end of a back-to-back.

Josh Giddey had his 11th triple-double of the season for the Bulls with 20 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists. Tre Jones scored 21 points and Matas Buzelis added 18 as the Bulls went 2-3 on a West Coast trip.

Timberwolves 127, Warriors 117
In San Francisco, Anthony Edwards scored 42 points and the Minnesota Timberwolves held off the injury-plagued Golden State Warriors.

Edwards shot 13 for 22, made all 12 of his free throws and also had eight rebounds and five assists, while Rudy Gobert contributed 18 points and nine rebounds in what coach Chris Finch considered a must-win game. The Wolves snapped a three-game skid - all of those double-digit defeats, including 153-128 at the Clippers on Wednesday - following a five-game winning streak.

Gui Santos' 3-pointer followed by a dunk by Malevy Leons cut Minnesota's lead to 109-102 with 8:37 left but Golden State couldn't do much more.

Brandin Podziemski scored 25 points for the Warriors, who scratched Draymond Green less than an hour before tipoff because of a lower back injury. Kristaps Porzingis moved into the starting lineup in his place as the Warriors used their 33rd different starting five, and it was Porzingis' first start since being acquired by Golden State at the trade

deadline from Atlanta. He finished with 20 points.
After Porzingis' step-back jumper with 9:57 left in the second quarter, Minnesota responded with a 17-4 run.
Golden State lost big man Al Horford for the night in the first quarter because of right calf tightness, then Seth Curry exited in the second half with tightness in his left inner thigh.

Pistons prolong Grizzlies losing streak



Los Angeles Clippers guard Jordan Miller, right, drives against Chicago Bulls forward Matas Buzelis, left, during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

Trail Blazers 124, Jazz 114
In Portland, Jrue Holiday and Scoot Henderson each scored 25 points, Donovan Clingan had 21 points and 15 rebounds and the Portland Trail Blazers beat the Utah Jazz.

With Golden State's loss to Minnesota, the Trail Blazers moved within a half-game of the Warriors for the ninth seed in the Western Conference.

Brice Sensabaugh led Utah with 31 points.
After Utah jumped out to a 33-15 lead, the Trail Blazers found their footing and went on a 27-5 run to take control.

Cavaliers 138, Mavericks 105

In Dallas, Evan Mobley matched his season high with 29 points, Donovan Mitchell had 24 and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Dallas Mavericks in the opener of a home-and-home series.

Mobley had 16 points in the first quarter and was already up to 23 by halftime, the second-highest scoring half of his career. He went 12 for 15 from the field and grabbed seven rebounds while playing just 23 minutes.

James Harden finished with 17 points, seven rebounds and seven assists for the Cavaliers, who shot 61.5% from the field and were 18 for 38 (47%) from 3-point range.
Cooper Flagg scored 25 points for the Mavericks, who were coming off a victory in Memphis that snapped an eight-game losing streak. Naji Marshall had 17 points.

Raptors 122, Suns 115

In Toronto, Brandon Ingram scored 36 points, RJ Barrett added 22 and the Toronto Raptors rallied to beat Phoenix, snapping the Suns' winning streak at four.

Jalen Green scored 34 points for Phoenix, matching his career high with eight 3-pointers, and Devin Booker added 31 points, but the Suns couldn't hold on after leading by 10 in the fourth quarter.

Immanuel Quickley scored 17 points for Toronto. Scottie Barnes had 14 and Ja'Kobe Walter 12 as the Raptors won for the first time in three games.

Grayson Allen scored 15 points for the Suns.

Knicks 101, Pacers 92

In Indianapolis, Jalen Brunson

finished with 29 points and nine assists, OG Anunoby added 25 points and eight rebounds, and the New York Knicks beat the Indiana Pacers.

Mitchell Robinson had a career-high 22 rebounds to go with 12 points as last year's Eastern Conference runner-up won its second straight and its sixth game in nine contests. The Knicks are still fighting to earn a top-four seed and home-court advantage in the first round of the playoffs.

Jarace Walker scored 18 points and grabbed nine rebounds to lead the Pacers. Aaron Nesmith had 12 points as injury-riddled Indiana lost its 12th straight. Ivica Zubac added 11 points and eight rebounds in his second game with Indiana since being acquired in a February trade.

Pacers coach Rick Carlisle insisted before the game that his short-handed defending Eastern Conference champions were still playing hard despite having the league's worst record and already being eliminated from the playoffs.

Injury jeopardizes Sands WC hopes

Ruiz tears ACL and to miss World Cup

MEXICO CITY, March 14, (AP): In the span of three days, Mexico has lost two players for the World Cup.

Midfielder Marcel Ruiz tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee, his club Toluca announced.

The 25-year-old Ruiz injured the joint on Wednesday in a CONCACAF Champions Cup match against San Diego of the MLS.

Toluca said in a statement that in addition to the ligament rupture, Ruiz also suffered a meniscus tear in the same joint and will undergo surgery.

"Everyone at this club regrets what happened and we stand in solidarity with him, wishing him a speedy recovery," the team said.

Mexico plays the World Cup opener on June 11 against South Africa.

Ruiz was key in helping Toluca win their second consecutive championship last December.

Ruiz received his first call-up to the senior national team in 2023, and has been one of the most consistent players since Javier Aguirre took over as manager in August 2024. The midfielder has 17 matches with the national team and was expected to go to his first World Cup.

His absence adds to Club América goalkeeper Luis Malagón, who was diagnosed on Wednesday with a ruptured Achilles tendon in his left leg.

Mexico has another half-dozen players sidelined, although the most serious case is that of right back Rodrigo Huescas, who tore a knee ligament last November.



U.S. international James Sands' World Cup hopes are in jeopardy after a left ankle injury ruled him out of the rest of the Bundesliga season.

Sands was scheduled to have ankle surgery on Friday in Munich, his St. Pauli club said.

St. Pauli gave no timeframe for when the 25-year-old midfielder might return.

Sands was injured after a foul on Sunday against Eintracht Frankfurt. The full extent of the injury wasn't revealed until days later after scans.

Sands has 14 appearances for the United States since 2021.

The World Cup co-hosted by the U.S., Mexico and Canada is in three months.

Deal needed by Monday to avoid season disruption: WNBA's Cathy

NEW YORK, March 14, (AP): WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert said Friday night that progress is being made toward a new collective bargaining agreement with the players' union and there's an urgency to get a deal done by Monday to avoid disruptions to the upcoming season.

"I've never been a betting woman in my life and I'm not going to start now. But we have to get a deal done by Monday," Engelbert said during a break in in-person negotiations. "We have to get it done without disrupting some part of the fact that we've got to run this two team expansion (draft). We have to get expansion going. We got to get free agency going. We gotta get the college draft."

The union concurred that there has been movement towards a new CBA and there seems to be a sense of urgency on both sides since the start of in-person meetings. "We have been there committed round the clock and speaking very passionately and factually," players' union executive director Terri Carmichael Jackson said. "As long as movement keeps us going in a forward direction, then I think we're good."

The two sides have spent approxi-

mately 50 hours discussing a new CBA since first getting together in person on Tuesday - the day the league had originally said there would need to be at least a handshake agreement for the season to start on time.

"It's day four and there's been movement, I think the league and particularly the commissioner and her team have heard that transformational remains the goal," Jackson said. "Salaries would be tied to revenue in a meaningful way is the players' top priority or one of their top priorities."

There's still a lot of work to get done. Revenue sharing has been the biggest difference for the two sides.

"We're trying to put a package together, salaries and benefits and all the other things the players want and deserve, and I want for them to," Engelbert said. "I said, I want all these things for the players. ... make it a package that meets our objectives of a transformational deal."

While league proposals have always been using net revenue - revenue after expenses - and union ones have talked about gross revenue - revenue before expenses - Jackson feels they have been on similar pages.

'In spite of increasing threats, we continue to stand firm in our demand'

WADA to weigh barring Trump, US officials from LA Oly and possibly World Cup over unpaid dues

WASHINGTON, March 14, (AP):The World Anti-Doping Agency is considering rewriting its rules to try barring President Donald Trump and all U.S. government officials from attending the LA Olympics in 2028 in a move that could also have implications for the World Cup being hosted by the U.S. this summer.

The proposal, on the agenda for next Tuesday's meeting of the global drug-fighting watchdog's executive committee, is the latest maneuver to come out of a years long refusal of the U.S. government to pay its annual dues to WADA. The refusal is part of the American government's unanimous, bipartisan protest of the agency's handling of a case involving Chinese swimmers and other issues.

The Associated Press learned of the agenda item through correspondence it obtained between WADA and European officials involved in the agency's decision-making. Two others with knowledge of the agenda confirmed the existence of the rules proposal to AP; they were not authorized to speak publicly about the agenda, which has not been released publicly.

WADA spokesman James Fitzgerald said "there is nothing new here," noting that discussions related to the issue of what to do about governments withholding funding have been ongoing since 2020 and aren't directly related to the U.S.

The proposal was, in fact, first brought up in 2024, when U.S. authorities successfully lobbied for its rejection.



In this file photo, President of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Witold Banka speaks during a press briefing for the upcoming 2025 WADA World Conference on Doping in Sports, in Seoul, South Korea. (AP)

The U.S. has since lost its seat on the executive committee.

"In spite of WADA's increasing threats, we continue to stand firm in our demand for accountability and transparency from WADA to ensure fair competition in sport," said Sara Carter, the director of the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

The rule, if passed, would figure to be mostly symbolic, given the limits an international sports federation could have on the president of a country attending an event inside his own

borders.

"I have never heard of a \$50-million-budget Swiss foundation being able to enforce a rule to, for example, prevent the United States president from going anywhere," said Carter's predecessor at ONDCP, Rahul Gupta, who was on the WADA executive committee two years ago and led the movement to reject the proposal. "And the next question you have to ask is: How are you going to enforce it? Are they going to post a red notice from Interpol? It's ludicrous. It's clear they have not thought this through."

Six Georgian rugby players sanctioned under anti-doping rules

LONDON, March 14, (AP): Six players in Georgia's rugby team and one member of the support staff have been charged and sanctioned for what World Rugby described Friday as an "orchestrated scheme involving recreational drugs" and the swapping of drug-test samples.

In a case dating back to before the former Soviet republic's team played at the 2023 men's Rugby World Cup, World Rugby and the World Anti-Doping Agency described a scheme of "sample substitution" with players' urine. The investigation, termed Operation Obsidian, could yet spread to other sports.

"What has been happening in Georgian rugby is outrageous and will send shockwaves through Georgian sport and government, as well as the global game of rugby," WADA President Witold Banka said.

WADA alleged a manager at Georgia's national anti-doping agency was giving advance notice of

drug tests to a member of the team's "entourage," who then warned players and staff in a group chat. WADA added that members of the Georgian agency's staff falsified the dates samples were taken, used "false documentation" to justify not testing a player and didn't watch players as they provided urine samples.

WADA said it has now "lost confidence" in the Georgian agency's testing and has asked the country's government to intervene.

Neither WADA nor World Rugby immediately named any of the players, how they were sanctioned or specified which drugs were involved. DNA analysis was used to detect the switched samples.

World Rugby told The Associated Press it intends to release names and other information at a later date once any potential appeals are resolved.

Georgia will play in Pool B with South Africa,

Italy and Romania at next year's Rugby World Cup. WADA said it has already gathered samples of Georgian athletes from other sports from storage for testing, to see if any of those were substituted too.

"This is not the end of the story as further investigation is now going on deeper into Georgian sport," Banka said.

Swapping contaminated samples for clean urine has a long history across many sports and was at the heart of the Russian scheme which affected the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

WADA said its investigation into alleged misconduct in Georgia used tactics from an earlier case, Operation Arrow. In 2022 it led to an Olympic gold medal being stripped from weightlifter Nijat Rahimov of Kazakhstan, who was banned for eight years, after he was found to have switched urine samples four times in the run-up to the 2016 Games.

'The pitch helpful for fast bowlers'

Sadaqat leads Pakistan to series-levelling win against Bangladesh

DHAKA, Bangladesh, March 14, (AP): Novice allrounder Maaz Sadaqat led Pakistan to a series-levelling 128-run win against Bangladesh in a rain-affected second one-day international.

The 20-year-old Sadaqat, playing his second ODI, hit a 46-ball 75 and grabbed 3-23 with his left-arm spin to be an easy pick for player of the match. After Sadaqat, Pakistan lost its last seven wickets for 43 runs and was bowled out for 274 in 47.3 overs. Lightning and a hailstorm delayed play for well over two hours and Bangladesh's target was revised to 243 runs in 32 overs. But Bangladesh was all out for 114.

Bangladesh won the first ODI by eight wickets after a new-look Pakistan with four debutants was also bowled out for 114.

"The last game didn't go our way (so) the simple message was to go and play your natural game," Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi said. "The pitch was helpful for fast bowlers, that's why we played four of them ... we lost wickets in the middle overs and we need to improve that."

Bangladesh was 27-3 and Shah Afridi had two wickets when the long delay

started. On resumption, Sadaqat trapped top-scorer Litton Das (41) lbw in his second over; Afif Hossain was brilliantly snapped up low by Salman Ali Agha at midwicket and Rishad Hossain was clean bowled by a superb arm ball.

Fast bowler Haris Rauf, the only change by Pakistan from the first game, then cleaned up the tail with 3-26 and Bangladesh was dismissed in 23.3 overs.

After failing to make an impact as an opener in the first ODI, left-handed batter Sadaqat dominated all three Bangladesh pacers and even took on Nahid Rana by smashing the fast bowler over his head for a straight six in his first over.

Sadaqat launched five sixes and six fours and provided a strong start of 103 runs with Sahibzada Farhan (31) in 13 overs before he bottom-edged a lap shot against captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz and lobbed an easy catch to Litton behind the wickets.

Shamyl Hussain made another disappointing 6 off 22 balls and Farhan sliced a catch to third before the experienced pair of Agha (64) and Mohammad Rizwan (44) partnered for a solid 109 runs.

Pakistan's slide started with an unusual run out of Agha in the 39th over that left the batter fuming. Video showed Agha throwing his helmet and gloves close to the boundary line as he walked back to the dressing room.

Agha, standing out of his crease at the non-striker's end, tried to pick up the ball when Rizwan drove back to Mehidy. The bowler got tangled with Agha after the ball struck his foot. Mehidy picked up the ball and hit the stumps at the non-striker's end with Agha well out of his crease. Mehidy appealed for the run out and the TV umpire gave it.

"He was away from the wicket and I was just looking for the ball," Mehidy said. "If you miss, he would go for the run, so I was just thinking like that."

Agha's dismissal at 231-4 sparked Pakistan's collapse at the hands of Rishad (3-56) and Mehidy, whose 10-over spell conceded 2-34.

"We didn't execute well in the first 10 overs, which we did the last time," Mehidy said. "It's a very good wicket to bat on but our top-order batters didn't get many runs. We have to improve our batting and need to take more responsibility."

'Complete absurdity'

Usyk hits out at softening stance toward Russians, plans Fury fight

MANCHESTER, England, March 14, (AP): The world of sport appears to be softening the hardline stance it took when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

Russian athletes are back competing under their own flag at the Paralympics. FIFA president Gianni Infantino said the international ban on Russian soccer teams "has not achieved anything." And his counterpart at the International Olympic Committee, Kirsty Coventry, insists all athletes should be allowed to "compete freely."

Oleksandr Usyk remains as resolute as ever.

"My opinion has not changed - this should not be happening," the Ukrainian heavyweight world boxing champion told The Associated Press. "People who support the killing of others, the bombing of civilian cities, hospitals, schools, and everything else should not have the right to take part in the Olympic Games."

Usyk has been a defiant symbol of his country's strength during the conflict, establishing himself as the most dominant heavyweight of his era. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest boxers in history as a unified champion at two weights.

He proudly wraps himself in his country's flag after each win - a show of solidarity toward his compatriots fighting on the home front.

No surprise, then, that he has strong views on Russia's readmission to the world of elite sport.

The Russian national anthem has rung out at gold medal ceremonies at the Paralympics in Milan Cortina for the first time in more than a decade.

Russian athletes have previously been allowed to compete as individual neutral athletes during the ban. But a speech by Coventry, the new IOC president, during the Winter Olympics last month was widely interpreted as paving the way to Russia taking part in the Los Angeles Summer Games in 2028.

She said athletes should not be held back "by the politics or divisions of their governments."

Her comments appear to be the direction of travel in the world of sport.

In an interview with Sky News last month

Infantino said world soccer's governing body FIFA should "definitely" look at lifting its ban on Russia.

The 39-year-old Usyk says sport should continue to take a stand.

"The Olympic Games were created as games of peace," he said. "But now someone who kills on another person's orders and launches missiles at another country is allowed to take part in sport - that is complete absurdity."

"If somebody is even following the orders of his commander-in-chief to go and fight, then they cannot also go to sports competitions and represent their country there. Let them continue being a soldier. Because in the evening they are killing, and in the morning they compete as athletes. That simply doesn't add up."

The undefeated Usyk returns to the ring against kickboxer Rico Verhoeven in Egypt on May 23.

Further down the line he wants a trilogy fight with Tyson Fury - who recently announced his comeback from retirement - having already beaten the British boxer twice.

"In my head, Tyson Fury, it's the last dance," he said.

Both fights with Fury were in Saudi Arabia, which has established itself as a stage for elite sport, such as F1, tennis and the soccer World Cup in 2034.

The Iran war, however, has caused disruption in the Middle East.

Iran has made retaliatory strikes in the region and there is uncertainty over whether a soccer match between Argentina and Spain in Qatar later this month can go ahead amid the widening crisis.

An ATP Challenger Tour tennis event in the United Arab Emirates was canceled after players fled the court when a nearby oil terminal was reportedly hit by a drone attack.

"Given the situation currently unfolding in the world, my task is simply to be ready for what I am preparing for," said Usyk, regarding fighting again in Saudi Arabia. "Then the organizers will decide where it can be held - where they can stage this show so that it is safe for all participants and spectators."

Villarreal late show breaks Alaves hearts in exciting draw



Torino's Giovanni Simeone scores during the Serie A soccer match between Torino Fc and Parma in Turin, Italy (AP)

Gladbach boosts hopes of avoiding relegation

VITORIA-GASTEIZ, Spain, March 14, (AP): Villarreal equalized 1-1 deep in stoppage time and broke the hearts of relegation-threatened Alaves in La Liga.

The home side seemed destined for a first win in six games and a debut three points for coach Quique Sanchez Flores, who was taking charge at home for the first time since replacing Eduardo Coudet nine days ago.

Alaves had gone ahead in the 40th minute courtesy of an own goal from center back Rafa Marin.

Toni Martinez's clever backheel from the byline smacked off Marin's head just four meters from goal and flew past his own goalkeeper.

However, a late equalizer was always a worry for a side that has conceded as many league goals in the last quarter of an hour as they have in the first half of their matches this season.

Sure enough, Nicolas Pépé did the damage with almost the last kick of the game in the seventh minute of added time when he finished off a counterattack by bending a fine shot into the far corner.

Villarreal moved above Atletico Madrid into third place in the table, a point ahead of the capital club.

Alaves remained in 16th place



From left: Mönchengladbach's Kevin Stöger, Joe Scally, Philipp Sander and goal scorer Franck Honorat celebrate after scoring their side's second goal during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Borussia Mönchengladbach and FC St. Pauli, in Mönchengladbach, Germany. (AP)

in the 20-team table, three points above the relegation zone.

In Germany, Kevin Stöger's first goal of the season helped Borussia Mönchengladbach beat St. Pauli 2-0 and boost hopes of avoiding Bundesliga relegation.

Stöger was making his 200th Bundesliga appearance and struck a superb 25-meter free kick over the St. Pauli wall approaching halftime.

Franck Honorat added the second in the second half when he side-footed home a low left-foot drive.

It was a comfortable win for the

12th-placed Gladbach and lifted it four points clear of a packed relegation zone.

Only five points separate Hamburg in 10th place and St. Pauli, which is third from bottom in the last of the relegation places.

Substitute Amine Gouiri scored with 11 minutes remaining to give Marseille a 1-0 win over Ligue 1 struggler Auxerre.

The result left Marseille in third place, three points clear of Lyon, which plays at Le Havre on Sunday. Marseille was seven points behind second-placed Lens and eight adrift of league leader Paris

Saint-Germain.

Although the south coast club has been a constant presence among the clubs pushing for a European place next season its form has been inconsistent since the start of the year.

However, Gouiri's return has added goals to the mix.

The Algeria international missed nine games after a shoulder injury in October but has scored five times since returning to the side in early January.

Here he replaced English defender CJ Egan-Riley after 62 minutes and proved decisive.

Auxerre remained third to last with just one win in its last 11 games. It was five points from safety.

In Italy, Parma scored two own goals in two minutes to undo an otherwise tight match and tumble towards a 4-1 defeat by Torino in Serie A.

Giovanni Simeone scored his second goal in three games to put Torino 1-0 up in the third minute only for Mateo Pellegrino to equalize for Parma 17 minutes later.

But Parma pressed the self-destruct button early in the second half.

First, Enrico Delprato turned a Che Adams shot into his own net in the 55th minute and two minutes later Mandela Keita was unlucky when a Simeone shot came off the bar, hit him almost on the goalline and bounced into the net.



In this file photo, Ukraine's boxer Oleksandr Usyk attends a press conference in Wembley stadium in London ahead of the boxing fight between Britain's Daniel Dubois and Oleksandr Usyk. (AP)

'Mercedes is interested in buying a stake in Alpine team'

SHANGHAI, March 14, (AP): Mercedes is among "three or four potential buyers" for a 24% stake in rival Formula 1 team Alpine, the French team's executive adviser Flavio Briatore said.

Ahead of the Chinese Grand Prix, Briatore said Mercedes was keen on the minority share - held by a private equity firm which has worked with sports stars like Patrick Mahomes - but suggested it wouldn't come with influence over how Alpine is run. He also dismissed reports Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff was in talks to buy the stake on his own behalf.

"Every day is a new situation. I don't know what is the latest one, but what I say is that I know it's a negotiation with Mercedes, not with Toto, with Mercedes, and we see. In this moment we have three or four potential buyers,"

said Briatore, who has been Alpine's de-facto team boss since last year.

Asked if that could lead to conflict-of-interest concerns about Mercedes - which already supplies Alpine's engines - gaining influence over how it's run or how it votes on future rule changes, Briatore suggested any minority shareholder would be a "passenger" in those talks.

"Normally one company, 75% decide and the 25% is a passenger, and this is the reality," Briatore said.

Mercedes did not confirm details of any involvement.

"Mercedes is a key strategic partner of Alpine and we are being kept apprised of the latest developments," the team said in a statement.

Former Red Bull team principal Christian Horner is also among the interested parties, Al-

pine said last month.

Alpine is majority-owned by French automaker Renault, which sold the 24% stake to a group led by private equity firm Otro Capital, which attracted attention by including sports stars like Mahomes and Travis Kelce and the actor Ryan Reynolds in its investment group.

Alpine is coming off a tough year as it placed last in the constructors' standings in 2025. Pierre Gasly earned the team's first point with 10th in Australia last week but Briatore said he wasn't pleased with the team's progress as F1 begins a new era of regulations.

"We are not happy at all. Our performance was very weak and was a combination of different factors, and we know what is the major problem we have in the car," he said.

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Mercedes driver George Russell of Britain celebrates his pole position for the sprint qualifying ahead of the Chinese Formula One Grand Prix race in Shanghai, China. (AP)

Sports

Antonelli on pole for Chinese GP as Russell wins sprint

Ferraris to start third and fourth

SHANGHAI, March 14, (AP): Kimi Antonelli stepped up Saturday when his Mercedes teammate George Russell hit trouble in qualifying to become the youngest-ever driver on pole position for a Formula 1 Grand Prix.

After holding off a challenge from Ferrari to win the sprint race earlier in the day, Russell seemed near-unbeatable. Then he stopped on track in qualifying and limped back to the pits with technical problems.

Russell's team got the car going again with seconds to spare for him to set a time. It was only good enough for second on the grid, 0.222 of a second off Antonelli, who kept up Mercedes' run of qualifying dominance after F1's sweeping changes to the cars for 2026.

The Ferraris of Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc will start third and fourth. Their fast starts could threaten Mercedes off the line, as they did last week in Australia and in Saturday's sprint race.

The 19-year-old Antonelli becomes the youngest driver to take pole position for a full Grand Prix race, though he was also on pole aged 18 for a sprint race last year in Miami.

"It's just the beginning, so obviously there's a lot more to come," Antonelli said. "Really looking forward to tomorrow. Car is feeling really good, car is strong, so a lot to play for tomorrow. But just super happy with today."

Russell said a damaged front wing and gear-change issues made for a "crazy" qualifying session. "As soon as I went out on the track, I could tell something wasn't right," he said. He then had to set a last-chance time with a depleted battery and cold tires.

Russell won the first race of the season in Australia last weekend, and he followed up taking the 19-lap sprint in China.

As last week in Australia, the Ferraris were fast off the line and Russell and Lewis Hamilton swapped the lead several times on the first few laps. But Russell began to pull away after the early laps with Hamilton fading as the constant battles took a toll on his tires. Charles Leclerc was second with his teammate Hamilton third.

"Lewis did an amazing job in the early laps," Russell said. "He caught me off guard - 20 years of experience. So I've still got a bit to learn."

"It was pretty fun in the end," Russell added. "A lot of strategy in play and overtakes. It's not easy, I hope it was fun race to watch. Usually the sprint races are pretty boring."

Hamilton received loud applause from the Shanghai crowd when he began his on-track interview by saying "你好" - hello in Chinese.

"That speed (of Mercedes) on the straight is just a little bit too much at the moment," said Hamilton, who won last year's sprint in China for his only victory since joining Ferrari. "I think I put up a good fight."

Hamilton and Leclerc couldn't renew their challenge late in the race after a safety car period for Audi's Nico Hulkenberg stopping on track.

Lando Norris was fourth for McLaren and Antonelli fifth after serving a penalty for an early collision with Red Bull's Isack Hadjar.



Mercedes driver Andrea Kimi Antonelli, left, of Italy leads against McLaren driver Oscar Piastri of Australia during the Sprint Race of the Chinese Formula One Grand Prix at the Shanghai International Circuit, in Shanghai, China. (AP)

Formula 1 has made massive engine and chassis changes for this season - the most radical in over a decade - that feature a 50-50 split between internal combustion and electric power.

Russell is one of the new era's biggest cheerleaders and said Saturday's sprint battle felt "like go-kart racing in the past ... I don't ever remember Formula 1 being like that, where you can have three or four cars all fighting for the same position truly on track."

Drivers have struggled to handle the trade-off between using power and conserving it, and some have struggled with extra power coming in unexpectedly.

Four-time world champion Max Verstappen is no fan of the changes and finished ninth in the sprint race.

"Everything that could go wrong, did go wrong," Verstappen said. "We just need to get our stuff together."

Shiffrin finishes 5th, protects overall lead

Scheib locks up World Cup GS title



Austria's Julia Scheib celebrates winning a women's World Cup giant slalom, in Are, Sweden. (AP)

ARE, Sweden, March 14, (AP): Austrian skier Julia Scheib locked up the women's World Cup giant slalom title Saturday, winning the penultimate race of the season after first-run leader Camille Rast skied out.

The victory gave Scheib an insurmountable lead of 189 points over her Swiss rival in the GS standings.

"It feels very special, winning the giant slalom globe has been a goal of mine for many years. To achieve it today means a lot to me, said Scheib, the ninth Austrian winner of this globe but the first since Eva-Maria Brem took it in 2016.

Scheib denied Paula Moltzan a first career victory, finishing 0.36 seconds

ahead of the American. Alice Robinson of New Zealand was 0.75 behind in third.

Mikaela Shiffrin improved from 12th following a costly mistake in the opening run to finish fifth and protect her lead in the overall standings.

Shiffrin lost just five points on Germany's Emma Aicher, who finished the race in a career-best fourth, and won 55 points on Rast.

Shiffrin now leads Aicher by 120 points and Rast by 223 and could increase her lead in Sunday's slalom, which is the American star's strongest event.

After this weekend, only the World Cup Finals with four races remain.

Best of the Rest

Cassio to undergo knee surgery: Veteran Cruzeiro goalkeeper Cassio will require surgery after suffering a multi-ligament knee injury, the Brazilian Serie A club said.

The 38-year-old former Brazil international sustained the injury in the second half of Cruzeiro's 2-0 defeat at Flamengo in Brazil's Serie A on Wednesday.

Cruzeiro said in a statement that Cassio would undergo surgery at a hospital in Belo Horizonte early next week.

"The entire recovery process will take place in Cruzeiro's health and performance department," the club said. "We wish him a speedy recovery." Cruzeiro did not say how long Cassio would be sidelined, but local media predicted a recovery time of at least six months.

"I'm sad about the injury and about not being able to be on the pitch with my teammates," Cassio, who was capped once for Brazil in 2017, said in a social media post.

"These are situations that are part of our work and I have no doubt that I will come back even stronger from this injury," the former PSV Eindhoven and Corinthians player added. (Xinhua)

Aquino strike gives Lanus win: Winger Dylan Aquino scored in the second half as Lanus edged to a 1-0 away win over Estudiantes in Argentina's Apertura tournament on Friday.

Aquino broke the deadlock in the 75th minute in La Plata, latching onto Eduardo Salvio's cross with a first-time strike that beat Uruguayan goalkeeper Fernando Muslera at his near post.

Estudiantes controlled more than 60% of possession but rarely threatened to breach the visitors' defense.

Despite the result, Estudiantes remains third in the 15-team Group A standings with 15 points, three ahead of 10th-placed Lanus. (Xinhua)

Suspension of sporting activities remains in effect: KFA

KUWAIT CITY, March 14: The Kuwait Football Association (KFA) says the suspension of all sporting activities, including training and matches, remains in effect and is awaiting approval from higher authorities for resumption, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a statement posted on its X account, KFA confirmed that the proposed date for resuming activities is preliminary and will only be implemented after approval and directives from higher authorities and once the current situation in the region is resolved.

It emphasized its commitment to the safety of all club personnel, including players, administrative, technical, and medical staff, while also expressing full support for all decisions made by higher authorities.

The Kuwait Football Association's board of directors had previously sent a letter to the Minister of Youth and Sports, Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, regarding the resumption of sporting activities.

The board highlighted its commitment to the directives issued by higher authorities and its dedication to protecting lives by holding matches

without spectators.

KFA announced that it has set April 2 as the date for the resumption of sporting activities in Kuwait. Club training will begin a week prior, subject to the approval of the political leadership and higher authorities.

It affirmed that it will complete all remaining matches in all competitions, assuring that no matches or tournaments under its auspices this season will be canceled. KFA has prepared a schedule outlining the dates and times of the remaining matches for the current season.

Australia clinches World Cup berth

China on course for record-extending title as South Korea reaches Women's Asian Cup semis

PERTH, March 14, (Agencies): China advanced to the semifinals of the AFC Women's Asian Cup after beating Chinese Taipei 2-0 after extra time in Saturday's quarterfinal.

China settled quickly and controlled possession for long stretches. Wang Shuang thought she had given her side the lead in the 39th minute, but the goal was disallowed after a VAR review.

China remained on top in the second half but could not find a breakthrough in regulation time.

The deadlock was finally broken in the 94th minute, when Shao Ziqin finished from the middle of the area after a pass from Wang. Shao then won a penalty in the 112th minute, but Wurigumula's spot kick was saved.

China sealed the result with two minutes left in extra time when Jin Kun surged down the right and forced an own goal by Chen Ying-hui.

The win keeps China on course for a record-extending 10th continental title, though the team will be without Wang for the next match, after the midfielder was handed a yellow card for the second straight match.

China now faces host Australia in Tuesday's semifinal and has also secured qualification for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup, with the four semifinalists earning direct berths. Chinese Taipei will play the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on Thursday in a playoff for one of the remaining two World Cup spots.

China coach Ante Milicic said his team had expected a difficult game, especially after a strong performance and result against the DPRK in the final group-stage match, as well as the change in kickoff time for the quarterfinal.

He said China created enough chances to win inside 90 minutes but failed to take them.

"We looked a little bit anxious, but in the end, I felt that we were fairly well in control," he said. "We won the game, qualified for the World Cup, and we moved into the semifinals. So I am just delighted for the players and staff." Milicic, who

is Australian, said Wang's suspension for the semifinal was a blow after her strong tournament, but added that it also created an opportunity for another player to step in against Australia.

South Korea secured a spot in the semifinals of the AFC Women's Asian Cup and qualified directly for the 2027 World Cup with a 6-0 victory over Uzbekistan in Sydney on Saturday.

South Korea, which finished as runner-up at the 2022 Asian Cup, dominated the match with 26 shots to Uzbekistan's one. Son Hwa-yeon opened the scoring in the ninth minute, followed by a long-range goal from Ko Yoo-jin in the 20th minute.

Park Soo-jeong, Ji So-yun, and substitute Lee Eun-young added goals in the second half, before Jang Sel-gi converted a late penalty to complete the scoring.

South Korea will play the winner of Sunday's quarterfinal between Japan and the Philippines.

Sam Kerr scored one goal and created another as Australia advanced to the Women's Asian Cup semifinals and secured a World Cup spot with a 2-1 win over North Korea.

The three-time champion North Koreans had almost two-thirds of possession and played at a high tempo to keep the Australians unsettled, but weren't able to convert their glut of scoring opportunities into more goals against a stubborn Matildas' defense.

The North Koreans had 21 shots at goal and 10 on target but couldn't capitalize. Australia turned its only two shots on target into goals.

Kerr played a key role in both.

In the ninth minute, the Chelsea forward poached possession from opposing captain An Kuk Hyang deep in the right corner and crossed into the area before Alanna Kennedy swooped onto a deflection and fired in a left-foot strike for her fifth goal of the tournament.



China players wave to supporters following the Women's Asian Cup quarterfinal soccer match between China and Taiwan in Perth, Australia. (AP)



Uzbekistan's goalkeeper Maftuna Jonimqulova and South Korea's Kang Chae-rim watch the ball during the Women's Asian Cup quarterfinal soccer match between South Korea and Uzbekistan in Sydney. (AP)