



Kuwait's Prime Minister visits Kuwait Central Blood Bank Page 5



Scan the QR code to access the Arab Times WhatsApp Channel

MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2026 / RAMADAN 27, 1447 AH

emergency number 112

NO. 19154

16 PAGES

150 FILS

CROWN PRINCE VISITS MILITARY SITES, LAUDS FORCES HEROIC ROLE

Drones strike Kuwait airport radar

Defense Minister checks on injured personnel



Left: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah visits military sites, praising Kuwait's armed forces for their exceptional readiness. Right: Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah visits Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital, checking on personnel injured in drone attacks.

Crown Prince Diwan and Ministry of Defense photos



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

From hardship to relief ... insolvent debtors do not deserve imprisonment

THE issue of debtors is a pressing concern for the people of Kuwait. The problem has been worsened by the absence of a clear legal framework to protect debtors who, driven by need, often fall victim to usurers skilled in exploiting people. These lenders do not only impose exorbitant interest rates but also tighten their grip on debtors through contracts, deeds, promissory notes, and bounced cheques, pushing many into despair.

Justice has therefore become a necessity. The platform that the Minister of Justice plans to launch, aimed at arranging the repayment of debts for individuals subject to arrest warrants, along with the central aid system introduced by the Ministry of Social Affairs last year, will play a crucial role in resolving this issue.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Minister of Justice, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, for taking this important step.

This initiative will help in proper management of donations collected to settle the debts of insolvent debtors, especially after the Ministry of Justice discovered that some contributions were not being used for their intended purpose.

It is important to note the legal and religious principle that creditors bear responsibility for not exercising sufficient caution before lending to someone unable to repay. Unfortunately, this principle is not applied in Kuwait, even though many other countries recognize it as self-evident and enforce it.

Debts are essentially commercial transactions

and, in the spirit of the law, should not be treated the same way as forgery or fraud. The law should not protect those who abuse their rights.

In Kuwait, the state often acts as a debt collector for creditors who failed to take adequate measures to ensure the recovery of their funds. This principle is flawed both legally and religiously.

Kuwait has several institutions that receive donations, including the Zakat House and various charitable societies.

The sixth principle of the Zakat House Law stipulates that debtors who are unable to repay their debts are among the eligible beneficiaries of donations. It is therefore essential to establish a dedicated platform for the Zakat House, similar to those implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, to assist these insolvent debtors. This would help alleviate their hardship and ensure they are treated like other needy individuals, without the need for intermediaries.

Dear Minister of Justice, I have previously emphasized that the law permitting the arrest and imprisonment of insolvent debtors over small sums exists only in Kuwait.

Continued on Page 5

Follow me on:
@Ahmedaljarallah
Ahmed aljarallah
ahmed@aljarallah.com



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

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Kuwait's General Authority for Civil Aviation said Kuwait International Airport was targeted Saturday evening by several drones, hitting the radar system, without any human injuries.

The Authority's spokesperson Abdullah Al-Rajhi told KUNA the incident was handled according to the emergency plan in place since the start of the crisis, in full coordination with relevant authorities.

He reaffirmed the authority's commitment to taking all necessary measures to safeguard civil aviation security and safety in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Defense Ministry spokesperson Colonel Saud Al-Atwan announced that two hostile drones targeted Ahmad Al-Jaber Air Base on Saturday evening, causing minor

material damage at the base.

In a media briefing, Al-Atwan confirmed that the Kuwait Armed Forces dealt with the attack in accordance with the military procedures, indicating that seven hostile drones were intercepted over the past 24 hours. He said the air defenses destroyed three drones, while two crashed outside the threat zone and posed no danger and two drones targeted Ahmed Al-Jaber Air Base. He added that the incident resulted in minor injuries to three Armed Forces personnel, who are currently undergoing treatment and are in stable condition.

He added that the Kuwait National Guard task force destroyed two hostile drones within its area of responsibility as part of the ongoing coordination among the military agencies in the country.

He revealed that the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Unit at the Land Forces Engineering Corps dealt with 13 explosive devices, which were disposed in accordance with the procedures.

Continued on Page 5

Kingdom's generosity shines amid Kuwait crisis

Saudi opens all land borders to Kuwait

By Saud Al-Farhan
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia opened all of its land borders without being asked, a testament to its inherent generosity, genuine and fraternal cooperation and a sense of responsibility in the midst of the drone and missile attacks, say high-ranking sources.

In a statement to the newspaper, sources pointed out that this is not strange for the Saudi brothers, who have proven to be a reliable partner, as shown from the very first hours of the brutal Iraqi invasion in 1990. "In a noble gesture, as it is customary for our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, orders were issued to open all borders for entry into and exit from Kuwait," sources affirmed.

Sources revealed that the Saudi General Directorate of Passports opened 44 lanes at the Khafji border with Kuwait to expedite procedures, indicating that these lanes operate round the clock to serve all those traveling by land.

They said this expansion aims to reduce congestion and ease movement through the Khafji border, which connects the Eastern Province with Kuwait, while facilitating the entry of large transport vehicles and cargo, and streamlining the transport of goods to prevent the shortage of essential supplies.

They asserted "we say to our Saudi brothers: Thank you for this great brotherly stance ... Thank you for the honorable positions, thank you for the neighborly support, and thank you for the stances of Saudi Arabia, which considers Saudi Arabia and Kuwait as one nation, one people and brothers, and strives to overcome difficulties without expecting anything in return. We reiterate that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are brothers, and their relationship has been established since time immemorial... May Allah reward our brothers abundantly."

They also emphasized that the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior is exerting its utmost efforts round the clock, in accordance with the directives of the political leadership.

Continued on Page 5

Hormuz crisis sends Kuwait oil to \$143, experts warn of \$180 surge

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: When the price of Kuwaiti oil increased to \$143 per barrel on Saturday following the onset of the crisis between Israel and the United States against Iran, two experts confirmed to the newspaper that the continuous closure of the Strait of Hormuz is pushing oil prices to exorbitant levels.

These experts revealed that Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has been forced to reduce oil production due to the escalating crisis.

They stressed the need for the Kuwaiti oil sector to learn from this experience by increasing its overseas storage capacity and connecting local oil pipelines to the Saudi and Emirati oil transport networks to ease the delivery of Kuwaiti crude oil to the Arabian Sea.

Oil refining and marketing expert Abdulhamid Al-Awadhi stated that the recent decision of KPC to reduce production by invoking force majeure clauses in crude oil and petroleum product sales contracts was

inevitable, given that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Parliament declared the closure of the Strait of Hormuz in the early days of the war, claiming that international law granted Iran the right to protect its territorial waters during wartime.

Al-Awadhi clarified that there is a huge difference between protecting territorial waters and closing an international waterway, which is a vital artery for oil transport and concerns seven Arab countries -- five of which are rich in hydrocarbon resources that significantly impact

global trade. He cited Article 44 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which prohibits coastal states from hindering or suspending the 'transit passage' of foreign vessels and aircraft through international straits. He said this article mandates countries bordering straits to not hamper transit and they must publicize known dangers to navigation or overflight.

Continued on Page 5



Al-Awadhi



Al-Mutairi

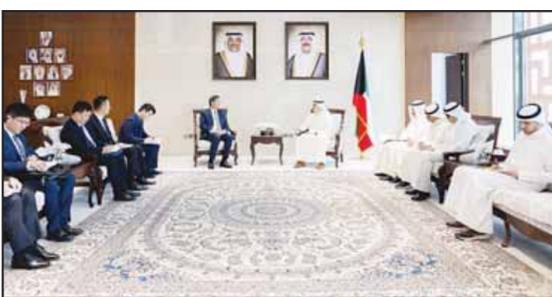
'Kuwait Mobile ID' app fully secure, says PACI

By Mohamed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) has denied reports of a cyberattack on its "Kuwait Mobile ID" app.

Continued on Page 5



Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo

Kuwait's Foreign Minister meets Chinese Special Envoy for the Middle East.

Kuwait, China discuss security

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Sunday received Chinese Special Envoy for the Middle East Chai Jun.

According to a Foreign Ministry statement, the meeting discussed the rising military escalation in the region due to Iran's hostile actions

and its serious implications for regional and international security and stability.

The two also reviewed the historic and strategic relations between Kuwait and China and ways to support and further develop them. (KUNA)

Gold reaches KD 50 per gram in Kuwait as global markets swing

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Global movements in precious metal prices were reflected in the Kuwaiti market, with the price of 24-karat gold reaching about KD 50 per gram (around 153 dollars), while 22-karat gold was recorded at approximately KD 45.8 per gram (around 140 dollars).

According to a report issued Sunday by Dar Al-Sabaek Company, silver prices fell to about KD 860 (around 2,810 dollars) per kilogram. Investors in the local market continued to monitor global developments and their impact on demand and investment in precious metals.

Globally, gold prices ended the week at 5,018 dollars per ounce after a period

marked by sharp fluctuations driven by a combination of economic factors and escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

The report explained that the yellow metal dropped during Friday's trading session below 5,050 dollars per ounce as the US dollar strengthened and US Treasury yields rose, reducing gold's appeal as a traditional safe-haven asset despite ongoing geopolitical risks in the region. The decline came as investors increased their holdings of the US dollar in search of liquidity, particularly after threats to close the Strait of Hormuz prompted markets to reassess global economic risks.

Continued on Page 5

Filtered water 'safe' to drink, says MoCI

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry confirmed that drinking water produced in Kuwait, known as "filtered water," is of very high quality and undergoes rigorous, continuous testing in accordance with the standards of the World Health Organization to ensure it is safe, pure, and potable for consumers, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an awareness publication, the ministry emphasized that there is no need to stockpile bottled water, given the ready availability of safe, high-quality drinking water.



2 Al-Jarallah - Fall of Iran a cause for GCC celebration

9 Jazeera Airways operating flights from Kuwait to Istanbul via Qaisumah Airport

Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:38	Asr	15:22
Sunrise ..	06:10	Maghrib ..	17:57
Zohr	11:57	Isha	19:14

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



Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times on Al-Arabiya TV.

Missed opportunities for peace

Al-Jarallah – Fall of Iran a cause for GCC celebration

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers and the Dean of Kuwaiti journalism, Ahmed Al-Jarallah, says, "The fall of Iran is undoubtedly a cause for celebration, as we in the GCC countries have suffered from Iranian obstinacy," reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an interview with Al-Arabiya TV on Saturday night, Al-Jarallah highlighted that the Gulf states tried to build good relations with Iran, but the Iranians chose a different path attempting to export their revolution to neighboring countries.

He pointed to Iran's efforts to influence the genetic and cultural makeup of the region's peoples, calling it unacceptable.

Al-Jarallah said, "We all remember when Iranian officials declared their control over four Arab capitals - Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen - in a statement that alarmed the entire Arabian Peninsula. We observed how the new Iranian Supreme Leader thanked the Houthis, Hezbollah, and the Iraqis who cooperate with Iran."

Al-Jarallah expressed satisfaction with the progress made in curbing Iranian influence.

He affirmed that he continuously monitors the situation in the region and all Iranian statements, indicating that Iran missed an opportunity to improve relations with the countries of the region and could have been a partner to the Gulf states.

Al-Jarallah expressed regret over Iranian statements, including the president's speech, stating that he does not believe there is a functioning Supreme Leader in Iran, as there are indications that the leader may have been killed or injured.

He affirmed that the language of the speech attributed to the new Supreme Leader mirrors that of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard rather than a Supreme Leader, noting that the language of the previous Supreme Leader was also different.

Al-Jarallah went on to say, "The Iranian regime has harmed the entire region. Since 1979, we have suffered in our relations with it. The regime has squandered numerous opportunities.

Observers of the Iranian regime's statements during the 12-day war or in the current war will find them inaccurate, even false."

He noted that the Gulf Cooperation Council countries have confirmed that no attacks will be launched from American bases on their territories.

Al-Jarallah clarified, "If the Iranian regime has a problem with Israel or America, then let it strike America."

He explained that the Iranian regime has launched missiles and drones at Gulf countries more than at Israel. Iran has not targeted American bases but has struck residential buildings and vital infrastructure in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, especially the Kingdom of Bahrain, which suffered attacks on its infrastructure, markets, and streets. Kuwait has also been targeted, with attacks on buildings and residential complexes. The people of the region are frustrated with Iran's actions.

Al-Jarallah asked, "Why does the Iranian regime deploy spies in the region to obtain coordinates for attacks on Kuwait, Bahrain, and the UAE? Does this not reveal a hidden hostile intent against the Gulf states?"

140 illegal clothes kiosks seized

MoSA detects 70 pc drop in donation violations: report

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: As the holy month of Ramadan comes to a close, sources at the Ministry of Social Affairs revealed a significant decline in donation violations during the 23rd annual Ramadan collection campaign, with a decrease of nearly 70 percent compared to previous years, particularly last year, reports Al-Jarida daily.

They explained that the three field inspection teams recently formed, led by the ministry and including representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Kuwait Municipality, detected numerous violations since the start of Ramadan. The most common violations were unauthorized collection kiosks for used clothing, especially in outlying areas, totaling over 140 kiosks.

Most of these unauthorized kiosks, particularly those of unknown origin, were removed by the municipality, as they could allow infiltrators and unscrupulous individuals to collect in-kind donations illegally, outside the ministry's oversight.

The sources affirmed the ministry's commitment to enforcing Cabinet Resolution No. 914/2001, which requires charitable organizations to remove all unlicensed dona-

tion collection units from the ministry and Kuwait Municipality areas, and limits clothing collection activities to the association's headquarters and official branches.

They revealed that inspection teams also identified unauthorized and illegal advertisements on social media soliciting cash donations under the guise of charitable projects, adding that the owners of these accounts were referred to the Ministry of Interior for legal action.

The sources went on to explain that unauthorized and unlicensed advertisements were also found near and on the walls of some mosques, soliciting donations to organize Iftar meals for fasting individuals without the ministry's approval. These cases were addressed, and the necessary legal measures were taken in coordination with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and other relevant government agencies.

While acknowledging the existence of some violations, the sources confirmed a significant decrease compared to previous years, thanks to the strict measures implemented by the ministry and other authorities to regulate donations. These measures include a complete ban on collecting donations inside mosques in all forms.

World faces food crisis if war prolongs: expert

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: As the global fertilizer crisis exacerbates due to the ongoing war between the United States and Israel against Iran, food security consultant and expert Mohammad Al-Furaih said the whole world could face a global food crisis if the war continues for several months.

In a statement to the newspaper, Al-Furaih mentioned the indicators of the rise in global fertilizer prices following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, as well as the increasing cost of food transportation, particularly since Kuwait still relies heavily on imports.

He said the current situation entails that the concerned authorities should make the most of the crisis and take advantage of available oppor-

tunities.

On the role of agricultural investment in increasing non-oil revenues, he affirmed that the agricultural sector can generate revenues for the State, thus, preventing the national economy from remaining indefinitely dependent on a single source of income.

About the challenges that the local agricultural sector is facing, Al-Furaih stated that the sector triumphed over many obstacles due to modern technology. He pointed out that the high summer temperature issue can be addressed through greenhouse farming.

He described the Kuwaiti farmer as a soldier on the front lines, remaining steadfast despite the difficult challenges he is facing. He emphasized that the Kuwaiti farmer is a role model who deserves support, calling for more assistance for those working tirelessly to guarantee food secu-

urity.

He urged the relevant authorities to benefit from the advice of agricultural experts to further develop the agricultural sector in Kuwait. He stressed the importance of drawing lessons from the Saudi Arabian experience, which has become highly reliant on local agricultural products and possesses vast farms producing wheat, coffee and other crops. He said this is the reason why Saudi Arabia will not be significantly affected by the ongoing war.

He underscored the importance of expanding the cultivation of strategic crops, so that agriculture in Kuwait does not remain limited to vegetable production.

He called for the establishment of a specialized agricultural college at Kuwait University or the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET).

Bid to facilitate cargo movement

Customs mulls plan to implement TIR system

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Director General of the General Administration of Customs Yousef Al-Nuwaif met senior customs officials to discuss activating the international road transport system (TIR).

In a press statement Sunday, the Customs Administration said that the meeting reviewed the importance of implementing the TIR system and its role in facilitating cross-border truck and cargo movement between countries.

The system helps accelerate transit procedures, reduce customs clearance time and

support regional and international supply chains, particularly under current regional circumstances. Participants reviewed the current status of the system in Kuwait and measures taken during the past period to meet implementation requirements.

The meeting also discussed challenges that may hinder activation, notably identifying the authority responsible for technical inspection of trailers and trucks in line with the convention's requirements.

Discussions addressed designating the entity

authorized to issue TIR Carnets to carriers and companies operating in international transport.

Several regulatory and operational proposals were presented to support implementation, including accrediting a technical inspection body and enhancing coordination among relevant entities.

Officials stressed the importance of continued coordination to complete activation requirements, supporting trade movement and strengthening Kuwait's position as a regional logistics hub.

'Buy what you need only, don't stockpile foodstuff'

Situation stable, routine work at co-ops: Al-Awadh

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Head of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies Mariam Al-Awadh stated that the supply situation in the country remains stable, stressing that food commodities are available in cooperative societies and supply centers and that no shortage has been recorded.

In an interview on Kuwait Radio, Al-Awadh affirmed that it is business as usual in cooperatives and that there is no overcrowding following the first few days, which witnessed a surge in shoppers. She called on the consumers to buy only what they need and to refrain from excessive stockpiling. She pointed out that many food items have expiration dates, which could result in spoilage if they are unnecessarily stored in large quantities.

She explained that differences in prices between some cooperative societies are normal, as certain goods are offered under promotional discounts for limited periods that may not be available simultaneously in all cooperatives.

She said the union monitors prices through regular inspection tours to ensure that cooperatives comply with the issued circulars regarding pricing, stressing that cases of price gouging or manipulation are extremely rare.

She added that there is continuous coordination between the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Social Affairs to monitor markets and address violations, emphasizing that food security in the country is stable and that goods remain available to both citizens and expatriates.

Meanwhile, Dr. Bader Al-Enezi, Head of the Budgets and Financial Control Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs, confirmed that once the emergency plan was implemented, goods were supplied to cooperative societies. "Any shortage was addressed immediately through companies, with alternative products provided when necessary," he explained.

In a televised interview, Al-Enezi reassured the public that the situation is normal, stating that in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce,

goods are also available through other outlets.

He explained that when demand for a particular item rises remarkably, sales are regulated to maintain adequate stock levels for everyone, with ongoing coordination with companies and the Ministry of Commerce to accelerate supply.

He pointed out there was initially a surge in demand for water, but several companies opened their warehouses and supplied the relevant authorities with the required quantities.

He added that all commodities – water, food, supplies, gas or other consumer goods – are monitored round the clock to ensure their continued availability.

He pointed out that prices are monitored by the Ministry of Commerce, explaining that some items were previously sold at discounted rates – below their original price, and have now simply returned to their normal price without any increase.

He added "in the event of any isolated cases of artificially inflated prices, we address them immediately and notify the Ministry of Commerce inspectors to take the necessary measures, including legal action, suspending the sale of the product, and withdrawing it from the market." He then urged everyone to purchase only what they need.

News on e-visa system is fake – Italy embassy

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Embassy of Italy denies the news, appeared on some social media, regarding the introduction of the electronic visa system (e-visa) for Italy starting from June 2026, and confirms that this news is fake. The Embassy recommends therefore to rely only on the indications published on the official communication channels of the Italian Government and of the Embassy of Italy (website and Instagram).

For further information: alkuwait.visti@esteri.it

New law major leap in Kuwait's 'legal system'

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Head of the Kuwait Society for Anti-Violence, Lawyer Ali Al-Ali, welcomed the issuance of the decree-law on protection from domestic violence, highlighting that the enactment of this legislation marks a major step towards strengthening legal safeguards for family members and establishing a safer, more stable social environment, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Lawyer Al-Ali described the new law as a qualitative leap in Kuwait's social legislation system.

He explained that the decree includes comprehensive measures to address domestic violence, such as establishing the National Committee for Protection from Domestic Violence, providing shelters for victims, and creating a fund to support and care for victims to offer social, psychological, and healthcare assistance.

The Kuwait Society for Anti-Violence played a role in shaping this legislative initiative through collaboration with relevant government bodies, including the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs. It submitted proposals and recommendations aimed at improving mechanisms for handling domestic violence cases and strengthening protection measures for victims.

The society's involvement stems from its societal role in monitoring cases of violence, raising legal and social awareness about the dangers of this phenomenon, and supporting official efforts to establish a comprehensive legal framework that effectively addresses these issues and preserves the dignity of family members.

Lawyer Al-Ali emphasized that the law paves the way for stronger cooperation between government institutions and civil society organizations in combating domestic violence.



Kuwait University photo
Civil Defense personnel supervising the evacuation drill.

Civil Defense runs evacuation exercise at Kuwait University

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Security and Safety Department at Kuwait University, in cooperation with the General Directorate of Civil Defense, carried out an evacuation drill on Sunday morning at the university administration building in Sabah Al-Salem University City.

The drill is part of ongoing efforts to raise the level of readiness to respond to emergencies, while reinforcing security and safety measures in all university facilities in light of the current regional and local circumstances.

3 drone operators arrested

New, hi-tech patrols on roads boost security system: official

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Director of the Security Media Department at the Ministry of Interior Colonel Othman Al-Mansouri said the Public Security, Traffic and Emergency Response patrols are exerting tremendous efforts in their field operations.

Al-Mansouri pointed out that the presence of modern field patrols equipped with advanced technologies greatly contributes to strengthening the security system and enhancing operational efficiency in various locations. He added that these patrols rely on modern and advanced technologies.

He stated that the Human Resources and Information Technology sectors introduced specialized patrols with high-tech capabilities, such as artificial intelligence, biometric fingerprint systems, and other modern security procedures that assist security personnel in performing their duties efficiently and accurately. He stressed that this ensures rapid response to various reports and incidents.

He added that the advanced technologies also enable the monitoring of individuals operating drones for photography.

He affirmed that the Human Resources

and Information Technology sectors are closely monitoring drone users.

He emphasized that these sectors support all other departments at the ministry through the provision of modern technological systems fortifying security operations. He said the patrols continue their field work throughout the country, with security units deployed in different areas to maintain security and public order and deal with reports or violations.

He asserted that the entire ministry is working hard to protect everyone round the clock, and perform duties with dedication and sincerity to maintain the security of the homeland and safety of the society.

Three drone operators were apprehended for violating instructions, the Ministry of Interior said on Saturday.

During the joint media briefing held by the Government Communication Center regarding current events, Spokesperson for the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior, Brig. Gen. Nasser Bouslaib said such practices would not be taken lightly and all legal procedures in this regard would be followed.

He added that the explosive ordnance disposal teams responded to eight reports related to falling shrapnel and foreign objects in the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of reports since the beginning of the Iranian aggression to 380.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Iran ... vast resources and failed leadership

"INSIDE Iran, Tehran's streets are eerily quiet. Traffic has vanished, and armed men in civilian clothes and military uniforms patrol the city, randomly stopping cars at checkpoints, spreading fear, and inspecting phones," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Observers say the greatest threat to the Islamic Republic is not foreign airstrikes, but Iranians taking to the streets. The regime's top priority is self-preservation, which raises the risk of another wave of mass arrests or violent crackdowns. At the same time, authorities have cut internet access, plunging the country into an information blackout once again.



Ahmad Al-Dawas

"Iran now stands at a historic crossroads. The leader who shaped its policies for decades has passed, leaving a legacy of animosities and crises. The question remains - Will the new leadership take a religious path, or will the Revolutionary Guard, which was recently weakened by strikes and with its intelligence apparatus compromised, take decisive action? Will it suppress any internal opposition that might threaten the regime?"

"With nearly a million members, the Revolutionary Guard is a formidable force capable of suppressing internal opposition and potentially determining the outcome if Iran descends into internal chaos.

"Iran also faces serious internal problems awaiting its new leadership. The country is grappling with the worst economic crisis in its history. The national currency has collapsed, inflation is eroding citizens' savings, unemployment, especially among young people, is widespread, and Western sanctions have crippled the economy. Just days ago, Iranian economists warned that continuing current policies without reform could trigger an even greater social explosion.

"This places immense pressure on the new leadership to improve living conditions. If reforms are not implemented, the Iranian street, which has staged multiple protests in recent years, may return to the streets, and with even greater force.

"Today, Iran faces three scenarios. The first is openness and building good neighborly relations with Gulf states, which could offer a chance to avert collapse. Yet, the regime continues to launch attacks on peaceful neighbors.

"The second is hardening, where the Revolutionary Guard and hardline conservatives consolidate power and select a more extreme successor, who will escalate confrontations with the US and Israel. This path would deepen Iran's isolation, drag the country into further conflicts, and worsen the suffering of its people.

"The third scenario is chaos. Tensions between the Revolutionary Guard and the religious establishment could escalate into open confrontation, potentially plunging Iran into a devastating civil war. The consequences would extend beyond Iran's borders, creating a new wave of refugees and fragmenting the so-called resistance axis into warring factions.

"Post-Khamenei Iran faces a stark choice - reconciliation with itself and the world, or a deeper descent into hostility and isolation. If central authority erodes, the most likely outcome is the rise of local insurgencies amid security vacuums, escalating cross-border tensions, and potential internal conflict. Armed ethnic groups within Iran, including Kurds, Baluchis, and Azeris, have carried out sporadic attacks on Iranian forces over the years and represent the most serious organized armed threat for pursuing political demands and overthrowing the religious regime."

Also:

"In a time of accelerating events and numerous challenges and trials, we need to remind ourselves that the role of religious values in confronting societal crises is essential," Kuwaiti writer **Shaikha Al-Asfoor** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Religious values are not merely rituals or ceremonies, but a profound ethical, humanitarian, and behavioral system capable of granting society security and internal cohesion, protecting it from collapse in the face of crises.

"When a society faces an economic, health, social, or security crisis, the need arises for values such as patience, solidarity, honesty, integrity, and respect. These values are not merely theoretical principles, but practical behaviors manifested in activities such as supporting vulnerable groups in society, assisting the sick, and repairing fractured relationships. On a personal level, they include improving one's lifestyle by adhering to healthy habits as indicated by the Prophetic teachings, along with drawing closer to God based on an awareness of behavioral realities.

"Religious values are composed of pure human values that enhance so-

cial security and instill in individuals a sense of responsibility toward one another and toward their religious identity. The social and psychological security provided by these values is the cornerstone of protecting society from external threats.

"A cohesive society, characterized by cooperation, compassion, and adherence to Islamic values, is better equipped to confront any external security threat, whether direct or indirect, because it is internally fortified by bonds of trust, solidarity, and sound faith.

"For example, when people unite during crises by offering charity or engaging in volunteer initiatives, they build a wall of solidarity that is difficult to breach.

"Religious values provide individuals with psychological reassurance during crises. Faith cultivates hope and alleviates anxiety, enabling people to think rationally and make sound decisions.

"This reassurance is not a luxury, but a fundamental element in crisis management, as it protects individuals from psychological collapse and boosts resilience. This is the approach that Kuwait (May God protect it) adopts.

"In crises like the one we are experiencing today, individuals must adopt this approach at the family level. Religious values are not merely a doctrinal legacy, but practical tools for consciously confronting reality.

"Religious values guarantee the social and psychological security of individuals and help build a more cohesive, conscious, and intellectually strong society capable of protecting itself from internal and external threats.

"Therefore, adhering to these values is not just an individual choice, but a collective necessity for protecting society, preserving its stability, and maintaining its authentic values and identity."

□ □ □

"The question of leadership in Iran is a vital issue with far-reaching implications for the political and security landscape of the Middle East. In this context, the announcement of Mojtaba Khamenei as Iran's new Supreme Leader has sparked widespread questions and concerns about the region's future," Kuwaiti writer **Emad Khamis Al-Aqab** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"His appointment comes at a time of escalating tensions and multiple security challenges across the Middle East. These developments pose a serious concern for Arabian Gulf states, which may feel compelled to strengthen their defenses and take decisive measures to protect their sovereignty and security.

"Mojtaba Khamenei, son of former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, is a prominent figure within the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and holds significant influence in both Iran's political and military spheres.

"He is known for his hardline and uncompromising stance, which raises concerns among neighboring countries about escalating tensions and potential conflicts in the region.

"His appointment as Supreme Leader could exacerbate regional divisions and expand his influence over Iran's domestic and foreign policies, posing unprecedented security challenges for the Gulf states.

"In response, these states reaffirm their full right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which allows nations to defend themselves in the event of armed aggression. This right is especially relevant given Iran's threats and its use of armed groups and proxies to destabilize the region.

"The Gulf states are committed to adhering to international law in responding to any potential attacks, applying measures proportionate to the scale and nature of such threats.

"To protect their territories, populations, and residents, they will take all necessary steps to preserve their sovereignty, security, and stability. This includes enhancing security and military cooperation with international and regional allies, as well as activating international diplomatic channels to secure global support against hostile actions.

"In conclusion, the appointment of Mojtaba Khamenei as Iran's new Supreme Leader is a worrying development for regional stability and security. This sensitive period requires that the Gulf states remain highly vigilant and take all necessary measures to safeguard their sovereignty and security.

"The Gulf states must also strengthen international and regional cooperation to maintain stability and peace in a region facing increasing challenges and threats.

"Effectively addressing this situation requires a comprehensive strategic approach that accounts for all political, security, and economic dimensions."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

'Ample foodstuff available in co-ops'



Ministry of Social Affairs photos
Minister of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs Amthal Al-Huwaila visits cooperative societies in Mubarak Al-Kabeer.

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs Amthal Al-Huwaila inspected Saturday some cooperative societies in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate to review the stock situation and the provision level of foodstuff and basic goods.

During a tour, Al-Huwaila affirmed that all foodstuff is normally available and there is no any shortage, according a news statement. The statement quoted the minister as saying that provision situations are stable and societies provide regularly consumers' needs.



Al-Huwaila met with some citizens at societies and listened to their notices, as part of her keenness on direct communications with citizens and making sure of workflow, it noted.

She urged officials at societies to continually provide basic commodities in sufficient quantities and gives priorities to national products.

These field tours came within the framework of implementing the political leadership's directives on following market conditions and making sure of the stable provision of basic goods, the minister stressed.

Decree reprimands domestic violence, safeguards family

Massive increase in penalties becomes law

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Decree-Law No. 11/2026 on protection from domestic violence was published in the official gazette "Kuwait al-Youm" on Sunday. The law establishes a comprehensive legislative framework to strengthen the protection of family members, prevent domestic violence, and repeals Law No. 16/2020.

According to the explanatory memorandum, the decree-law reflects the state's commitment to protecting the family as the cornerstone of society. It also addresses gaps identified in implementing the previous law by introducing legal and procedural tools to ensure effective protection for victims.

The law provides a clear definition of domestic violence in all its forms - physical, psychological, sexual, and financial - and specifies the categories eligible for protection, as well as establishes mechanisms for reporting and early intervention to ensure cases are handled quickly, confidentially, and effectively.

The decree-law mandates the formation of a National Committee for Protection from Domestic Violence under the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. The committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry

of Information, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as members of the judiciary and civil society.

The committee is tasked with developing general policies to combat domestic violence, reviewing relevant legislation, preparing awareness and training programs, and issuing annual reports on cases and complaints.

The decree-law also requires the establishment of shelters for victims of domestic violence, affiliated with the Supreme Council for Family Affairs.

Police forces may be called to provide protection, and a fund has been established to support victims of domestic violence and those under their care.

The law grants the competent authority broad powers to receive reports, coordinate with security and medical agencies, and take necessary measures to protect victims, including transferring them to hospitals, forensic medicine departments, or specialized centers.

Dispute

The competent authority is also empowered to provide psychological and social support and facilitate family dispute resolution according to regulations that prioritize the best interests of the family.

The law establishes a comprehensive system of protection orders, allowing the court to issue urgent measures to safeguard victims while exempting applicants from court fees.

The decree-law specifies penalties for acts related to domestic violence.

Anyone who coerces a victim into dropping their complaint shall face imprisonment of one week to six months and a fine of up to KD 1,000.

Failure to report cases of violence against children or individuals lacking legal capacity carries

a penalty of imprisonment for up to one year or a fine of up to KD 200.

Filing a false report of domestic violence is punishable by imprisonment of up to two years and a fine of up to KD 500.

Violating a protection order carries a penalty of one to three months' imprisonment and a fine of KD 500 to 1,000, with increased penalties if the violation involves an act of domestic violence.

Publishing or broadcasting any information about domestic violence cases before, during, or after the verdict is prohibited. Only a summary of the verdict may be published, without mentioning the names or images of the parties involved. Violators face imprisonment of one to three months and a fine of KD 1,000 to KD 5,000.

The decree-law affirms the Public Prosecution's jurisdiction to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate all crimes specified in the law, while ensuring full confidentiality of proceedings and using identification codes to protect the identities of victims.

The Supreme Council for Family Affairs will prepare the implementing regulations within three months. The decree-law takes effect from the date of its publication in the official gazette.

Penalties:

■ Imprisonment of one week to six months and a fine of up to 1,000 dinars for anyone who forces a victim to withdraw their complaint.

■ Imprisonment of up to one year or a fine of up to 200 dinars for failing to report cases of violence against children or persons lacking legal capacity.

■ Imprisonment of up to two years and a fine of up to 500 dinars for submitting a false report of domestic violence.

■ Imprisonment of one to three months and a fine of 500 to 1,000 dinars for violating a protection order.



KUNA photo
Ministry of Commerce and Industry inspectors visited many food stores in Hawally Governorate.

Price checks continue

MoCI detects 13 various violations in store raids

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) recorded 13 violations during an inspection campaign targeting several commercial stores in Hawally Governorate.

In a statement to KUNA on Sunday, the ministry said the campaign was led by Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai and carried out by the emergency inspection team on Saturday evening.

The violations included failure to comply with fixed food price regulations, selling certain goods above the approved price, failing to display prices, irregularities related to promotional offers, failure to issue invoices, and not indicating the country of origin.

The ministry stressed that emergency inspection teams will continue conducting market campaigns to monitor prices, enforce regulations, and strengthen consumer protection.

'Starlink' comes to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Starlink satellite internet service has started operating in Kuwait, according to the company's official website, which shows its availability in the country, reports **Al-Rai** daily.

Several pre-registered customers reported receiving emails to complete the subscription process, which is now open to all residents after years of waiting.

According to the company's website, the launch and activation process is subject to the terms and conditions of the Kuwait's Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) and its required approvals.

MUGHAL MAHAL  **مغل محل**
SINCE 1988
الخبز الأول للصبح

CELEBRATE IFTAR WITH DELICIOUS FLAVOURS!

Iftar Buffet HAWALLY
KD 6.450 ONLY
CHILDREN AGE: 3 TO 10 **KD 3.750**

20% OFF

FREE DELIVERY

20KD Gift Voucher
Special Iftar Offer
For Just 16 KD

1800 188
JUST ORDER - WE'RE ON THE WAY!

SERVING ALL ACROSS KUWAIT
@mughalmahalkuwait



Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) holds the third emergency meeting.

KRCS photo

KRCS holds 3rd emergency meeting, evaluates operational preparedness

Volunteers increased to 381 under response plan

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) held on Saturday the third emergency meeting of the Directors of Board which witnessed increasing the numbers of volunteers to 381 as part of the approved plan to keep pace with current developments and enhance field readiness.

Chairing the meeting, KRCS Chairman Khaled Al-Maghames said the meeting came within the continued follow of developments and assessing operational and logistical readiness of emergency teams and volunteers, along the review of the latest developments related to the approved emergency plans.

The meeting also focused on the evaluation of coordination among relevant government agencies and review of logistical aspects to make sure of the provision of relief substance

and basic supplies as part of the society's strategic stock, Al-Maghames told KUNA in a statement.

Male and female volunteers were distributed into some field groups in line with the approved plan in a manner that ensures rapid response if needed, he noted. There are training and rehabilitation programs to volunteers.

The KRCS, along with the state's institutions, continues its humanitarian and national role through boosting logistical and operational preparedness and activating the capacity of volunteers, he stated.

No gas leakage detected: Kuwait's agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): The Public Authority for Environment, the Kuwait Oil Company, the Kuwait National Petroleum Company and the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company affirmed on Friday that regarding what is being circulated about the presence of gas leaks, no readings indicating any gas leakage have been recorded, according to the data issued by the approved monitoring and surveillance systems at operational sites and air quality monitoring stations.

In a joint news statement, the concerned authorities confirmed that the results of the current readings show that the levels of gases and pollutants in the outdoor air are within the normal and permissible limits according to the approved environmental and health standards.

This stresses the stability of the situation and the absence of any abnormal indicators, it added.

It pointed out that technical teams at the concerned authorities are pursuing readings around the clock through monitoring and surveillance systems to ensure the safety of operational processes and maintain the lightest levels of safety and environmental commitment, according to the statement.

The relevant authorities confirm that situations are stable and there is ongoing coordination and communication between the Public Authority for Environment and oil companies to pursue developments in a manner that ensures transparency, environment protection and the safety of all, the statement concluded.

Embassy of Mexico

Eid Al-Fitr congratulatory message from Mexico Ambassador to Kuwait

On behalf of the Government and people of Mexico, I extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, the esteemed Government, and the friendly people of Kuwait on the joyous occasion of Eid-Al-Fitr.

Eid Al-Fitr is a blessed time that reflects the noble values of compassion, solidarity, and generosity. It marks the culmination of the holy month of Ramadan, a period of reflection, devotion, and unity. May this auspicious occasion bring renewed hope, prosperity, and continued progress to Kuwait under its visionary leadership.

I wish the State of Kuwait and its people lasting peace, stability, and further advancement, and I look forward to the continued strengthening of the bonds of friendship and cooperation between Mexico and Kuwait.



Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller, Ambassador of Mexico to Kuwait

May this Eid be filled with joy, harmony, and renewed hope for a future of continued success and well-being. Eid Mubarak!

Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller
Ambassador

Awareness content hits half a million

IICO completes Thabat 2 program to support 500,000 Rohingya refugees

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): The International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) announced on Sunday the completion of Thabat 2 program aimed at supporting more than 500,000 Rohingya refugees through awareness media content produced in the Rohingya language.

Senior Donor Relations Specialist at IICO Jarrah Al-Zaid told KUNA the program came in response to the difficult humanitarian conditions faced by thousands of Rohingya refugees in camps, where displacement, poverty and

limited educational opportunities persist.

He said the program was implemented in cooperation with Arakan Humanitarian Association in Turkiye and targeted over 500,000 beneficiaries, mostly residing in refugee camps in Bangladesh, at a total cost of USD 37,481.

Al-Zaid added the project included establishing a fully equipped studio and producing visual awareness content focusing on strengthening family cohesion and preserving religious and cultural identity amid harsh living conditions.

He noted the second phase followed the success of the first season, expanding production to 20 episodes addressing issues affecting Rohingya refugees, achieving more than nine million views across digital platforms.



Al-Zaid

Other Voices

The Earth song: A cry for peace

By Ahmad alsarraf

AMID the destruction, violence, and devastation around us, I found that the lyrics of an old 1995 song by the late, legendary Michael Jackson capture some of my feelings about the current state of the world.

The song reminds us that this is not just about ourselves, but about everything on this beautiful Earth. It calls on us to care, let go of negativity, and recognize that wars are destroying everything around us. We must care for one another, cherish our planet, and place our homeland above all else, as it remains our last refuge.

Below are the lyrics of that song:

What about sunrise? What about rain?

What about all the things that you said we were to gain?

What about killing fields? Is there a time?

What about all the things that you said was yours and mine?

Did you ever stop to notice all the blood we've shed before?

Did you ever stop to notice this crying Earth, these weeping shores?

What have we done to the world? Look what we've done...

What about all the peace that you pledge your only son?

What about flowering fields? Is there a time?

What about all the dreams that you said was yours and mine?

Did you ever stop to notice all the children dead from war?

Did you ever stop to notice this crying Earth, these weeping shores?

I used to dream... I used to glance beyond the stars

Now I don't know where we are, although I know we've drifted far

Hey, what about yesterday? (What about us?)

What about the seas?

The heavens are falling down... I can't even breathe

What about apathy?

I need you

What about nature's worth? It's our planet's womb

What about animals? We have turned kingdoms to dust

What about elephants? Have we lost their trust

What about crying whales? We are ravaging the seas

What about forest trails? Burnt despite our pleas

What about the holy land? Torn apart by creed

What about the common man? Can't we set him free?

What about children dying? Can't you hear them cry?

Where did we go wrong? Someone tell me why

What about baby boy? What about the days? What about all their joy?

What about the man? What about the crying man?

What about Abraham? What about death again?

Do we give a damn?

The link to the song is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EG6cyfKEs>

email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

New borrowing framework

MoF decree empowers KIA, CBK to secure state funding

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Minister of Finance, Dr. Yaqoub Al-Rifai, issued Ministerial Decision No. 9/2026 that authorizes the Kuwait Investment Authority and the Central Bank of Kuwait to conduct borrowing on behalf of the Ministry of Finance, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Article 1 of the decision states that the Central Bank of Kuwait is authorized, on behalf of the Ministry of Finance, to coordinate and consult with the ministry to conduct borrowing operations in Kuwaiti dinars or major convertible foreign currencies within the

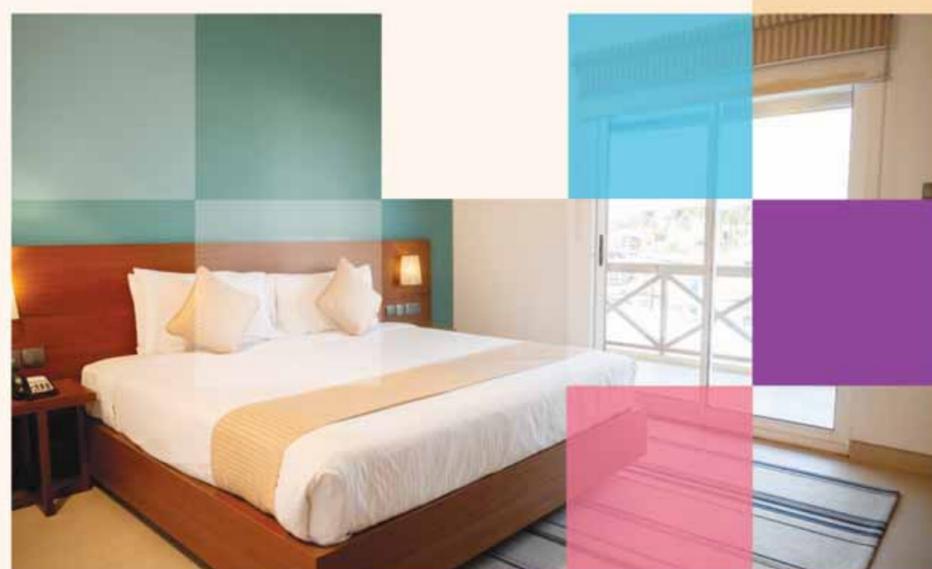
State of Kuwait, in accordance with the established financial methods and instruments.

Article 2 stipulates that the Kuwait Investment Authority is authorized, on behalf of the Ministry of Finance, to coordinate and consult with the Ministry to conduct borrowing operations in major convertible foreign currencies from the global market, in accordance with established financial methods and instruments.

Article 3 stipulates that officials, each within their respective jurisdiction, are responsible for implementing this decision and periodically reporting to the Minister of Finance on actions taken under its provisions. The decision is effective from the date of issuance and will be published in the official gazette.



Dr. Al-Rifai



Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)

Price

One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast

BHD 46.000

One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast

BHD 102.148 / Net

Weekends (Thursday & Friday)

Price

One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast

BHD 53.361 / Net

One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast

BHD 119.173 / Net

Terms & conditions apply

Kuwait's Prime Minister visits Kuwait Central Blood Bank

PM praises donors and staff for strengthening national blood reserves

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited on Sunday the Kuwait Central Blood Bank accompanied by Minister of Health Ahmad Al-Awadhi

and Director of the Central Administration of Blood Transfusion and Cell Therapy at the Ministry of Health, Reem Al-Radwan.

During the visit, His Highness listened to a briefing on the mechanisms of the blood bank's work and the

stages of blood and platelet donation, in addition to the capacity of blood donation centers across the country and the plans adopted to secure sufficient blood and platelet reserves. His Highness expressed his appreciation to citizens and residents who donated blood, praising their initiative, which reflects the values of solidarity and social

cohesion within the community.

He also commended the medical and technical staff working at the central blood bank and its affiliated centers for their humanitarian and national role, stressing the importance of continuing work with responsibility and cooperation to ensure the availability of a strategic blood reserve, particularly during the current period.



Prime Minister Diwan photos

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, paid an inspection visit on Sunday to the Central Blood Bank, accompanied by the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi, and the Director of the Central Department of Blood and Cellular Therapy at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Reem Al-Radwan.

Kuwait Foreign Minister holds talks with UAE, Qatar, Egypt on regional tensions

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held a phone call on Sunday with UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

According to a Foreign Ministry statement, the call addressed the rising military escalation in the region due to Iran's hostile actions and its serious implications for regional and international security and stability. Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh

Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held a phone call Sunday with Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

During the call, the two sides discussed the growing military escalation

in the region following Iran's aggression against regional states.

According to a statement by Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the talks addressed the serious repercussions and concerning implications of the escalation on regional

and international security and stability.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received a phone call on Sunday from Egyptian Foreign Minister Bader AbdelAati.

According to a Foreign Ministry statement, the call discussed the rising military escalation in the region due to Iran's hostile actions and its serious implications for regional and international security and stability.

Continued from Page 1

From hardship

The creditor who risked their money by lending to someone unable to repay should bear the responsibility of proving nonpayment. Yet in Kuwait, the burden falls on the debtor to prove their insolvency. Simply put, if they were not insolvent, they would not have needed to borrow in the first place.

I would like to stress the importance of distinguishing between borrowing from banks and borrowing from usurers. Banks provide loans only after fulfilling the legal requirements that allow them to recover their funds through the borrower's assets.

Unlike usurers and other creditors, banks do not issue cheques or promissory notes that could constitute a criminal offense.

We need to break free from this cycle as soon as possible. The number of debtors in Kuwait has reached high levels, with many imprisoned for failing to repay small sums or due to bounced cheques and court-ordered debts.

A citizen's freedom should not be restricted over a debt of KD 1,000 or less, especially when there are organizations collecting donations for this purpose, yet the use of these funds often is unclear.

Our forefathers followed the principle that "after hardship comes ease," which made transactions among Kuwaitis simpler and reflected a society built on solidarity and widespread social compassion, unlike what we see today.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Minister of Justice for his decision to suspend the execution of arrest warrants for debtors. I hope this suspension will be made permanent and is not limited to times of crisis.

Drones strike

He also affirmed the commitment of the Armed Forces to maintain the highest level of readiness to defend the nation.

Moreover, Ministry of Interior spokesperson Brigadier General Nasser Bousulaib confirmed the arrest of three individuals for using drones for aerial photography in violation of the warnings and instructions issued in this regard, given the negative impact of such activity on security measures during the current period. He said the arrested individuals were referred to the relevant authorities to take legal action against them.

He disclosed that the ministry continues to monitor those who violate the regulations on the use of these devices, warning that the ministry will not hesitate to take legal action against violators in order to maintain national security and safety.

He added that the explosive ordnance disposal teams responded to eight reports on falling debris resulting from defensive operations. He said the specialized teams handled these incidents as per the procedures, bringing the total number of reports received since the beginning of the attacks to 380.

He stressed that the security and military institutions continue to perform their duties with high efficiency.

He then reaffirmed the ongoing efforts of the specialized teams in dealing with drone debris and the effects of defensive operations.

He implored Almighty Allah to pro-

tect the State of Kuwait, its leadership and its people, and to perpetuate the blessings of security and safety bestowed on the whole nation.

Undersecretary of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Lt. Gen. Hamad Al-Barjas underlined Saturday the importance of unifying efforts and integrating roles among different security and military authorities in a manner that enhances readiness and deals with all challenges to ensure the protection of the homeland, its security and stability.

This came during the reception of Lt. Gen. Al-Barjas of the Chief of the Kuwait Army's General Staff Lt. Gen. Khaled Al-Shariaan and Lt. Gen. Abdulwahab Al-Waheeb, as part of boosting coordination and integration among these authorities, the KNG said in a press statement.

Al-Barjas conveyed the greetings and appreciation of the KNG command for sincere efforts exerted to defend the country, it added.

It noted that continued coordination and joint action among relevant authorities are a fundamental pillar to bolster national security system.

The senior officials discussed bolstering coordination to keep pace with the requirements of the 'current circumstances' and achieve the highest level of preparedness, it stated.

Also on Saturday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah visited a number of military sites accompanied by Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Shariaan.

During the visit, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

According to a Diwan statement, His Highness the Crown Prince lauded the "heroic and exceptional" role of all military and security bodies involved in maintaining a high state of readiness amidst the rapid and critical developments currently unfolding in the region.

His Highness also lauded solidarity and strong condemnation voiced by the international community of the heinous attacks by the Iranian side that targeted the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as His Highness highly valued the historic adoption of the Gulf resolution in the United Nations Security Council with the support of 136 countries, which demonstrates the just of the Gulf position and the strength of international solidarity with it. His Highness indicated that coordination with the brothers in the GCC countries is ongoing and continuous, while stressing at the same time the need to take external threats seriously, and to maintain the highest levels of readiness and vigilance to deal with all scenarios in light of a highly complex regional situation.

Concluding his visit, His Highness prayed to Almighty Allah for the continued security, safety, and prosperity of the State of Kuwait under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, as well as to bestow His mercy upon Kuwait's righteous martyrs who sacrificed their lives in defense of the nation, and a speedy recovery for the injured.

His Highness the Crown Prince was accompanied during the visit by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah and Head of the

Crown Prince's Diwan, Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In related news, Kuwait's Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah visited Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital on Sunday to check on personnel injured in a hostile drone attack.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Defense said the minister was briefed by the medical team on the personnel's condition and wished him a speedy recovery.

The statement added that two other injured personnel have already recovered.

Elsewhere, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi affirmed on Sunday that his country "welcomes any regional initiative that could lead to a just end to the war."

In a statement carried by the Iranian Fars News Agency, Araghchi said, "We welcome any regional initiative that could lead to a just end to the war," adding that "ending the war is contingent upon guarantees of non-recurrence and the payment of reparations."

Araghchi noted that diplomatic calls are ongoing between Iran and Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and neighboring countries.

He emphasized that "the Strait of Hormuz is open to all except for ships belonging to the US and its allies," adding that "the situation in Iran is stable, there are no rifts within government institutions or the military, and the Supreme Leader of Iran is in good health and fully managing the situation."

Gulf states reported new missile and drone attacks on Sunday after Iran threatened to widen its campaign and called for the evacuation of three major ports in the United Arab Emirates as the war in the Middle East, now in its third week, expands further.

Israel and the United States attacked Iran on Feb. 28, saying they were striking nuclear and military sites and encouraging the Iranian people to rise against their leaders. Iran has responded with attacks against Israel and neighboring countries in the Arabian Gulf.

The war, which shows no signs of ending soon, has upended global air travel, disrupted oil exports from the region and sent fuel prices rising across the world.

U.S. President Donald Trump said he hoped countries reliant on oil and gas exports would send warships to secure the Strait of Hormuz. None responded with firm commitments by Sunday though some said they were considering action.

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE told residents Sunday they were working to intercept incoming projectiles, a day after Iran threatened three Emirati ports, the first time it has done so against a neighboring country's non-U.S. assets.

Iran had earlier accused the U.S. of launching Friday's strikes on Kharg Island from the UAE, without providing evidence for the claim. The UAE and other Gulf countries that host U.S. bases have denied allowing their land or airspace to be used for military operations against Iran, including toward the island, home to Iran's primary oil terminal.

Since the war started, Iranian strikes have killed at least a dozen civilians in Gulf states, most of them migrant workers.

As global anxiety soars over oil prices and supplies, Trump said Saturday that he hopes China, France, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom and others send warships to keep the Strait of Hormuz "open and safe." Those countries rely more heavily than the U.S. on oil and gas that passes through the strait.

"We are intensively looking with our

allies at what can be done, because it's so important that we get the strait reopened," U.K. Energy Secretary Ed Miliband told Sky News, adding that "ending this conflict is the best and surest way to get the strait reopened."

South Korea's Foreign Ministry said it would coordinate closely with Washington and review Trump's proposal.

Araghchi, in a social media post, described Trump's call as "begging."

Iran's joint military command has reiterated its threat to attack U.S.-linked "oil, economic and energy infrastructures" in the region if the Islamic Republic's oil infrastructure is hit.

Hormuz crisis

He disclosed that one reason why Kuwait invoked the force majeure clause is the ongoing official Iranian threats to close the Strait of Hormuz should war break out in the region.

He added that oil tankers had already been damaged, prompting international insurance companies to document these incidents. "Furthermore, oil fields, refineries and storage facilities belonging to countries bordering the strait and others within the Gulf region had been targeted," he said.

He stated that the Strait of Hormuz is almost completely closed, with the average number of transiting vessels dropping from 65 to five, indicating 95 percent transit rate.

He revealed that Kuwait's decision to reduce production stemmed from a decline in shipping and unloading operations at its ports, as well as the rise in oil storage levels.

He affirmed that Kuwait authorized the activation of the force majeure clause, which exempts the seller from liability, loss or legal compensation claims in the event of a breach of the sales contract due to failure to deliver the oil quantity because of circumstances beyond its control, such as war or natural disasters.

He said the seller is entitled to reduce the quantity to a reasonable level, while the buyer has the right to demand the agreed-upon quantity if a legal loophole exists that the clause did not cover for the seller and if the seller did not exert its utmost effort to provide the required quantity.

Regarding the impact of reducing domestic oil production on the State budget, Al-Awadhi revealed that Kuwait's production before the crisis was around 2.58 million barrels per day, with domestic consumption ranging from 450,000 to 470,000 barrels per day. He pointed out that any reduction will have negative repercussions on national revenues despite the remarkable increase in the price of oil.

On the other hand, economist Nasser Al-Mutairi predicted that the price of oil will exceed \$180 per barrel if the current crisis in the region continues. He said the global economy will be affected by the rise in oil prices, especially since 20 percent of global oil consumption passes through the Strait of Hormuz.

He stressed that the rapid increase in oil prices has led to the collapse of stock markets in East Asia, citing the enormous losses suffered by the South Korean and Japanese stock markets last week. He said South Korea and Japan rely heavily on Gulf oil to power their industrial equipment and machinery, stating that in addition to the volatility in financial markets, a two-month continuation of the war could lead to a surge in energy prices and disruption

of global trade.

He explained that the shock of war could cause structural imbalances in the world's economies, as demand for essential goods like food and medicine will increase to mitigate risks should the war drag on.

He warned that price hikes will affect all markets, indicating that KPC had a proactive mindset, as it stored quantities of Kuwaiti crude oil in the countries that consume the most Kuwaiti oil.

He was quick to add that the current crisis necessitates increasing external storage, enough for the countries importing Kuwaiti oil for at least a month, with the need to link the local Kuwaiti oil pipelines to the oil transport pipeline networks in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to facilitate the arrival of Kuwaiti oil to the Arabian Sea.

Gold reaches

Although geopolitical tensions typically support gold prices, the rise in crude oil prices above 100 dollars per barrel heightened concerns over renewed global inflationary pressures, prompting investors to focus more on income-generating assets amid expectations of tighter monetary policy.

Discussions about potential interest rate cuts in 2026 have diminished after higher energy costs complicated efforts to control inflation, supporting the US dollar and raising bond yields while prompting some investors to liquidate gold positions to secure liquidity and cover margin calls.

Gold futures for April delivery fell by 1.25 percent, or 64 dollars, to close at 5,061 dollars per ounce at the end of the week, bringing the metal's total weekly losses to around 1.88 percent.

Silver prices declined more sharply, with futures contracts dropping 4.44 percent, or 3.57 dollars, to close at about 81 dollars per ounce, recording a weekly loss of approximately 3.46 percent.

The report also highlighted a rise in the US Dollar Index, which measures the performance of the US currency against a basket of six major currencies, reaching 100.35 points and heading toward weekly gains of about 1.4 percent.

These market movements coincided with mixed US economic data showing that the core Personal Consumption Expenditures Index, the Federal Reserve's preferred measure of inflation, rose to 3.1 percent year-on-year in January, remaining significantly above the central bank's target of 2 percent.

Uncertainty in global markets increased further after statements by US President Donald Trump warning that the United States could take strong military action against Iran during the week, raising fears of a wider conflict in the Middle East and potential disruptions to energy markets and global supply chains.

The report noted that these developments prompted the credit rating agency Standard & Poor's to warn that the continuation of the war could lead to long-term supply shocks, potentially raising global inflation and putting pressure on economic growth.

Financial market data indicated that traders currently expect only limited monetary easing in the coming period, with estimates pointing to a possible interest rate reduction of no more than

20 basis points.

From a technical perspective, the report said the 5,000 dollars per ounce level has become an important psychological support level for gold in the near term. A break below this level could push prices toward the 50-day moving average near 4925 dollars per ounce, while the next support level lies around 4841 dollars.

On the upside, the report identified 5,050 dollars per ounce as the first resistance level if prices rise again, followed by 5100 dollars and then the recent peak near 5,238 dollars per ounce.

The report highlighted that market surveys reflect hesitation among investors and financial institutions regarding the short-term direction of gold. Some analysts believe that gold maintaining levels above 5000 dollars indicates continued investment demand, while others say that keeping interest rates unchanged by the Federal Reserve at its upcoming meeting may place additional pressure on the metal in the near term.

Markets are expected to focus this week on the Federal Reserve meeting scheduled for March 17 and 18, along with key economic data including industrial production, housing market indicators, employment data, and the Producer Price Index, while closely monitoring geopolitical developments in the Middle East that could continue to influence global market movements.

'Kuwait Mobile

In a statement posted on its X account on Monday evening, PACI explained that claims circulating on some social media platforms about a cyberattack on the app are false. The information is completely unfounded and that the app's systems are functioning efficiently and securely, with no impact on its services.

PACI urged the public to verify information, avoid spreading rumors, and rely only on official PACI channels for updates.

Saudi opens

They stated that the ministry is fully aware that the relationship between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia is based on the principles of cooperation and integration, which require no further explanation, as times of crisis clearly demonstrate how all roles complement one another in the spirit of teamwork.

They quoted Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahad bin Abdulaziz – may Allah have mercy on him – as saying, "there is no Saudi Arabia without Kuwait, and there is no Kuwait without Saudi Arabia. It is a shared existence, geography, history and destiny."

They added that Kuwait appreciates the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in facilitating travel between the two countries, pointing out that this significant gesture reflects the shared destiny of the two brotherly nations.

They said Kuwait is always keen on maintaining its strong relationship with the Kingdom, a position that resonates deeply among Kuwaitis and underscores the vital bond between the two brotherly nations. "This critical period reveals the true character of our historic leaders, who spare no effort in alleviating the suffering of their brothers. This is our pledge to the Kingdom of Goodness," they concluded.

INTERNATIONAL

High winds cause power outages, property damage and 1 death in US

HARRISBURG, Pa., March 15, (AP): Hundreds of thousands of people were left without power Saturday after high winds raked eastward from the Great Lakes region, leaving trees down and substantial property damage in their wake. Farther west, at least one person died in a massive wind-driven wildfire in Nebraska.

About 346,000 customers were still without electricity as of the late afternoon in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan, according to PowerOutage.us, which tracks outages nationwide.

A 66 mph (106 kph) gust at Pittsburgh International Airport on Friday was deemed its fourth-strongest on record that was not caused by a thunderstorm, according to the National Weather Service. Cleveland Burke Lakefront Airport saw winds hit 85 mph (137 km) that afternoon.

Winds took down a gas station canopy in New Franklin, Ohio, and an auto parts store sign in Baldwin, Pennsylvania. Trees and tree limbs fell into or onto homes and cars from Cleveland to Pittsburgh. The roof of a school building in the Chicago suburb of Niles, Illinois, was severely damaged by wind.

High winds fueled multiple wild-

fires across a broad swath of Nebraska's range and grassland, causing one death in Arthur County, officials said. The victim was not immediately identified, and the sheriff's office did not disclose other details about the death.

What state officials have dubbed the Morrill County fire has burned at least 735 square miles (about 1,880 square kilometers) so far across four counties. At least 12 structures have been destroyed, according to the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Chelle Ladely of Sidney said her home was currently safe, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) south of the nearest fire. But she worries for other friends and family in the area.

"Smoke is filling the air, and at night I can see the burn of the fires on the horizon," Ladely said. "My father is a crop agronomist, and his company as well as other local farmers are all gathering their water trucks to help aid with the fires, and truckloads of bottled water and food is being supplied by our good patrons for our volunteer firemen trying to extinguish the blazes."

Several other wildfires pushed by winds of up to 65 mph (105 kph) burned another 225 square miles (about 580

square kilometers) for a total of nearly 938 square miles (about 2,430 square kilometers) by midday Saturday. The strong winds have kept firefighters from containing any of the fires, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency said. Gov. Jim Pillen toured areas burned by the Morrill County fire.

In Chicago, thousands of revelers turned out to see the city's namesake river dyed bright green and a downtown parade celebrating the St. Patrick's Day holiday, despite the threat of snow and stiff winds that drove the feels-like temperature well below freezing.

Dangerous winds were but one piece of a wild weather mosaic that included heavy rains in Hawaii, triple-digit heat coming next week in Phoenix and a return of winter cold to the Midwest and Northeast. Chicago was forecast to approach the single digits Fahrenheit by Tuesday, with Minneapolis seeing lows around zero (minus 18 C).

Several Minnesota cities have already declared snow emergencies starting Sunday, when what could be the season's largest snowfall is expected to hit. Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula are also in the crosshairs.



Malcolm and Lincoln firefighters respond to a wildfire in Denton, Nebraska, on March 12. (AP)

Federal order seeks major capacity increase at proposed Arizona ICE detention center

WH wants to build underground center to provide security screening for visitors

WASHINGTON, March 15, (AP): The White House wants to build an underground center to provide security screening for visitors, the latest step in the Trump administration's plan to overhaul the grounds.

Plans, including renderings of the 33,000-square-foot (3,066-square-meter) center, were included in the preliminary agenda released on Friday for the April meeting of a federal commission that approves construction on federal land in Washington.

The screening facility would be built beneath Sherman Park, which is located southeast of the White House and directly south of the Treasury building.

The park had for a long time been the place where White House tourists and guests lined up for security checks before they cleared a series of trailer-type structures and walked to the East Wing entrance. President Donald Trump tore down the East Wing last fall to build a ballroom. Visitors currently line up near Lafayette Park, across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House.

The new screening facility would have seven lanes to ease processing and reduce wait times. Construction could begin as early as August, according to the plans, as the White House said it wants the facility operating by July 2028, six months before Trump's term ends.

The monument of Union Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman in the center of Sherman Park would not be removed, according to plans for the project, which is a collaboration of the Executive Office of the President, the US Secret Service and the National Park Service, which manages the White House grounds.

The National Capital Planning Commission, which oversees federal construction, planned to discuss the proposal at its April 2 meeting, according to the tentative agenda circulated Friday.

Also on that meeting agenda is a debate and a final vote on plans by the Republican president to build a 90,000-square-foot (8,360-square-meter) building, including a large ballroom, where the East Wing stood.

Also:

WASHINGTON: A former prison in Marana slated to become an immigration detention center has a capacity of 513 people, according to state documents. But a procurement order released by the federal government aims to push that capacity to 775.

That's a change that local advocates say would be devastating for detained people.

"There is no way to raise the population by that amount in an ethical way," said



The White House is seen Feb 24, 2026, in Washington. (AP)

immigration attorney Daniela Ugaz, who heads the legal research team for Pima Resists I.C.E., a group created specifically to resist the detention center.

"As an immigration attorney I've worked a lot in these detention centers and I've seen that when the population surges abuse, devastation, medical neglect resulting in death and safety concerns all rise."

On Feb. 25, the federal government shared a procurement memo for an operator to run the detention center in Marana for two years.

The building, formerly a state prison, is owned by private prison operator Management and Training Corporation, or MTC, which bought it from the state in 2025. MTC had previously operated a minimum security prison in the building until 2023.

While no final agreement has been made, the federal procurement order names MTC as the operator most likely to run the immigration detention facility: "Management & Training Corporation is the sole owner and operator of the Marana

detention facility that meets ICE requirements in the timeframe."

The capacity of the Marana detention center is 513 people, according to a 2023 press release from the governor's office about the sale of the state prison as well as state audit documents of the facility while it was a prison.

The procurement order, however, asks for the facility in Marana to be prepared to hold 775 detainees.

In a statement to Arizona Luminaria, MTC said the company had a long track record of working with local leaders, businesses and residents to be a strong community partner.

"If an agreement is finalized, our focus will remain on restoring good local jobs, supporting the Marana economy, and operating the facility with high standards of safety, professionalism, and dignity."

MTC did not respond to a question from Arizona Luminaria about the building's capacity.

The town of Marana has said that as the state owned the facility, and it was already zoned for a prison, there was no local approval required for the sale to move ahead.

Vic Hathaway, communications manager with the town of Marana, told Arizona Luminaria that Marana was not a party to the agreement between the federal government and MTC, but had a longstanding working relationship with the company.

"MTC previously operated a detention facility at this location for many years, during which the Town experienced a professional and cooperative relationship. We have communicated with MTC and have been assured they are open to meeting with the Town and residents to address concerns and answer questions should the agreement move forward. At this time, details have not been finalized," Hathaway said.

This summer, Congress approved \$45 billion for immigration detention, part of an increase in spending for immigration enforcement that experts say has significantly grown America's immigration enforcement apparatus.

"DHS/ICE needs to increase bed capacity to meet the administration's interior enforcement and border decompression goals," the procurement notice reads.

That comes as immigration detention nationwide saw the highest number of deaths in custody in Fiscal Year 2025 than any year since 2004.

Local groups have raised concerns about what an expansion of immigration would mean for their communities.

Of particular concern, say advocates, are the conditions inside detention.



People take part in a national demonstration against the war in Iran and the March 22 referendum on the Italian justice system, in Rome on March 14. (AP)

Anti-war protests in Italy, Spain as referendum on judges looms

Thousands of people protested Saturday against wars in the Middle East and judicial reforms proposed by Italy's conservative government - linking international tensions with a growing domestic political battle before a national referendum.

The March 22-23 referendum on changes to the judicial system has become a major political test for Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's

government, which faces an election next year. The debate over legal reforms has escalated into a broader confrontation between the prime minister and her political opponents.

In central Rome, protesters waving red trade union banners and Palestinian and Cuban flags chanted "Meloni government, resign!" before the rally ended peacefully. Demonstrations also took place

across Spain on Saturday, where rallies were organized in dozens of cities by a coalition of civic groups calling for an end to the conflict in the Middle East. In Madrid, thousands chanted slogans against the war and expressed solidarity with civilians affected by the conflict.

Additional protests took place earlier this week in Athens and other cities across Greece. (AP)

Zelensky says Ukraine waiting on US, Russia to set next round of talks

KYIV, Ukraine, March 15, (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in comments released Sunday that he was ready for the next round of trilateral peace talks to end Russia's more than 4-year-old invasion of Ukraine, but that it was up to Washington and Moscow to agree on where and when to meet.

Zelensky said the US had proposed hosting the next meeting between American, Ukrainian and Russian negotiating teams, which include US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, but Moscow had refused to send a delegation.

"We are waiting for a response from the Americans. Either they will change the country where we meet, or the Russians must confirm the US," Zelensky said in a media briefing Saturday. "We are not blocking any of these initiatives. We want a trilateral meeting to take place."



Zelensky

The U.S. has postponed its sponsored talks between the two sides due to the war in the Middle East. The Iran war, which erupted on Feb. 28 following US-Israeli strikes on Iran and spread across the region, has drawn the international spotlight away from Ukraine's plight as it strives to hold back Russia's bigger army.

Speaking to journalists, Zelensky also warned of a "very high" risk that the Iran war could drain the air defense stockpiles Ukraine depends on to counter Russian missile strikes.

Zelensky said he lacked a clear picture of available stockpiles and had discussed with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on Friday whether SAMP/T batteries could serve as an alternative to U.S.-made Patriot batteries for intercepting ballistic missiles. He said Ukraine would be "first in line" to test any viable alternative.

He also appeared to push back against US President Donald Trump's recent assertion that Washington has no need for Ukrainian drone technology.

"No, we don't need their help on drone defense," Trump said in a Fox News Radio interview that aired Friday.

French voters head to polls in early municipal test before 2027 election

PARIS, March 15, (AP): Voters are going to the polls Sunday in the first round of municipal elections to choose leadership teams across France, from small villages to the biggest cities - a test for political parties' electoral machines before next year's presidential election for the successor to President Emmanuel Macron.

Although largely focused on grassroots concerns, the voting will be scrutinized for any early hints of how parties might fare in the presidential race of 2027, when Macron's second and last term as president ends. The second round is on March 22.

Attention is particularly focused on key races in major cities, including Paris. Incumbent Socialist Mayor Anne Hidalgo, elected in 2014 and re-elected in 2020, decided against seeking a third term, having steered the French capital through the trauma of extremist attacks in 2015 and the exuberance of the Paris Olympics in 2024.

In Marseille, France's second-largest city, polls pointed to a tight race between incumbent left-wing Mayor Benoit Payan and the candidate of the far-right National Rally party, Franck Allisio, and his would-be municipal team.

The National Rally's performances



French socialist candidate for Paris mayoral election Emmanuel Gregoire casts his vote during the first round of France's 2026 municipal elections in Paris on March 15. (AP)

in municipal races will be studied for possible indications of whether the party of Marine Le Pen is gathering momentum in the lead-up to 2027, despite the possibility that she might be barred from challenging again for the presidency herself.

Last year, a French court convicted

Le Pen of embezzlement and prohibited her from seeking public office for five years. She is the daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen, the polarizing founder of the far-right National Front who was convicted multiple times of anti-semitism, discrimination and inciting racial violence.

Prominent Belarus opp'n figure receives award four years after prison sentence

BERLIN, March 15, (AP): Prominent Belarus opposition figure Maria Kolesnikova on Saturday picked up a prize for contributions to European unity that she was unable to collect while in prison in her homeland four years ago.

Kolesnikova was presented with the International Charlemagne Prize at a ceremony in Aachen, Germany. She won the prize in 2022, when it was received on her behalf by her sister, Tatsiana Khomich.

Kolesnikova was a key figure in the mass protests that rocked Belarus in 2020. She was a close ally of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the opposition leader who was forced into exile after challenging authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko in that year's vote.

With her close-cropped hair, broad smile and a gesture of forming her outstretched hands into the shape of a heart, she was often seen at the front of demonstrations. Kolesnikova became



Laureate Maria Kolesnikova speaks after receiving the International Charlemagne Prize in Aachen, Germany on March 14. (AP)

an even greater symbol of resistance when Belarusian authorities tried to deport her in September 2020. Driven to the Ukrainian border, she briefly

broke away from security forces, tore up her passport and walked back into Belarus, where authorities took her back into custody.

INTERNATIONAL



Sophon Zaram (center) waves after being elected the new Speaker of the House of Representatives of Thailand in Bangkok, Thailand on March 15. (Xinhua)

Sophon Zaram elected new House speaker of Thailand

BANGKOK, March 15, (Xinhua): Sophon Zaram, a member of parliament (MP) from the Bhumjaithai Party, was elected the new speaker of the House of Representatives of Thailand on Sunday.

Under the Thai constitution, the House speaker will also be the president of the National Assembly. The new speaker will officially take office after the royal endorsement.

During the first parliamentary session following last month's general election, Sophon ran for the House

speaker post against People's Party candidate Parit Wacharasindhu.

In a secret ballot vote, Sophon received 289 votes to become the new speaker, compared to 123 votes for Parit, acting Speaker Pairoj Lohsunthorn announced.

Sophon Zaram joined the Bhumjaithai party in 2008, and served as the country's transport minister from 2008 to 2011. He held the position of Thailand's caretaker deputy prime minister since September 2025.



This photo provided by the North Korean government shows a test firing of multiple rocket launch systems, at an undisclosed place in North Korea on March 14. (AP)

Beijing, Hanoi to hold 10th border defense friendship exchange

Millions in Vietnam vote for new legislature in general election

HANOI, Vietnam, March 15, (Agencies): Voters in Vietnam cast their ballots to select a new National Assembly on Sunday, two months after the ruling Communist Party reelected leader To Lam to the country's top political post.

Nearly 79 million voters across the country are eligible to pick 500 representatives from 864 candidates to the rubber-stamp National Assembly. All candidates are vetted and pre-approved by the Communist Party, ensuring the assembly remains aligned with the party's political direction.

The Communist Party tightly controls political activity, arguing that centralized leadership allows the country to pursue longterm development goals without disruptions.

The new National Assembly is expected to implement the policy agenda shaped at the congress, prioritizing sustained economic growth and political stability.

The election follows the Communist Party's national congress in January, a political event held every five years that sets the country's leadership lineup and policy priorities. At the congress, Lam was reelected as general secretary, the most powerful position in the political system.

"We have the people's support in this election," Lam said after casting his ballot in Hanoi, describing the vote as a national celebration where citizens choose representatives to guide development and safeguard the country's



Voters cast ballots to elect representatives in the National Assembly and people's councils in Hanoi, Vietnam on March 15. (AP)

sovereignty and stability.

Vietnam's economy has expanded rapidly over the past decade, driven by manufacturing exports, foreign investment and its growing role in global supply chains. The country has positioned itself as an alternative production hub as companies diversify away from China, attracting major electronics and textile manufacturers.

It has now set an ambitious target of 10% or higher annual economic growth over the next five years, placing the private sector at the center of its

development strategy in a notable shift for the communist state. Policymakers are now recalibrating the country's economy to push it toward higher-value industries, modernized production and wider use of science, technology and digital tools.

Vietnam's leadership also faces challenges as the country's export-driven economy grapples with uncertainty from rising trade tensions, including tariffs introduced by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Voter turnout in Vietnam's elections

is typically high, often exceeding 90%, with polling stations set up in cities, rural communities and remote regions to encourage participation.

"As a voter in this election, I believe I will be able to choose candidates with morals, dedication and competence to serve the country, bringing development and prosperity to our country and our people," said retired official Doan Thi Bich.

The incoming National Assembly is expected to convene its first meeting in April to formally approve key government appointments and begin implementing the policy roadmap laid out at the party congress.

Also:

BEIJING: China and Vietnam will hold their 10th border defense friendship exchange in mid-March, the Chinese Ministry of National Defense announced on Sunday.

The event is set to take place in designated areas and ports in China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Vietnam's Quang Ninh province, as well as waters in the Beibu Gulf, the ministry said in a statement.

During the event, the two sides will organize joint naval fleet patrols and training exercises. They will also hold medical consultations and cultural events with civilians in the border areas, the statement said.

Kim observes test of rocket launch systems with daughter in N. Korea

SEOUL, South Korea, March 15, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, accompanied by his teenage daughter, observed a live-fire test of multiple rocket launch systems, state media reported Sunday, a likely response to ongoing US-South Korean military training that North Korea views as an invasion rehearsal.

The official Korean Central News Agency reported that Kim watched the strike drill involving twelve 600mm-calibre, ultraprecision rocket launchers off North Korea's east coast on Saturday.

South Korea's military said Saturday it detected about 10 ballistic missiles fired from North Korea's capital region toward the eastern sea. South Korea's national security council called the launches a provocation that violated U.N. Security Council resolutions that bans any ballistic activities by North Korea.

KCNA cited Kim as saying that the drill would expose enemies within the 420-kilometer (260-mile) striking range, to "uneasiness" and give them "a deep understanding of the destructive power of tactical nuclear weapon,"



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, its leader Kim Jong Un and his daughter attend a live-fire test of multiple rocket launch systems, at an undisclosed place in North Korea on March 14. (AP)

KCNA said. He apparently referred to South Korea and US troops stationed in South Korea.

"If this weapon is used, the opponent's military infrastructure within its

striking range can never survive," Kim said, according to KCNA.

KCNA photos showed Kim and his daughter, reportedly named Kim Ju Ae and aged about 13, walking near huge olive-green launch trucks and looking at weapons being launched from them. The girl has been accompanying her father at numerous high-profile events like missile tests and military parades since late 2022, stoking outside speculation that she's being groomed as his heir.

Also:

SEOUL: A fire broke out at a seven-story building in **Sogong-dong**, Jung-gu, Seoul, in South Korea on Saturday evening, leaving 10 people injured, YTN reported.

The fire is believed to have started at a guesthouse on the third floor of the building at around 6:10 pm local time. So far, two people were seriously injured, and eight others sustained minor injuries, with some of the injured reported to be foreign nationals.

Fire authorities issued a Level 1 emergency response and were conducting firefighting operations.

Republic of Congo votes in election that could extend prez 42-year rule

BRAZZAVILLE, Republic of Congo, March 15, (AP): The Republic of Congo is voting to elect a new leader Sunday as incumbent President Denis Sassou N'Guesso runs for a fifth consecutive term.

Three million people are registered to vote in the election, which has been marked by a lethargic mood among young people who expect Sassou N'Guesso to win again, and a call for a boycott by opposition parties. Polls are expected to close by 7 p.m.

Six other candidates are challenging Sassou N'Guesso to vie for the top job of the oil-rich Central African country, which boasts one of the largest oil reserves in sub-Saharan Africa, but analysts say none of them can mount a significant challenge against the incumbent, who has been in power for 42 years.

The campaign showed a vast mismatch between Sassou N'Guesso and his opponents, with the incumbent being the only candidate to travel around the country to canvass for votes. Roads in the capital city, Brazzaville, are paved with Sassou N'Guesso's effigies.

Two other major parties are boycotting the elections over allegations of unfair electoral practices.

Sassou N'Guesso, running under the Congolese Party of Labor, first came to power in 1979 and was replaced in 1992 when he organized the country's first multi-party elections. He returned to power as a militia leader following a four-month civil war in 1997.

A constitutional referendum in 2015 removed presidential age and term limits, allowing him to run again.

The country is struggling with high international debt, which currently stands at 94.5% of its gross domestic product according to the World Bank, and skyrocketing



President of Congo Denis Sassou N'Guesso looks on during a ceremony at the Elysee Palace in Paris, on May 23, 2025. (AP)

unemployment rates for young people. More than half the country's 5.7 million population lives in poverty and 47% of the country's population is under 18.

The election is the latest in a trend of octogenarian African leaders clinging to power. Sassou N'Guesso is the third-longest serving African president, only behind Cameroon's Paul Biya and Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo.

Afghan Taliban forces crossed 'red line' with drone attacks on civilians: Zardari

ISLAMABAD, March 15, (Agencies): Pakistan's president has warned neighboring Afghanistan's Taliban government that it had "crossed a red line" by launching drone attacks on civilian areas in Pakistan, and hours later the country reportedly conducted strikes on an Afghan drone storage facility.

The statement by Asif Ali Zardari was the latest in what has become the deadliest fighting yet between the two South Asian neighbors. The cross-border clashes, which erupted late last month, have shown no signs of abating despite efforts by China and Turkey to broker a ceasefire.

Pakistan said its forces intercepted the drones launched Friday but that falling debris injured two children in the city of Quetta and two people elsewhere in the country.

According to state-run media, Pakistan's air force carried out strikes late Saturday in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar Province, targeting an Afghan military facility that had allegedly been used to launch drone attacks into Pakistan a day earlier and that the facility was also being used by the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban for "acts of terrorism" in Pakistan, Pakistan TV, citing security officials, reported that the lat-



Residents inspect the site of a strike in Kabul, Afghanistan on March 13. (AP)

est strikes were intended to signal to Kabul that Afghan territory cannot be used for cross-border attacks against Pakistan.

There was no immediate comment from Kabul about the latest strikes in Kandahar.

On Friday, the Afghan Taliban government accused Pakistan of conduct-

ing airstrikes in Kabul, the country's capital, and other areas in eastern Afghanistan, saying at least six civilians were killed and 15 others were injured.

Hours later, Kabul claimed its air force responded by targeting military installations near Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, and in northwestern Pakistan.

7 dead in Nepal bus accident

KATHMANDU, Nepal, March 15, (AP): A passenger bus carrying Indian pilgrims slipped off a mountain road and rolled down its slopes in central Nepal, killing seven people and leaving nine more injured, police said Sunday.

All seven killed were Indian pilgrims, and seven other Indian pilgrims on board were injured and taken to nearby hospitals to get medical treatment. The other two injured in the crash, which happened Saturday night, were the Nepali bus driver and his assistant.

The bus was returning after the pilgrims visited the revered Manakamana Temple.

The accident occurred on a path leading from the highway to the temple near Shahid Lakhani village, located about 120 kilometers (75 miles) west of the capital, Kathmandu.

The bus was going downhill when it slipped off a curve and rolled down the mountainside about 150 meters (500 feet) before landing in a ravine.

Police and villagers who reached the wreckage pulled out the injured and helped transport them in ambulances to local hospitals for treatment.

Wine leaves Uganda after going into hiding post poll

KAMPALA, Uganda, March 15, (AP): Ugandan opposition leader **Bobi Wine** said on Saturday he fled the country to escape a military search for him in the aftermath of a disputed presidential election.

Wine, whose real name is Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, went into hiding shortly after the Jan. 15 presidential election.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni won the election with 71.6% of the vote, according to official results that Wine rejects as fake.

Wine's location has been unknown to the general public for weeks, with growing concern for his safety after the army chief, Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, repeatedly posted threats against him on social platform X.

Kainerugaba, the president's son and

presumptive heir, has suggested Wine is wanted for unspecified crimes. Ugandan police say they are not looking for him.

In a video message posted on X on Saturday, an unshaven Wine said he managed to leave Uganda but did not reveal where he went.

"Fellow Ugandans and friends of Uganda all over the world, by the time you see this video I will have left the country for some critical engagements outside Uganda," he said. "And at the right time I will come back and continue with the cause. I thank all of you fellow Ugandans who have concealed and protected me for all this time when the regime was looking for me."

He said it was impossible for Ugandan security operatives to find him "because the people have protected me."

Ugandan soldiers raided Wine's house the day after the Jan. 15 vote, but the opposition leader had already gone into hiding, fearing for his life after campaigning for weeks in helmet and flak jacket at rallies where security forces were a constant presence.



Wine

Lat/Am

5 arrested in Cuba protest: A group of residents of a city in central Cuba took to the streets early Saturday and partially destroyed the local headquarters of the ruling communist party. Authorities said that five people were arrested in a demonstration that was linked to the island's energy supply issues and access to food.

The Cuban government said through official media that "vandalism acts" in Moron were directed at the building, while a smaller group also threw stones and set the reception furniture on fire. Videos published on social media showed that a drugstore and a store were also affected.

Cuba's government said that its interior ministry has opened an investigation into the case. The country has suffered more blackouts and lack of fuel since other countries of the region stopped sending oil. (AP)

'Bolsonaro's kidney function worsens': Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's kidney function worsened at the intensive care unit to which he was transferred hours earlier, a hospital in the capital, Brasilia, said Saturday. The 70-year-old leader also has pneumonia and doctors say his medical situation is serious, but stable.

Bolsonaro was sent to DF Star Hospital on Friday from the prison where he is serving a 27-year sentence for leading a coup attempt in 2023. The hospital also said in a statement that he has had an increase in inflammatory markers since treatment began.

The former president, who governed between 2019-22, was admitted to the hospital after experiencing high fever, low oxygen, sweating and chills. Exams confirmed bronchopneumonia, a type of pneumonia, likely caused by as-



An American flag flies again at the US Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela on March 14, seven years after it was lowered when Washington and Caracas cut diplomatic relations in 2019. (AP)

piration. (AP)

□ □ □

US flag raised at embassy in Venezuela: The American flag was raised Saturday over the US Embassy in Venezuela for the first time since 2019, a move that highlighted the recent shift in relations between the two countries since then President Nicolás Maduro was captured by American troops in January.

Though the flag is now waving, the building is undergoing renovations and it remains unclear when it will fully reopen.

The move comes after several statements from US President Donald Trump in support of Maduro's successor, acting President Delcy Rodríguez, who has tried to keep negotiations open with the American government. (AP)

Bursa Kuwait ends session slightly lower

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Bursa Kuwait closed Sunday's trading session with its general index slipping by 5 points, or 0.06 percent, to end at 8,604.12 points. The market witnessed trading of 149.6 million shares valued at KD 45.6 million (around USD 140 mil-

lion) across 10,522 transactions.

The main market index edged up by 2.85 points, or 0.04 percent, to settle at 8,001.13 points. Trading in this segment involved 53.2 million shares through 4,761 deals, worth KD 8.3 million (approximately USD 25.4 million).

Brent above \$103, WTI near \$99

Oil prices reach highest levels since 2022 amid Gulf tensions

KUWAIT CITY, March 15, (KUNA): Oil prices ended last week's trading at their highest levels since July 2022 amid growing concerns that ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East could damage oil infrastructure and disrupt global energy supplies, particularly if the Strait of Hormuz is closed.

Brent crude futures settled on Friday at USD 103.14 per barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate futures closed at USD 98.71 per barrel.

Energy expert Jamal Al-Gharabally told KUNA on Sunday that the Strait of Hormuz is the world's most critical energy corridor, with about 20 million barrels of oil per day passing through it - roughly 20 percent of global oil supplies - in addition to large volumes of liquefied natural gas.

He said the GCC countries rely heavily on this vital corridor to export oil to global markets, noting that any disruption to shipping through the strait would trigger an immediate shock in global markets.

The disruption has reduced oil flows through the strait from around 20 million barrels per day to less than one million barrels, Al-Gharabally added, describing the loss as the largest supply shock

since the 1970s oil crisis.

He noted that maritime shipping has been severely affected, with vessel traffic largely halted and marine insurance and transport costs surging.

He said some countries have taken steps to curb sharp price increases, including drawing from strategic petroleum reserves and increasing production outside the Gulf region, such as in the United States, Brazil, and Norway.

Alternative export routes have also been utilized, including Saudi Arabia's East-West Crude Oil Pipeline (Petroline), which ends at the Red Sea port of Yanbu.

He added that Iran exports a significant portion of its oil through the Strait of Hormuz, noting that closing the waterway would also halt a major source of Iranian oil revenue, increasing economic pressure on Tehran.

Al-Gharabally stressed that using the strait as a pressure tool is usually temporary for political purposes rather than a permanent closure due to its strategic importance to the global economy, adding that a prolonged full shutdown of the strait is unlikely.

He projected oil prices could range between USD 90 and USD 130 per barrel amid the current geopolitical tensions.

GCC produced 21% of global crude oil in 2024: GCC-STAT

MUSCAT, March 15, (KUNA): The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Statistical Center (GCC-STAT) stated Sunday that Gulf countries contributed 21.8 percent to global crude oil production and 26.6 percent to its exports in 2024.

In its "Energy Statistics" report, which provides a comprehensive overview of the oil, gas, and renewable energy sectors in the Gulf, the center added that GCC nations accounted for 10 percent of global marketed natural gas production and 13.5 percent of its exports that year.

It noted that GCC holds 32.7 percent of world oil reserves and 21.2 percent of natural gas reserves, based on global energy indicators.

The oil sector's added value at current market prices reached about USD 561.2 billion (24 percent of gross domestic product (GDP)), while at constant prices (excluding inflation), it was USD 541.9 billion (29.3 percent of GDP), it explained.

Energy data showed a 5.4 percent drop in crude oil production to 16.1 million barrels per day (bpd) from 17 million bpd in

2023.

Crude oil exports fell 7.2 percent to 11.5 million bpd from 12.3 million bpd, it pointed out.

Marketed natural gas production declined slightly by 0.4 percent to 442 billion cubic meters from 443.8 billion in 2023, GCC-STAT mentioned.

The average annual growth rate for oil reserves from 2020-24 was 30.7 percent, and for natural gas reserves, 1 percent.

In 2024, GCC reserves totaled 511.9 billion barrels of crude oil and 44.3 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, it said.

Total renewable energy capacity in GCC reached 14.2 gigawatts (0.3 percent of global capacity) in 2024, the center added.

GCC electrical interconnection projects achieved economic savings of USD 540.5 million, with exchanged energy amounting to 1,795 gigawatt-hours, it pointed out.

Established in Oman, the GCC Statistical Center serves as the official source for GCC data and information, while enhancing national statistical and planning efforts.

Gulf Bank provides new banknotes across branches

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: With the approach of Eid Al Fitr, Gulf Bank has announced the availability of new banknotes of various denominations across In all bank branches except the following: Crystal Tower, Mina Al Zour, Ahmadi, Ministries Complex, Jahra Coop Fahad Al-Salem Street, and Mansouriya, allowing customers to conveniently obtain fresh banknotes traditionally distributed during Eid celebrations.

New banknotes are available at most Gulf Bank branches, while customers can also obtain them through Interactive Teller Machines located at the Main Branch on Mubarak Al Kabeer Street, Crystal Tower, Al Adan, Al Salam, Jabriya, Fahaheel Xcite, Mishref, Shaab, Al Fanar Mall, Abdullah Al Salem, Sabah Al Ahmad, Alkhiran Mall, Hawalli, and Sabahiya. Note that the new banknotes will be available on ITM devices starting March 19.



Through its branches, Gulf Bank is providing new Kuwaiti dinar banknotes in denominations of KD20, KD10, KD5, KD1, in addition to KD0.500 and KD0.250, while Interactive Teller Machines provide the first four denominations to help meet the increased demand for smaller

notes during the Eid season.

In addition, Gulf Bank continues to offer convenient digital solutions through its mobile banking application, including the WAMD and Pay-Link services, enabling customers to transfer money quickly and securely through simple steps within the ap-

plication.

Starting from the first day of Eid, Gulf Bank will also activate the Ee-deti service on its mobile banking app, allowing customers to send digital Eid gifts to up to five recipients at once, providing a convenient way to share the joy of Eid with family and friends.

Gulf Bank also encourages parents to take advantage of this occasion to promote a culture of saving among children by motivating them to set aside part of their Eid money. The bank offers a wide range of savings accounts designed to support different financial goals, including the neo Children's Savings Account, which is specifically designed for children and young customers. Through Gulf Bank's extensive network of ATMs, children can conveniently deposit their Eid money, helping them develop positive saving habits from an early age.

Private markets for individual investors opportunities & risks

By NBK Wealth

For decades, private markets were primarily accessible to institutional investors and ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNWIs). That landscape is now changing. Over the past decade, the introduction of semi-liquid private market funds has emerged, making private markets more accessible to a broader range of investors.

Semi-Liquid Private Markets Fund Definition

Semi-liquid funds provide exposure to illiquid markets while offering limited but periodic liquidity, typically allowing redemptions of up to 5% of the fund's net asset value per quarter. These funds are often described as "evergreen" funds because they do not have a fixed end date, unlike traditional private market funds, which typically operate on 10-15-year cycles, including multi-year investment periods.

In semi-liquid funds, investors can subscribe at any time, capital is deployed immediately, and distributions are often reinvested automatically. In effect, these funds combine the economic characteristics of private markets with the operational simplicity of a mutual fund-like experience.

Growth of Semi-Liquid Funds

Semi-liquid private market funds have seen rapid growth, particularly within the private wealth segment. It is estimated that \$4.4 trillion will be managed in semi-liquid funds by 2029.

This expansion reflects a broader structural shift. Institutional investors have long allocated 20-40% of their portfolios to private markets, while individual investors have historically had limited access. As wealth managers increasingly prioritize diversification and seek new return drivers, semi-liquid funds have



become a key access point, bridging the gap between traditional private market lockups and the liquidity needs of individual investors.

Why Semi-Liquid Funds Appeal to High-Net-Worth Investors

Traditional private market funds require investors to commit capital upfront, with gradual funding through capital calls over several years. This approach can complicate liquidity planning and requires ongoing monitoring. Semi-liquid funds streamline this process: investors subscribe once and fund their investments immediately. This eliminates the need for ongoing cash-flow management and simplifies administration, a major advantage for wealth clients and advisors.

They also help address a common feature of traditional private market investments: the "J-curve" where returns are often modest in the early years while capital is being deployed, and fees are paid before investments have matured. Semi-liquid funds, by contrast, invest into a broadly diversified portfolio from the outset. This can lead to a more balanced, smoother early return profile. Furthermore, automatic reinvestment of proceeds over time enhances compounding and long-term growth.

Product Structure and Liquidity Profile

Private markets are inherently illiquid; semi-liquid funds introduce conditional redemption mechanisms. Most funds allow quarterly



redemption requests, typically capped at 5% of net asset value per quarter. This provides flexibility for cash-flow needs, portfolio rebalancing, or life events, but liquidity is conditional and may be restricted during periods of market stress.

Lower Entry Barriers and Strategic Allocation

Traditional private market funds typically require minimum investments of \$1-5 million or more, a threshold that has historically limited participation to ultra-high-net-worth individuals and institutional investors. Semi-liquid funds often have minimum investments of \$10,000-50,000, making private markets accessible to a broader group of investors.

Lower minimums allow advisors and investors to diversify across strategies, managers, and vintages, and integrating private markets into strategic portfolio allocations rather than treating them as ad hoc investments.

Portfolio Integration & Allocation

When thoughtfully implemented, semi-liquid funds can serve distinct roles in a portfolio:

- Private Credit enhances income generation.

- Private Equity provides diversification and differentiated return drivers relative to public equities.

Core Infrastructure delivers stable, predictable cash flows with partial inflation protection.

Allocation sizing must account for liquidity constraints. Semi-liquid funds are best suited for investors with a multi-year time horizon and should be considered part of a portfolio's "illiquidity bucket." They are complements to public markets, not substitutes.

Risk Factors and Manager Selection

Investors should be aware of key risks. Semi-liquid funds offer liquidity to investors while investing in illiquid assets, this creates a liquidity mismatch, and therefore redemption mechanisms are conditional and not guaranteed. Valuations of private assets are subjective and updated less frequently than public market prices, smoothing volatility without removing underlying economic risk. Finally, manager selection is critical as outcomes vary widely depending on the investment manager's quality and track record.

Key Takeaways

- Semi-liquid funds represent a significant evolution in providing individual investors with access to private markets.

- They simplify participation by removing capital calls, offering periodic liquidity and lowering minimum investment thresholds.

- Investors must fully understand liquidity constraints and valuation subjectivity inherent in these funds.

- Manager selection is critical due to the wide dispersion in performance.

- Semi-liquid funds complement, rather than replace, public market allocations, offering a more accessible alternative to institutional private market investments.

Representing 5% of global shipping capacity

Arab countries own 2,900 merchant fleet ships with a tonnage of 109 million metric tons: Dhaman

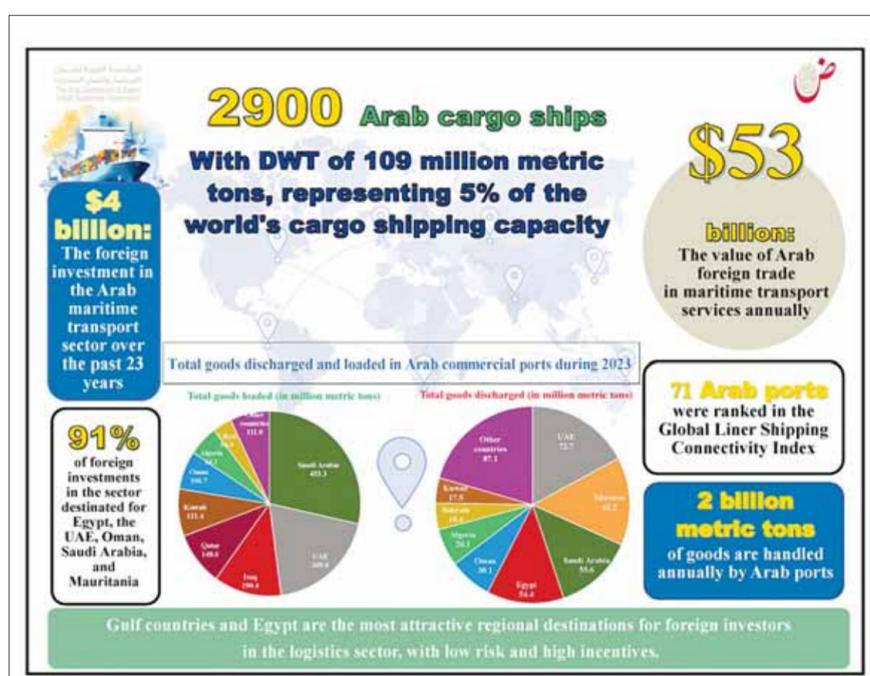
KUWAIT CITY, March 15: The Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) revealed that the maritime transport sector in the Arab region attracted 146 foreign projects, with a capex of nearly \$4 billion, over the past 23 years, between January 2003 and December 2025.

In its fourth sectoral report for 2025 on the Arab maritime transport sector, issued today at its headquarters in Kuwait, the Corporation said that five Arab countries; Egypt, the UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Mauritania, attracted 114 foreign projects during the same period, accounting for 78% of the total, with a capex of nearly \$3.8 billion, making up over 91% of the Arab total.

Based on four main pillars: 1- The fleet and ports, 2- Trade in the sector, 3- Foreign projects in the sector, 4- Assessments of risks and rewards, the report showed that Japan led the list as the top investor in the region in the maritime transport sector in terms of the capex over the past 23 years, with a value exceeding \$784 million, or 19% of the total, followed by Germany with 16%, then the US with 15%.

The report noted that the American Think Big for Shipping and Logistics was ranked the top foreign investor in the region in terms of the capex in the sector, with a value of \$606 million, or 15% of the total. It was followed by Germany's Hapag-Lloyd with a value of \$581 million, or 14%, and Belgium's DEME with \$550 million, or 13%. Taiwan's Yang Ming, Japan's Mitsui O.S.K. Line and K-Line came in the fourth place, with a value of \$371 million, with a share of 9% each.

At the level of inter-Arab investment in the sector, the report showed that six Arab countries: the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Morocco, and Egypt invested in 11 joint projects in the maritime transport sector with a capex surpassing \$218 million. Five Arab companies: Bahrain's Kanoon Shipping, Saudi Arabia's Triple F, Abu Dhabi Ports, Jas, and Gulf Marine Services of the UAE, accounted for 89% of the total.



Based on the assessment of logistics risks, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Egypt, and Kuwait led the Arab ranking for 2025, becoming the most attractive destinations for investment in logistics in the region.

The report showed a 4% rise in the size of the Arab merchant fleet to hit 2,900 ships according to the beneficial ship ownership in 2025. The tonnage of its ships also increased by 4.6% to around 109 million metric tons of deadweight in 2025, making up 5% of the global shipping volume.

Based on UNCTAD's data, the report indicated that Arab ports received over 423 million metric tons of cargo in 2023 (including 58% in the UAE, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt), compared to 1.6 billion metric tons of cargo loaded through those ports during the same year, representing 14% of the global total. Oil accounted for 58% of the loaded cargo total.

Handling at 10 Arab ports surged by 19% in 2023, compared to 2019, reaching around 59 million TEUs, with more than half of that volume con-

- The Arab maritime transport sector has attracted 146 foreign projects with a capex of \$4 billion over 23 years
- Egypt, UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Mauritania are the sector's top foreign investment recipients with 91% of the capex
- Some 71 Arab ports were ranked in the Liner Shipping Connectivity Index, with Jebel Ali, Tanger Med, Khalifa, Jeddah, Alexandria, Port Said and Dammam ports topping the Arab ranking
- The Gulf countries and Egypt are the best regional destinations for foreign investors in the logistics sector, with low risk and high incentives

centrated in the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

The report revealed that the average Arab ranking in the Liner Shipping Connectivity Index improved during the fourth quarter of 2024, with the UAE, Morocco, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia leading the Arab world. Seventy-one Arab ports were ranked among the top 930 ports worldwide in the index, with Jebel Ali, Tanger Med, Khalifa, Jeddah, Alexandria, Port Said, Dammam, Damiyetta, Salalah, and Casablanca ports topping the Arab list.

Regarding foreign trade in maritime transport services for 11 Arab countries, the report said that it shot up by 12% to exceed \$53 billion in 2024, accounting for 25% of total Arab trade in transport services. It ascribed this to a hike in Arab countries' exports in maritime transport services by 14% to hit roughly \$9 billion, and a rise in Arab imports by 13% to roughly \$45 billion in 2024.

Based in Kuwait, the Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) was established in 1974 as a multilateral institution that comprises all Arab countries and four joint Arab financial institutions. It provides specialized insurance services against credit and political risks with a view to facilitating the inflow of foreign direct investments into Arab countries and promoting Arab exports and imports.

'Hikes are inevitable'

Jet fuel prices surge as Middle East war disrupts oil supplies

WASHINGTON, March 15, (AP): Jet fuel prices are rising as the war in the Middle East disrupts global oil supplies, putting cost pressure on airlines as the busy summer travel season approaches.

Experts say it's not a question of if airfares will go up, but when, for how long and by how much. The impact may be felt most on long-haul international routes, which burn significantly more fuel than shorter flights.

Some airlines outside of the U.S. have announced fare increases or fuel surcharges in an effort to offset the growing expense. In the U.S., United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby recently warned that airfare increases will "probably start quick" as increasing fuel costs work their way through the industry.

The war is constraining oil exports and prompting major producers like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq to scale back output as shipments face growing obstacles.

Iran has attacked commercial ships across the Arabian Gulf and targeted oil infrastructure in Gulf Arab nations following U.S. and Israeli strikes. The attacks have effectively halted traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow passage that carries about one-fifth of the world's oil supply.

The volatile crude oil prices causing retail gasoline prices to swing up sharply have had the same effect on the price of jet fuel. The average price in the U.S. reached \$3.99 per gallon on Friday, up from \$2.50 the day before the war started two weeks ago, according to the Argus U.S. Jet Fuel Index. The index tracks the average price airlines pay for jet fuel across major U.S. airports.

Figures from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics show that U.S. airlines paid about \$2.36 per gallon for fuel in January, the most recent data available.

Some airlines are partially protected from sudden price spikes through fuel hedging, a strategy that allows them to lock in fuel prices months or even years in advance. But not all airlines hedge, and those that do are usually only protected for a portion of their fuel needs, meaning prolonged price surges may cause more carriers to raise fares.

"No one hedges anymore, and even if you do, hedging the crack spread is really hard to do," Kirby said at a Harvard event last week. The crack spread is the difference between the price of crude oil and the price of products produced from it, like gasoline.

Another factor for airlines: Air space closures have required rerouting flights around parts of the Middle East, which can mean longer routes, additional fuel burn and higher operating costs.

Travelers may feel the impact in several ways.

Airlines can add or increase fuel surcharges, an extra fee common among carriers outside of the U.S. that's added on top of the base ticket price.

Major U.S. carriers, however, don't charge a separate fuel surcharge. Instead, they build fuel costs into the overall ticket price, meaning any increase is more likely to show up as a higher base fare for travelers, according to Tyler Hosford, security director at global risk management firm International SOS.

Airlines also may adjust what they charge for premium add-ons - such as seat upgrades, extra legroom seats, checked bags or priority boarding - as another way to offset higher operating costs. For consumers, that means even if the base fare doesn't rise immediately, the total cost of a trip could still increase once additional fees and upgrades are factored in.

If higher fuel prices persist, airlines may also adjust schedules or reduce certain routes, said Christopher Anderson, a professor at Cornell University's business school whose research includes operations and information management in the hospitality and airline industries.

It's difficult to predict exactly how much ticket prices could increase as a result of costlier oil and fuel. Industry analysts say the impact of higher jet fuel costs can vary based on the route, airline and travel demand.

Fuel typically accounts for 20% to 25% of an airline's operating costs, making it the second-largest expense after labor, according to Rob Britton, an adjunct marketing professor at Georgetown University and retired American Airlines executive. A sharp rise in fuel prices therefore can have a major impact on airlines' budgets.

So far, most fare increases and fuel surcharges are coming from airlines based in the Asia-Pacific region, but experts expect more airlines - especially those without fuel hedging - to follow if high jet fuel prices persist.

Hong Kong's flag carrier, Cathay Pacific, said it would increase its fuel surcharge starting Wednesday.

"The price of jet fuel has approximately doubled since March amid the latest developments in the Middle East," the airline said in a statement Thursday.

Other airlines with price increases or new surcharges include:

- Air France-KLM said roundtrip economy fares on long-haul flights could rise by about 50 euros (about \$57).

- Air India introduced fuel surcharges Thursday on certain routes. After March 18, the carrier says the surcharge will increase by up to \$50 for all tickets to Europe, North America and Australia.

- Hong Kong Airlines increased fuel surcharges across several routes as of Thursday.

- FlySafair in South Africa announced a temporary fuel surcharge. Experts say travelers planning summer trips may be able to limit the impact of rising airfares by booking earlier rather than waiting for last-minute deals.

Locking in ticket prices sooner - especially with flexible booking options that allow changes - can help secure lower prices before airlines adjust rates further.

Hosford, the security director at International SOS, suggests travelers stay flexible with travel dates, check fares at nearby airports and set alerts for price drops. He also recommends using frequent flyer miles or credit card points to book flights instead of holding out for a "perfect deal."

"If you were going to spend cash on the flight but now you're not, then that's a good redemption deal," he said.



An airplane is refueled at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in SeaTac, Wash., on Sunday, Nov. 23, 2025. (AP)

Over 6,000 passengers transported since launch of alternative routes

Jazeera Airways operating flights from Kuwait to Istanbul via Qaisumah Airport

KUWAIT CITY, March 15: Jazeera Airways has commenced operating flights between Kuwait and Istanbul via Qaisumah Airport (AQI) in Hafar Al Batin, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, continuing the airline's efforts to facilitate passenger mobility amid the current regional situation.

Following the temporary suspension of operations at Kuwait International Airport for safety reasons, Jazeera Airways is currently the only airline from Kuwait supporting travel continuity for passengers through this alternative route.

The first flight to Istanbul was operated yesterday, with passengers transported safely from Kuwait to Qaisumah by bus before boarding the outbound flight to Istanbul Airport. Inbound passengers travelled from Istanbul to Qaisumah before continuing overland into Kuwait.

Jazeera Airways continues to work closely with relevant authorities and stakeholders in both Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to ensure safe, coordinated, and efficient operations.

Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways, said:

"As a Kuwaiti national carrier, maintaining connectivity for Kuwait during this period is extremely important for us. Following the launch of flights to Egypt and Jordan, we are pleased to now extend our operations to Istanbul, enabling more passengers to travel in and out of Kuwait despite the current operational situation. Since 11 March, we have already transported more than 6,000 passengers. We also launched flights to Colombo which are now completed booked. To address the huge demand, we will continue expanding existing destinations with additional frequencies while gradually introducing new destinations like India, UAE and others. We are



Jazeera AQI to IST

grateful for the strong collaboration and support of the Kuwait DGCA, Saudi GACA, and our many operational partners that enabled us to establish a safe and coordinated travel solution for passengers during this time."

Passengers wishing to travel are encouraged to book their journeys through the Jazeera Airways website jazeeraairways.com, mobile app, or the call center at 177 within Kuwait or +965 2205 4944 internationally.

What to know about the Strait of Hormuz, a key passageway essential for global energy supply

DUBAI, March 15, (AP): The Strait of Hormuz is a small strip of water connecting the Persian Gulf to the world's oceans, and it has become a big problem for the global economy.

On a typical day, ships carrying about a fifth of the world's oil sail out of the Gulf through the narrow passageway. But the war with Iran means it's effectively closed, hemming in more than 90% of that crude and refined products, according to the International Energy Agency. The Islamic Republic has vowed to block the region's oil exports, saying it would not allow "even a single liter" to be shipped to its enemies.

The snarls have sent oil prices above \$100 per barrel and threatened a surge of painful inflation for the global economy if the blockage lasts a long time.

"The scale of what is at stake cannot be overstated," said Hakan Kaya, senior portfolio manager at investment management firm Neuberger Berman.

Some analysts say oil prices could jump to \$150 per barrel if the strait remains closed for weeks and conditions worsen. That would mean even higher gasoline prices for drivers worldwide, undercutting household budgets already pressured by high inflation. It would also raise costs for businesses, which could in turn raise their own prices further for customers.

"One way or the other, we will soon get the Hormuz Strait OPEN, SAFE, and FREE!" President Donald Trump said in a posting on his social media network on Saturday.

Here's what to know about the strait and the widening Iran war.

The Strait of Hormuz is a bending waterway, about 33 kilometers (21 miles) wide at its narrowest point. It connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman. From there, ships can then travel to the rest of the world. While Iran and Oman have their territorial waters in the strait, it's viewed as an international waterway all ships can ply. The UAE, home to the skyscraper-studded city of Dubai, also sits near the waterway.

The Strait of Hormuz through history has been important for trade, with ceramics, ivory, silk and textiles moving from China through the region. In the modern era, it is the route for supertankers carrying oil and gas from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE and Iran. The vast majority of it goes to markets in Asia, including Iran's only remaining oil customer, China.

While there are pipelines in Saudi Arabia and the UAE that can avoid the passage, the U.S. Energy Information Administration says "most volumes that transit the strait have no alternative means of exiting the region."

Threats to the route have caused global energy prices to spike in the past, including during the Israel-Iran war in June.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center, run by the British military, says it has received 20 reports of incidents affecting vessels in and around the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman as of Thursday. It lists 16 attacks and four others as "suspicious activity," involving tankers, tugs, cargo and other vessels.

The strait is effectively closed as Iran targets energy infrastructure and traffic through the strait.



A cargo ship sails in the Arabian Gulf towards Strait of Hormuz in the United Arab Emirates, Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)

Previously, Iran temporarily shut down parts of the strait in mid-February for what it said was a military drill. In past times of tension and conflict, Iran has at times harassed shipping through the narrows, and during the 1980s Iran-Iraq war, both sides attacked tankers and other vessels, using naval mines to completely shut down traffic at points. But Iran up until now not carried out repeated threats to close the waterway altogether since then, even during last year's 12-day war when Israel and the U.S. bombarded Iran's key nuclear and military sites.

The U.S. is rolling out ship reinsurance in the region through the U.S. International Development Finance Corp., a government agency that partners with the private sector to back global investment projects, in an effort to get ships moving through the strait again.

Political risk insurance is a type of coverage intended to protect firms against financial losses caused by unstable political conditions, government actions, or violence. Marine insurers had been canceling or raising rates for insurance in the region.

The U.S. reinsurance facility will insure losses up to approximately \$20 billion on a rolling basis, according to the International Development Finance Corp., focusing on insuring cargo and physical damage to a ship's structure and operating machinery to start.

Trump said that, if necessary, the U.S. Navy would escort oil tankers through the strait, though that has yet to happen.

On Wednesday, Trump's Energy Secretary Chris Wright briefly posted on social media that the U.S. Navy had escorted a tanker through the strait, but he later deleted the false claim. The initial posting and walkback helped send oil prices and stock markets swinging sharply, showing how the singular focus of markets is on getting ships through the strait again.

On Saturday, Trump suggested publicly for the first time that the U.S. might not be able to reopen the waterway on its own, and without international support.

"Hopefully China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK, and others, that are affected" will "send Ships to the area so that the Hormuz Strait will no longer" be threatened by Iran, he wrote in his post.

Global shippers have issued service alerts saying they have suspended operations in the area.

"Those ships that got stuck in the Gulf are not going anywhere," said Tom Goldsby, logistics chairman in the Supply Chain Management Department at the University of Tennessee. "There's also a whole host of ships that were heading into the Gulf to replace them, and of course they're anchored or going elsewhere now."

As the Strait of Hormuz remains at a standstill, a group representing many of the world's wealthiest countries said it will release the largest volume of emergency oil reserves in its history. The International Energy Agency said it will make 400 million barrels of oil available from its members' emergency reserves, which is more than double the 182.7 million barrels that the IEA's 32 member countries released in 2022 in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

But while such moves can replenish some of the oil supplies blocked in the Persian Gulf, they do so only for the short term. For a longer-term fix, analysts say the Strait of Hormuz needs to clear.

The White House is also looking into waiving Jones Act requirements. The 1920s law is often blamed for making gas more expensive. It requires goods shipped between U.S. ports to be moved on U.S.-flagged vessels, and is designed to protect the American shipbuilding sector.

Analysts warn restarting Gulf energy facilities may take weeks

Iran war puts key Gulf energy infrastructure at risk

FRANKFURT, March 15, (AP): The Iran war threatens some of the world's most critical oil and gas infrastructure - the pipelines, refineries, and shipping terminals that keep energy flowing from the countries around the Arabian Gulf to the global economy.

Strikes by Iranian drones have disrupted operations at some of them, while the risk of Iranian strikes has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, the conduit for some 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas. Oil fields in the region have cut back output as storage fills up. Qatar, a major supplier of liquefied natural gas, has shut down its exports as well.

All that has sent prices soaring, raising the cost of everything that needs fuel made from crude: flying, cooking, heating homes, running factories, transporting goods, and farming. International benchmark Brent crude has risen from \$72.97 the day before the war started to almost \$99 on Thursday.

Here is the key infrastructure that's at risk and why it's important. The terminal was shut down by state-owned QatarEnergy following a drone strike, dealing a shock to global gas markets since Qatar produces 20% of the world's liquefied natural gas. The company is citing force majeure - in other words, that it's unable to supply its contracted customers due to circumstances beyond its control.

Ras Laffan, the largest LNG export facility in the world according to the company's website, draws gas from the world's largest single gas field and chills it until it is liquid for loading on tankers that take it to customers, primarily in Asia. Gas purchasers in Europe also feel the pinch due to sharply higher gas prices.

Located on the Arabian Gulf northeast of Dammam, this is Saudi Aramco's

largest refinery and a port capable of accommodating large tankers. It was temporarily shut down after a drone impact caused a fire.

Saudi Aramco operates this pipeline from the Aqaiq oil processing center near the Arabian Gulf to the Yanbu port on the Red Sea, allowing exports to avoid the Hormuz chokepoint. The pipeline lacks capacity to fully make up for the Hormuz closure.

A key terminal for oil tankers on the Gulf of Oman, it enables Abu Dhabi to export a significant share of its oil without sending it through the Strait of Hormuz. It was initially disrupted by fighting, but the oil terminal had resumed operations by Friday, according to Lloyd's List shipping industry publication.

"Iran's targeting of oil storage in Fujairah isn't a coincidence; it's attacking one of the potential reroutings of oil that's been trapped in the Persian Gulf," said Torbjorn Soltvedt, principal Middle East analyst at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft.

A tanker terminal that has handled almost all of Iran's roughly 1.6 million barrels per day of prewar crude exports, most of it going to China. Iran has exported 13.7 million barrels since the war started, and "multiple" tankers were seen on satellite imagery Wednesday loading at Kharg, according to Tanker-Trackers.com maritime intelligence company.

Enables export of Iranian oil without going through the Strait. Limited capacity, but data and analytics firm Kpler reports a tanker loaded 2 million barrels on March 7, the first shipment from the facility since 2024.

Israel's Energy Ministry directed operator Chevron to shut down the field, whose operating platform is 10 kilometers (6 miles) off Dora, due to the secu-

urity situation. It's the largest natural gas reservoir in the Mediterranean and a key supplier to Egypt. A shutdown during Israel's 12-day war with Iran in June led Egypt to curtail gas supplies to industries including fertilizer producers.

Iraq has cut back output at key fields at Rumaila and West Qurna due to dwindling storage. The Rumaila field is a so-called supergiant, meaning it holds more than a billion barrels in reserves.

Iraq and other Gulf countries are running out of space to put the oil. That could bring long-lasting interruption since once shut down, oil and gas wells may need weeks or months to resume.

Even if the Strait of Hormuz reopens, "it's going to take time to restart production in some of these fields. It's not a switch that can be turned on and off," said Soltvedt. "It's the same for Qatar in terms of their LNG facility. It will probably take weeks to get some of the facilities up and running again."

This artificial island 50 kilometers (30 miles) from shore in the Arabian Gulf exports oil worth 80% of Iraq's annual GDP from the country's oil fields. It has ceased operations, according to Lloyd's. Two tankers have been hit in Iraqi territorial waters.

The Sitra Island refinery is the backbone of Bahrain's oil sector, processing supply from Bahraini fields and delivered from Saudi Arabia via pipeline. A missile strike halted operations and disrupted jet fuel, diesel and other supplies.

Salalah is the site of an \$800 million facility that produces liquid petroleum gas for export to Asia, where it is a commonly used cooking fuel. The port is located outside the Strait of Hormuz. Operations were suspended as a precaution after drone strikes, according to Lloyd's.

BUSINESS

Persistent tensions: Brent above \$100, US data releases, ECB watch, and yen under pressure

By National Bank of Kuwait

This week, global markets navigated heightened Middle East tensions that saw Brent crude touch USD 119.50/bbl, softer US growth, and mixed inflation prints alongside weaker Canadian labour data, data-dependent ECB and BoE stances with euro-area inflation near 2% and flat UK output, and divergent Asia-Pacific signals led by strong China trade and a weaker yen, against a firmer dollar and subdued risk appetite. In the United States and Canada, the US granted a second authorisation for buyers to receive Russian cargoes already at sea and launched broad Section 301 forced-labour investigations covering 60 partners alongside the temporary 10% blanket tariff; data showed core PCE +0.4% MoM (+3.1% YoY), CPI +2.4% YoY, Q4 GDP revised to 0.7% annualised, jobless claims at 213K, JOLTS rose to 6.95M, and softer University of Michigan sentiment, with the dollar firm (DXY last at 100.362) and USD/CAD at 1.3718 following a sharp Canadian employment drop (-83.9K) and a rise in unemployment to 6.7%. In Europe, the ECB monitored energy-driven price pressures with current euro-area inflation at 1.9% ahead of the March 19 meeting, emphasizing diversified energy supply and a data-dependent stance; EUR/USD closed the week at 1.1417 [-1.73%]. In the United Kingdom, GDP was flat in January versus a 0.2% forecast as services stagnated and private housebuilding fell 5.6%, while the trade deficit (ex-precious metals) narrowed to GBP 1.8bn; GBP/USD ended the week at 1.3230 [-1.36%]. Over in Asia Pacific, China's exports rose 21.8% YoY in Jan-Feb with imports up 19.8%, CPI at 1.3% YoY and PPI -0.9% YoY, while the yen weakened toward JPY 160 amid higher energy costs and announced fuel subsidies and reserve releases; USD/JPY closed the week at 159.73 [-1.22%]. Equity markets were softer on the week amid energy-supply uncertainty, with US and European indices outperforming deeper declines in Japan. US yields saw heightened volatility, with the 2s10s and 5s30s curve spreads shifting on the week by -1.588 bps and 1.828 bps, respectively. Brent crude closed the week at USD 103.14/bbl, up 11.27%, as spot gold settled lower near USD 5019.49 per ounce on reduced rate-cut expectations.

United States and Canada

Brent Above USD 100/bbl as Middle East Tensions Extend into Third Week, Heightening Global Supply-Risk Premiums

Geopolitical tensions in the Middle East continued into a third week, with oil prices back above USD 100/bbl after a volatile week that saw a low of USD 81.16/bbl on Tuesday and a peak of USD 119.50/bbl on Monday, and sustained elevated risk premiums across global energy markets. Disruptions to key regional shipping routes and uncertainty around future supply have contributed to increased volatility in crude benchmarks. The US has temporarily authorised purchases of Russian oil already loaded at sea through April 11 to stabilise supply. Public statements and media reports indicate that military activity remains ongoing, while regional casualties have been recorded

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.1618	1.1411	1.1667	1.1417	1.1300	1.1500	1.1468
GBP	1.3413	1.3219	1.3483	1.3230	1.3010	1.3300	1.3229
JPY	157.78	157.28	159.75	159.73	159.00	162.00	158.48
CHF	0.7760	0.7748	0.7917	0.7911	0.7750	0.8100	0.7832

across several countries. Financial markets are monitoring the potential implications for energy availability, transport logistics and global inflation dynamics, with the conflict emerging as a key driver of near-term sentiment across commodities, rates and foreign-exchange markets. Current swap pricing signals no anticipated rate move at the Fed's 18 March meeting. DXY last printed at 100.362.

US Launches Section 301 Forced-Labour Investigations Targeting 60 Trade Partners, Including UK, EU and Canada

The US administration initiated new Section 301 investigations targeting 60 trading partners - among them the UK, EU and Canada - examining whether inadequate forced-labour safeguards warrant additional tariffs. The probes follow the Supreme Court's ruling that invalidated many of the administration's earlier levies, prompting the imposition of a temporary 10% blanket tariff set to expire after 150 days. The new investigations, broader in scope than recent excess-capacity probes, aim to re-establish tariff measures ahead of that deadline. The US already restricts imports produced with forced labour, including goods from China's Xinjiang region. Further Section 301 reviews on digital services and drug pricing are planned, signalling an expanded US trade-enforcement agenda that could lead to renewed duties across multiple sectors and trading partners.

US Core PCE +0.4%, CPI +2.4% YoY; Q4 GDP Revised to 0.7%; JOLTS Climbs to 6.95M; UoM Sentiment Eases to 55.5

US economic data signalled softer momentum at the start of the year, with real consumer spending rising only 0.1% in January while core PCE increased 0.4% MoM and 3.1% YoY. GDP for Q4 was revised down to 0.7% annualised from 1.4% amid broad mark-downs to private consumption, investment and government spending. CPI inflation remained contained in February, with headline and core readings at 2.4% and 2.5% YoY respectively, supported by lower used-car and insurance prices. Labour-market indicators were mixed: weekly jobless claims edged down to 213K, while January JOLTS vacancies rose to 6.95M from 6.55M in December. Preliminary University of Michigan data indicated softer consumer sentiment and steady inflation expectations as higher energy prices cloud the near-term outlook.

Canada Employment Falls by 83.9K in February as Jobless Rate Rises to 6.7%

Canada's labour market weakened sharply in February, with employment declining by 83.9K - the largest monthly drop since January 2022 - and the unemployment rate rising to 6.7% from 6.5%. The contraction was concentrated in full-time positions (-108.4K) and private-sector employment (-72.6K), partially offset by a 24.5K increase in part-time work. Youth unemployment climbed to 14.1%. Losses were broad-based across goods- and services-producing industries, led by wholesale and retail trade. The data markedly diverged from expectations of a 10K job gain and a 6.6% unemployment rate. Markets reacted with a softer Canadian dollar and lower front-end yields, reducing expectations of near-term tightening. Policymakers face a complex outlook as rising oil prices from regional geopolitical tensions pose upside inflation risks ahead of the Bank of Canada's March 18 rate decision. USD/CAD last printed at 1.3718.

Europe and the United Kingdom

ECB Monitors Energy-Driven Price Pressures as Inflation Stays Near 2% Amid Oil Price Pressures

The ECB is assessing renewed energy-driven inflation risks as Middle East tensions lift oil above USD 100/bbl, though current conditions differ markedly from the 2022 energy shock. Euro-area headline inflation stood at 1.9% in the latest reading, compared with 5.1% in early 2022, and gas and electricity prices remain far below prior peaks. Policymakers highlight more diversified energy supply, less expansionary fiscal policy and a higher deposit rate at 2%, providing greater policy flexibility. While market pricing has shifted toward possible tightening, officials signal no change at the March 19 meeting. Wage growth and underlying inflation remain somewhat elevated, and the duration of higher energy prices will be key for expectations. The ECB maintains that a measured, data-dependent approach remains appropriate at this stage. EUR/USD last printed at 1.1417.

UK GDP Flat in January, Undershooting 0.2% MoM Forecast as Services Stagnate and Private Housebuilding Falls 5.6%

UK GDP was unchanged in January following 0.1% growth in December, below the expected 0.2% and indicating early-year stagnation ahead of any poten-

tial inflationary impact from the Middle East conflict. Services output was flat, with employment activities posting their largest non-pandemic monthly decline since 2012, reflecting labour-market softness. Manufacturing rose 0.1% and construction increased 0.2%, though private housebuilding fell 5.6% amid heavy rainfall. The weak start places the economy off track for the Bank of England's projected 0.3% Q1 expansion. Rising energy prices - driven by conflict-related supply disruptions - risk intensifying inflation pressures and delaying policy easing. The trade deficit (ex-precious metals) narrowed to GBP 1.8B over the three months to January 2026, supported by higher exports despite an 11.3% drop in shipments to the US. GBP/USD last printed at 1.3230.

Asia-Pacific

China Records 21.8% YoY Export Surge; CPI Hits 1.3% and PPI -0.9% in Early 2026

China's exports rose 21.8% YoY in January-February 2026, significantly outperforming expectations and driving the trade surplus to a record USD 213.6bn (+25.3% YoY). Imports increased 19.8% YoY, reflecting stronger demand for semiconductors and crude oil. Export gains were led by shipments to ASEAN (+29.4%) and the EU (+27.8%), while exports to the US declined 11% amid tariff-related frontloading. Concurrently, consumer inflation accelerated to 1.3% YoY - its highest in 37 months - driven by Lunar New Year travel and services costs, with core CPI rising 1.8% YoY. Producer prices fell 0.9% YoY, the mildest decline since mid-2024, supported by higher energy costs and improved pricing in advanced industrial sectors. Persistent domestic demand softness continues to underpin China's broader disinflationary environment. USD/CNH last printed at 6.9065.

Yen Weakens Toward JPY 160 as Oil Prices Rise, Heightening Pressure on Japan's Energy-Importing Economy

The yen depreciated toward JPY 160 per dollar - its weakest level since 2024 - as crude oil traded above USD 100/bbl, amplifying terms-of-trade pressures for Japan's energy-dependent economy. The 35% surge in oil prices this month has intensified imported inflation risks, with gasoline prices rising above JPY 160 per litre and broader fuel costs climbing. Japanese authorities noted they are in closer-than-usual contact with US counterparts, though intervention remains unlikely given broad dollar strength is driven by rising oil prices rather than speculation. Domestic policy signals have also weighed on the currency, following reports of Prime Minister Takaichi's preference for a cautious approach to future rate hikes and the nomination of two dovish Bank of Japan board members. The government announced additional fuel subsidies and plans to release 80M barrels from strategic reserves to mitigate the impact of elevated energy prices. USD/JPY last printed at 159.73.

Kuwait

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30650.

Trump admin moves to restore \$1.6 trillion in lost tariff revenue

New tariffs could offset impact of tax cuts, analysts say

WASHINGTON, March 15, (AP): The Trump administration this week stepped up its ambitious effort to replace about \$1.6 trillion in lost tariff revenue that was eliminated by the Supreme Court's decision to strike down a range of the president's import taxes.

Recovering that lost revenue, which the White House was counting on to help offset the steep, multi-trillion dollar cost of its tax cuts, is possible but will be challenging, experts say. The administration has to use different legal provisions to impose new duties, and those provisions require longer, complex processes that U.S. companies can use to seek exemptions. It could be months or more before it is clear how much revenue the replacement tariffs will yield.

"I wouldn't bet against this administration being able to get back on paper the same effective tariff rate they had before," said Elena Patel, co-director of the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center. But the new approach will "make it easier for people to contest the tariffs, which is going to put a big asterisk on the revenue until all that is settled."

On Wednesday, U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said the administration will investigate 16 economies - including the European Union - over whether their governments are subsidizing excessive factory capacity in a way that disadvantages U.S. manufacturing. The investigation will also cover China, South Korea, and Japan, Greer said.

In addition, he said there would be a second investigation of dozens of countries to see if their failure to ban goods made by forced labor amounts to an unfair trade practice that harms the United States. That investigation will also cover the EU and China, as well as Mexico, Canada, Australia, and Brazil.

Both investigations are being conducted under Section 301 of the 1974 Trade Act, which requires the administration to consult with the targeted countries, as well as hold public hearings and allow affected U.S. industries to comment. A hearing as part of the factory capacity investigation will be held May 5, while a hearing on the forced labor investigation will occur April 28.

It's a far cry from the emergency law that President Donald Trump relied on in his first year in office, which allowed him to immediately impose tariffs on any country, at nearly any level, simply by issuing an executive order.

Moments after the Supreme Court's ruling, Trump imposed a 10% tariff on all imports under a separate legal authority, but that duty can only last for 150 days. The president has said he would raise it to 15%, the maximum allowed, but has yet to do so. Some two dozen states have already challenged the new tariffs. The administration is aiming to complete its Section 301 investigations before the 10% duties expire.

The effort underscores the importance that the Trump White House has placed on tariffs as a revenue-raiser at a time when the federal government is facing huge annual budget deficits for decades into the future. Previous administrations, by contrast, used tariffs more sparingly to narrowly protect specific industries.

Erica York, vice president of federal tax policy at the Tax Foundation, noted that the first investigation covers roughly 70% of imports, while the second would cover nearly all of them.

"That breadth suggests the goal isn't to address the issues at hand, but instead to recreate a sweeping tariff tool," she said.

Trump sees tariffs as a way to force foreign countries to essentially help pay the cost of U.S. government services, even though all recent economic studies find that American companies and consumers are paying the duties, including ones from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and economists at Harvard University. In his state of the union address last month, Trump even touted his tariffs as a potential

replacement for the income tax, which would return the United States' tax regime to the late 19th century.

Trump also wants tariffs to help pay for the tax cuts he extended in key legislation last year. The tax cut legislation is expected, according to the most recent estimates by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, to add \$4.7 trillion to the national debt over a decade, while all Trump's duties, including ones not struck down by the court, were projected to offset about \$3 trillion - or two-thirds of that cost.

The court's ruling Feb. 20 that he could no longer impose emergency tariffs eliminated about \$1.6 trillion in expected revenue over the next decade, according to the CBO.

Some of Trump's tariffs remain place, including previous duties on China and Canada that were imposed after earlier 301 investigations. The administration has also slapped tariffs on some specific products, including steel, lumber, and cars. Those, combined with the 10% tariff for part of this year, should yield about \$668 billion over the next decade, the Tax Foundation estimates.

"It's going to take a really big patchwork of these other investigations to make up for the (lost) tariffs," York said.

The administration's efforts are also unusual because they reflect an overreliance on tariffs to bring in more government revenue. Trump has also said the duties are intended to return manufacturing to the United States, and he has used them to leverage trade deals.

"What makes this really different," said Kent Smetters, executive director of the Penn Wharton Budget Model, "it is really the first time tariffs have been mainly used as a revenue raiser."

Patel, meanwhile, argues that raising revenue can be done more reliably and straightforwardly by Congress. Laws like Section 301 are traditionally intended to be used to address specific trade policy concerns in particular countries.

"It's not supposed to be there to raise revenue," she said. "If we want to raise revenue through tariffs, then Congress should impose a broad based tariff."

Bessent, He Lifeng lead Paris talks

US & China begin trade talks in Paris ahead of Trump visit

BEIJING, March 15, (AP): Representatives from Beijing and Washington began their economic and trade talks in Paris on Sunday, paving the way for U.S. President Donald Trump's state visit to Beijing to meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping in about two weeks.

The delegations, led by U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, convened in the French capital in the morning, China's official news agency Xinhua reported. The White House has said that Trump will travel to China from March 31 to April 2, though Beijing has not officially confirmed it.

Bessent said on Thursday that his team will continue to deliver results that put America's farmers, workers and businesses first. The U.S. Treasury Department said Bessent will meet He on Sunday and Monday.

China's commerce ministry said Friday the two sides are set to discuss "trade and economic issues of mutual concern."

Trump's visit to China will be the first for a U.S. president since he went in his first term in 2017. It will come five months after the two leaders met in the South Korean city of Busan and agreed to a one-year truce in a trade war that temporarily saw tit-for-tat tariffs soar to triple digits before the two sides climbed down.

Still, trade remains a source of tensions. The commerce ministry on Friday hit back against the

Trump administration's new trade investigation into 16 trading partners, including China. The investigation - which came after a Supreme Court ruling struck down Trump's sweeping global tariffs that were imposed last year - could pave the way for new tariffs.

Another issue that could be discussed is the Iran war, especially when global anxiety is soaring over oil prices and supplies. Trump said Saturday that he hopes China, France, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom and others will send warships to keep the Strait of Hormuz "open and safe."

Before Sunday's talks, Gary Ng, a senior economist at French bank Natixis and a research fellow at the Central European Institute of Asian Studies, said the Paris meeting is likely the most important bilateral one before the Xi-Trump summit.

The key issue is "whether China and the U.S. can agree on what is agreed and manage disagreement. Iran is a new factor, but Beijing is more concerned about the flip-flopping of U.S. policies," he said.

Last week, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said it would be a "big year" for China-U.S. relations. While he did not confirm the state visit, Wang said that "the agenda of high-level exchange is already on the table."

Bessent and He have led trade negotiations between the countries since last year, having met in Geneva, London, Stockholm, Madrid and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Experts question how quickly housing orders will reduce prices

Trump signs executive orders to tackle housing affordability

WASHINGTON, March 15, (AP): President Donald Trump on Friday signed a pair of executive orders aimed at showing his commitment to improving home affordability - a key issue for many voters going into November's election for control of the House and Senate.

Under the first order, the federal government would reduce its own housing regulatory burdens and create incentives for best practices by state and local governments, with the goal of making it easier for builders to construct more homes. The second order would reduce the regulatory burdens tied to mortgages and make it easier for smaller community banks to provide home loans.

"Layers of unnecessary regulatory barriers, slow permitting processes, and onerous mandates at all levels of government have delayed construction, restricted development, and driven up the costs of new housing," said a draft of the order. "These constraints have made housing less affordable for many Americans."

The executive orders - obtained exclusively by The Associated Press - show how the Trump administration is seeking to put more of a policy emphasis on the importance of home ownership. Housing affordability has emerged as a fundamental political challenge for Republicans and Democrats alike, with lawmakers working on measures to show they're responding to concerns that buying a first home has become difficult for middle-class families.

On Thursday, the Senate passed a broad bipartisan bill on housing, which seeks to adjust policies to increase construction and limit institutional ownership of home development. The measure's status path in the House is uncertain. The White House said in a March 2 statement that it supported passage of the measure.

It's unclear how quickly federal efforts can generate new construction or mean-

ingly reduce mortgage costs, as the key regulatory issues on home development involve state and local government policy choices and mortgage rates will reflect changes in financial markets.

The multiyear shortage of construction has kept prices high, while mortgage rates spiking in the aftermath of the pandemic have left many renters unable to buy and existing owners unwilling to part with their current properties.

Under the first order signed Friday by Trump, federal agencies would create incentives to speed up permitting times by state and local government, including the curtailing of "green" building codes, reductions to design and building mandates and making it easier to deploy innovative construction methods.

The order looks heavily at federal environmental regulations, directing the EPA and secretary of the Army to review and update stormwater, wetlands and other water-related permitting requirements to reduce costs and improve the ability to insure homes.

The departments of Commerce, Housing and Urban Development and Transportation, along with the Federal Housing Finance Agency, are instructed to eliminate regulations and update programs that are reducing residential development. Multiple federal agencies would also seek to eliminate environmental and energy efficiency regulations that could increase costs and restrict home construction.

White House officials said the Biden-era energy efficiency mandates in HUD and Agriculture departments' guidelines could add up to \$9,000 to housing construction costs. The officials requested anonymity to outline the details of the orders before their signing, saying that other federal regulations would add even more for participants.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation would simplify its guidance for historic reviews, while the federal government would seek to have its New Markets Tax Credit program align with the Opportunity Zone tax breaks created during Trump's first term.

The order does not seek to change state and local zoning codes, as the administration has sought to preserve suburban housing rather than increase housing density.

The White House officials said federal agencies can incorporate best practices on housing regulations as a criteria for rewarding discretionary grants to state and local governments. One example of a best practice would be local governments having a 60-day deadline for approving building permits. The administration sees this order as having a longer term effect for homebuilders and buyers.

The second order would aim to streamline the mortgage process, directing the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to change its mortgage guidelines so that smaller banks could engage in more lending. The CFPB would update the requirements under the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act to lessen the regulatory burdens for obtaining a mortgage, among other directives.

The administration's theory is that the changes to mortgage regulations would increase the number of financial institutions competing to provide home loans, thus reducing the cost of borrowing for buyers. The White House maintains that its changes would preserve the financial safety and stability of the mortgage market.

The White House officials expect that potential homebuyers could see the impact of the changes to mortgage regulations in a matter of months.

High home prices have emerged as a key issue for voters under the age of 40 going into this fall's midterm elections.

'Scare Out' aims to help people defend the country from threats

Spy thriller is first Chinese film backed by intelligence agency

WASHINGTON, March 15, (AP) — Dodging glass-walled skyscrapers, a drone joined a high-octane chase as a spy tried to evade the agents in pursuit. In moments, the unmanned aircraft knocks him down. The drama happened in China's southern city of Shenzhen and has been seen by millions of people domestically and abroad, including in the United States.

But it was not real. It was one of the scenes from "Scare Out," a recently released Chinese movie that marks the first motion picture to be endorsed by China's secretive and powerful Ministry of State Security.

A movie about a mole inside an intelligence agency is not new in many countries, but it is in China, where the authorities — especially those with links to security — are used to keeping strict control over what is shared.

Directed by Oscar-nominated Zhang Yimou, "Scare Out" has been presented as "led and created" by the MSS, which hopes the movie will also help people to defend the country from any threats. It opened in theaters on Feb. 17, Chinese New Year's Day.

MSS, which promoted it on social media, said in a statement the film aims to "strengthen the people's defense line" and "echo the needs of the times of national security education."

Although it hasn't supported a movie before, MSS has become more open about its work, bringing some of its underground operations into the open and engaging more with the public. In its first online post around two years ago on WeChat, China's largest social media platform, it said: "Counterespionage requires the mobilization of the entire society."

Since then, the ministry has been posting almost on a daily basis, and some messages are about real cases. For example, one was about a travel blogger who allegedly asked a college student to take pictures of a military base, while another was about a military buff who bought four books of military secrets under \$1 at a neighborhood recycling station.

It has also published comics, short videos, and mini movies. "Scare Out," which stars acclaimed actors Jackson Yee and Zhu Yilong, tells the story of the hunt for a mole within China's intelligence service who is leaking



A man walks past a promotion board for 'Scare Out' at a cinema in Beijing, Saturday, March 7. (AP)

classified secrets information about a new fighter jet.

"Spies are just there around you," Zhang, the director, said in a trailer released by the MSS.

For some security experts, MSS seems to be looking to make its work not only visible, but also to promote people's participation in reporting what they see as suspicious.

"It wants to build public and popular support to encourage people to share information," said Sheena Greitens, an associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin.

"(It's) a very sophisticated effort to mobilize Chinese citizens and make national security entertaining and fun to support," she added.

Zhang, writing in an op-ed for the People's Daily — the Chinese Communist Party's flagship newspaper and the country's biggest national newspaper — said: "State security officers accompanied us throughout the whole filming process to make sure the film is close to reality."

The director is known for his films "Ju Dou," "Raise the Red Lantern," and "Hero," all of which secured Oscar nominations.

Rumors on social media claim the film's plot is based on a real case about a researcher who allegedly leaked information about China's J-35 fighter abroad.

MSS did not respond to a request for comment by The Associated Press. Since its release, the movie has been playing in the U.S., Canada, and Australia. Its box office has reached 1.1 billion yuan (\$160 million) in two weeks.

Alice Jin, a 28-year-old who works in e-commerce in Washington, said she saw the movie with the hope of "not falling asleep." But she said it was "better than I expected," adding: "I had no idea what it (MSS) was before."

Wang Lehong, a 25-year-old student, said: "I love watching movies, so a movie on patriotism education definitely works better on me." It was, he added, "better than a lecture."

For decades, other countries have had spy movies. The first James Bond movie was released over six decades ago.

The CIA, which has also been portrayed in movies and TV shows, such as the Jason Bourne franchise, is known to work with Hollywood to shape the entertainment industry's portrayal of the agency.

Western movies are more about "here's where the trouble is coming from," but China is also "highlighting to people internally that they don't side with the West," said Liam McLoughlin, senior lecturer in politics at Edge Hill University in northwest England.

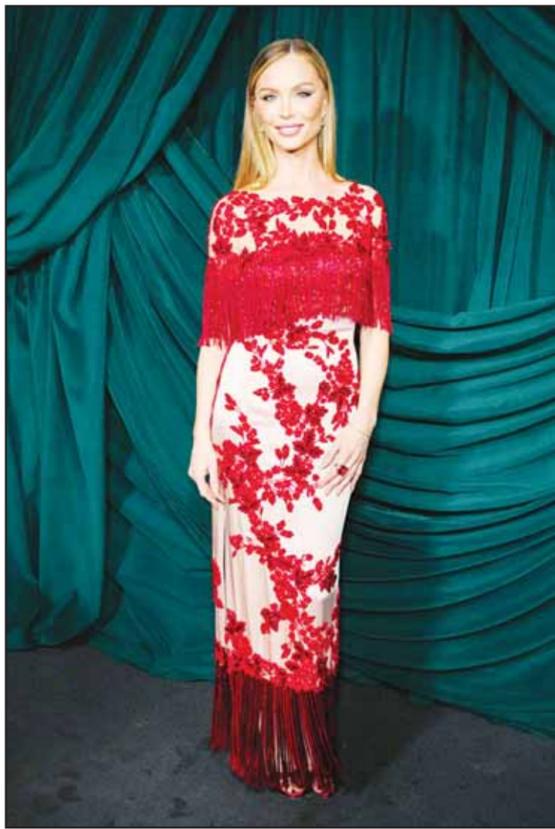
Awards



Melanie Hamrick, (left), and Mick Jagger arrive at Chanel's 17th Annual Pre-Oscar Awards Dinner. (AP)



Nicole Kidman (left) and Elle Fanning arrive at Chanel's 17th Annual Pre-Oscar Awards Dinner. (AP)



Georgina Chapman arrives at Chanel's 17th Annual Pre-Oscar Awards Dinner on Saturday, March 14, at The Beverly Hills Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)



Emilie Livingston, (left), and Jeff Goldblum arrive at Chanel's 17th Annual Pre-Oscar Awards Dinner. (AP)



Leslie Mann and Olivia Munn at Chanel's 17th Annual Pre-Oscar Awards Dinner. (AP)



Variety

NEW YORK: Conductor **Juanjo Mena**, the former principal conductor of the Cincinnati May Festival, said he will retire this year because of Alzheimer's disease.

Mena announced the diagnosis in January 2025 and said in a public letter Friday that the disease has progressed.

"My situation is different than it was a year ago and it calls for some important decisions to be made," the 60-year-old wrote in the letter, released by the agency IMG Artists. "I now feel that the time has come to say goodbye to my work on the podium. Every score has an ending, and the final bars of this one have been written. This year's concerts will be the last I conduct. This decision was a difficult one to make, as you can imagine, but one I have considered carefully and wanted to share with you today." (AP)

WASHINGTON: Richard Grenell, an ally of President Donald Trump who oversaw far-reaching changes at the Kennedy Center that prompted many artists to abandon the iconic performing arts venue, will step down as the institution's president.

Trump announced the change in a social media post on Friday after it was first reported by Axios. The president said Matt Floca, who manages the Kennedy Center's facilities operations, will succeed Grenell.

The moves are expected to be finalized at a board meeting scheduled for Monday at the White House, according to a person familiar with the matter who requested anonymity to discuss plans that are not yet public.

Grenell's departure comes as the Kennedy Center prepares to close this summer for a two-year renovation. (AP)

Photographer reflects on 2026 entertainment events

Indelible photos, stories from awards season

LOS ANGELES, March 15, (AP) — As a staff photojournalist for The Associated Press based in Los Angeles, Chris Pizzello covers hundreds of entertainment events a year — perched in the rafters, crouched on the red carpet or directing stars to make the perfect portrait. It all culminates in awards season, where he captures the defining moments in the lives of the celebrities he's shot day in and day out, from the triumphs of Beyoncé and Bad Bunny at the Grammys to the envelope snafu and The Slap at the Oscars.

Ahead of Sunday's Oscars, he broke down his favorite photos from the 2026 awards season thus far.

One of the cool aspects of shooting the Critics Choice Awards in January is that the few photographers allowed inside are placed right in the middle of the room, surrounded by tables of celebrities. Usually, at awards shows, we're placed far behind the action, requiring us to scope out the celebrities with massive, bazooka-like 600mm lenses on monopods.

I usually try to predict who is going to win right before the announcement, so that I can capture their instant reaction. It's one of my favorite kinds of entertainment photos. Everyone likes to win and they're always at least a little surprised or gratified, no matter how many times they've won before. For the supporting actress category, I actually thought that Teyana Taylor was the likely winner, since "One Battle After Another" had been winning a lot of critics' awards. So I had my lens trained on her back near the stage. But I knew Amy Madigan was also quite close to my position over to my left. When they announced Madigan's name for "Weapons," I swung my lens over



Left: Michael B. Jordan reacts as he accepts the award for outstanding performance by a male actor in a leading role for 'Sinners' during the 32nd Annual Actor Awards in Los Angeles on March 1, 2026. Right: Amy Madigan, center, reacts to winning the award for best supporting actress for 'Weapons' during the 31st Annual Critics Choice Awards in Santa Monica, Calif., on Jan. 4, 2026. (AP)



quickly and managed to capture her own surprise. I love the reactions of the folks at the table around her, especially her young co-star Cary Christopher in the shades.

Every awards season, there is one nominee who is having more fun than everyone else — and this year, that person is Taylor. Awards season eventually becomes a slog to the vast majority of the nominees, and you can sense the flagging energy as February churns into March. The shoulders slump imperceptibly, the smile becomes a little forced, and the wave to the crowd a little less ebullient than it was at the Palm Springs Film Festival at the start of January.

But none of this applies to Taylor. She's easily been the red carpet star of the 2026 awards season. She's the most fashionable, the most energetic and just the plain happiest to be here. The entertainment photographers all wake up when she arrives for the red carpet, and she definitely knows what she's doing out there.

I like this frame from the photo room of the Golden Globes because you can sense Taylor's exuberance

without even seeing her face. She had just won the supporting actress in a motion picture award for her performance in "One Battle After Another" and was posing up a storm. She gave the photographers about 10 different looks, all equally lively and fun, before finally turning around and striking this triumphant pose.

Some of the best vibes of awards season are found at the annual Oscar nominees luncheon, customarily held at the storied Beverly Hilton. Nominees will stroll around makeshift studios set up by the world's media outlets and do interviews. A few of the outlets (like the AP) are allowed to shoot brief portraits.

It's all a bit of a crapshoot, since every outlet is fighting to get the same nominees and there are only so many interviews they can do. You just have to be ready for whatever happens to stop by. This year, best actor nominee Ethan Hawke was one of the very first nominees to visit the AP studio. The "Blue Moon" star was so early that my lighting was not even fine-tuned yet.

perform, wearing nothing but a guitar and his boxers.

His performance was literally so stripped-down that there wasn't much to shoot other than tight shots of Bieber moodily leaning into his microphone. Then near the end of the song, as I was switching lenses, I looked up and noticed the wider context of a lone, small figure alone on the stage, dimly lit by a spotlight overhead. Shooting the boxer-clad Bieber in front of a sea of black hopefully gets across the guts it took for him to lay it on the line in front of not only a packed arena but also a live, worldwide viewing audience.

It had all been getting too predictable. While there has been some variability in the supporting actor wins through awards season, the leads seemed to have been locked in since early January: Jessie Buckley and Timothée Chalamet. While Buckley prevailed yet again at the Actor Awards, there was a big surprise in store when Viola Davis took the stage to present male actor in a leading role.

My lens was trained on Chalamet. I thought the only possible upset could be Leonardo DiCaprio for "One Battle After Another," since he was the early favorite in the category before everyone saw Chalamet's electrifying turn in "Marty Supreme." But Leo was not even in the building, so I kept my focus on Chalamet.

But Davis suddenly called out Michael B. Jordan's name for "Sinners," and the ballroom erupted. No one saw it coming, least of all Jordan. He is a pretty cool customer, so it was fun to shoot his genuinely gobsommed reaction up at the podium. The Actor Awards this year was like seeing a fairly conventional Hollywood film with an out-of-nowhere twist ending.

Is Atlanta still the 'Hollywood of the South'?

After rapid rise, Georgia's film industry hits painful reset

ATLANTA, March 15, (AP): Chris Ratledge used to make as much as \$9,500 a week working on film sets around Atlanta. Now, he's on food stamps.

The 48-year-old digital imaging technician moved from Indiana to Georgia in 2017 as studios - lured by generous tax credits - turned Atlanta into the "Hollywood of the South," the backdrop for hundreds of productions like "The Hunger Games," "Stranger Things" and more than a dozen Marvel blockbusters.

Ratledge said the work was grueling - 70-hour weeks were normal - but the \$72-an-hour pay was transformative. "I paid off three years of back taxes in one year, just from the money I made," says Ratledge, who worked on the Netflix movie "Red Notice," as well as shows like TBS' "Miracle Workers" and Starz's "P-Valley."

Those times are long gone: Ratledge has worked just four days on set since May 2024.

Instead, he's been working part-time at the front desk of a local tennis center and stringing rackets on the side, trying somehow to support his family of five on \$15 an hour without health insurance. His wife, a cancer survivor, has started cleaning houses a few days



A group of college students tour Shadowbox Studios, Nov. 12, 2025, in Atlanta. (AP)

a week, and they've downsized their rental home. But their \$2,000-a-month income hardly even covers their rent, a shortfall that has left Ratledge in debt and deeply depressed.

"All I want for Christmas is for my film career back," Ratledge wrote on Instagram in December.

After hitting a peak of \$4.4 billion in 2022, spending on film and TV production in Georgia has tumbled, reaching just \$2.3 billion in the last fiscal year, as total productions dropped from 412 in 2022 to 245 last year. The decline accelerated after the 2023 writers and actors strikes halted productions for months,

dealing a blow to an industry still recovering from COVID-19 shutdowns.

"We saw a lot of productions start looking overseas, knowing that they wouldn't have another work stoppage," said Lee Thomas, the deputy commissioner of the Georgia Film Office. "We knew that it would be like a reset to the industry... but it certainly was a bigger, harder fall than we anticipated - and longer."

Marvel has left Georgia's market - its last movie filmed there was 2025's "Thunderbolts" - and shifted its massive productions to the United Kingdom, where labor and production costs are cheaper. Streamers like Netflix are also increasingly filming abroad, while producing fewer shows in general. Other states, including California and Texas, have upped incentives to compete with Georgia's tax credits, which can cover up to 30% of production costs.

Local industry Facebook groups are filled with complaints about a lack of work, with some people griping about well-established veterans taking up the few jobs available, said Monique Younger, an Atlanta costume supervisor. Younger says her work is less than half what it once was, making her "feel

a little bit useless."

Jen Farris, an Atlanta native and long-time location scout, said she used to reject offers because she had too much work. Now, she's navigating two- or three-month gaps in between projects, forcing her to "watch her pennies."

"You just pray that you have nested away enough to float a little bit," she said.

Despite the bleak landscape, Shadowbox Studios, one of metro Atlanta's largest soundstage operators, is betting on the area's future and has urged local filmmakers and industry leaders to rethink what's possible.

Shadowbox has been pitching its mammoth spaces to everyone from indie filmmakers to content creators and esports organizers. But it also wants to make sure the city's crew base remains robust.

Atlanta has for years served as the country's "antidote" to Hollywood blockbusters moving overseas, said Shadowbox COO Mike Mosallam, pointing to the city's experienced crews, comparatively lower production costs, extensive soundstage space and diverse landscapes. Keeping that talent pipeline strong is key to keeping more productions from leaving, he said.

In November, Shadowbox hosted about 25 Black college students for Backlot Academy, a program launched in 2022 to diversify the ranks of professions where personal connections often determine who gets hired.

Veteran crew members taught the participants how to decipher call sheets, use walkie-talkie lingo and survive 12-hour days on their feet. Participants could enroll for free in a multiweek digital course on the ins and outs of production and get mentorship as they try to book their first gig.

Trainee Julian Williams grew up in Atlanta and watched his city become a playground for Hollywood. One of the "Alvin and the Chipmunks" movies was even filmed on his street. Now a 24-year-old digital media student at Georgia Piedmont Technical College, Williams is determined to break into the industry as a production assistant, with the hope of one day becoming an assistant director.

He's prepared to follow his film dreams wherever they lead, but for now, he's betting on Atlanta and its collaborative film community.

"People are genuinely helpful and willing to share what they know," Williams said.

Television

Fans rejoice

'Doctor Who' lost episodes found

LONDON, March 15, (AP): Over six decades of "Doctor Who," the intergalactic adventurer's adversaries have included evil robots, rampaging Yeti - and the BBC, which erased many early episodes of the now-iconic sci-fi TV series.

A film charity announced Friday that it has found two previously lost 1960s episodes in film cans wrapped in plastic bags among the possessions of a deceased collector. They have been restored by BBC archivists and will be available next month on the broadcaster's streaming service.

The discovery leaves 95 episodes still missing from the adventures of a galaxy-hopping alien known as the Doctor that debuted in 1963.

"Doctor Who" - the "who" is an existential question, rather than the character's name - has become a television institution with millions of fans around the world. But the BBC's attitude to the show in its early years was careless. Scores of episodes were lost because the broadcaster threw out film recordings or wiped video tapes for reuse.

"The main broadcasters in the UK in the 1960s, 70s, up to the 80s really, junked quite a lot of content," said Justin Smith, a cinema professor at England's De Montfort University and chair of trustees of Film is Fabulous!, which works to preserve cinema and television history.

"In some ways finding missing 'Doctor Whos' is the holy grail" of classic TV discoveries, Smith told The Associated Press.

Smith said the charity found film cans containing the two rediscovered black-and-white episodes, "The Nightmare Begins" and "Devil's Planet," among the collection of a film aficionado who had died. The collector's estate wishes to remain anonymous.

The episodes aired during the show's third series in 1965 and feature William Hartnell, the first of more than a dozen actors to play the Doctor, in a story involving archvillains the Daleks - pepperpot-shaped metal aggressors whose favorite word is "Exterminate!"

Smith said that for "Who" fans, "it's got it all, it really has. It is intergalactic, it's got some great performances. It stands up really, really well."

The newfound episodes feature Peter Purves, who played the Doctor's sidekick Steven Taylor in 46 installments of the show.

"Twenty-seven of mine still are missing, but I'm delighted that two have been found," 87-year-old Purves told the BBC. "It's rather sad, but it's great when some turn up."

The discovery is the first since 2013, when nine missing "Doctor Who" episodes were found in the storeroom of a television relay station in Nigeria. The newly recovered episodes form part of a 12-part storyline, much of which is still missing. Smith said he is hopeful more instalments might turn up.

"We know that other episodes are in existence," he said. "We don't know where they are or who's got them - otherwise we'd be knocking on doors. But, yeah, I think there are more. The only question is when and where they will come to light."



Two full size Daleks from the BBC TV series Doctor Who, dating from the late 1970s to 1988 and used in the series 'Remembrance of the Daleks' at Bonhams auction house in London, Aug. 2, 2010. (AP)

Television



This image released by Prime shows Nicole Kidman in a scene from 'Scarpetta.' (AP)

'Characters come to you at the right time'

Kidman, Curtis bring 'Scarpetta' to TV

NEW YORK, March 15, (AP): When Jamie Lee Curtis' blockbuster film "True Lies" premiered worldwide, it would've been improbable to think that 30 years later she would be giddy about a TV show - about as improbable as performing her iconic helicopter stunt without special effects.

"I guarantee you when I was ... literally hanging under a helicopter above the Florida Keys over the Seven Mile Bridge in Florida, I did not imagine I'd be sitting in New York City that many years later with Nicole Kidman," Curtis said. "Not only being co-bosses on a show, but then also playing her slutty sister. I was not imagining that as my future."

The Oscar winners co-executive produced and star in "Scarpetta," a new mystery crime series from Prime Video, out March 11, based on Patricia Cornwell's popular books. Curtis credits Kidman as one of the major Hollywood players who helped shrink the gulf between perceptions of film and TV roles with prestige series like "Big Little Lies" and "Nine Perfect Strangers."

Kidman, 58, plays the titular character Dr. Kay Scarpetta, a forensic pathologist who solves complex murders. Upon returning to Virginia, she comes across cases eerily reminiscent of one three decades prior that catapulted her career forward. To prepare for the role, Kidman spent time with a medical examiner in Tennessee, where she learned how to hold a scalpel, and how to identify and dissect organs.

"My sister and my mother were obsessed with the novels, so I would read them," the Emmy-winning Kidman said. "When I mentioned it to my sister, she was like, 'Well, I mean, that's it. You have to do it.'"

The book rights to Cornwell's iconic fiction series were optioned throughout the years with megastars sometimes attached, including actors Demi Moore, Angelina Jolie, and even Kidman previously. But those iterations didn't come to fruition.

At the 2021 Oscars, Kidman approached Curtis' table and introduced herself - they'd never met, despite working in similar circles for decades. Months later, when Kidman heard Curtis was leading the charge on "Scarpetta," she wanted in.

"I have a philosophy where characters come to you at the right time," Kidman said. When she first considered playing Kay Scarpetta, the timing wasn't right, and neither

were the scripts. But the second time, it all came together. "Here she is, and I'm ready now," she said, reflecting on her decision to embrace the project.

Curtis plays Scarpetta's free-spirited sister Dorothy. The "Halloween" franchise star had no intention of acting in the show but agreed to it at Kidman's request. The eight-episode season was led by showrunner Liz Sarnoff, whose credits include "Lost" and "Barry," and is also a longtime fan of the books.

The cast includes Emmy winner Bobby Cannavale as Pete Marino, Kay's ex-partner and Dorothy's husband and "The Mentalist" star Simon Baker, who plays FBI profiler and Scarpetta's husband Benton Wesley. Another Oscar winner, Ariana DeBose, is Dorothy's tech-savvy daughter, primarily raised by Kay.

A companion storyline set in the '90s follows the doctor's early career, with Rosy McEwen, who bears a striking resemblance to Kidman, portraying the younger version. Jake Cannavale - Bobby's actual son - plays the young Marino, with Hunter Parrish portraying babyfaced Benton.

DeBose, who presented Curtis with her Oscar for "Everything Everywhere All at Once," was offered the role in a personal text message from Curtis. Her character, Lucy, is grieving her dead wife and seeks comfort in an AI replica. It's a pivot for an actor known for upbeat Broadway performances.

"I hope audiences will also find a way to have compassion for her," said the 35-year-old, of a fictional character that had real-life reverberations. Five months after filming, DeBose faced a loss of her own when her mother died. "I'm more clear now than I was when I was actually shooting this series... that grief manifests in very different ways."

Cornwell, who has sold more than 120 million copies of the "Scarpetta" series worldwide, was heavily involved in the adaptation.

"Dream come true - literally," said the New York Times bestseller, who started the series in 1990. The 69-year-old, who began penning "Postmortem" while working in the office of Virginia's chief medical examiner, is currently writing the 30th book centered around a serial poisoner. She says Kidman and Curtis uncovered new layers of her beloved characters.

"I'm learning things from them," she said. "When I sit back and I'm working on my book, suddenly I'm seeing Jamie in my head, or I'm hearing Nicole. My characters have come alive."

Prime has found massive success with popular novel adaptations like "Reacher," "Jack Ryan," the "Bosch" universe and "Cross," all possessing deep troves of source material. They're betting "Scarpetta" will be their next big hit.

Kidman, whose divorce from country music star Keith Urban was finalized in January, has a busy slate of upcoming projects, including the series "Margo's Got Money Troubles," "Girls and Their Horses" and "Discretion," as well as the films "The Young People" and "Practical Magic 2."

Curtis hopes the series, produced by her company Comet Pictures, inspires young women in the industry with another model for leadership, both in front of and behind the camera.

"I hope that they see people - women - doing all these different jobs. This show doesn't exist without me calling Jason Blum, saying, 'Hey, I found out that the rights to Patricia's books are available. Let's (expletive) go!'" said Curtis, recalling her conversation with the Blumhouse Television founder, who helped produce it. "They will hear that and go, 'Oh, that's how you get (expletive) done! You persevere.'"

Two "Scarpetta" seasons were ordered, and Curtis has famously said she will leave acting before Hollywood leaves her. Could more success delay her plan though?

"When my parents were in their heyday, they were enormous movie stars. There is a point where the industry just moves on. ... I want to be able to end it on my own terms ... I've been saying that since I was 30," said the 67-year-old Emmy winner. "I want to be able to walk away with the dignity and pride in my work, and not kind of grasping at something that's fading away."

"Pay no attention to her," Kidman interrupted, and said to Curtis, "We're not listening to that because we're asking you to stay forever."

The two teased each other playfully, like real-life sisters.

"She will be working well past 100, probably," Kidman said, "And we'll all be going, 'That's an inspiration.'"

Books

'Rise, Girl, Rise' inspires kids

Activists duo channel their bond into book

NEW YORK, March 15, (AP): Leymah Gbowee, the Liberian peace activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, says she doesn't pay much attention to celebrities. With one key exception: that time she first met Gloria Steinem.

"I was just starstruck," Gbowee confesses to The Associated Press of the moment a mutual friend introduced her to the feminist icon. "Everyone knows of Gloria, regardless of which continent you come from."

Steinem, for her part, protests that she's not any more of a star than Gbowee. "She's a GLOBAL celebrity," the famed activist, now 91, says of Gbowee, 54, who won the Nobel in 2011 for her work promoting peace and women's rights in Liberia.

In any case, their introduction two decades ago - via filmmaker and fellow activist Abigail Disney, who'd made a documentary about Gbowee's peace movement - led to a strong friendship, separated by an ocean but fueled by shared commitment to social justice.

"Their spirits were in sync," recalls Disney. "I said: 'My work is done here. You guys do your thing.'"

Steinem smiles when repeating the phrase "sister-friend," a term she says Gbowee invented: "It just expressed how we felt." Now, the friendship - and that phrase - has led to something tangible and colorful: "Rise, Girl, Rise: Our Sister-Friend Journey. Together For All," a picture book for kids. Dubbed "a journey of activism, sisterhood and friendship," it's both a joint biography and a call to a new generation to fight for equality.

With vivid illustrations by Kah Yangni, the two women trace their childhoods, young Steinem traveling the United States in a trailer with her antique-dealer father, over "miles of highways fruit stands, gas stations, diners," and Gbowee in Liberia, "a land rich with timber, ripe with hopes for a new tomorrow." They learn about injustice and inequality in their countries, and grow up to fight it - meeting as adults around a kitchen table.

The friends spoke in separate interviews - Gbowee from Liberia, and Steinem from her Manhattan brownstone - about their friendship, their book, and that kitchen table. Interviews have been combined and edited for length and clarity.

AP: The two of you live on different continents and have fought different sorts of battles. How did you get to know each other?

Gbowee: Gloria and I were introduced by a mutual friend, Abby Disney, many moons ago. And from that time onward, I was like, "If I ever need to talk to you, can we? And it was "Yes, yes, yes." And it's been that way for a long time. When I was pregnant with my daughter (now 16), we had the baby shower at Gloria's home.

Steinem: I remember her as a kind of global, amazing figure who somehow from Africa to the US, through Europe, everywhere, is a unifying figure and unifying storyteller. ... I mean, she IS the movement. Look at her life. She's an inspiration, whether we're talking about an ecological global save-the-trees movement or about women's equality.

AP: (To Gbowee) You've spoken about how a conversation with Gloria - at her kitchen table - influenced your decision to stick with the feminist movement at a time you were struggling, and ultimately inspired this book.

Gbowee: It was our Easter Sunday conversation in 2009, where I was really feeling funky about being in the feminist movement. Did I want to stay? Did I want to leave? And she said to me, "One of the reasons you feel the way you're feeling is because you need a sister." She was telling me about how she had all these sisters from Alice Walker to different people she used to go on trips with, they didn't need anything from each other, just to be there for each other. She said, "That's the kind of person you need, that you can be very vulnerable with." It was a beautiful conversation.

AP: What made you want to write the book together?

Steinem: First of all, we wanted to communicate, to write, to somehow connect with each other despite the global distance. ... I think that as children, we were interested in stories and were ourselves storytellers, as well as consumers of stories. We also had a relationship to the natural world, which perhaps is true for most children. Just a sense of kinship with trees and flowers and gardens.

Gbowee: During the pandemic, I started writing a lot. Someone put me in touch with Scholastic and I sent a manuscript and they looked at it and said, "Let's talk some more." I raised the issue of wanting to collaborate with a few individuals. And once I said "Gloria," they were like, "Do you know her?" I was like, "Of course I know Gloria!"

AP: (to Steinem) The two of you describe your childhoods in the book, and it's striking to read that you weren't introduced to regular school until you were about 10 years old.

Steinem: Until the sixth grade. We lived in rural Michigan in the summertime ... And in the wintertime, my father always put the whole family in a house trailer and we were working our way, buying and selling antiques and so on, to Florida or California. I think my family thought because I was always reading books in the back seat, that was enough.

AP: It doesn't seem to have set you back.

Steinem: Well, I'm probably still lousy at math.

AP: What age is this book directed at, and is it for girls?

Steinem: (Laughing) I mean, it's called "Rise, Girl, Rise," but I think boys could tolerate that title, too. Girls have read "The Hardy Boys" for years and other boys' books and felt connected.



This undated photo provided by Scholastic Inc. on Feb. 2, 2026 shows Gloria Steinem, (left), and Leymah Gbowee seated with copies of their book called "Rise, Girl, Rise: Our Sister-Friend Journey. Together for All." (AP)

The number behind science, engineering, and innovation

From rockets to cancer research, how pi is part of our lives

LOS ANGELES, March 15, (AP): Math nerds and dessert enthusiasts united to celebrate Pi Day every March 14, the date that represents the first three digits of the mathematical constant pi.

Representing the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter, pi is approximately equal to 3.14159 - but its digits go on forever. In school, you might have used it to calculate the area of a circle or the volume of a cylinder. But the applications of pi are endless and part of every corner of our world.

The holiday was created in 1988 by Larry Shaw, a physicist at the Exploratorium science museum in San Francisco.

"He had a very open and expansive view of the world and saw an opportunity with this number, mathematical concept, to invite people into the joy of mathematical learning," said Sam Sharkland, program director of public programs at the museum, who worked with Shaw before he died in 2017.

While it began as a small staff cel-

bration featuring pie, it soon turned into a grand procession where hundreds of visitors marched around the pi shrine, each carrying a digit. Attendees often show up early to claim their favorite digit for the parade.

One woman who has the symbol tattooed on her neck comes every year and marches near the front with a pi flag, Sharkland said.

The celebration begins at 1:59 p.m., signifying the next three digits of pi.

Here are a few ways pi is being used on the cutting edge of science.

In Artur Davoyan's field of mechanical and aerospace engineering, pi is so fundamental that it would be hard to pinpoint one use case for it, he said.

Pi is part of "literally every single formula that you would use to do any calculation, like for spacecraft motion, for materials and how they work, or propulsion systems," said Davoyan, a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Anything that is round or has cyclical or repeating properties - such



In this photo made with a long exposure, a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, with four private citizens onboard, lifts off from Kennedy Space Center's Launch Pad 39-A, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2021, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP)

as radio waves - involves pi. Even squares or irregular blobs can be broken down into a series of progressively smaller circles and calculated using pi, Davoyan said.

Davoyan's research looks at how to create new propulsion systems to send spacecrafts more quickly to the far reaches of the solar system to gather and send back information to

Earth. He pointed to NASA's Voyager 1 and 2, which launched in 1977 but didn't reach interstellar space until 2012 and 2018.

To send a signal to those space probes, NASA must calculate Earth's exact position in orbit around the sun and design antennas for communication using pi. Then scientists use pi once more when receiving and breaking down complex signals that are being beamed back to Earth.

"Say aliens send something to us, something that we don't know how to deal with," Davoyan said. "So the very first thing that you would do, you would try to split it into simple functions... and turns out that when you do this operation, you will naturally have pi in it."

Pi also comes up frequently when studying small amounts of fluids.

Dino Di Carlo, chair of the bioengineering department at the UCLA Samueli School of Engineering, conducts research that involves creating little particles out of polymers that act as tiny

test tubes for cells. This is used as an important tool to examine cells closely and learn about their functions and what's inside them.

The pi constant is used in calculating how to form those droplets, surface tension calculations that define how droplets can break up, and how researchers can control the size of those volumes, Di Carlo said.

Di Carlo is using this technique to find antibodies - small proteins that fight diseases in your body - that could block signals put out by cancer cells.

Pi is also an important part of calculations when looking at how liquids flow through tubes and barriers. One example is when the fluid sample slowly flows sideways in a take-home COVID-19 test.

Di Carlo used these properties to devise a new test for Lyme disease that can be completed in 20 minutes, rather than days or weeks like previously.

"As an engineer and scientist, (pi) is just a part of life," Di Carlo said. "Maybe I've taken it for granted."



Aerial photo taken on Aug. 16, 2022, shows a truck traveling on a road surrounded by forests in Horqin Left Wing Rear Banner, Tongliao City, in northern China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. (Xinhua)

'Sandy area once infertile now restored with trees'

China extends 'green wall' with new tech to fight desertification

HOHHOT, March 15, (Xinhua): On the northern edge of Maowusu, the fourth largest sandy area in China, Zhang Zhanjiang, a veteran local farmer, found himself faced with unfamiliar modern planting techniques.

He did not expect that tree planting nowadays would involve such precise work. Overhead, drones were buzzing as they conducted monitoring and transportation of supplies, while on the ground, planting machines had largely replaced manual labor, with technicians using remote sensing data to track planting results.

Zhang was among more than 100 beginners to join the local afforestation campaign this spring in a township of the city of Ordos, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

Watching a technician's demonstration, Zhang crouched on the sand to adjust depth and angle in employing the planting machine to drill suitable holes for inserting branches of a desert plant, *Salix mongolica*, while also tamping the sand with his shovel.

He then went to check on his work via remote sensing data displayed on the technician's tablet computer. Zhang carefully studied data such as soil moisture and made fine adjustments to planting spacing based on the feedback, as these factors can affect the survival rate of the seedlings.

"In the past, this sandy area produced shifting sand. Nothing planted could survive," he said, while gesturing at the freshly planted rows of willow cuttings. "Now we're learning how to fix it."

As the group of trainees operated machines for planting, drones airlifted bundles of straw, which were to be used in weaving grass checkerboards to protect small trees.

This, notably, is the front line of China's 2026 campaign to fight desertification. As the country marked its 48th National Tree Planting Day on Thursday, the National Greening Commission reported that China's forest and grass coverage rate has exceeded 56 percent thanks to its greening efforts.

Meanwhile, local authorities in desertification-prone areas have embarked on this year's greening drive armed with mobilized manpower, decades-long experience of afforestation innovations and intelligent equipment.

China is among the countries with the most severe desertification globally, with its desertified areas mainly located in northwest, north and northeast China, which are dubbed the "three-north."

The country in 1978 initiated its landmark ecological project, the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program, which has become the world's largest afforestation endeavor. Sched-

uled to be completed by 2050, the program has the aim of rehabilitating and greening desert-prone lands and desertified areas in the "three-north."

To boost these efforts, Inner Mongolia, ranking top among the country's provincial-level regions by accomplishing a total of 123 million mu (about 8.2 million hectares) of ecological construction and 66.88 million mu of sand prevention and control during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), plans to continue three major afforestation campaigns this year, expected to green a total area of 40 million mu, said Wu Guoqing, deputy director of the regional bureau of forestry and grassland.

One of the battlefields is located in the Alxa League, where smart equipment is playing an important role in the fight. Drones disperse grass seeds and seedlings from the air, while large-scale desert control machinery traverses the sandy terrain.

Tong Keting, director of the rural revitalization office in Alxa High-Tech Zone, said that by combining mechanical operations and manual work, vegetation coverage in the targeted area has been increased from less than 5 percent to over 40 percent, while annual sediment inflow into rivers had decreased from 500,000 tonnes in 2016 to 300,000 tonnes in 2025, demonstrating tangible results.

Misdiagnosis of Parkinson's is common

New genetic discovery offers hope for Parkinson's disease treatment

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

By Jose Abisambra
University of Florida

"Yes, doctor. My dad's first fall was on his 65th birthday. He stood in the driveway and suddenly dropped backwards on his back. After he fell two more times, we came to the clinic."

The symptoms the patient's son described didn't fit the usual diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. The family noted mood changes, including outbursts of anger. When the patient tried reading, the words "jumped" at him. Instead of looking down the page with his eyes, he moved his entire head. While his hands didn't shake, he noticeably moved around more slowly.

Dad was diagnosed with Parkinson's. The doctors weren't convinced this was the right diagnosis, but it was the best they could come up with. He was given medications for Parkinson's. They treated his symptoms with physical therapy and blood thinners to prevent clots if he got injured from a fall. But his condition worsened, and he died within 10 years.

He had been misdiagnosed. He actually had progressive supranuclear palsy, a rare and aggressive neurodegenerative disease with similar symptoms to Parkinson's. The late Rev. Jesse Jackson, who died on Feb. 17, 2026, at age 84, had a similar experience of misdiagnosis.

About 6 to 10 in 100,000 people are affected by progressive supranuclear palsy, totaling around 30,000 patients in the United States. But because this disease is often misdiagnosed, the real numbers are likely higher. It shares similar symptoms with Parkinson's, making it very challenging to distinguish between the two. In fact, PSP is also called atypical parkinsonism. Moreover, the brain cells of people with PSP share similar pathological signs with 20 other neurodegenerative disorders.

There are no biological tests to screen for progressive supranuclear palsy and no therapies specifically for this disease. Patients like Jackson are stuck with treatments that don't improve their quality of life. In our recently published research, my neu-



Rev. Jesse Jackson waves as he steps to the podium during the third day of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, July 27, 2016. (AP)

rosience lab identified a potential biomarker that could help change how doctors approach this disease.

Rare genetic changes can increase someone's risk of developing progressive supranuclear palsy.

For example, researchers found that a single mutation on the gene coding for the stress sensor protein PERK increases a person's risk of developing the disease. PERK helps relieve stress from a part of the cell that acts as a warehouse for newly made proteins. When the cell becomes stressed, PERK dials down the production of new proteins and gives this warehouse time to recover.

Many labs worked to find why this single change in DNA could unleash a devastating life sentence. My team and I had previously found that alterations in a key protein involved in neurodegenerative diseases, tau, can activate PERK, which further weaponizes abnormal tau against cells.

After identifying three other PERK mutations, the field focused on targeting PERK as a way to treat the disease. However, results were conflicting: Both increasing and decreasing PERK activity improved cell survival and brain function in animal and cell models.

Then researchers made a crucial discovery: Unlike properly functioning PERK, the mutant form of this protein could not eliminate tau clumps in the brain. This meant that the brain normally has a way to get rid of toxic tau, but this mechanism was compromised in people who have the mutation.

Treatment strategies that could change the activity of PERK, even in sick patients, could provide a way to fight this disease.

My team and I wanted to understand how PERK promotes the abnormal accumulations of tau protein that causes progressive supranuclear palsy.

First, we genetically engineered cells to express normal or mutant PERK. As expected, while both forms of PERK carried out nearly identical functions, mutant PERK did not sufficiently clear out tau. Our next step was to identify which proteins PERK actually affected.

We hypothesized that both versions of PERK reduced the production of different proteins. To test this, we tagged cells with an antibiotic that attaches to newly made proteins.

Surprisingly, only four proteins differed between normal and mutant PERK cells, suggesting we'd found a potential key to understand how progressive supranuclear palsy develops and how it kills brain cells.

One of the proteins we identified, DLX1, was previously associated with the disease. After confirming that DLX1 is enriched in the brains of people with PSP, we tested how changing DLX1 levels would affect fruit flies engineered to produce high levels of tau in their brains.

We found that reducing DLX1 levels in the flies minimized the damage tau causes on cells. These findings strongly imply that DLX1 plays a role in the development of progressive supranuclear palsy. (AP)

Children most affected by rabies in Egypt

Egypt acts to curb rising stray dog issue

CAIRO, March 15, (Xinhua): When pharmacist Sarah Mahmoud returns home each day to her residential area in southeastern Cairo, the Egyptian capital, she says the trip has become fraught with anxiety.

Mahmoud, a 38-year-old mother of three who has lived in Maadi district since 2014, recalled a time when stray dogs were few and largely harmless, allowing residents to coexist with them peacefully. However, the stray dog population has grown, and their behavior has shifted over the past two years.

"The dogs began moving in packs of 10 to 15, howling loudly and displaying aggressive behavior," she said, adding that she was once bitten on the leg before a doorman intervened.

Mahmoud's experience reflects broader concerns among residents, veterinarians, and individuals working with animal welfare groups in Egypt, prompting the government to step up measures to address the issue.

Figures from the Egyptian Federation for Animal Welfare, a non-governmental organization, quoted by Ahram Online in July 2024, put Egypt's stray dog population at 15 million. By late 2025, however, statistics from Cairo's Veterinary Directorate suggested it had climbed to 40 million.

Mahmoud Hamdy, an official with the Egyptian Veterinarians Syndicate,



A stray dog is seen in Cairo, Egypt, on Jan. 27, 2026. (Xinhua)

told Xinhua that Egypt's long-simmering stray dog crisis has reignited fierce debate due to their surging numbers, which have been attributed to the abandonment of domestic pets, uncontrolled breeding, and hybridization with aggressive foreign breeds.

The impact of the issue is increasingly evident in data. According to health ministry data, Egypt recorded about 1.4 million dog bite cases in 2025, up from at least 1.2 million in previous years. Meanwhile, dogs were linked to some 90 percent of rabies cases in Egypt, while in Western countries, the deadly disease is no longer primarily linked to dogs.

UN Food and Agriculture Organization data indicate that, on average, 50

clinically confirmed human rabies cases occur annually in Egypt, mostly among children, with around 70 percent not receiving preventive treatment.

To cope with the situation, Egypt allocates about 1.2 billion Egyptian pounds (about 23 million U.S. dollars) annually for free vaccines and serums, said Hamdy. Victims of dog bites receive four vaccine doses and an injection of rabies immune globulin, costing around 1,250 Egyptian pounds per person.

In mid-January, Egypt's Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation launched a 180-day plan to tackle the stray dog issue, as part of the national strategy "Egypt Rabies-Free by 2030." The plan includes measures such as establishing shelters for stray dogs and the vaccination and sterilization programs.

"The state adopts a balanced approach that protects citizens while adhering to compassion and humane standards in dealing with animals," said Mostafa Ramadan, head of Cairo's Veterinary Directorate.

As part of the plan, 30 fully equipped vehicles have been deployed to safely transport dogs during field campaigns. Twelve shelters are being established across 12 governorates, including Cairo, Giza and Alexandria, where dogs are vaccinated, sterilized, and returned to their original locations if confirmed to be non-aggressive, said Ramadan.

Temporal livestock plan

Scientists propose solution for human-wildlife conflicts

XINING, March 15, (Xinhua): Chinese scientists have shared new insight regarding human-wildlife conflict resolution by establishing a temporal livestock management strategy, according to the Northwest Institute of Plateau Biology (NWIPB) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Published in the journal *Integrative Zoology*, the study sheds light on the common global challenge of ensuring both sustainable development and biodiversity protection, the institute said.

"Livestock predation by large carnivores is a global conservation challenge that fuels human-carnivore conflict and hinders coexistence with agropastoral communities. Understanding carnivore activity patterns and implementing temporal segregation are evidence-informed strategies for mitigating such conflict risks," said Lian Xinming, a researcher with the NWIPB.

Domestic livestock grazing occupies about one-third of the Earth's land area and significantly affects sympatric wildlife. This high overlap in space utilization also leads to constant conflict between local herders and wild animals.

In underdeveloped areas where agriculture and animal husbandry serve as pillar industries, retaliatory hunting caused by human-wild animal conflict has become one of the key driving factors in the decline of some wild animal populations, posing a serious threat to the long-term survival of many endangered species, Lian noted.

Various strategies have been developed and improved in the bid to avoid economic losses and casualties caused by human-animal conflict. With a focus on exploring non-fatal mitigation strategies, the research team conducted a long-term field investigation and study in the Sanjiangyuan area, which is known as "China's water tower," located in the country's northwestern Qinghai Province.

Snow leopards, wolves, lynxes and brown bears are the main large carnivores that come into conflict with humans in this region. The first three species mostly prey on domestic animals, while brown bears mainly damage houses and even cause human casualties.

Over a ten-year period from 2014 to 2024, scientists installed 422 infrared cameras and collected relevant monitoring data in this region, covering a cumulative monitoring area amounting to 2,580 square kilometers. They obtained a large amount of valid photos of snow leopards, wolves, brown bears and lynxes, respectively.

Employing kernel and conditional circular kernel density estimation, they analyzed the diel activity patterns of these four large carnivores and aimed to identify seasonal variations between cold and warm periods, thereby enabling the identification of high-risk intervals for potential conflict between these species and humans.

Source probed

Cambodia reports 2nd bird flu case

PHNOM PENH, March 15, (Xinhua): A 45-year-old woman from far north-west Cambodia's Banteay Meanchey province had been confirmed positive for H5N1 human avian influenza, becoming the second case of this year, the Ministry of Health said in a statement on Sunday.

The victim, living in Ropak village of Preah Netr Preah district, was confirmed positive for the virus by the National Institute of Public Health on Saturday.

Investigations revealed that the patient raised chickens and ducks, and some of her poultry fell ill and died. She tested positive for H5N1 three days after having direct contact with the dead poultry, the ministry said in a statement.

Health authorities are looking into the source of the infection and are examining any suspected cases or people who have been in contact with the victim in order to prevent an outbreak in the community, the statement said.

It was the second human case of bird flu so far this year after the first case was detected on a 30-year-old man from southwest Kampong province in mid-February, and he recovered.

H5N1 influenza is a flu that normally spreads between sick poultry, but it can sometimes spread from poultry to humans, and its symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, and severe respiratory illness.

SPORTS

Heart-stopping finish as France wins back-to-back Six Nations titles

Ireland wins Triple Crown, finishes 2nd, Wales ends drought

PARIS, March 15, (AP): France won back-to-back Six Nations titles after beating England 48-46 on a last-second penalty kick by Thomas Ramos in a thriller for the ages.

England scored its seventh try in the 77th minute and converted for 46-45. If the score held for a few more minutes Ireland would have been crowned the champion.

But France pressed yet again with 14 men, lost possession, regained it, and earned two simultaneous penalties after the full-time siren. Captain Antoine Dupont debated with referee Nika Amashukeli where the penalty spots were. Ramos, who didn't miss a goalkick all night, finally lined up his seventh shot from more than 40 meters out.

The fullback nailed it straight down the middle in the 83rd and leaped into the arms of teammates, celebrating as back-to-back champions for the first time in 19 years.

Of the title-winning goalkick, Ramos said, "It's in my top three, and not just third. I love moments like that. This title rewards our very strong start to the tournament. I'm very happy. It would have been so tough, when you think about the scenario, to lose it at home in the 76th minute."

In a bewildering and breathless



Antoine Dupont of France holds the trophy aloft after clinching the title after winning the Six Nations rugby union match between France and England in Saint-Denis, outside Paris. (AP)

match including 13 tries and six lead changes, Ramos was the difference as France scored only six tries, four of them by winger Louis Biele-Biarrey.

England put up its highest ever score against France on French soil on the 120th anniversary of Le Crunch, but suffered a fourth loss in a single championship for the first

time in 50 years.

Ireland kept alive its Six Nations title hopes and buried Scotland's in a familiar-looking 43-21 victory to launch the final round.

The Irish moved three points ahead of France, which hosted England in the day's last match in Paris. Ireland was two minutes from being crowned champion but France's

Thomas Ramos kicked a last-second penalty to win the match and title 48-46.

Ireland finished second, two points behind the French, who crushed the Irish 36-14 on opening night in Paris.

The Irish at least won the Triple Crown for a fourth time in five seasons, denying the Scots their first

sweep of the home nations since 1990.

Both sides began the match with title ambitions. But to win their first title since 1999, the Scots had ghosts to exorcise. They'd won only once in Dublin in 26 years, not since 2010, and never at Aviva Stadium. They'd also lost their last 11 contests to Ireland.

Ireland's modus operandi was power, controlling the gainline, and relentless pressure. They smashed a Scotland side that put 50 points and seven tries on hapless France last weekend.

Wales tasted Six Nations success for the first time in 1,099 days after blowing away Italy 31-17 in Principality Stadium.

The growing confidence from spirited losses against Scotland and Ireland spilled over into an unexpected and dominant bonus-point win, Wales' first in the championship since March 2023 when it beat Italy in Rome.

Wales was physical, direct and ruthless, leading 21-0 by halftime then 31-0 before Italy scored.

Their scramble defense was also amazing as Italy had two tries disallowed, one held up, and another prevented by an ankle tap.

While Wales ended the nightmare of a national record 15-match losing streak in the Six Nations, it finished with a third consecutive wooden spoon.

Italy equaled its best Six Nations finish - fourth in 2007 and 2013 - but it wanted more, an historic third win in a single championship after beating Scotland and England. However, the Azzurri were smashed in the first half, and ultimately missed 30 tackles.

Wales made the eight first-half penalties count.

Atlanta United keeps Union reeling

Johnsen shines in debut as Sporting KC edges Galaxy

CARSON, Calif., March 15, (AP): Dejan Joveljic had a goal and an assist against his former team, Lasse Johnsen had a goal and an assist in his league debut and Sporting Kansas City beat the Los Angeles Galaxy 2-1.

Neither team found the net until Joveljic used assists from Manu Garcia and Johnsen to score two minutes into stoppage time for a 1-0 lead at halftime. Garcia earned his first assist after tallying nine as a rookie last season.

Joveljic, along with Stephen Afrifa, set up an insurance goal by Johnsen in the 74th minute for a 2-0 advantage. Afrifa's helper was first this season and his second in 39 appearances.

Emmanuel Latte Lath had a goal and an assist and Miguel Almiron had three assists to spark Atlanta United to a 3-1 victory over Philadelphia, extending the Union's worst start in club history.

Latte Lath staked Atlanta United to a 1-0 lead in the 28th minute when he used assists from Almiron and defender Elias Baez to score. It was Latte Lath's first goal this year after scoring seven times last season - his first in the league. Baez, a 21-year-old rookie, notched his second assist.

Tomás Jacob made it 2-0 with a goal two minutes into the second half. It was the first goal for the 21-year-old rookie defender. Almiron and Matias Galarza had assists. Galarza contributed in his debut for the club after being signed on March 2 from Argentina's River Plate.

Tai Baribo scored on a penalty kick in the fifth of 18 minutes of second-half stoppage time to rally D.C. United to a 2-1 victory over Chicago after Hugo Cuypers drilled a late PK to give the Fire a brief lead.

Neither team scored until the 81st minute when Cuypers sent a PK into the net after a foul on DC United midfielder Jackson Hopkins.

Stijn Spierings scored a goal in his MLS debut to help Real Salt Lake beat Austin FC 2-1.

Spierings, a 30-year-old former Netherlands youth international, ran onto a ball played ahead by Justin Glad and blasted a first-touch shot from well outside the area to give Real Salt Lake (3-1-0) its first lead of the game at 2-1 in the 88th minute.

Jon Bell scored for Austin (1-2-1) in the 18th minute.

Noel Caliskan played an entry pass from the left edge of the penalty box that was redirected into the net by Austin defender Oleksandr Svatok for an assist.

Mateusz Bogusz scored a short-handed goal in the 15th minute of second-half stoppage time and the Houston Dynamo rallied to beat the Portland Timbers 3-2.

Houston (2-1-0) shook off a red card on Nicholas Markanich for his foul on Timbers goalkeeper James Pantemis in the fourth of 18 minutes of stoppage time. Jack McGlynn's second assist of the match set up the winner. It was the first goal for Bogusz in his first season with the Dynamo after scoring 18 times in two seasons with Los Angeles FC.

Portland (1-3-0) took a 1-0 lead into halftime when Gage Guerra scored his first career goal - unassisted - in the fourth minute of stoppage time after Jonathan Bond got a hand on a penalty kick by Kristoffer Velde but couldn't coral it. Guerra sent the deflection off the inside of the right post and into the net.



FC Dallas' Logan Farrington (23) and San Diego FC's Oscar Verhoeven (33) battle for the ball during an MLS soccer match in Frisco, Texas. (AP)

coach Oscar Pareja mutually parted ways Wednesday.

Nicolas Fernández scored twice in the first half and Talles Magno scored late in the second to propel New York City FC to a 3-1 victory over the Colorado Rapids at Yankee Stadium.

NYCFC (3-0-1) jumped in front in the 22nd minute when Fernández scored unassisted and then took a 2-0 lead in the 45th on another unassisted goal by Fernández - off a free kick. It was his fourth goal of the season after scoring three times in 11 appearances last year - his first season in the league.

It was NYCFC's first goal off a free kick since Hannes Wolf did it in May of 2024 against the Philadelphia Union.

Hany Mukhtar scored four minutes into second-half stoppage time - the 25,000th goal in MLS history - and Brian Schwake earned his second clean sheet in his fourth MLS start as Nashville SC beat the Columbus Crew 1-0.

Mukhtar subbed in to begin the second half for Nashville (3-0-1) before scoring for the second time this season. It was his 84th goal in 183 career appearances with the club.

Mathieu Choiniere scored twice - the 27-year-old's second career multi-goal game in MLS - and Hugo Lloris had his fourth consecutive shutout on Saturday night to help Los Angeles FC beat St. Louis City 2-0.

Loris finished with four saves for LAFC (4-0-0), which has outscored its opponents 8-0 this season. The 39-year-old Lloris, who had 12 clean sheets in each of his first two seasons with the club, joined Roman Bürki (St. Louis, 2025) as the only players in MLS history with four consecutive shutouts to open a season.

Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting scored an equalizer in the 98th minute to recover a point for the New York Red Bulls in a 1-1 draw with Toronto FC in Toronto's home opener.

Toronto (2-1-1) broke through in the 43rd minute when Dániel Sallói finished from the center of the box after a pass from Djordje Mihailovic. Goalkeeper Luka Gavran helped preserve the lead before halftime, turning aside several early chances from the Red Bulls.

Petar Musa scored three goals - his second career hat trick and second multi-goal game this season for FC Dallas in a 3-3 tie with San Diego FC.

Musa capped the scoring in the fifth minute of stoppage time. Bernard Kamungo intercepted a pass near midfield, raced down the left side and then tapped a pass to Musa for a first-touch finish from the left corner of the 6-yard box.

Lakers edge Nuggets in OT

Orlando completes 5-0 sweep of Miami as Celtics hand Wizards 11th consecutive loss

BOSTON, March 15, (AP): Jayson Tatum had 20 points and 14 rebounds in a season-high 32 minutes, Neemias Queta had 24 points and 10 rebounds and the Boston Celtics withstood a late charge to beat Washington 111-100 and send the Wizards to their 11th straight loss.

Tatum had his second double-double since making his season debut earlier this month. Jaylen Brown added 16 points to help the Celtics snap a two-game skid.

Boston's lead grew to 30 points in the third quarter, but Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla kept Tatum on the court to allow him to reach a high for minutes in the four games he's played in since his return from Achilles tendon surgery. He had been capped at 27 minutes in his previous three games.

Washington, which was coming off erasing a 17-point deficit to force overtime in a loss at Orlando on Thursday, chopped Boston's lead to 12 in the fourth quarter. But the Celtics got a layup from Tatum and 3-pointer by Sam Hauser to help them close it out.

Tristan Vukcevic had 22 points to lead the Wizards.

Magic 121, Heat 117

In Miami, Paolo Banchero scored 27 points, Desmond Bane added 21 and the Orlando Magic beat the Miami Heat, becoming the second team in the last 30 years to beat the same opponent five times in one season.

Wendell Carter Jr. scored 15 for the Magic, who won their seventh straight and snapped Miami's season-best, seven-game winning streak.

Orlando led by as many as 22, before Miami twice got within two in the final 18.5 seconds.

Orlando (38-28) moved a game clear of Miami (38-30) in the race for fifth in the Eastern Conference, plus is 10 games over .500 for the first time since the end of the 2023-24 season.

Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 22, while Bam Adebayo and Norman Powell each had 20 for Miami, which hadn't gone 0-5 against one team since doing so against New York - then coached by now-Heat President Pat Riley - in 1992-93.

The only other instance in the last three decades: New Orleans went 5-0 against Sacramento in 2023-24.

Lakers 127, Nuggets 102, OT

In Los Angeles, Luka Doncic made a fall-away jumper with 0.5 seconds remaining in overtime and the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Denver Nuggets 127-102 on Saturday night.

Austin Reaves forced overtime when he rebounded his intentionally missed free throw and made a floater with 1.9 seconds remaining in regulation.

Doncic created enough distance from Spencer Jones to make the 17-foot shot, finishing with 30 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds as he continued his spectacular play during Los Angeles' five-game winning streak. Doncic then blocked Tim Hardaway Jr.'s desperation heave following a Denver timeout.

Reaves finished with 32 points, making the first free throw and then perfectly executing his missed second attempt off the front of the rim after the Nuggets fouled him to prevent a tying 3-point attempt leading 118-115 with 5.2 seconds left.

Nikola Jokic had 24 points, 16 rebounds and 14 assists for his 27th triple-double of the season. Aaron Gordon led the Nuggets with 27 points and Hardaway finished with 20.

Spurs 115, Hornets 102

In San Antonio, Victor Wembanyama had 32 points, 12 rebounds, eight assists and three blocks in his return from a one-game absence, leading the San Antonio Spurs to a victory over the Charlotte Hornets.

Miles Bridges had 22 points and Kon Knueppel added 20 for Charlotte, which had won two straight and eight of 10.

The Spurs have won 17 of 19 to tighten their grip on second in the Western Conference. San Antonio (49-18) is 7 1/2 games ahead of No. 3 Houston (41-25) and three games behind Oklahoma City (52-15) for first.

The Spurs closed their longest homestand 5-1, with their only loss coming as Wembanyama watched from the bench because of a sore right calf in a 136-131 loss to Denver on Thursday that snapped a five-game winning streak.

Kings 119, Clippers 108

In Inglewood, Russell Westbrook had 12 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for his 209th career triple-double and DeMar DeRozan scored 27 points to lead the Sacramento Kings to victory over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Kawhi Leonard scored 31 points before leaving with a sprained left ankle for the Clippers, whose four-game winning streak was stopped. It was Leonard's 45th consecutive game with at least 20 points, topping Bob McAdoo's franchise record set during the 1974-75 season when the team was based in



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, right, dives for the loose ball past Denver Nuggets guard Christian Braun during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles. (AP)



San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama (1) grabs a rebound over Charlotte Hornets forward Moussa Diabate (14) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Antonio. (AP)

Buffalo.

Leonard was injured with 9:27 left in the fourth quarter when he was guarding DeRozan and landed awkwardly before backpedaling a few steps and tumbling to the court. He popped up quickly, but limped noticeably to the Clippers' bench before heading to the locker room. Leonard didn't return to the game and there was no immediate word on whether he might miss time.

Hawks 122, Bucks 99

In Atlanta, CJ McCollum scored 30 points, Jalen Johnson had his 12th triple-double of the season and the Atlanta Hawks beat the Milwaukee Bucks for their ninth straight victory.

Johnson finished with 23 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds as Atlanta extended the longest current winning streak in the NBA. McCollum made seven 3-pointers and moved ahead of Paul Pierce into 16th place on the career list with 2,147.

Nickeil Alexander-Walker had 20 points for the Hawks, who led 60-52 after a first half with six lead changes and four ties. The Hawks then broke it open in the third quarter by outscoring Milwaukee 35-26, with McCollum scoring 11.

Ryan Rollins scored 22 points for the Bucks, who were without Giannis Antetokounmpo after he sprained his left ankle during Milwaukee's 112-105 loss to Miami on Thursday. Kevin Porter Jr. added 18 points, seven rebounds and seven assists.

Resurgent Flamengo eases past Botafogo in Rio derby

RIO DE JANEIRO, March 15, (Xinhua): Flamengo continued its resurgent form with a 3-0 away win over Botafogo in Brazil's Serie A.

Samuel Lino and Leo Pereira scored first-half goals and Brazil striker Pedro added a third just after the interval as Flamengo cruised to its third consecutive league victory.

Botafogo was forced to play the entire second half with a numerical disadvantage after defender Alexander Barboza was shown a red card on the stroke of halftime.

The hosts had only one shot on target, slipping to their third defeat in four games.

"We are getting better with every match," Flamengo manager Leonardo Jardim told a post-

match news conference.

"The players are prioritizing the importance of playing collectively and I'm particularly happy with the way everyone is contributing in defense. We have become a more compact team and that makes a big difference against opponents of the caliber of Botafogo." In Saturday's only other Brazilian top flight fixture, Renato Kayzer and Erick were on target as Vitoria eased to a 2-0 home win over Atletico Mineiro.

Florian Monzon and Lucas Robertone scored in each half as Group A leader Velez Sarsfield secured a 2-0 away win over Platense in Argentina's Apertura tournament.

Monzon put his side ahead in the eighth minute

when his powerful shot flew into the top-right corner after taking a deflection.

Robertone doubled the advantage just after halftime with a long-range drive that beat goalkeeper Matias Borgogno at his near post.

Platense had several chances to reduce the deficit in the second half but couldn't find a way past Colombian goalkeeper Alvaro Montero, who made five saves.

The result leaves Velez seven points clear of second-placed Union Santa Fe while Platense is sixth, eight points off the pace.

Elsewhere in Argentina's top flight on Saturday, Jaminton Campaz scored a late winner as Rosario Central won 2-1 at home to Banfield.

SPORTS

Arsenal strengthens grip on title race, Dowman makes EPL history



Everton's Tim Iroegbunam, left, and Arsenal's Riccardo Calafiori jump for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Everton in London, England. (AP)

LONDON, March 15, (AP): Arsenal strengthened its grip on the Premier League title race on the day its 16-year-old wonderkid, Max Dowman, scored a brilliant solo goal to become the competition's youngest ever scorer.

After Arsenal relied on late goals by Viktor Gyokeres and Dowman to snatch a 2-0 home win over Everton, second-place Manchester City could only draw 1-1 at West Ham.

The lead grew to nine points on what might prove to be a defining day in Arsenal's bid for a first English league title since 2004.

It will certainly never be forgotten by Dowman, the school kid and surely a future superstar in English soccer.

At 16 years, 73 days, he changed the game after coming on in the second half for his third Premier League appearance in a breakthrough season that has already seen him become the youngest player in Champions League history.

It was his cross from the right that was missed by Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford and

Manchester City draws at West Ham



Manchester City's Rayan Ait-Nouri, left, and West Ham's Jarrod Bowen compete for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between West Ham United and Manchester City in London, England, Saturday. (AP)

struck the midriff of Arsenal substitute Piero Hincapie. The ball bounced across the goalmouth and Gyokeres applied the finishing touch from close range.

Then, in the seventh minute of stoppage time, Dowman collected the ball midway in his own half after a corner was cleared, dribbled around two players, and raced clear to

tap into an empty net. Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford was stranded upfield having gone up for the corner in search of an equalizer.

City couldn't match Arsenal, surrendering the lead given to Pep Guardiola's team by Bernardo Silva in the 31st minute. Four minutes later, Konstantinos Mavropanos headed home the equalizer at a corner.

It wraps up a tough week for City, which was beaten 3-0 by Real Madrid in the first leg of the Champions League's round of 16 on Wednesday.

Across London, Chelsea lost 1-0 to Newcastle thanks to an 18th-minute goal by Anthony Gordon.

Burnley is running out of time and hope in the Premier League.

A 0-0 home draw with Bournemouth on Saturday left next-to-last Burnley - one of the many U.S.-owned teams in England's top division - eight points from safety with just eight games remaining this season and facing an immediate return to the Championship.

Burnley has won just four of its 30 league games.

Sunderland, another promoted team, appears to be safe from relegation but is limping toward the end of the season after a third straight home loss - this time to Brighton 1-0.

The only goal was a bizarre one, with Yankuba Minteh's mis-hit cross from the byline somehow squeezing in at the near post in the 58th minute at the Stadium of Light.

Sunderland hadn't lost at home until a defeat to Liverpool on Feb. 11. Since then, it has lost to Fulham and now Brighton.

Dortmund closes in

Bayern held to 1-1 draw at Leverkusen after 2 red cards

BERLIN, March 15, (AP): Bayern Munich salvaged a 1-1 draw despite clinging on with nine players at Bayer Leverkusen as Harry Kane returned to action following an injury, while Borussia Dortmund cut Bayern's Bundesliga lead to nine points.

Luis Díaz, who scored the equalizer following Aleix Garcia's opener, was sent off in the 84th minute for a second yellow card for diving. Nicolas Jackson, starting with Kane on the bench, received a straight red card for a poor tackle in the 42nd minute.

Bayern coach Vincent Kompany and his players were sharply critical of the decision to send off Díaz, and referee Christian Dingert admitted after the game that it wasn't the right call after viewing a replay, in comments to broadcaster Sky Sport.

"I'm incredibly proud of the mental performance the guys showed," Kompany said of his team. "There was an incredible amount of things going on today."

Leverkusen took the lead in the sixth minute after 18-year-old German-American winger Montrell Culbreath stole the ball off Díaz and fed it to Patrik Schick, who set up Garcia on the edge of the box. The midfielder slotted home with a deflected shot.

The hosts defended well to contain Bayern's attempts to come

back, and frustration showed when Jackson was sent off before halftime for a late challenge on Martin Terrier.

Bayern played with third-choice goalkeeper Sven Ulreich because Manuel Neuer has a calf issue and backup Jonas Urbig was concussed in the 6-1 win over Atalanta midweek in the Champions League. Ulreich denied an effort from Schick in a one-on-one situation at the hour mark just before Kane came on.

Back from a calf injury, Kane played for the first time since Feb.



Bayern's goalkeeper Sven Ulreich makes a save against Leverkusen's Ibrahim Maza, left, during a German Bundesliga soccer match between Bayer Leverkusen and Bayern Munich in Leverkusen, Germany. (AP)

28 after scoring eight goals in his past four Bundesliga games. He fired the ball into an empty net in the 62nd minute but it was disallowed for blocking the goalkeeper's clearance with a hand in the buildup.

Diaz leveled in the 69th with a low shot from Michael Olise's precise setup. The Colombia winger later received a second yellow card for diving and Bayern was down to nine men with six minutes left to play. The hosts could not snatch the win despite pushing hard until the end as Jo-

nas Hofmann had a goal ruled out deep in stoppage time.

Bayern hasn't won at Leverkusen in the league since October 2021, and heads back there next month for a German Cup semifinal.

Sixth-place Leverkusen missed a chance for what would have been only its second win in seven games in all competitions. It's drawn five of the last six and heads into a Champions League second leg game at Arsenal on Tuesday after a 1-1 draw in the first leg.

Dortmund was in total control throughout the first half and Augsburg was lucky to trail by just one goal at halftime. Karim Adeyemi broke the deadlock in the 13th and had several other chances, hitting the woodwork twice. Luca Reggiani made it 2-0 in the 59th.

Hoffenheim, aiming to qualify for Champions League for first time since the 2018-19 season, stayed third - 17 points behind Bayern - after a 1-1 draw with relegation-threatened Wolfsburg, which was playing its first game under new coach Dieter Hecking.

Cologne's 19-year-old winger Said El Mala scored his ninth goal of a breakout season in a 1-1 draw with Hamburger SV. Eintracht Frankfurt beat Heidenheim 1-0 with a goal from Arnaud Kalimundo.

Esterhuizen anchors SA reply with unbeaten 45

South Africa bowls out New Zealand for 91, wins first T20 by 7 wickets

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, New Zealand, March 15, (AP): A South Africa team with four players on debut rolled World Cup finalist New Zealand for 91 in 14.3 overs and went on to win the first Twenty20 international Sunday by seven wickets.

Opener Connor Esterhuizen anchored the South Africa reply with 45 from 48 balls as the Proteas won with 20 balls to spare. He was supported by Dian Forrester, also on debut, who stayed with him for more than six overs and was 16 not out at the end.

Esterhuizen finished the chase with a six off Kyle Jamieson from the fourth ball of the 17th over.

New Zealand's spinners helped to make a fight of it and captain Mitchell Santner finished with 1-8 from his four overs on a turning pitch at Bay Oval.

"I think all the plans paid off and the execution was top-notch from our bowlers," South Africa captain Keshav Maharaj said. "It was a young bowling lineup, but whatever we asked them to do, they stood up."

"It was a little nervy towards the end but it showed the maturity in Connor and Dian in the way they played to take it over the line."

New Zealand had eight players missing from its World Cup squad, including its top-six batters from the team that lost the final against India by 96 runs and beat South Africa by nine wickets in the semifinals.

After choosing to bat first, New Zealand lost five wickets in the powerplay, couldn't recover and stumbled to its 10th-lowest score in T20 internationals, its second-lowest against South Africa.

Gerald Coetzee dismissed New Zealand opener Devon Conway and Tom Latham within the first three overs, finishing with 2-14, then Otneil Baartman took 2-22 to help complete the ruin of the New Zealand top order.

Baartman dismissed Tim Robinson and Nick Kelly, on debut, before the run-out of

Bevon Jacobs left New Zealand on 36-5.

Nqobani Mokoena ran through New Zealand's lower order, taking 3-26 to stifle any hope of a late resurgence. A 26-run partnership between Jimmy Neesham (26) and Mitchell Santner (15) was the best New Zealand could manage.

Neesham fell to Mokoena and captain Santner to his South Africa counterpart Maharaj, who took 2-25.

"It was quite cool making my debut in the first game and I went out there to enjoy it," said Mokoena, 19, who was Player of the Match. "The first two overs didn't really go my way and I thought I wasn't going to get any wickets. But I just stuck to my plans and thank God it paid off."

New Zealand plays so often overseas that it's possible they can no longer judge their home conditions. The pitch at Bay Oval looked docile at a glance, but the South African seamers found both seam and swing in the warm early evening conditions.

There was even a little turn for the spinners later. All of the New Zealanders struggled with their timing.

Conway chipped an attempted pull shot to mid-wicket and Tom Latham didn't stop to review when he was hit on the front pad by an inswinging delivery from Coetzee.

Robinson attempted a slog over the leg side but didn't connect and was caught by George Linde running in at mid-on. Kelly was left grasping at a ball from Baartman that pitched on a good length and straightened enough to beat his defensive shot.

Jacobs played the ball into the covers and headed for a single only to see the stumps at the non-striker's end shattered by a direct hit from Ruben Hermann.

"I think there was a little more in the pitch than we thought, especially up front," Santner said. "South Africa bowled well and put us under pressure from the start. Wickets in the powerplay, it's always tough from there."

Another three members of Iran's soccer team decide against staying in Australia as refugees

MELBOURNE, Australia, March 15, (AP): Another three members of the Iran's women's soccer team who accepted refugee visas to stay in Australia have decided to return to their homeland, an Australian government minister said on Sunday.

The departure leaves three of an initial seven squad members in Australia.

"Overnight, three members of the Iranian Women's Football Team made the decision to join the rest of the team on their journey back to Iran," Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke said in a statement.

"After telling Australian officials they had made this decision, the players were given repeated chances to talk about their options," Burke added.

Iran's team arrived in Australia for the Women's Asian Cup last month, before the war in the Middle East began on Feb. 28.

Initially, six players and a support staff member from a squad list of 26 players accepted humanitarian visas to stay in Australia before the rest of the Iranian contingent flew from Sydney to Malaysia on March 9.

Another later changed her mind and left Australia. Three left Sydney for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Saturday night, a government official said. The rest of the team has remained in Kuala Lumpur since they left Australia.

Iran's Tasnim News Agency said the latest three to leave Australia were two players and the support staff member. The three were "returning to the warm embrace of their family and homeland," the news outlet said in a statement.

Concerns about the team's safety in Iran heightened when the players didn't sing the Iranian national anthem before their first match.

The Australian government was urged to help the women by Iranian groups in Australia and by U.S. President Donald Trump.

The Iranian news agency described the women's return to the team as the "disgraceful failure of the American-Australian project and another failure for Trump."

Treasurer Jim Chalmers, one of the most senior members of the Australian government, said he was pleased that three of the



Tony Burke

Iranian women would remain in Australia. "I am worried about them," Chalmers told Seven Network television, referring to the women who had changed their minds about staying in Australia.

"I can only image the pressure that they feel and how difficult these sorts of decisions would be for them," Chalmers added.

Burke said Australians should be proud that their country presented the Iranian team with choices and sought to help them.

"While the Australian government can ensure that opportunities are provided and communicated, we cannot remove the context in which the players are making these incredibly difficult decisions," Burke said.

"The Australian government has done everything we could to make sure these women were provided with the chance for a safe future in Australia," he added.

Kuwait's No.1 English Newspaper

For Subscriptions and Complaints

Please Call

51508991 51526559



Ferrari driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain steers his car ahead of teammate Charles Leclerc of Monaco during the Chinese Formula One Grand Prix race at the Shanghai International Circuit, in Shanghai, China. (AP)

Sports

Antonelli 'breaks through' as Mercedes dominance rolls on

Hamilton grabs first Ferrari podium at Chinese Grand Prix

SHANGHAI, March 15, (AP): He's been defined by being Lewis Hamilton's successor and George Russell's teammate. Now Kimi Antonelli is a Formula 1 race-winner in his own right, and the second-youngest in history.

The 19-year-old Italian pulled clear of an entertaining battle between Russell and the two Ferraris to take a commanding win at the Chinese Grand Prix on Sunday and share the podium with his teammate and Hamilton, the seven-time champion he replaced last year.

It's a vindication of the gamble Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff took in picking the youngster, who'd joined Mercedes' junior program aged just 11, to replace an all-time great when Hamilton moved to Ferrari for 2025. There were plenty of doubters when Antonelli crashed 10 minutes into his practice debut in 2024.

"Many said it was just too early last year, and obviously we asked ourselves that question, whether it was too much to throw him into this pressure cooker," Wolff told Sky Sport Germany.

"One year with ups and downs and he's young. We have to forgive him these mistakes, and now he's in the second Grand Prix (of 2026) and brings it home ruthlessly. It's good."

The 19-year-old Italian was the youngest pole-position starter and briefly lost the lead to Hamilton at the start but retook it soon after and was in control the rest of the way.

"We did it! We did it!" Antonelli shouted to his team over the radio amid laughs and whoops, and he was holding back tears amid celebrations and a TV interview soon after.

It was another 1-2 finish for Mercedes to start the season as Russell came through a battle with both Ferraris to finish second. Hamilton was third for his long-awaited first Grand Prix podium finish for Ferrari.

The only driver younger than Antonelli to win a Grand Prix was Max Verstappen, who was 18 when he took his

first victory in 2016. He's the first Italian to win since Giancarlo Fisichella in 2006.

The new regulations again produced a dramatic fight for position between Mercedes and the fast-starting Ferraris as Russell fought his way past Charles Leclerc and Hamilton in a multi-lap battle with numerous changes of position. That allowed Antonelli to build his lead at the front.

Even after Russell had pulled away to secure second place, teammates Leclerc and Hamilton kept up their own fight for third. "This is quite a fun battle," Leclerc exclaimed over the radio.

Leclerc was fourth with Oliver Bearman fifth for Haas, Pierre Gasly sixth for Alpine and Liam Lawson seventh for Racing Bulls. Isack Hadjar recovered from an early spin to place eighth for Red Bull, ahead of Carlos Sainz, Jr. in ninth for Williams, while Franco Colapinto was 10th for Alpine to score his first point since 2024.

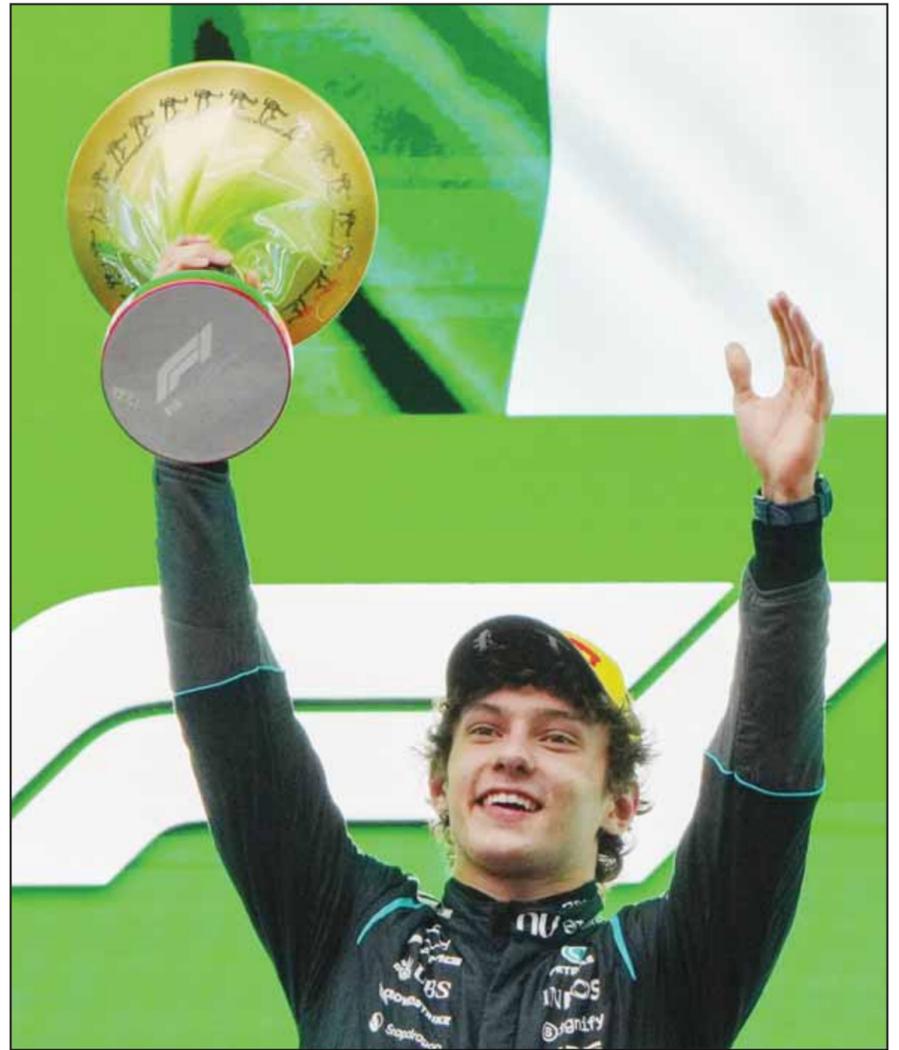
Max Verstappen was running sixth when his car lost power and he had to limp back to the pits in another blow for the four-time champion, who has been a leading critic of F1's new cars.

Formula 1 champion Lando Norris and his McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri were both unable to start after encountering technical problems minutes before the race began.

Piastri was due to start fifth and Norris sixth for Sunday's race. Norris was in his car in the pits but didn't leave for the grid, before Piastri was then withdrawn from the grid.

McLaren said it found "two different electrical problems on the power unit side" after an investigation. It's the second time Piastri has failed to start in 2026 after he crashed before the start of last week's race in Australia. Only 18 of 22 cars took the start, with Audi's Gabriel Bortoleto and Williams' Alex Albon also unable to make it, before both Aston Martin cars and Verstappen hit trouble in the race too.

F1 is racing hours after it announced next month's races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia will not go ahead because of the war in the Middle East.



Mercedes driver Andrea Kimi Antonelli of Italy celebrates with his trophy after winning the Chinese Formula One Grand Prix race at the Shanghai International Circuit, in Shanghai, China. (AP)

'A difficult decision to take'

F1 calls off April races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia due to war

SHANGHAI, March 15, (AP): Formula 1 and its governing body FIA said the Grand Prix races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia will not happen in April because of safety concerns related to the Iran war.

Both countries have been struck during Iran's response after the United States and Israel launched a wave of attacks on Iran.

The announcement was made early Sunday morning in Shanghai ahead of the Chinese Grand Prix.

"Due to the ongoing situation in the Middle East region, the Bahrain and Saudi Arabian Grands Prix will not take place in April," F1 said. "While several alternatives were considered, it was ultimately decided that no substitutions will be made in April."

F1 was due to race in Bahrain on April 12 and in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah on April 19.

"While this was a difficult decision to take, it is unfortunately the right one at this stage considering the current situation in the Middle East," said Stefano Domenicali, president and CEO of F1.

The FIA said the two races "will not take place in April" and that no replacements would be organized.

"The FIA will always place the safety and well being of our community and colleagues first. After careful consideration, we have taken



In this file photo, Mohammed Ben Sulayem, FIA President visits the starting grid before the Qatar Formula One Grand Prix at the Lusail International Circuit in Lusail, Qatar. (AP)

this decision with that responsibility firmly in mind," FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem said.

The FIA didn't explicitly rule out rescheduling the races and, along with F1, did not use the words "cancel" or "postpone" in announcing the series would not be in Bahrain or Saudi Arabia next month.

Ben Sulayem said: "Bahrain and Saudi Arabia are incredibly important to the ecosystem of our racing season, and I look forward to returning to both as soon as circumstances allow."

The promoters of the races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia said they supported the decision.

F1's packed schedule doesn't have any obvious open dates for rescheduled races this year.

Calling off the Bahrain and Saudi Arabian races means there will be a five-week gap from the Japanese Grand Prix on March 29 and the next race, the Miami Grand Prix on May 3. Without any rescheduling, the 22-race schedule would be the shortest since 2023.

The two Middle East races weren't until next month but F1 faced making a decision earlier because it typically flies in the first staff and cargo to tracks weeks in advance. F1 was also faced with the difficulty of selling tickets at short notice, which make it almost impossible to set up a replacement race in other countries.

Kimi Antonelli, the Mercedes driver who qualified on pole position for Sunday's race in Shanghai, said his thoughts were "with the ones that are suffering from this situation" and that safety needed to be the priority, adding of the FIA and F1: "I'm sure they will do the right thing."

The schedule is a joint matter for the FIA and for F1's commercial rights holder and teams had signaled a willingness to follow their lead.

"I think we follow the guidance of the FIA and Formula 1, as we always do. They've always led us in the right direction," Audi team principal Jonathan Wheatley said Friday. "Nobody's going to compromise on anything that would put teams into an uncomfortable situation."

Bahrain had already hosted two preseason F1 tests this season before Israel and the United States launched attacks on Iran. A smaller-scale test of wet-weather tires was called off in the immediate aftermath of those strikes.

A travel shutdown affecting major airports in the Middle East also caused disruption for Europe-based F1 and team staff heading to Melbourne for the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

The last time a scheduled F1 race was canceled was in 2023, when the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix in northern Italy was called off at short notice due to deadly floods in the area.

In 2022, F1 continued with its race weekend in Saudi Arabia even after Yemen's Houthi rebels attacked an oil depot during a practice session, with black smoke visible from the Jeddah circuit.

The same year, F1 canceled the Russian Grand Prix's contract after Russia invaded neighboring Ukraine.

Philippines suffers big loss

Japan storms into Asian Cup semis, secures World Cup spot



Japan's Toko Koga celebrates after scoring her team's second goal during the Women's Asian Cup quarterfinal soccer match between Japan and the Philippines in Sydney. (AP)

SYDNEY, March 15, (AP): Toko Koga headed in two goals as Japan routed Philippines 7-0 on Sunday to advance to the Women's Asian Cup semifinals and secure a spot in next year's World Cup in Brazil.

The 20-year-old Tottenham defender scored in first-half stoppage time and again in the 76th minute as Japan improved its tally to 24 goals and none conceded so far in the 2026 championship.

Japan will play 2022 runner-up South Korea on Wednesday for a spot in next weekend's final.

"It's always nice to score a lot of goals and for the players to show what they can do, but it's not going to help us against Korea," Japan coach Nils Nielsen said. "I knew we scored a lot, but for the semifinal, (earlier goals) can't help us."

"We will be ready to play South Korea." Four years ago, Japan lost on penalties to eventual champion China in the semifinals, ending its title defense.

All the semifinalists in Australia qualify automatically for the 2027 Women's World Cup. The losing quarterfinalists go into playoffs for two more guaranteed places in Brazil.

Japan completely dominated possession and field position but wasn't able to score for 45 minutes against a determined Philippines defense anchored by goalkeeper Nina Meollo.

Once the first goal went in - Mina Tanaka's header from point-blank range after a scrappy scramble in the goalmouth - it started a flow for the top-ranked team in the tournament.

Three minutes later, Koga jumped to meet a corner from Honoko Hayashi and angled it into the back of the net to give Japan a 2-0 halftime lead.

The Japanese scored twice in three minutes midway through the second half to lead 4-0, with Remina Chiba sliding in with a right-foot shot from the edge of the box in the 65th from Aoba Fujino's long, floating cross and Manaka Matsukubo scoring in the 67th.

Koga scored again with a close-range header to make it 5-0 before substitutes Momoko Tanikawa and Riko Ueki added further goals in the last four minutes of regulation.

"Obviously it's tough to take but you're playing probably the best team in Asia ... probably one of the top five teams in the world," Philippines coach Mark Torcaso said. "Our girls showed a lot of determination in that first half. We had a lot of younger players out there in the first half, and they got some really good exposure and experience, so I'm really proud of that."

"But we've got another game to worry about to get to a World Cup, to play Uzbekistan, so we'll just turn the page over and we'll focus on the next one now."

Japan, the 2014 and 2018 champion, scored a tournament-leading 17 goals in the group stage.

China beat Taiwan 2-0 in extra time in a Saturday quarterfinal set against geopolitical tensions to move into a semifinal against host Sam Kerr's Australia, which beat North Korea 2-1 on Friday night.

Former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz quits international cricket

ISLAMABAD, March 15, (AP): Former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed retired from international cricket on Sunday after leading the country in 100 international matches across multiple formats.

"I would like to thank the Pakistan Cricket Board for the trust they placed in me over the years," Sarfaraz said in a statement. "Pakistan cricket has always been very close to my heart and I will continue to support the game in every possible way."

The PCB has already included Sarfaraz in the revamped four-member men's selection committee after the disappointing T20 World Cup in which the team failed to make it to the semifinals.

Sarfaraz made his one-day international debut against archrival India in 2007, but had to wait for three years before playing his first test match against Australia at Hobart in 2010, which was followed by his first Twenty20 appearance against England at Dubai.

Sarfaraz scored 6,164 runs across multiple formats including six centuries and 35 half-centuries. He represented



In this file photo, Pakistan's Sarfaraz Ahmed plays a shot during the first day of first test cricket match between Pakistan and New Zealand, in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP)

resented Pakistan in 54 test matches, 117 ODIs and 61 T20s. As a wicket-keeper, he held 315 catches and had 56 stumpings.

During his almost two-decade long international career, Sarfaraz led Pakistan to the Champions Tro-

phy title in 2017 after beating India in the final. He also captained Pakistan to the Under-19 World Cup title in 2006.

Sarfaraz captained Pakistan to 11 consecutive series victories in T20s that included clean sweeps against

the West Indies, Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand and Scotland.

"Captaining Pakistan across all formats was a dream come true," Sarfaraz said. "I always tried to play fearless cricket and build a united team. Seeing players like Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman ... and others grow into match-winners during my captaincy is one of my proudest achievements."

Sarfaraz also holds the Pakistan record of 10 catches in a test matches, which he took against South Africa in Johannesburg in 2019. He is also the only Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter to score an ODI century at Lord's against England in 2016. His last international appearance came against Australia in a test match at Perth in 2023.

"It has been the greatest honor of my life to represent Pakistan," he said. "From leading the U-19 team to a world title in 2006 to lifting the ICC Champions Trophy in 2017, every moment in Pakistan colors has been special. I am grateful to my teammates, coaches, family and the fans for their unwavering support throughout my career."