



Kuwait PM conducts inspection tour of Subiya power and water distillation station Page 2



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KUWAIT'S FIRST DEPUTY PM ORDERS HEIGHTENED VIGILANCE AMID THREAT

Hostile Iranian drones still in play

Trump signals no halt to Iran war as Tehran's Gulf strikes continue

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Kuwait National Guard (KNG) successfully intercepted and downed two drones in the past 24 hours within its areas of responsibility, according to an official statement.

Spokesperson for the Kuwait National Guard, Brigadier General Dr. Jadaan Fadhel stated on Monday that the engagement was executed as part of an ongoing operational framework to bolster national security, fortify vital strategic sites, and neutralize potential threats. The spokesperson underscored the high level of synergy between the National Guard, the Kuwait Army, the Ministry of

Interior, and the Kuwait Fire Force.

He affirmed that these combined forces maintain peak combat readiness to decisively confront any attempts to undermine the nation's security, sovereignty, or internal stability and to protect national interests and resources

On Sunday, Ministry of Defense spokesperson Colonel Saud Al-Atwan said the Kuwait Armed Forces detected 14 hostile drones that breached the airspace of the country.

In a media briefing about the latest developments regarding the Iranian attacks on the State of Kuwait, Al-Atwan disclosed that eight of the abovementioned drones were destroyed, while falling debris caused some material damage and minor injuries to three members of the Armed Forces. He affirmed that the injured have undergone treatment and their health condition is stable.

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Iran unwittingly threatens global interests

AMID the ongoing war and increasing talk of closing the Strait of Hormuz, I recalled a speech by Sultan Qaboos bin Said (May God have mercy on him) delivered shortly after the fall of the Shah in 1979.

The late Sultan spoke about the geopolitical changes in the region, Oman's independence, and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, which he emphasized as an international waterway that could not be closed.

Oman and Iran share the Strait of Hormuz, which is an international waterway over which no party can assert exclusive control.

Furthermore, all countries bordering the Arabian Gulf are Arab states, except for Iran. Therefore, these countries have the right to use the Strait of Hormuz without Iranian interference.

Iran is trying to exploit the world's vulnerabilities, but there is no doubt that the price it will pay, now and in the future, will be enormous.

Approximately 20 percent of the world's oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz daily, along with vital regional supply chains.

It would be reckless for Tehran to attempt to close the strait unless it is willing to sacrifice the Iranian people, who have suffered poverty and famine since 1979.

The Iranian people are capable of achieving miracles if granted freedom, free from the control of a regime still clinging to prehistoric illusions.

Meanwhile, the world will not allow this malevolent regime to exert pressure by threatening to close a vital waterway like the Strait of Hormuz. The international community is currently facing its worst economic crisis since World War II, and current conditions are on the verge of triggering a global recession.

The world does not need further crises. All countries must act to stop Iran's aggression in this crucial waterway to prevent the closure of the Strait of Hormuz from becoming a reality. If Iran is allowed to control the strait, it could potentially grant any country the right to close it at will.

It is obvious that European countries, along with

China, Japan, and other parts of East Asia, are the primary victims of Iran's actions, not just the United States and Israel.

Tehran's moves are therefore bound to provoke the affected countries, which cannot simply call for de-escalation without taking measures to halt Iran's malevolent activities throughout the region.

We in the Gulf are well aware that the regime in Tehran rests on the shoulders of reckless individuals who are indifferent to the suffering of their own people.

However, there is a conscious elite that fully understands the dire consequences of war. This elite now requires international support to free itself from the regime that has oppressed them for 47 years, during which it has committed murder and torture against hundreds of thousands of patient Iranian citizens.

This regime is unacceptable to its neighbors, particularly after it launched attacks on neighboring countries despite their repeated assurances that their territories would not be used for attacking Iran.

I will not recount here the hostile acts the Iranian regime has carried out against the Gulf Cooperation Council countries from 1979 to the present.

We must recall what Tehran declared in 2011, when the then-commander of the Revolutionary Guard, Mohammad Ali Jafari, threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, saying, "Stopping navigation in the Strait of Hormuz would be easier than drinking a glass of water."

Since then, the world should have developed a strategy to prevent Iran from taking such actions. It is not too late, however. Holding the Iranian regime accountable has become a necessity, and its removal would benefit both the region and the world.

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Worshippers gather for Laylat Al-Qadr



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

The Muslim faithful headed for the mosques in hunt for the 'Laylat Al-Qadr' or the 'Night of Power' throughout Kuwait on the 27th of Ramadan night. Laylat Al-Qadr is the holiest night in Islam, marking when the Holy Qur'an was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

By Mohammad Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Mosques in Kuwait observed the 27th night within the last 10 days of Ramadan in an atmosphere of deep faith, reverence and tranquility.

Tens of thousands of worshippers flocked to the mosques to observe this blessed night, which Muslims hope is Laylat Al-Qadr (the Night of Decree) – the night the Holy Quran was revealed and which Almighty Allah described as being better than a thousand months.

From the early hours of the night, worshippers began arriving at mosques throughout the country to perform the Qiyam prayer.

The mosques were filled with worshippers who stood in tightly packed rows, a scene of profound

devotion reflecting their deep connection to religious rituals and their determination to seize the blessings of the last 10 days of the holy month.

The worshippers humbly and devoutly recited the supplication narrated from the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) for Laylat Al-Qadr: "O Allah, You are forgiving and love forgiveness, so forgive us." They asked the Almighty to accept their good deeds and to make this night a night of forgiveness, mercy and deliverance from Hellfire.

Following the guidance of the purified Sunnah of the Prophet, the worshippers gathered for recitation, remembrance and supplication, hoping to attain the great reward that Allah has bestowed upon this blessed night, when angels descend and goodness and blessings abound until dawn.

The prayers were held in an atmosphere of tranquility and peace as the worshippers raised their hands in supplication, asking Allah to protect Kuwait and its people from all harm and to perpetuate the blessings of security, stability and prosperity upon them in view of the current circumstances in the region.

The imams emphasized the importance of adhering to Islamic values, striving to strengthen the spirit of love and unity among members of society, avoiding rumors, and exercising wisdom and responsibility.

They affirmed that the true Islamic faith calls for moderation and balance, and that the month of Ramadan is a great opportunity to reinforce noble human values, such as patience, generosity and social solidarity.

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Zakat House donates KD 500,000

Kuwait launches donation drive for indebted citizens

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Minister of Justice, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, announced on Monday the launch of a donation campaign to pay off the debts of those in financial distress, which will continue until midnight.

He expressed confidence in the success of the campaign, by the grace of God, due to its charitable purpose and its goal of alleviating the suffering of those facing financial difficulties during the blessed days of the holy month of Ramadan.

Addressing the Kuwaiti people via Kuwait TV, Counselor Al-Sumait stated that donations used to pay off the debts of those in financial distress can be deducted from Zakat (obligatory alms).

In a statement Monday, the ministry said the one-day campaign began at 10:00 a.m. and will continue until midnight, aiming to support debtors unable to repay their obligations during these blessed days of Ramadan.

The ministry called on citizens, residents, institutions, companies and banks to contribute to the initiative as part of efforts to assist indebted individuals facing financial hardship.

It explained that debt payments will be made directly through the General Department of Execution for the benefit of creditors, in accordance with approved regulations to ensure donations reach beneficiaries in an organized and transparent manner.

Donations can be made electronically through the ministry's dedicated link <https://eservices.moj.gov.kw/donate/> or via the unified government e-services mobile application Sahel App by selecting the Justice Ministry's donation campaign service.

The ministry added that donations may also be submitted through cheques deliv-



Minister of Justice, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait

ered to the General Department of Execution at the New Palace of Justice building.

It noted that beneficiaries must meet several conditions, including being a person directly involved in the case and having an active execution file as of March 12. The executive document must also be a court judgment or payment order, while donations may cover all or part of the debt, provided the debtor has not previously benefited from donations in the same execution file.

The ministry added that the donation for a single debtor must not exceed KWD 10,000 (around USD 32,500), which may be deposited in one or more execution files.

Meanwhile, Acting Director General of Kuwait Zakat House, Dr. Majed Al-Azmi, announced on Monday a KD 500,000 donation to a Kuwait Ministry of Justice campaign supporting indebted citizens with court rulings registered at the General Department of Enforcement.

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Kuwait sets tougher penalties for terror crimes

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Decree-Law No. 47/2026 on Combating Terrorism Crimes was published in a special supplement to the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Yaum" on Monday.

The Decree-Law aims to establish a comprehensive legal framework for combating terrorism, and combining criminalization, punishment, and preventive measures to enhance the protection of society and preserve the security and stability of the state.

The decree-law consists of five chapters comprising 31 articles and defines several key legal terms.

According to the law, a terrorist act is defined as any act or threat that causes death, detention, or injury to a person, or damage to public or private property, public facilities, land, sea, or air transportation, or cybersecurity,

carried out as part of an individual or collective criminal project aimed at spreading terror among the people, endangering public safety and security, or compelling a public authority or a regional or international organization to act or refrain from acting.

The law defines a terrorist organization as any group, body, organization, or entity, regardless of its legal or actual form, inside or outside the state, that aims to commit terrorist acts.

According to the law, a terrorist is any natural person who has committed, participated in, or attempted to commit a terrorist act.

A person classified as a dangerous terrorist is someone for whom there are grounds to believe that their conduct constitutes a serious threat of committing a terrorist act.

The law stipulates harsher penalties when crimes are committed with-

in the framework of a terrorist act.

It was decided to increase the penalties stipulated in other laws when a crime is associated with a terrorist act, raising the penalty of life imprisonment to the death penalty, and increasing a 15-year prison sentence to life imprisonment when the prescribed penalty for the crime is 15-year imprisonment.

The decree-law equates an attempted terrorist crime with a completed crime in terms of punishment, given the seriousness of such acts and the direct threat they pose to the security of the state and the safety of society.

The legislation also includes provisions criminalizing a number of acts related to terrorist activities.

Anyone who establishes, founds, organizes, or manages a terrorist organization is punishable by life imprisonment or a prison term of no less than ten years.

A prison sentence of no less than seven years shall be imposed on anyone who, by any means, calls for joining a terrorist organization or participating in its activities while knowing its purpose.

A prison sentence of no less than five years shall be imposed on anyone who joins, attempts to join, or enlists in a terrorist organization with the intent of achieving its purpose.

The law imposes severe penalties on anyone who trains or instructs individuals in the use of weapons or ammunition, or teaches them martial arts, with the intent of carrying out a terrorist act.

Anyone who communicates with a terrorist organization, or with anyone acting on its behalf, with the intent of assisting it in any way in committing a terrorist act, shall face imprisonment ranging from 10 years to life.

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Kuwait preps for Shawwal crescent

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA) The moon sighting committee announced it will meet at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday at the Supreme Judicial Council headquarters to sight the crescent marking the start of Shawwal.

In a statement Monday, the authority called on anyone who sights the Shawwal crescent to come forward and provide testimony.

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Ramadan Timings

Imsak..... Tuesday..... 04:37
Iftar..... Tuesday..... 17:57
Imsak..... Wednesday..... 04:36

Banks across Kuwait close doors for Eid Al-Fitr holiday

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Secretary General of the Kuwait Banking Association, Sheikha Al-Essa, announced that local banks will be closed during the upcoming Eid Al-Fitr holidays, following coordination with the Central Bank of Kuwait.



Al-Essa

In a press release issued by the association, Al-Essa explained that if Thursday, March 19 is the last day of Ramadan, banks will be closed from

Thursday to Monday, and will reopen on Tuesday, March 24.

If Thursday, March 19 is the first day of Eid Al-Fitr, the holiday will run from Thursday to Sunday, with banks resuming operations on Monday, March 23.

On this occasion, the Kuwait Banking Association extends its warmest congratulations and best wishes to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (May God protect him), His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah (May God protect him), His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (May God protect him), the people of Kuwait, and all bank customers.



3 Are hospitals ready for crisis?

Council OKs 4 diplomatic security zone, Doha garage bus terminal

8 KFH offers Eidiyah through branches & digital channels

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:37 Asr 15:21
 Sunrise .. 06:10 Maghrib .. 17:57
 Zohr 11:57 Isha 19:10

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

Kuwait PM conducts inspection tour of Subiya power and water distillation station



His Highness Prime Minister Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah during his inspection tour of the Subiya Power and Water Distillation Station.

PM Diwan photos

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): His Highness Prime Minister Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah conducted an inspection visit on Monday to Subiya Power and Water Distillation Station accompanied by Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Subaih AlMukhaizeem and Undersecretary Adel Al-Zamel.

During the visit, His Highness was briefed by officials on the operation

mechanisms of power generation units at the station's main building and the approved plans to ensure continued electricity production to meet the country's needs and maintain service stability.

He also reviewed the fuel storage area that sustained limited damage following a hostile targeting, as officials explained that maintenance work and spare parts provision had begun in preparation for resuming

operations.

His Highness also visited the station's emergency shelter and was briefed on operational procedures during emergencies, safety systems and logistical readiness, while expressing appreciation to national staff for their dedication in ensuring the sustainability of essential services.

2 co-ops boards disbanded in financial, admin scandal

Principles of integrity, transparency priority: minister

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila announced the issuance of a decision to dissolve the boards of directors of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Al-Qurain cooperative societies and appoint temporary boards to manage their affairs, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement issued on Monday, the minister explained that the decision was based on monitoring and oversight findings that revealed serious financial and administrative violations. The Ministry of Social Af-



Dr Al-Huwaila

fairs will take all necessary measures against any violations affecting shareholders' funds or contravening the laws and regulations governing the work of cooperative societies. It will refer the identified violations to the Public Prosecution to take the necessary legal action and hold accountable anyone proven to be involved in financial or administrative misconduct.

Dr. Al-Huwaila affirmed the Ministry of Social Affairs' commitment to promoting integrity, transparency, and good governance in cooperative societies, and to taking decisive action against any violations.

She stressed that appointing a temporary board of directors ensures the continuity of the cooperative societies' operations and the smooth management of their affairs until the legal and regulatory procedures for forming a new board are completed.

Dr. Al-Huwaila called on all board members and employees of cooperative societies to comply with the laws and regulations governing their work and to uphold good management

practices while protecting shareholders' funds.

The Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila affirmed on Sunday that the ministry is committed to upholding the principles of integrity, transparency, and governance in cooperative societies, taking decisive measures against any violations, protecting funds of cooperative societies, preserving shareholders' rights, and strengthening confidence in cooperative and agricultural work, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press release, the ministry explained that this followed Minister Dr. Al-Huwaila's decision to refer the former Chairman of Al-Wafra Agricultural Cooperative Society to the Public Prosecution for necessary legal action, and to dismiss the current treasurer and a board member due to proven serious financial and administrative violations.

Minister Dr. Al-Huwaila emphasized that the ministry will not hesitate to take necessary legal action against any violations that affect shareholders' funds or breach the laws and regulations governing cooperative societies.



Deputy Director General of the General Administration of Customs for Ports Affairs and Customs Investigation Saleh Al-Omar.

KUNA photo

Customs pledge to speed up cargo processing amid crisis

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): Deputy Director General of the General Administration of Customs for Ports Affairs and Customs Investigation Saleh Al-Omar affirmed Sunday commitment to speeding up cargo processing, ensuring smooth shipment flow and supporting trade amid current conditions.

This came during his visit to the Nuwaiseeb Customs Port, to review the progress of work and monitor the mechanism for the entry of goods and the customs procedures followed to ensure the smooth movement of shipments and the rapid completion of transactions, said the Administration in a statement.



Al-Omar

The statement explained that Al-Omar met with several employees and listened to a detailed explanation about the daily work procedures and the mechanism for completing customs transactions. He praised their efforts and their commitment to facilitating procedures and easing trade movement while maintaining the regulatory role of customs.

Al-Omar stressed the importance of continuing to work in a spirit of teamwork to ensure the speedy completion of cargo transactions while preserving the security and safety of the country from any prohibited materials.

The statement added that during his tour, Al-Omar reviewed the workflow at the port and the mechanism for handling goods from their arrival until the completion of customs clearance procedures. He also followed up on the supervisory procedures in place to ensure that shipments comply with the applicable laws and regulations.

Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman

Eid greetings to leadership, and Kuwaitis: Oman envoy

ON the occasion of the upcoming

Eid al-Fitr, I am pleased to extend my warmest congratulations to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (May God protect him), His High-



Dr. Al-Kharousi

ness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the people of Kuwait.

I pray that God grants the State of Kuwait, its leadership, government, and people continued progress, prosperity, security, and stability under its wise political guidance, and I wish many happy returns for the leadership, government, and people of Kuwait.

Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi
 Ambassador of Oman to Kuwait

2 power lines damaged by projectile debris fixed

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Official spokesperson of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Eng. Fatima Hayat has confirmed the completion of repairs to two additional overhead power lines that were damaged by falling debris last Thursday.

In a press statement, Hayat disclosed that specialized technical teams were able to restore five of the six damaged overhead lines to service, adhering to the highest technical standards and approved safety and security procedures.

She said the repair work was carried out with high efficiency as per the approved emergency plan, with ongoing field monitoring and the necessary technical inspections to ensure the safety of the electrical grid components, enhance its readiness, and increase its reliability.

She commended the tremendous efforts exerted by the national workforce, including the engineers, technicians and field workers, who continue to work round the clock with a high sense of national responsibility, while affirming that the electrical system is stable and operating efficiently.

In another development, as part of its ongoing efforts to increase freshwater and brackish water reserves to 219.5 million imperial gallons per day as an emergency reserve, the ministry has submitted a tender for the construction, completion, maintenance and development of Shuwaikh Water Distribution Complex and the associated works at a total cost of KD74.703 million to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) for review.

The ministry is waiting for SAB's approval of the contract before commencing work. This is considered a vital water project with the aim of increasing freshwater storage capacity by 66 million gallons per day, raise pumping rates to 54.5 million gallons per day, and increase brackish water pumping to 23.5 million gallons per day.

Also, the ministry is waiting for SAB to approve the contract for the construction, completion, maintenance and development of the existing and new Doha Water Distribution Complex and a water pipeline from the complex to the United Nations Roundabout, along with associated works, at a cost of KD97.188.

MoE makes sure students abroad complete studies

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education affirmed that the safety of students and the stability of their academic journey remain among its top priorities, noting that it has closely followed the situation of Kuwaiti students studying abroad since the early moments of the current developments.

Supervisor of Guidance, Counseling and Special Scholarships at the ministry Mishari Saleh said during a media briefing on the latest developments in light of the Iranian aggression on Kuwait that the ministry has taken several measures to ensure the safety of students abroad and the continuity of their studies.

Saleh noted that the measures include direct and continuous follow-up on the conditions of the students in various countries to ensure their safety and academic stability.

He added that the ministry immediately contacted cultural offices in countries of study to check on the students, update their information and ensure that studies continue normally.

Saleh noted that the ministry reassured students and their parents that all students are safe and that the academic process continues in universities abroad.

Other Voices

Khamenei and Maduro

By Ahmad alsarraf

A few days prior to the start of the latest war between Iran, Israel, and the United States, I posted a message on social media, stating that Iran is not Venezuela, and Khamenei is not Maduro, etc.

That post didn't sit well with some individuals, who misinterpreted it. However, time proved me right.

Due to many reasons, there is nothing more difficult than opposing religious regimes. No religious regime in the modern era has succeeded in achieving progress and stability for its people because the priorities of the leaders of such regimes have no relation to the daily needs of the citizen, nor to their advancement in modern sciences, nor to developing their capabilities, nor to their freedoms.

We also observe a similarity between religious regimes and radical regimes in their emphasis on adhering to a quasi-uniform dress code, their refusal to wear a necktie because it is associated with Western culture, while still wearing Western-style suits.

A somber expression is evident on everyone, and women are required to wear the headscarf or chador. Almost everyone, from field commanders and military experts to bank presidents, ministers, and even candy vendors, tends to look alike and often imitates their leaders in behavior and speech. This reflects a common feature of these religious and radical regimes, where the state is the leadership and the leadership is the state.

Amidst all this activity, both military and civilian, in Iranian cities, the focus is largely on the major cities, which are predominantly Persian. There is near-total disregard or marginalization of other cities and minority groups, who make up no less than half of the country's 90 million inhabitants.



alsarraf

With the exception of some participation from the Azeri minority, there is a near-total disregard for minorities in general, whether they are non-Persians, non-Shia, or non-Muslim Iranians.

According to CIA reports, the Persian population in Iran is estimated to be slightly more than half, including the Mazandaran and Gilak minorities.

Although the Mazandaran and Gilak peoples are not Persian but rather Caspian Sea peoples, they are classified within the Iranian family, like the Kurds and Baloch, and have their own languages.

The largest minority after the Persians are the Azeris, who make up approximately 25 percent of the population. They are followed by the Kurds (about ten percent), the Lurs (five percent), the Baloch (mostly Sunni), the Turkmen (two percent), and the Iranian Arabs, who comprise between one percent and three percent, and are concentrated in Khuzestan. The Iranian Arabs have suffered greatly under the central government since the fall of their state.

Other minorities include Armenians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Georgians, Circassians, Jews, and Mandaeans, who make up approximately one percent of the population.

It was inevitable, given the realities on the ground, that the revolution would eventually transform into an institutionalized system focused on survival at any cost. This led to the entrenchment of clandestine and religious institutions, forming complex networks run by clerics and the Revolutionary Guards, who controlled money, power, weapons, and supporting bureaucratic and commercial structures. Over time, they were able to exploit sanctions and turn them to their advantage.

The popular religiosity that marked the early days of the revolution began to decline after the end of the war with Iraq, due to ongoing suffering from the American and Western embargo, and the regime's insistence on spending the state's limited resources on acquiring nuclear weapons, buying foreign allegiance, and consolidating religious rule.

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Farwaniya Governorate photo
 Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with the center's staff.

Governor visits ambulance center, checks readiness

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah conducted an evening inspection visit to the Farwaniya Health District Ambulance Center, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Head of Khaitan Ambulance Center Faisal Ahmed Al-Muraifeh and Head of West Abdullah Al-Mubarak Ambulance Center Mohammad Al-Sharrah warmly welcomed Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Sabah.

The visit aimed to review the workflow and assess the level of preparedness of the

center in terms of the provision of ambulance services.

The Governor reviewed the operational procedures and the efforts of the ambulance teams in responding to reports and emergencies. He lauded these teams for efficiently playing their vital role and their dedication in serving the public.

He also stressed the importance of supporting field efforts to speed up the emergency response and improve the overall level of health preparedness throughout Farwaniya Governorate.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Is it just pressure tactics or conflict might expand?

"ON Friday, March 13, Omani authorities announced that two drones had crashed in the Sohar region. One crashed in the Al-Awahi industrial area, killing two expatriates and injuring several others, and the other crashed in an open area without causing any injuries." Kuwaiti writer **Hussain Al-Rawi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This Iranian attack marks the third targeting of Omani territory in recent days, following the attack on the port of Duqm on March 3 and the port of Salalah on March 11. These incidents occurred approximately two weeks after the start of US-Israeli military operations against Iran.



Dr. Hussain Al-Rawi

"The three targeted economic zones - the ports of Duqm, Salalah, and Sohar - are among the most important economic and commercial centers in the Sultanate, serving as vital arteries for international trade and linking Oman to global markets.

"Are the motives behind these attacks solely the economic importance of these ports, or are there other underlying reasons? One of the most significant potential factors behind this Iranian targeting of Omani territory is the current US military presence in the region.

"The United States maintains a network of military bases and jointly uses some local bases and facilities for its operations throughout the region, including in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and the Gulf states, within the framework of military cooperation arrangements.

"Some sites with a US military presence have become targets of Iranian attacks since the outbreak of military confrontation between the United States and Israel on one side and Iran on the other.

"According to a report published by the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram weekly on March 5 regarding the defense agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States, military access agreements between the two countries allow the use of certain Omani facilities for logistical and strategic purposes.

"Based on the 1980 US-Oman Defense Agreement, which was expanded in 2019, the US military has access to several Omani ports, most notably Duqm, Salalah, Muscat, and Sohar, for maritime resupply, ship maintenance, and support operations in the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman, the Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea.

"The port of Duqm holds particular strategic importance due to its location outside the Strait of Hormuz, providing direct access to the open ocean without passing through the maritime chokepoint controlled by Iran.

"The port can accommodate aircraft carriers and large naval vessels, giving the United States operational flexibility if transit through the Strait becomes unsafe.

"The agreement also allows the use of certain Omani air bases when needed, such as Thumrait Air Base and Masirah Air Base, both belonging to the Royal Air Force of Oman, as well as Muscat International Airport under limited military coordination arrangements.

"Oman's strategic geographic location gives the United States direct access to the Arabian Sea and the ability to monitor the Strait of Hormuz, Yemen, East Africa, and Iran.

"At the same time, Oman maintains more balanced relations with Iran compared to some other Gulf states, making it, in the view of many observers, an important logistical hub with a less visible military presence than its declared combat bases.

"Given these factors, the targeting of ports and vital areas in Oman cannot be understood in isolation from the escalating regional tensions between the United States and Israel on one side and Iran on the other.

"Between the economic importance of these ports and the logistical role they could play in Western military arrangements, Oman finds itself in a highly sensitive geographical position, making it vulnerable to the repercussions of a regional conflict that extends beyond its borders.

"Are these attacks merely temporary pressure tactics, or do they indicate that the confrontation may expand?"

Also:

"There is a verse - 'For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease' (Ash-Sharh 5-6). A person's affairs, circumstances, and situations in life can worsen to such an extent that they may begin to believe they cannot improve. Some may even reach a point of despair, feeling hopeless about ever changing their circumstances," columnist **Khaled Al-Janfawi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"They may lose all hope of solving problems and overcoming life's difficulties. However, according to divine wisdom, God Almighty tests individuals in this worldly life to examine their patience and strengthen their faith. If a Muslim patiently endures the trials that befall them, their situation will improve, even if it takes time.

"Among the moral and logical evidence that proves that some aspects of

life may worsen before they improve, we can mention the following:

- Success does not come on a silver platter - True success in life comes when a person reaches the goal they seek through effort that matches the level of achievement they desire. No personal success can be realized without making the necessary efforts that enable the attainment of one's objectives. Nothing in this worldly life comes for free, and the individual has no choice but to continue with determination and perseverance, especially when their goals are legitimate and ethical.

- Certainty in God Almighty guarantees the improvement of circumstances - A believer faces the trials of this worldly life, but as a Muslim, they rely on God Almighty with absolute and unwavering faith, confident that He, the Exalted, will remove their distress, lift their affliction, and improve their circumstances. Whoever reaches this level of certainty trusts without doubt that the Lord of Glory is more powerful than anything humans fear in this life. As Allah says in His Holy Book - "And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient." (Al-Baqarah 155)

- Time heals wounds - No matter how severe the pain, the hardships that follow difficult situations and personal struggles will be overcome with time. Place your trust in God, be patient, and persevere, for your trials will not last, God willing.

□ □ □

"Nations are not just land and borders, roads and buildings. They are built by loyal people who see serving their country as an honor and do not hesitate to sacrifice their lives for it," writer on family and psychological matters **Fahad Al-Rifai** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"In the history of every nation, there are moments that vividly show the meaning of loyalty, when love for the land turns from a silent feeling into living action, from spoken words into real sacrifice.

"Kuwait recently bid farewell to souls who were performing their duty in a turbulent time. They have departed, but they set an example of sacrifice. They did not seek heroism, nor aim for their names to be recorded in history. They were simply following the lessons of their fathers and grandfathers that serving Kuwait is an honor, and protecting it is a sacred trust.

"When we reflect on the story of this nation, we see that this spirit is not new. Since its founding, Kuwait has been built on principles of solidarity and loyalty. From their days of pearl diving, the people of Kuwait learned that a ship cannot survive if everyone is focused only on themselves, but only if all understand that their fate is shared. This is



Fahad Al-Rifai

how Kuwait was built... through collective effort, solidarity, and people who place the nation's interest above all else.

"Over the decades, Kuwait has faced difficult times and harsh crises, but each time it has emerged stronger, not because the path was easy, but because its people knew how to stand with their country in its most challenging moments. Perhaps what most distinguishes Kuwaitis is that their love for their country has never been a mere slogan, but a value put into action, like the soldier protecting the borders, the security officer staying up all night to safeguard the people, and every individual who sees serving their country as a responsibility, not just a job.

"The martyrs the nation recently lost are part of this long tradition of loyalty. They fulfilled their duty knowing that an entire nation depended on their vigilance and dedication. None of them were widely known, yet today they have become part of the memory of a nation that knows how to honor its sons.

"Protecting the land is a responsibility that allows no hesitation. In moments like these, grief is not the only emotion; there is also pride, because this nation continues to produce men who embody this spirit. The nation is proud of its sons who sacrifice their lives for it, and we are proud that this land continues to nurture people who understand the meaning of true loyalty. The greatest tribute to the martyrs is not in words alone, but in ensuring that this nation remains as they always envisioned it - cohesive, strong, and united around its values.

"We must preserve our unity, instill in our children a sense of belonging to the homeland, and understand that the homeland is protected not by weapons alone, but by awareness, action, and dedication. These martyrs have departed, but their message is clear - Kuwait was not built by chance, but by the efforts of men and the loyalty of its people. This land will remain steadfast because from its very beginning, it was founded on one unchanging principle that love of country is not just words spoken, but a sacrifice offered willingly."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Kuwait's Ministry of Education carried out a mock evacuation drill in shelters at buildings of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Hawalli educational districts.



Education Ministry photos

MoE conducts mock shelter evacuation drill

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Education on Monday carried out a mock evacuation drill in shelters at buildings of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Hawalli educational districts.

The ministry said in a statement that the exercise was conducted in cooperation with the General Department of Civil Defense, Ministry of Interior and rapid intervention teams from the

Education Ministry.

The drill aimed to ensure the readiness of shelters and the efficiency of approved evacuation plans, while training staff on rapid evacuation procedures and emergencies to enhance effective response and ensure the safety of personnel and visitors.

The ministry affirmed that such drills are part of its ongoing preventive plans, imple-

mented in coordination with relevant state bodies to raise awareness of safety procedures and strengthen emergency preparedness in educational facilities.

It added that field drills help evaluate and continuously improve existing procedures, ensuring ministry facilities remain ready to handle various emergencies and maintain a safe working environment for everyone.

Are hospitals ready for crisis?

Governor checks readiness, care provided

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah conducted an inspection visit to Farwaniya Hospital to assess the quality of healthcare services and the readiness of its various departments.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser was received by the hospital's Director Dr. Ali Al-Mutairi, Head of the Pharmacy Department Dr. Manal Al-Majawib, Dr. Khalid Al-Mutairi from the Pharmacy Department, and Head of Public Relations Hamoud Al-Azmi.

During the visit, the governor toured the Emergency and Pharmacy Departments, where he reviewed the work procedures and the level of medical services provided. He also received a briefing on ongoing developments at the hospital and the efforts exerted to improve the healthcare system and enhance service quality.

Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser praised the efforts of the medical and administrative staff, and their dedication to providing healthcare to citizens and residents. He stressed the importance of continuing to develop healthcare services and improving the efficiency of medical facilities to support the system and elevate the quality of care.

Farwaniya Governorate photo
Farwaniya Governorate Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah is briefed on the procedures and health care provided at the Farwaniya Hospital.

Tanker owners get citations for selling expensive water

By Marwah Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced that inspection campaigns at water tanker stations in Salmiya, Jabriya, and Al-Rai resulted in the issuance of nine violation reports and the initiation of necessary legal procedures.

The ministry stressed that the violations observed by the emer-

gency teams during the inspection campaigns included tanker owners failing to adhere to regulated prices, and imposing artificial or unjustified price increases that infringe on consumer rights.

The ministry affirmed its ongoing efforts to strengthen oversight and monitoring, ensure market stability, guarantee the availability of goods and services, and protect consumer rights.

Beware fraudulent sites & messages, warns GAC

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The General Administration of Customs (GAC) has issued a warning against interacting with fraudulent emails, messages, or websites impersonating its services, reports Al-Rai daily.

GAC emphasized the importance of not responding to such communications, avoiding untrusted links, and refraining from providing personal or banking information to any unofficial entity. It clarified that electronic transactions can only be completed through two official channels - the Sahel app or GAC's official website.

KFF tackles 10 routine fires; no one injured

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Lieutenant Colonel Ahmad Al-Mashmoum from the Public Relations and Media Department of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) stated that the department received ten routine calls, all of which were handled successfully without any reported injuries, reports Al-Rai daily.

In a statement to Kuwait TV, Lieutenant Colonel Al-Mashmoum confirmed that fire crews are fully prepared to respond to any emergency.

He noted that a calm atmosphere has prevailed across the country over the past two days but emphasized that preventative measures remain necessary.

Lieutenant Colonel Al-Mashmoum advised citizens and residents to maintain this calm and act responsibly in the event of any incident. He also urged families and guardians to closely supervise their children during the last ten days of Ramadan, noting that most recent calls to the department involved children's behavior.

KBA forms legal team to document Iran's attacks

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Chairman of the Kuwait Bar Association, Adnan Abul, announced the launch of an initiative to form a legal team headed by the association's Vice President for International Relations, Abdulrahman Al-Tahous, to document evidence of the Iranian attacks that Kuwait has faced over the past 15 days, in preparation for legal accountability under international law and conventions, in coordination with the country's relevant authorities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Abul explained that the association will reach out to international legal organizations to urge urgent condemnation of the attacks, demand their immediate cessation, and call for those responsible to be held accountable. This effort aligns with the UN Security Council's adoption of Resolution 2817, which condemned Iranian attacks targeting Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Ban on cigarettes sale via delivery platforms

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued on Sunday a decree No. 27 of 2026 prohibiting the selling of all types of tobacco and cigarettes, including e-cigarettes and relevant devices and tools, through delivery platforms or any other similar digital methods.

In a press statement, the ministry said that the step came within the framework of organizing and limiting the selling of these processes through such platforms, in a manner that ensures commitment to the implemented regulations.

The ministry stressed that it would implement one punishment or more against those violators, it said.

The punishments include issuing a warning to the facility committing violations, a temporary administrative closure of the activity and cancelling the licence in case of repeated violations.



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Council OKs diplomatic security zone, Doha garage bus terminal

Sharq parking moves forward, landfill pending

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Municipal Council, chaired by Abdullah Al-Mahri, held its session on Monday, during which it

approved the following:

□ Request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to allocate sites for buildings within the security wall project in the Diplomatic Quarter,
□ Request of the Ministry of Interior to expand the surface parking area adjacent to

Saad Bin Ubadah Primary School for Boys in Adailiya, Block Three and to relocate the existing parking entrance,
□ Request of the owners of plots one through 55 to revert plots one and 40 in Dasman to their original investment use, and redistribute the commercial spaces among the remaining plots,

□ Request of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs to allocate a site for a mosque in Shuwaikh Industrial Area, next to the automated bakery and the old Shuwaikh slaughterhouse,
□ Request of the Ministry of Social Affairs to cancel the expansion of the senior citizens center in Shamiya, Block Eight,
□ Request of Al-Itqan Private Education Company to subdivide Plot 69 in Salmiya, Block One,
□ Request of Kuwait Public Transport Company (KPTC) to change the use of the Doha Garage into a bus terminal.

The council also adopted the recommendation of the Capital Governorate Committee to amend the condition for implementing and handing over parking facilities to the Ministry of Finance in the previous decision of the council regarding the construction of a multi-level parking area and beautification of the adjacent State-owned squares in Sharq.

Meanwhile, the council decided to retain on its agenda the proposal of its chairman to add gold workshop to the list of commercial activities, extension of the tender contract for disposing debris in the Kuwait Municipality landfill sites, and request of Deputy Chairman of the council Khaled Al-Mutairi and several members to discuss the comments of the State Audit Bureau (SAB) about the landfill sites.

The council referred to the executive body the proposal of member Alia Al-Farsi to adopt the 'facilities management' (FM) concept in the implementation of municipal development projects.



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq
The Municipal Council, chaired by Abdullah Al-Mahri, hold its session on Monday.

MoCI support to boost cash flow in Q1

Al-Mawashi gets KD 3.1m gov't subsidy

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: Kuwait Livestock Transport and Trading Company (Al-Mawashi) announced on Sunday that it has received a government subsidy of KD 3.1 million from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in accordance with Ministerial Resolution No. 580/2008, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a disclosure on the Boursa Kuwait website, the company said the subsidy will positively impact its financial position by increasing cash flow

and reducing trade receivables and other outstanding balances by the same amount in the first quarter of this year.

Established in 1973 and listed on the Boursa Kuwait in 1984, Al-Mawashi has an authorized capital of KD 21.6 million. The company is a leading player in Kuwait's food security sector, the world's largest transporter of live sheep, and the first Australian livestock trading company in the region.

Ministers urge efforts to contain escalation

Kuwait FM holds talks with Jordanian, Omani, Bahraini, Saudi counterparts

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on Monday a phone call from Jordanian deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Al-Safadi, where they discussed regional developments.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Monday that the two sides discussed the growing military escalation in the region, due to the Iranian aggressions against countries of the region, and its dangerous repercussions on regional and international security and stability.

The two sides also stressed the importance of intensifying regional and international efforts to contain the escalation and maintain the region's security and stability.

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



Sheikh Jarrah

on Sunday made a phone call with his Omani counterpart Badr Al-Busaidi.

During the phone conversation, both sides discussed the regional military escalation as a result of the heinous Iranian aggression on the region's countries and relevant serious reflections on regional and global security and stability.

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Sunday made a phone call with his Bahraini counterpart Abdullah Al-Zayani.

During the phone conversation, both sides discussed the regional military escalation as a result of the heinous Iranian aggression on the region's countries and relevant serious reflections on both regional and global security and stability.

Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Sunday made a phone call with his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan.

During the phone conversation, both sides discussed the regional military escalation as a result of the heinous Iranian aggression on the region's countries and relevant serious reflections on regional and global security and stability.

Kuwait expresses solidarity with Ethiopia over floods, landslides

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday expressed solidarity with Ethiopia following floods and landslides that struck several southern regions of the country, that resulted in deaths, injuries, missing persons

and material losses.

In a statement, the ministry expressed Kuwait's sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the government and people of Ethiopia, as well as to the families of the victims, while wishing a speedy recovery to the injured.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait sets

The law also increases penalties for crimes targeting transportation or vital installations.

A prison sentence of no less than seven years shall be imposed on anyone who damages, disables, or intentionally endangers land, sea, or air transportation or navigation facilities if done in furtherance of a terrorist act. The penalty is increased to life imprisonment if the act results in injury to one or more persons, and to death if it results in the death of a person.

The law imposes severe penalties on anyone who enters the premises of diplomatic or consular missions, or regional or international organizations, with the intent to commit a terrorist act. Penalties are increased if the act involves force, weapons, or multiple perpetrators. The death penalty applies if it results in loss of life.

The decree-law also includes preventative measures to address terrorist threats before a crime occurs.

It provides for the establishment of a permanent "Rehabilitation Center," which addresses manifestations of extremism and deviant behavior and promotes positive reintegration into society through reform programs covering cognitive, psychological, social, behavioral, professional, and religious aspects.

The law authorizes the Public Prosecution to summon any person deemed a terrorist threat to enroll in a rehabilitation program. If the individual refuses, the Public Prosecution may request the Criminal Court to subject them to the program, with the possibility of imposing additional preventative measures such as police surveillance, restricting access to certain locations, or prohibiting contact with specific individuals or entities.

The law clarifies that these measures are not criminal penalties and that the person subject to them is not considered an accused or a criminal, but they are precautionary measures aimed at preventing crime.

The decree-law also established a permanent "National Counter-Terrorism Committee," chaired by the Minister of Interior and including the ministers of Defense, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Islamic Affairs, and Health, the Attorney General, a judge with the rank of advisor, the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait, and the Head of the Financial Intelligence Unit, along with any other members the Cabinet deems appropriate.

The committee aims to coordinate efforts among relevant authorities, implement national and international obligations related to combating terrorism, develop a national strategy to combat terrorist threats, monitor its implementation, raise awareness of the dangers of terrorism, and strengthen the role of society in countering it.

The law also includes specific procedural provisions to ensure the effectiveness of criminal prosecution in terrorist crimes.

It holds legal entities accountable if any of the crimes stipulated in the law are committed in their name or on their behalf, with fines ranging from ten thousand dinars to one million dinars, in addition to the possibility of dissolving the entity or temporarily or permanently closing its headquarters.

The law authorizes the use of a controlled delivery system, with the permission of the Public Prosecution, to facilitate the tracking of terrorist crimes and the identification of their perpetrators.

It affirms that criminal cases involving terrorist crimes are not subject to any statute of limitations, and no time limits for prosecution or punishment apply.

The law assigns the Public Prosecution, and no other entity, the authority to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate these crimes, with the Criminal Court having jurisdiction over them.

The relevant minister is required to issue the necessary decrees to implement the law's provisions within six months of its effective date.

The Prime Minister and the relevant ministers are responsible for enforcing its provisions after publication in the official gazette, and the law becomes effective from the date of publication.

The most prominent features of the draft law are as follows:

1. A national legal framework for combating terrorist crimes - Establishing a comprehensive legal framework to combat terrorism, fulfilling the requirements of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, and closing legislative gaps by providing precise definitions of terrorist acts, terrorists, and terrorist organizations.

2. Protecting the Interests of the state and its citizens abroad - Extending the law's scope to include terrorist crimes committed outside Kuwait if they target its interests or citizens, including Kuwaiti embassies, aircraft, and ships.

3. Stricter penalties for terrorist acts - Doubling penalties for any crime under the Penal Code that constitutes an act of terrorism, which may include life imprisonment or the death penalty, and establishing a minimum penalty that cannot be reduced.

4. Preventative measures for individuals deemed a terrorist threat - The draft law proposes measures aimed at preventing crimes and rehabilitating individuals considered a terrorist threat. These measures may include participation in rehabilitation programs, police supervision, restrictions on communication, or prohibitions on being in specific locations, as determined by a court order. Violations of these measures are subject to criminal penalties.

5. Protection of foreign embassies in Kuwait - The draft law introduces new crimes, including entering the premises of foreign organizations, embassies, or consulates within Kuwait with the intent to commit a terrorist act, and criminalizes entry into Kuwait with the intent to commit a terrorist act.

6. National Ministerial Committee for Combating Terrorism - The draft law establishes a committee chaired by the Minister of Interior and comprising several ministers and relevant authorities. The committee is responsible for coordinating efforts among competent authorities, monitoring developments in terrorism, and proposing policies and recommendations to strengthen the national framework for combating it.

7. Criminal liability of legal entities - The law defines the criminal liability of legal entities, such as companies, institutions, and public benefit associations, that participate in or collude in terrorist acts, imposing strict penalties including fines and suspension of activities.

8. Procedural mechanisms and controlled delivery - The law introduces a procedural mechanism to detect terrorist crimes and establishes a "controlled delivery" system. This system enables monitoring the entry of devices or equipment that may be used in terrorism, with the aim of tracking suspects and apprehending perpetrators, in accordance with the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

9. No statute of limitations for terrorist crimes - The law exempts terrorist crimes from the statute of limitations, ensuring that criminal cases and penalties do not lapse over time, given the seriousness and unique nature of these crimes, which may go undetected for many years.

Worshippers gather

They underscored the importance of these blessed days in getting closer to the Almighty through acts of obedience and worship and to strive to instill the values of mercy, tolerance and cooperation among members of society, thereby, contributing to strengthening social cohesion and reinforcing the values of brotherhood and love.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs mobilized all its resources to welcome worshippers on this blessed night. It provides various services to the worshippers, hence, creating a suitable atmosphere for performing acts of worship in comfort and tranquility.

The 27th night of Ramadan is a spiritual milestone awaited by Muslims every year, as they are keen to observe it through prayer, remembrance of Allah, recitation of the Holy Quran and supplication, wishing for its immense blessings and the glad tidings of mercy, forgiveness and deliverance from Hellfire.

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New legislation outlines security powers, protected areas and penalties for violations

Kuwait issues decree-law to safeguard military interests

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The official Gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm" has published Decree-Law No. 13/2026 concerning the safeguarding and protection of the supreme interests of military entities, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decree consists of 34 articles organized into six chapters, as follows:

Chapter One: Definitions

Article 1:

For the purposes of this law, the following terms shall have the meanings assigned:

1. The competent authority - The Minister of Defense, the Minister of Interior, or the Head of the National Guard, as applicable.

2. Supreme interests of military entities - The foundations, principles, concepts, plans, policies, and strategic objectives related to military entities and the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

3. Military entities - The Army, the Police, and the National Guard.

4. Military organizations - The bodies, commands, forces, regions, brigades, camps, bases, fields, sites, independent units, detachments, attached units, and civilian buildings belonging to military entities.

5. Protected areas - Military formations, installations, locations, sites, and civilian buildings of strategic or vital importance in the state that are entrusted to military entities for permanent or temporary guarding and protection, as determined by a decision of the competent authority.

6. Strategic planning - Strategic, military, and security plans designed to prepare military entities to maintain the security and safety of the homeland and defend it, which are classified.

7. Military movements - Movements undertaken by military entities to perform a security, military, or strategic duty based on an operational order or prepared plans.

8. Military transportation - The movement of aircraft, ships, boats, naval vessels, trucks, vehicles, or equipment belonging to military formations for the purpose of transporting military personnel, supplies, materials, or equipment such as weapons, ammunition, vehicles, and fuel.

9. Military convoys - A group of military vehicles, equipment, or trucks moving according to a movement order, consisting of no fewer than four vehicles.

10. Military escorts - The movement of persons of interest to the State, accompanied by military or civilian vehicles, as determined by a decision of the competent authority or assigned by the military.

11. Protection and security measures - Actions taken by the military to prevent any attack or violation of the safety of military installations or protected areas.

12. Firing Fire - The use of firearms to eliminate hostile activity and destroy hostile targets.

13. Engagement - Actions taken by the military to respond to hostile threats and activities.

14. Hostile activity - Physical actions perpetrated by a hostile force against protected areas, including armed or electronic attacks, intrusions, theft, or any other act that obstructs the missions or duties of the military.

15. Hostile force - Any individual, group, organization, party, bloc, or unit, whether military or civilian, that initiates or carries out hostile activity.

16. Pursuit - Actions undertaken by a military entity to intercept, stop, or block the movement of an enemy force, within the scope of the entity's defined responsibilities.

17. Extraordinary situations - Sit-ins, strikes, or any actions that cause chaos, riots, or a breach of security.

Chapter Two: The nature of securing the supreme interests of military entities

Article 2:

Securing and protecting the supreme interests of military entities involves preventing any threat or attack against them, obstruction of their objectives, harm to them or their interests, or any attempt to weaken their morale or take such actions.

Article 3:

Ministries, institutions, public bodies, companies, and individuals are obligated to preserve the supreme interests of military entities as set forth in this Decree-Law and to refrain from obstructing, resisting, attacking, or harming them.

Article 4:

It is prohibited to enter military organizations or carry out any action or procedure within them without permission and in accordance with the procedures and regulations determined by the competent authority of each entity.

Article 5:

All documents, papers, correspondence, information, data,

maps, drawings, photographs, and recordings of any kind related to military matters issued by the military or civilian sectors of military entities are considered confidential.

It is prohibited to publish, disclose, or circulate their contents or substance through any means of publication or advertising. Anyone connected to these documents by virtue of their position, work, or capacity is prohibited from retaining them for personal use, photographing them, recording all or part of their contents by any means, or providing copies to others.

Chapter Three: Military movements and convoys

Article 6:

The unit designated by the competent authority within the military entities shall have the authority to establish the necessary requirements, in coordination with the General Traffic Department, to regulate traffic flow and ensure the security and facilitation of military movements and convoys.

Article 7:

Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 26 of Decree-Law No. 67/1976, each military entity shall establish rules and procedures to regulate traffic within the protected areas under its supervision, by decision of the competent authority, to ensure the safety and protection of passengers and pedestrians within the facility.

Each military entity is obligated to apprehend violators of this article within the geographical boundaries of the protected areas under its jurisdiction, without prejudice to the Ministry of Interior's authority to take general enforcement measures in accordance with applicable legal rules.

Article 8:

Road users are required to clear the road, yield, or stop their vehicles during the passage of military convoys, processions, or official vehicles when signaled by horns or other means, even if this requires stopping on the far right side of the road.

Drivers of military vehicles and equipment must exercise due care to prevent endangering lives or property and must warn others during the movement of military convoys, processions, or official vehicles, or during military movements or deployments in the performance of their duties, in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of this Decree-Law.

Chapter Four: Security and Protection Procedures

Article 9:

The force responsible for guarding protected areas within military jurisdictions has the authority to take all necessary measures to secure and protect these areas, including stop and search procedures, administrative inspections, and verification of entry permits.

In the event of hostile activity, an extraordinary situation, or a crime occurring within these areas, the force is authorized to detain individuals until the arrival of the competent authorities, as well as to detain vehicles and movable property, in accordance with the controls, procedures, and guarantees set forth in the Code of Criminal Procedure and Trials, and relevant international laws and treaties concerning certain persons, places, or buildings.

Article 10:

Commanders and officers of protected areas within military entities have the authority to coordinate and implement preventive security measures, establish checkpoints, and enforce security protocols to maintain control over these areas and address any actions or behaviors that may threaten them.

They may issue permits for non-employees to enter these areas. The competent authority shall determine the external boundaries of these areas.

Article 11:

Military entities are required to clearly mark or announce firing ranges, training areas, and protected areas. The competent authority shall issue a decision specifying these markers.

It is prohibited to damage, move, obscure, or alter the orientation of warning signs, or to take any action that would render these signs ineffective.

Article 12:

The presence of unauthorized persons in protected areas, minefields, radiation emission sites, or land and sea maneuver areas designated by the competent authority with signs, information boards, or any other form of announcement is prohibited.

Hunting, grazing, and camping near these areas are also prohibited, as regulated by a decision of the competent authority.

Article 13:

The force assigned to guard protected areas within military zones is required to place signs and directional boards, erect fixed or mobile barriers, or install gates to delineate protected areas and prevent unauthorized entry or passage.

While guarding these areas, the force must follow the pro-

cedures and rules stipulated in this Decree-Law when dealing with anyone entering these areas.

Article 14:

The force assigned to guard protected areas may, if its personal security or the security of these areas is threatened, use force or fire upon anyone attempting to forcibly enter, attack the areas, attack their guards, flee from them, or fail to comply with orders issued by the assigned force. The competent authority shall determine the procedures and regulations for engagement and the use of firearms.

Article 15:

The competent authority, in coordination with the relevant entities, shall issue the procedures and regulations for handling extraordinary situations.

Article 16:

The Supreme Defense Council, or its designee, shall designate the force or unit assigned to guard the state's borders. This force is authorized to detain, stop, search, arrest, and use firearms against anyone attempting to cross, trespass, or breach the state's land or sea borders. In emergency situations, this force or unit may use direct fire to deter any imminent threat, in accordance with prevailing security or operational circumstances.

Article 17:

The force or unit tasked with guarding the state's borders shall take all necessary actions and measures to secure and protect the state's land and sea borders.

Its responsibilities include:

1. Guarding land and sea borders, roads, paths, corridors, and ports.

2. Combating smuggling and infiltration in the border region.

3. Conducting patrols, establishing facilities, and providing early warning of any suspicious activity along the border.

4. Gathering information and evidence regarding incidents occurring in border areas.

5. Providing assistance in search and rescue operations along the border.

6. Preserving the environment, natural resources, and protected areas within the border region in accordance with applicable laws.

7. Preventing violations of the state's laws and regulations, including military, security, customs, or health-related laws.

8. Monitoring maritime navigation in cooperation with relevant authorities.

9. Performing any other tasks and responsibilities assigned to it.

Article 18:

The Air Force is authorized to intercept any hijacked aircraft, whether civilian or military. During a pursuit, the Air Force may:

■ Prevent the hijacked aircraft from landing in the State of Kuwait and escort it until it leaves the country's airspace.

■ Force the hijacked aircraft to land in the State of Kuwait.

■ Shoot down the hijacked aircraft if it poses a threat to the security and safety of the country.

Article 19:

Without prejudice to international treaties and agreements, the Supreme Defense Council, or its designee, shall designate the force or unit responsible for securing and protecting Kuwait's territorial waters, oil pipelines and related products, the Kuwaiti merchant fleet, and freedom of navigation, and for enforcing international maritime law.

The competent authority shall issue a decree specifying the rules and procedures for pursuing vessels, submarines, boats, dinghies, and buoys that violate the law in internal, territorial, contiguous, economic, or continental shelf waters.

Article 20:

The Supreme Defense Council shall issue a decision specifying the rules and procedures for coordination and resolving jurisdictional disputes between military entities regarding duties and tasks within territorial, contiguous, or economic waters.

Article 21:

The force or unit designated in accordance with Article 19 of this Decree-Law shall conduct search and rescue operations in economic or international waters within the distance limits set by a decision of the competent authority.

Article 22:

The competent authority shall issue a decision specifying the rules and procedures for managing armed conflicts, the weapons used, and the standards and controls for their use, in accordance with public international law, international humanitarian law, and applicable international treaties and agreements.

Article 23:

The Cabinet shall issue a decision specifying the rules and procedures for coordination between military entities and all

relevant state bodies regarding the implementation of this Decree-Law and related decisions.

Article 24:

Each military entity is obligated to cooperate with other military or civilian entities and provide assistance, support, and all necessary resources and facilities to ensure the protection and security of protected areas, in accordance with applicable laws and decisions.

In such cases, command shall rest with the military entity requesting support, regardless of rank.

Chapter Five: Penalties

Article 25:

Without prejudice to any more severe penalty prescribed by another law, anyone who violates the provisions of Articles 8, 11, or 12 of this Decree-Law shall be punished by imprisonment for up to six months and a fine of not less than KD 300 and not more than KD 1,000, or by either of these penalties.

The court shall order the confiscation of items and tools used in violating the prohibition stipulated in the last paragraph of Article 12.

Anyone who violates the provisions of Article 5 of this Decree-Law shall be punished by imprisonment for up to five years and a fine of not less than KD 5,000 and not more than KD 10,000, or by either of these penalties.

Article 26:

Without prejudice to any more severe penalty stipulated by another law, anyone who intentionally disseminates news, publishes statements, or spreads false rumors about military authorities, with the intent to undermine confidence, diminish prestige, cast doubt on their existence, or weaken morale, without verifying the accuracy of the information or its source, shall be punished by imprisonment for three to ten years and a fine of not less than KD 5,000 and not more than KD 10,000, or by either of these penalties.

Article 27:

Without prejudice to any more severe penalty prescribed by another law, anyone entrusted with safeguarding the supreme interests of military entities in a transaction, operation, project, or case, or who negotiates, engages in, agrees with, or contracts with any entity inside or outside Kuwait regarding matters related to those entities, shall be punished by life imprisonment or imprisonment for no less than seven years if such action involves financial rights or obligations of these entities and is deliberately carried out in a manner harmful to their interests to gain profit or benefit for themselves or others.

If the offender achieves their objective, or if the act is likely to harm the status of these entities, the penalty shall be life imprisonment.

Article 28:

Penalties shall be doubled if the crimes outlined in this Decree-Law are committed during wartime, under martial law, or during general mobilization.

Article 29:

The competent authority shall determine, by decision, the entity responsible for conducting investigations and gathering evidence within protected areas regarding the crimes stipulated in this Decree-Law, in a manner that does not conflict with the provisions of Law No. 17/1960.

Article 30:

The Public Prosecution shall have exclusive jurisdiction to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate the crimes stipulated in this Decree-Law and any related offenses.

Article 31:

Except when a military member is referred for investigation by their employing entity for a crime committed during the performance of security duties, they may, with the approval of the competent authority, be accompanied by a representative from the legal affairs department of their employing entity before the investigating authorities.

Article 32:

The statute of limitations stipulated in Article 4 of Law No. 16/1960 shall not apply to the crimes outlined in Articles 5, 26, and 27 of this Decree-Law.

Chapter Six: Final provisions

Article 33:

The competent authority, each within its respective jurisdiction, shall issue all necessary decisions to implement this Decree-Law.

Article 34:

The ministers, each within their respective jurisdiction, shall implement this Decree-Law, which shall come into effect from the date of its publication in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm".

Continued from Page 1

Hostile Iranian

He said "three hostile drones targeted Kuwait International Airport, damaging the radar system and no casualties were reported, while three other drones crashed outside the threat zone and did not pose danger."

He added that the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) task force destroyed five hostile drones within its area of responsibility.

He also stated that the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Unit at the Land Forces Engineering Corps responded to seven reports, while handling and disposing of drones according to the procedures.

He emphasized that the duties of the Armed Forces, alongside various military agencies in the country, reflect the concept of joint teamwork and underscore the unified objectives they are striving to realize - guarantee national security and protect the land and airspace of the country from malicious or treacherous threats.

He pointed out this is achieved through sheer determination and a firm belief rooted in sacrifice and selflessness, with the ultimate goal of doing everything to preserve national freedom and stability.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Interior spokesperson Brigadier General Nasser Bousulaib revealed that the explosive ordnance disposal teams responded to 12 reports about falling shrapnel from defensive operations over the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of reports to 392.

Bousulaib confirmed that the security and military institutions continue to perform their duties with high efficiency.

He indicated that the sirens were activated once in the last 24 hours and the total number of times they have been activated since the start of the attacks reached 89.

He appealed to everyone to remain calm when the sirens are activated or when hearing sounds of defensive interception operations, stay in safe places inside buildings, and stay far from windows and open areas.

He also urged everyone to adhere to the instructions issued by official authorities to ensure their safety, stressing that "your awareness and adherence to instructions are the cornerstones of enhancing security and safety."

Also on Sunday, Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah headed a meeting of the Civil Defense

Committee on Sunday with all committee members attending.

The meeting mainly highlighted preparedness strategies and coordination of efforts among various state bodies amid the current circumstances in the country and the entire region.

During the meeting, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, who doubles as head of the committee, was briefed on relevant reports, the decided emergency plan and civil protection measures to ensure the country's internal front.

Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef underlined the necessity of keeping absolute vigilance and high-level preparedness to address any looming reflections.

He also stressed the significance of integration and cooperation between military sectors and civil society agencies, noting that shared responsibility necessitates wiping out all obstacles to ensure continued vital services and secure strategic facilities nationwide under various circumstances.

In latest development, US President Donald Trump stated that he has no intention to end the war on Iran now, despite the growing concerns about its impact on the global economy.

"We've hit the Iranians hard, and they'd need 10 years to rebuild if we stopped now ... But I'm not ending the war now," President Trump told reporters on Air Force One while flying back to Washington.

He emphasized that he would not allow fluctuations in global oil prices to impede the strategic objective of preventing Tehran from acquiring nuclear weaponry.

He asserted that the sustained aerial campaign is yielding results, noting that Iranian military infrastructure and capabilities have been "significantly diminished."

President Trump claimed that several high-profile figures within the Iranian regime had been neutralized during the war, adding that Washington is monitoring potential successors whom the US deems "suitable" for future engagement.

President said he believes the Iranian leadership is "not ready" yet to accept a deal on US terms.

"I've heard that the Iranians very much want to negotiate, but I don't think they're ready to do that," he said.

Addressing Iran's disruption of maritime navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, the President remarked that obstructing the vital waterway does not require a standing army, but rather "a few disruptive individuals."

He called upon allied nations-particularly those heavily reliant on the strait

for energy imports-to assume greater responsibility and participate in securing international shipping lanes.

He assured that "Iran's military capabilities have declined significantly".

Trump accused Iran on Monday of media manipulation using artificial intelligence (AI) to project a false image of military prowess.

"Now, AI has become another Disinformation weapon that Iran uses, quite well, considering they are being annihilated by the day," President Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

He specifically dismissed widely circulated footage of Iranian "kamikaze boats" and naval strikes as digital fabrications.

He maintained that such maritime assets do not exist and are intended solely to bolster the morale of a "defeated military."

"The fact is, Iran is being decimated, and the only battles they "win" are those that they create through AI, and are distributed by Corrupt Media Outlets," he asserted.

President Trump categorically refuted reports-which he attributed to "corrupt media outlets"-claiming the neutralization of US strategic assets.

He denied that five US refueling tankers had been downed, clarifying that the fleet remains in active service with the exception of one unit undergoing maintenance.

"It's all false information to show how "tough" their already defeated Military is!" he added.

Furthermore, he denounced visual reports showing the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln ablaze in the ocean as "fabricated AI imagery."

He emphasized that the vessel had neither been targeted nor sustained any damage, labeling the dissemination of such reports as a grave threat to national security and "unpatriotic."

"Not only was it not burning, it was not even shot at - Iran knows better than to do that!" he clarified.

The US President expressed his support for Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Brendan Carr's scrutiny of broadcast licenses for organizations accused of amplifying Iranian-linked disinformation.

He argued that the use of "free American airwaves" to perpetuate foreign-backed narratives necessitates a formal administrative review.

Trump said he has demanded about seven countries send warships to keep the Strait of Hormuz open as Iranian strikes continued to rain down on Gulf countries Monday.

Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest, gradually restarted operations after a drone struck a fuel tank and started a fire. Authorities said it was quickly contained and no injuries were reported.

Tehran has accused the United States without evidence of using "ports, docks and hideouts" in the United Arab Emirates to launch strikes on Kharg Island, home to the main terminal handling Iran's oil exports evidence, as oil prices soared. Brent crude oil was trading near \$105 per barrel on Monday.

Trump said the U.S. is negotiating with countries heavily reliant on Middle East crude to join a coalition to police the waterway where about one-fifth the world's traded oil normally flows, but declined to name them.

Israeli strikes have deepened Lebanon's humanitarian crisis, with more than 850 people killed and over 850,000 displaced.

Here is the latest:

Iraqi Oil Minister Hayan Abdul-Ghani said Monday in a video statement that a pipeline from the northern city of Kirkuk to Turkey will be operational within a week, allowing the country to resume oil exports interrupted by the ongoing regional war.

Iraq previously exported around 3.4 million barrels of oil a day through its southern port of Basra, he said, but "in light of the military operations and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, Iraqi oil exports stopped two or three days after the beginning of the war in the region."

Abdul-Ghani said the pipeline from Kirkuk to Turkey, with a capacity of 200,000 to 250,000 barrels a day, is currently undergoing hydrostatic testing. The route will bypass the semi-autonomous Kurdish area in northern Iraq after Baghdad could not reach an agreement with local authorities over conditions for exporting via another pipeline in the Kurdish region.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said those that fled southern Lebanon in the face of Israeli fighting against Hezbollah militants won't be able to return home until northern Israel, which has been hit by barrages of rockets, is safe.

"Hezbollah will pay a heavy price for its aggression and activity in the Iranian axis to destroy Israel," he said.

"We have promised security to the residents of the north, and that is exactly what we will do," he said.

The top U.S. military commander in the Middle East says American forces are zeroing in on Iran's threats to freighters carrying oil and natural gas through a vital chokepoint in the Persian Gulf.

"We will continue to rapidly deplete Iran's ability to threaten freedom of navigation in and around the Strait of Hormuz," Admiral Brad Cooper, the head of U.S. Central Command, said in a video posted to X on Monday.

Iranian strikes on commercial vessels have effectively stopped shipping traffic in the waterway, through which a fifth of the world's oil is transported. That has dramatically increased the price of oil and put pressure on Washington to do something to ease the pain for consumers.

Germany reiterated on Monday its firm refusal to participate in any military operation to safeguard shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

This came in a statement by Federal Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul in an interview with German's ARD broadcaster, echoing repeated assurances of non-participation from Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Defense Minister Boris Pistorius.

"Will we soon become an active part of this conflict No," Wadephul said, adding that Germany has maintained a clear stance on participation from the outset, and his position aligns with those of Chancellor Merz and Minister Pistorius.

When asked about the possibility of expanding the EU's Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), Wadephul said that the mission, which focuses primarily on the Red Sea, "has not yet demonstrated any effectiveness," he added, "Therefore, I am very skeptical that extending this mission to include the Strait of Hormuz would lead to greater security."

Wadephul stated that all these aspects will be discussed at the meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels on Monday.

In Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron said Sunday that he spoke with Iranian President Massoud Pezeshkian, urging him to put an end to unacceptable attacks.

"I have just spoken with the Iranian President Massoud Pezeshkian," President Macron said in his social media account on X.

"I called on him to immediately put an end to the unacceptable attacks that Iran is carrying

We're going to conduct generous oversight: Wicker

US Republicans resist calls for Iran war hearings, creating new standoff with Democrats

WASHINGTON, March 16, (AP): The United States' war with Iran is entering its third week, but Congress has yet to publicly test the Trump administration's case for the conflict.

Republicans in Congress have so far side-stepped public debate over the war, even as Senate Democrats reach for every tool at their disposal to demand hearings with Trump administration officials. Increasingly frustrated, Democrats are threatening this week to force a series of votes on the war, hoping that the effort to gum up the Senate's voting schedule will prod Republicans to action.

"We've had no oversight whatsoever over what the executive is doing as we're spending a billion dollars a day, and we have failed to have any real substantive debate or discussion," said Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J.

The role of Congress in the deliberations is an unsettled question with enormous stakes, given that lawmakers have the power to shape the trajectory of the conflict as it grows in cost and casualties. So far, 13 military members

have been killed and billions of dollars have been spent, but President Donald Trump has not sought congressional approval for attacking Iran.

As the 17th day of the conflict dawned Monday, Republican lawmakers remained mostly resistant to the idea of quickly forcing public testimony before Congress.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune told reporters last week that he didn't expect public hearings specifically on the Iran war, but noted it would inevitably come up in the regular rhythm of testimony on military policy and spending.

"They have briefed us," Thune, R-SD, said, pointing to classified briefings from the Trump administration. Those sessions have been held behind closed doors and most lawmakers refuse to disclose more than the broad topics of discussion.

Thune also noted there have been regular news conferences from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Gen Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They are "answer-



US Sen Lisa Murkowski, chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs speaks at the oversight hearings to examine federal policies governing Indian water rights settlements, including S.953, to provide for the settlement of the water rights claims of the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe, and the San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe on Capitol Hill on March 11, in Washington. (AP)

ing the hard questions that are being asked," Thune said.

The GOP chairs of committees dealing with national security have also said they don't have plans in the near term to hold hearings specifically on the war, though some acknowledged the value of lawmaker questioning.

Sen Roger Wicker, the chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, argued that the regular run of hearings on Capitol Hill would provide lawmakers with plentiful opportunities to ask questions.

"We're going to conduct generous oversight, thorough oversight," said Wicker, R-Miss.

Some Republicans are looking ahead to an expected supplemental budget request from the Trump administration to cover the costs of the war. That request, however, is likely weeks away and faces a difficult path through Congress.

Democrats have pointed out that the Pentagon has already received additional funding from Republicans' mar-

quee tax cut law that was passed last year and provided funding for GOP priorities, including at the Pentagon.

Still, agitation from a few Republicans at the lack of high-level responses from the Trump administration is starting to show, especially as they brace for a hefty war bill from the administration.

"I don't want to just be given the invoice from the Department of Defense, saying this is what it's going to cost," said Sen Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska. "I want them to be engaged with us."

She added that it was important for lawmakers to get information both in classified briefings and public hearings "so that the public can better understand this, too."

Another GOP senator on the powerful Appropriations Committee, Louisiana's John Kennedy, exited a classified briefing last week fuming that it had been a "total waste of time" because the officials were not able to provide the answers that top-level Cabinet officials could.

As Trump administration pushes deportations, immigration data becomes harder to find

WASHINGTON, March 16, (AP): The Trump administration likes to promote its immigration enforcement agenda through numbers, with ambitious goals to deport 1 million people, report zero releases at the US-Mexico border and arrest thousands of alleged gang members.

For all the boasting, the administration has been releasing less reliable, carefully vetted data than its predecessors on a signature policy that has become one of the most contentious of Trump's second term.

The gap in information and a loss of figures from an office that has tracked immigration data back to the 1800s have left researchers, advocates, lawyers and journalists without important statistics to hold the Republican administration to account.

"They aren't publishing the data," said Mike Howell, who heads the conservative Oversight Project, an advocacy group pushing for more deportations. Instead, Howell said, the Department of Homeland Security has put out numbers in news releases "that purport to be statistics with no statistical backup and the numbers have jumped all over the place."

With mass deportations a priority, new restrictions and increased enforce-



Law enforcement officers walk out of a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility on Oct 11, 2025, in Portland, Ore. (AP)

ment have led to a surge in immigration arrests, detentions and deportations.

But finding the metrics that once measured those changes can be hard. It is an extension of earlier administration moves to limit the flow of government information by scrubbing or removing federal datasets or by the firing last year

of the top official overseeing jobs data.

The Office of Homeland Security Statistics is responsible for publishing figures from Homeland Security agencies, including removals and the nationalities of those deported, to provide a comprehensive picture of immigration trends at the border and inside the

United States.

Originally known as the Office of Immigration Statistics, it tracked such data since 1872. In its current form, created under the Biden administration, it also started publishing monthly reports that allowed researchers to track developments almost in real time.

But key enforcement metrics on its website have not been updated since early last year. A note on the page where the monthly reports were says it "is delayed while it is under review."

"It's the most timely data. It's the most reliable data," Austin Kocher, research professor at Syracuse University who closely follows immigration data trends, said about the monthly reports. "It has the most omniscient view of immigration enforcement across the entire agency."

An interactive dashboard launched by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement in December 2023 once let users examine whom the agency was arresting, their nationalities, criminal histories and removal numbers. ICE called it a "new era in transparency."

Though intended for quarterly updates, the latest data is from January 2025. The agency's annual report, typically released in December, had not been published as of mid-March.

America

Severe storms pummel parts of US with snow: Successive punches of snow and wind were set to impact the eastern half of the United States on Monday as severe weather swept across much of the nation and made roads impassable in the Upper Midwest.



Stein

Forecasters said mid-Atlantic states and Washington, D.C., were at greatest risk for high winds and tornadoes. The cold front was expected to move off the East Coast by Tuesday, bringing sharply colder weather in its wake, forecasters said.

The late winter blast comes as Hawaii continued to be affected by a separate storm system that caused severe flooding over the weekend.

Officials said schools in Raleigh and Chapel Hill, North Carolina, would be closed Monday. **Josh Stein** urged residents to enable emergency alerts on their phones ahead of expected wind gusts of 74 mph (119 kph). (AP)

Pardon lobbyist charged in New York: Federal authorities in New York have arrested and charged a lobbyist - one who worked on behalf of an ex-surgic home operator pardoned recently by President Donald Trump - with attempting to force a former client and his son to pay him \$500,000, according to documents.

Joshua Nass, 34, of Charleston, South Carolina, appeared Saturday before a magistrate judge in Brooklyn on an attempted extortion charge unsealed the previous day, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York said. Nass, who was being released on \$5 million bond, could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted. (AP)

Feds move to dismiss charges against Army vet: The Justice Department has moved to dismiss charges against an Army veteran who set fire to an American flag near the White House last year to protest President Donald Trump's executive order on flag burning.

Jay Carey, 55, of Arden, North Carolina, who has said he served in the Army from 1989 to 2012 and was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, was arrested on Aug. 25 after he set fire to a flag in Lafayette Park, which the National Park Service oversees. Earlier that day, Trump signed an executive order requiring the Justice Department to investigate and prosecute people for burning the American flag. (AP)

Pope escalates call for ceasefire in Iran by addressing those responsible for war

ROME, March 16, (AP): Pope Leo XIV demanded a ceasefire in the Middle East on Sunday in his strongest comments to date, directly addressing the leaders who launched the war in Iran.

"On behalf of the Christians of the Middle East and all women and men of good will, I appeal to those responsible for this conflict," Leo said. "Cease fire so that avenues for dialogue may be reopened. Violence can never lead to the justice, stability, and peace that the people are waiting for."

Leo didn't cite the United States or Israel by name in his comments at the end of his Sunday noon blessing. But history's first US pope mentioned the attacks that targeted a school, an apparent reference to the missile strike on an elementary school in Iran in the opening days of the war that killed over 165 people, many of them children.

US officials have said outdated intelligence likely led to the United States launching the strike, and that an investigation is ongoing.

The Vatican has highlighted the carnage of the Minab strike, running an aerial photo of the mass grave being dug for the young victims on the



Pope Leo XIV visits the parish complex of Sacro Cuore di Gesu in Ponte Mammolo on the outskirts of Rome on March 15. (AP)

March 6 front page of its official newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, under the headline "The Face of War."

Leo said he was close to the families of those who had been killed in the attacks "which have hit schools,

hospitals and residential centers." He expressed particular concern about the impact of the war in Lebanon, where aid groups are warning of a humanitarian crisis.

For the two weeks since the start of the US-Israeli war, the pope has limited his comments to muted appeals for diplomacy and dialogue in an apparent attempt to avoid pitting himself as an American political counterweight to President Donald Trump. He hasn't named the US or Israel publicly, but that is also in keeping with the Vatican's tradition of diplomatic neutrality.

On Friday, for example, in a speech to priests attending a Vatican class on the sacrament of confession, Leo said the sacrament was a workshop that restores unity and peace.

"One might well ask: do those Christians who bear grave responsibility in armed conflicts have the humility and courage to make a serious examination of conscience and to go to confession?" he said.

But while Leo has sought to keep his messaging indirect and apolitical to avoid inflaming tensions, some of his US cardinals and the Vatican secretary of state have not.



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney speaks during announcement to defend and transform Canada's Northern and Arctic regions in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories on March 12. (AP)

Nordic countries and Canada agree to deepen cooperation in security

OSLO, March 16, (Agencies): The Nordic countries and Canada agreed on Sunday to strengthen cooperation in defence, security, resilience and green economic growth following a summit in the Norwegian capital Oslo.

At the Nordic-Canadian Summit, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store met with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, along with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo and Icelandic Prime Minister Kristrun Frostadottir.

In a press release, the Norwegian government said the six leaders agreed to further deepen cooperation to safeguard security and create new opportunities for economic growth.

Store said Canada and the Nordic countries are working closely to enhance security in the Arctic and sup-

port efforts to strengthen the Allied presence in the region through NATO.

The Norwegian government also said that in a world where technology and international trade are increasingly used as coercive tools, the countries will place high priority on economic security, job creation and green economic growth.

Meanwhile, Carney said his government will spend billions on forward operating locations and infrastructure in the North to assert sovereignty over the increasingly contested region.

Carney announced he is putting an additional \$32 billion Canadian (US\$24 billion) into military forward operating locations Yellowknife, Inuvik, Iqaluit and Goose Bay.

"In this new era, we cannot rely on other nations for our security and prosperity," Carney said.

The additional funds comes as US President Donald Trump called earlier this year for the US to take control of Greenland, the Inuit self-governing territory of the kingdom of Denmark. Trump has also talked about making Canada the 51st state.

The prime minister made the announcement in Yellowknife, the capital city of Canada's Northwest Territories, before he takes off for his planned visit to Norway where he will observe a NATO exercise.

The announcement includes \$2.7 billion Canadian (US\$1.9 billion) for four new remote operating hubs across the North to assist with rapid deployment. Carney is also announcing funds to support a variety of road and port projects in the North.

This includes money for the Mackenzie Valley Highway, which will connect Yellowknife and Inuvik.

'Show of strength before April election'

Hungary PM, Magyar summon rallies

BUDAPEST, Hungary, March 16, (AP): Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and his main political opponent, Peter Magyar, each drew throngs of their supporters to the streets of Hungary's capital on Sunday for a show of strength before the two men face off in pivotal elections just four weeks away.

The rival rallies in Budapest, which drew hundreds of thousands of people in support of Orban's nationalist Fidesz party and Magyar's center-right Tisza, are being viewed as a barometer for which side commands more support as the campaign enters its final month.

In power since 2010 and looking for his fifth consecutive election victory, Orban, 62, faces a more competitive race than at any time in the past two decades as Magyar has shot to prominence and challenged what once seemed an unshakable grip on power by the pro-Russian populist.

Addressing a crowd of at least 100,000 on Budapest's Heroes' Square, Magyar charged Orban's government with turning Hungarians against one another through propaganda and divisive policies, and of steering the country away from its rightful place among Western democracies.

"Our homeland is part of the West, our homeland is part of the European



Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban addresses his supporters during a march in Budapest, Hungary on March 15. (AP)

community, our country is part of NATO. And not because of treaties or charters, but because it is written in our destiny," Magyar said.

"Our ancestors left us the inheritance of where we belong," he continued. "We're not afraid. We have learned from our ancestors that nothing lasts forever."

In the lead-up to the election, Orban has relied increasingly on an aggres-

sive anti-Ukraine campaign that alleges Kyiv, the European Union and Tisza are part of a conspiracy to oust his government and install one that would financially support Ukraine and send soldiers to fight in its war against Russia.

The election's stakes, he has claimed, are whether or not the war in Ukraine bankrupts Hungary and sends its youth to their deaths on the front lines.

Europe

22 injured in Moscow tram collision: The number of people injured in a collision of trams in northwestern Moscow has risen to 22, the capital's traffic police said on Sunday.

Earlier reports said the crash occurred at around 09:30 Moscow time (0630 GMT) on Vodnikov Street and involved two trams traveling on Route No. 6. About 70 people were on the trams at the time.

A technical malfunction caused one tram to derail and collide with another, said the press service of the Moscow Main Directorate under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Law enforcement officials said 11 of the injured are in serious condition.

The Moscow prosecutor's office has taken over the investigation of the accident. A special commission, including experts from the Moscow Metro and the tram manu-

facturer, will determine the causes of the crash, said the Moscow Metro press service. (Xinhua)

Gregoire leads in Paris municipal elections: The list headed by left-wing candidate Emmanuel Gregoire leads the vote in the first round of municipal elections in Paris on Sunday, Radio France reported, citing initial estimates.

Gregoire, heading the candidate list of an alliance of the Socialist Party, The Ecologists and the French Communist Party, won 36.5 percent of the vote, while the list led by former culture minister Rachida Dati of The Republicans obtained 24.9 percent, according to the preliminary estimates by polling institute Ipsos.

According to the French Interior Ministry, the candidate list including French Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu won more than 59 percent of the vote in Vernon in the northern department of Eure, securing victory in the first round of the municipal elections. (Xinhua)

Asia

Chinese FM meets with Vietnamese counterpart: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Vietnamese Foreign Minister Le Hoai Trung in Hanoi on Sunday.

During the meeting, Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, noted that following the 14th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in January this year, the top leaders of the two parties agreed to hold the first ministerial meeting of the China-Vietnam "3+3" strategic dialogue on diplomacy, defense, and public security, and the 17th meeting of the China-Vietnam Steering Committee for Bilateral Cooperation.

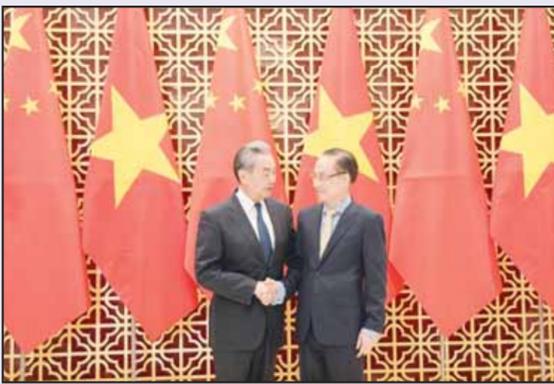
In accordance with the strategic consensus reached by the top leaders, these two important mechanisms should be used to deeply explore the coordination of the two major issues of development and security, clarify important measures for following the socialist path, and send a positive signal to the international community of China-Vietnam solidarity, mutual trust, and joint progress, Wang said.

Stating that this year marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan and the new era for Vietnam's national rise, presenting unprecedented opportunities for the socialist cause of both countries, Wang said that the advantages of the socialist systems of China and Vietnam are becoming increasingly prominent, and the strategic value of the China-Vietnam community with a shared future continues to rise.

He pointed out that the two countries should deepen strategic mutual trust, strengthen strategic cooperation, promote development amid change, safeguard security amid crisis, enhance the respective national strategic resilience and development momentum, respond external uncertainties with the stability of China-Vietnam cooperation, so as to inject lasting impetus into improving the well-being of the two peoples, safeguard the socialist cause, and build a community with a shared future for humanity.

For his part, Trung, also a member of the Political Bureau of the CPV Central Committee, said that guided by the spirit of comrades and brothers between Vietnam and China, both sides will certainly be able to implement the strategic consensus reached by the top leaders of the two parties.

Trung added that as friendly neighbors, comrades, and brothers, Vietnam is always willing to support China's development and growth, the enhancement of its international status, and its greater contributions to the socialist cause, as well as world peace, stability, and development.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, meets with Vietnamese Foreign Minister Le Hoai Trung, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee, in Hanoi, Vietnam on March 15. (Xinhua)

Vietnam firmly adheres to the one-China policy and, as always, supports China's position on issues related to Xinjiang and Xizang, said Trung.

He also noted that Vietnam is willing to work with China to plan the next stage of high-level exchanges, strengthen inter-party exchanges, promote pragmatic cooperation in trade, investment, green development, and connectivity, implement cultural exchange projects, and join hands to deepen and solidify the strategically significant China-Vietnam community with a shared future. (Xinhua)

1 dead in Sydney shooting: A man has died after he was shot at a residence in western Sydney, Australia, on Monday.

Police said in a statement that emergency services were called to the unit in Lidcombe, 14 km west of central Sydney, following reports of a shooting shortly after 4 a.m.

Officers arrived at the scene and found a 38-year-old man suffering gunshot wounds. He was taken to the hospital, where he died a short time later.

A second man was found at the scene with non-life-threatening injuries suffered during an assault and was also hospitalized.

Police established a crime scene at the residence and have called for members of the public with information about the shooting to contact investigators. (Xinhua)

Australian troops to be deployed to assist flood-hit NT: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Sunday that military troops will be deployed to help communities hit by days of flooding in Northern Territory (NT).

The government has approved the assistance from Australian Defense Force (ADF) personnel to communities around Katherine, 270 km southeast of the territory's capital Darwin, with the recovery efforts after devastating floods, Albanese said on social media platform X.

"To everyone doing it tough right now, know we are with you through the response and through the recovery," he added.

The Northern Territory government has requested the help from the ADF.

Since early March, the territory has been suffering from severe flooding. According to Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) news reports, Katherine has seen its worst flooding in nearly three decades, with several surrounding remote communities evacuated. Floods also inundated Darwin River homes and devastated rural properties, while the rising waters of Daly River set a new record.

No fatalities have been officially reported in the flooding in the Northern Territory so far, while two international tourists were killed in separate flood incidents in Queensland. (Xinhua)

Laos sets date for 1st session of new parliament: The Standing Committee of the Lao National Assembly (NA) has approved the schedule for the inaugural session of the NA's 10th legislature, which will be held from March 23 to March 27, according to an announcement issued.

The five-day session will take place in Lao capital Vientiane, and the announcement calls on all members of the NA, its internal bodies, and relevant sectors to ensure the successful organization of the inaugural session and the fulfillment of its objectives. (Xinhua)

Khin Yi elected new speaker of lower house

Myanmar's parliament meets for first time in 5 years with military controlling most seats

NAYPYITAW, Myanmar, March 16, (AP) Myanmar opened its first parliamentary session in more than five years on Monday following an election that did not include major opposition parties, ensuring that the ruling military is set to retain a firm grasp on power.

The military blocked Myanmar's last parliament from convening when it seized power from the last legitimately elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, and has governed without a legislature since then. It touted elections held in late December and January as a step toward the return of democracy.

But the military and its allies hold nearly 90% of the seats in the two-chamber parliament, while Myanmar's former ruling National League for Democracy and other major opposition parties were either blocked from running or refused to compete under conditions they deemed unfair.

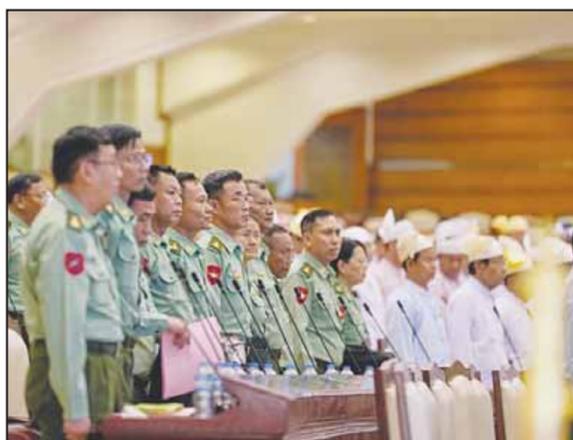
Delegates wearing traditional attire arrived in the capital, Naypyitaw, on Monday for the opening session of the 373-seat lower house, which convened in the tightly guarded parliamentary complex, newly renovated after being badly damaged by last year's earthquake.

Security forces sealed roads leading to the parliament, and vehicles were searched for explosives before entering.

The new Parliament's first task is to elect a speaker for each chamber, then elect a president and two vice presidents.

During Monday's session, Khin Yi, the chairman of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, was elected as speaker of the lower house. He is a former general and police chief, widely regarded as a close ally of Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, the country's military ruler.

Maung Maung Ohn, also a former general and ex-information minister, was



Myanmar's military representatives attend a session at Lower House parliament in Naypyitaw, Myanmar on March 16. (AP)

elected deputy speaker.

The 213-seat upper house is scheduled to open Wednesday, with 14 re-

gional parliaments set to convene two days after that.

A quarter of the available seats in the upper and lower houses - 166 seats - were reserved for the military by the military-written constitution, and the USDP won 339 of the rest. Twenty-one other parties won between one and 20 seats each.

Phased elections were held in December and January in 263 of the country's 330 townships.

Critics described the vote organized by the military government as an effort to legitimize its rule. The 2021 coup triggered widespread opposition that dragged Myanmar into a civil war.

Tom Andrews, a special rapporteur working with the U.N. human rights office, has urged the international community to reject the election results and any power arrangements that follow.

Min Aung Hlaing, who heads the current military government, is widely expected to assume the presidency.

However, the constitution bars a president from serving concurrently as the army's commander-in-chief - Myanmar's most powerful post - raising questions about whether he would relinquish that role.

Suu Kyi, Myanmar's 80-year-old former leader, is serving a 27-year prison term on charges widely viewed as spurious and politically motivated. Her party won landslide victories in the 2015 and 2020 elections, but was forced to dissolve in 2023 after refusing to register under new military rules.

An opposition shadow parliament, formed by elected lawmakers who were blocked from taking their seats when the military seized power in 2021, also held an online session on Monday. It claims it is the country's sole legitimate parliament.



Japanese Coast Guard officers prepare to search for capsized boats, at a port in Henoko, Nago city, Okinawa prefecture on March 16. (AP)

2 dead after 2 boats capsize off US base construction site in Japan

Two boats carrying 21 people capsized Monday off Henoko, a controversial relocation site for a US military base off Japan's southern island of Okinawa, throwing all into the water and leaving two of them dead, officials said. The Japan Coast Guard said 18 of them were students from a Kyoto high school on two boats, 10 on Heiwa Maru and eight on the smaller Fukutsu, to observe the Henoko area as part

of their peace education program. Coast guard rescuers pulled all 21 people out of the water, but a 17-year-old female student and the captain of Fukutsu were later pronounced dead, officials said. Two people were injured but their conditions are not life threatening. Coast guard officials said the cause of the accident is under investigation. The boats were about a kilom-

eter (half a mile) east of Henoko when they capsized. A wave advisory was in place during the accident, but the water was not very rough and there was no sign the boats collided, officials said.

Persistent protests and lawsuits between Okinawa and Tokyo have held up the relocation plan of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma from a crowded neighborhood on the island for nearly 30 years. (AP)

Cross-border attacks kill 2 and injure 5 in Afghanistan: official

KABUL, March 16, (Agencies): Two people were killed and five others sustained injuries as Pakistani forces launched cross-border attacks in the eastern Afghanistan Khost province on Sunday, provincial government spokesman Mustaghfar Gurbaz said Monday.

According to the official, the Pakistani artillery targeted some areas in Gurbaz and Jaji Maidan districts on Sunday night, leaving two people dead and injuring five others.

Numerous people, according to Afghan and Pakistani officials, have been killed and injured since the outbreak of skirmishes along the border a couple of weeks ago. Pakistan said Sunday it targeted militant hideouts in Afghanistan's Kandahar region overnight, as the fighting that erupted between the two neighbors late last month showed no signs of abating.

The cross-border fighting, which has included Pakistani airstrikes in the Afghan capital, Kabul, is the deadliest yet between the two South Asian nations. Islamabad has referred to the conflict as an "open war," adding to concerns about regional stability as the US-Israeli war with Iran engulfs the Middle East and beyond.

In a post on X, Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the military had struck equipment storage facilities and "technical support infrastructure" in overnight attacks in Kandahar.

Afghan government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Pakistan had hit two locations: a site used by security guards during the day that was empty at night, and a drug rehabilitation center that suffered slight damage. He said there were



A crater and traces left by a mortar shell are seen at the Omari camp, Torkham, Afghanistan on March 11. (Xinhua)

no casualties, but that the strikes showed that Pakistan was "continuing to invade and fuel the fire of war."

Afghanistan's Defense Ministry said it carried out an attack on a Pakistani army camp in Pakistan's South Waziristan area on Sunday in retaliation for the strikes in Kandahar. It claimed the attack destroyed most of the camp's command center and other facilities, and inflicted heavy casualties on the Pakistani military.

Pakistan's Ministry of Information rejected the claim as "propaganda," saying that a small drone was struck down and that "no military installation or infrastructure was hit."

Afghanistan also said it carried out operations inside Pakistan across the border from Kunar and Nangarhar provinces, claiming to have captured a Pakistani

military outpost and killed several soldiers. Pakistan also rejected those claims.

Pakistan accuses Afghanistan's Taliban rulers of harboring militant groups, particularly the Pakistani Taliban, or Tehrik-e-Taleban, which stage attacks inside Pakistan. Afghanistan denies the charge, insisting it does not allow its territory to be used against other countries.

The latest fighting erupted in late February, when Afghanistan launched a cross-border attack into Pakistan in retaliation for Pakistani airstrikes inside Afghanistan days earlier that it said had killed only civilians.

The clashes upended a ceasefire that had been brokered by Qatar last October following fighting that had killed dozens of soldiers, civilians and suspected militants.

Lat/Am

Peru presidential candidate dies in accident: A Peruvian presidential candidate died Sunday in a car accident on a remote Andean highway while traveling to a political rally.

Napoleon Becerra, 61, was the candidate for the Workers and Entrepreneurs Party of Peru in the April 12 election. The leftist was one of the 36 candidates and a recent poll showed him with less than 1% of the voting intentions.

Becerra's vehicle went off the road in the rural district of the city of Pilpichaca, 430 kilometers (267 miles) southeast of capital Lima, local police said. Mayor Balvin Humaní told The Associated Press that three passengers in the candidate's car were injured. (AP)

Police not allowing activist to leave home: Cuban activist Yoani Sánchez said on Sunday that an alleged policeman dressed in civilian clothes is stopping her from leaving her home in Havana.

The accusation comes in the wake of protest in the city of Moron, where a group partially destroyed the local headquarters of the ruling communist party as the island struggles with energy blackouts and food shortages.

Sánchez confronted the man in a video published a video on Facebook and argued he was violating her rights. She also said two women who do not live in her building were roaming around since the officer arrived. (AP)

Subcontinent

10 dead in India hospital fire: At least 10 people died, and a few others were injured when a fire broke out at a government-run hospital in India's eastern state of Odisha on Sunday night, confirmed the local police.

The fire broke out inside the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the SCB Medical College and Hospital, located in the state's Cuttack district. Among the injured, five persons were said to be in critical condition. Most of the victims were patients admitted to the ICU of the ill-fated hospital. (Xinhua)

2 dead as tornado hits east India: At least two people died, and nearly 20 were injured when a strong tornado hit parts of India's eastern state of Odisha on Sunday. Many houses were also damaged as the tornado swept through the area, confirmed the local police.

The natural tragedy mainly struck the coastal state's Mayurbhanj district. According to the police, nearly 100 houses across several villages were ravaged in the tornado. (Xinhua)

Sri Lanka looks to remote work: Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disسانayake has directed ministry secretaries to examine the feasibility of remote work for public and private sector employees to reduce fuel consumption and maintain essential services amid the Middle East conflict, the President's Media Division (PMD) said in a statement on Sunday. (Xinhua)

Kiir vows to hold elections in December

Madagascar's president appoints new PM

ANTANANARIVO, March 16, (Xinhua): Madagascar's President Michael Randrahirina appointed Mamiatiana Rajaonarison as prime minister on Sunday.

During the appointment ceremony at the presidential palace, Randrahirina said that he needed the "integrity" of Rajaonarison, who has long worked in the anti-corruption field.

"We must show the Malagasy people that the nation needs upright and incorruptible individuals," he said.

The president also stressed that he expects the new prime minister to promptly form a government tasked with implementing the national re-foundation policy and delivering tangible results as soon as possible.

Also:

JUBA: South Sudanese President Salva Kiir has committed to his country holding general elections in December as scheduled.

Kiir made the remarks on Thursday after receiving a briefing from Nation-



CAPSAT military unit commander Col Michael Randrahirina during an interview with The Associated Press in Antananarivo, Madagascar on Oct 15, 2025. (AP)

al Elections Commission Chairperson **Abednego Akok Kacoul** on preparations for the December polls.

"President Kiir emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum in the preparations and indicated that

the government will avail the necessary resources and logistical support required for the successful conduct of the elections in December 2026," the presidency said in a statement issued in Juba, the capital of **South Sudan**.

Boursa Kuwait ends session lower

KUWAIT CITY, March 16, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed trading on Monday with its general index falling 32.98 points, or 0.38 percent, to settle at 8,571.14 points. Total trading volume reached 137.6 million shares across 12,072 cash transactions, with a total value of

KD 47.3 million (around USD 145.2 million). The main market index declined by 20.28 points, or 0.25 percent, ending at 7,980.85 points. Trading in this segment involved 59.5 million shares through 4,587 transactions, valued at KD 8.4 million (approximately USD 25.7 million).

KPC revenues set at KD 21 bln for 2026/27

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: A decree was issued linking the budget of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries to the 2026/2027 budget.

Article One of the decree estimates the revenues of KPC and its subsidiaries at KD21 billion, while Article Two

estimates expenditures at KD 20 billion.

Article Three estimates net profits for fiscal 2026/2027 at KD767,805,000.

Article Four mandates the Prime Minister and the ministers—within their respective jurisdiction—to implement this decree-law, which shall be published in the official gazette, 'Kuwait Al-Youm', and take effect on April 1.

KOTC signs \$12.9mn gas cylinder contract

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: The Higher Purchasing Committee at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries announced, through the official gazette -- 'Kuwait Al-Youm', the awarding of the tender of Kuwait Oil Tankers Com-

pany (KOTC) for supplying 320,000 12-kilogram steel liquefied gas cylinders with a valve for the Shuaiba and Umm Al-Aish liquefied gas filling branches.

The tender was awarded to a private company at a total price of \$12.896 million for a contract period of 16 months from the date the letter of credit is opened.

Wall Street futures gain

Hormuz disruption keeps oil high as global markets surge

WASHINGTON, March 16, (AP): U.S. markets climbed into positive territory early Monday and the price of oil dipped but remained elevated at around \$100 a barrel as the Iran war entered its third week.

Futures for the S&P 500 gained 0.6% while Dow Jones Industrial Average futures rose 0.4%. Nasdaq futures rose 0.8%.

U.S. benchmark crude fell 1.5% to \$97.21 per barrel. It's up about 45% since the war began. A barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, ticked up a fraction of a percent to \$103.35. It's climbed more than 40% since the war began.

Since being attacked by the United States and Israel more than two weeks ago, Iran has been regularly hitting Israel, American bases and its Gulf Arab neighbors' energy infrastructure with drones and missiles. It has also retaliated by effectively stopping cargo traffic through the narrow Strait of Hormuz, where a fifth of the world's oil typically sails. That has oil producers cutting production because their crude has nowhere to go.

In just over a week since the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, more than 12 million barrels of oil equivalent per day have been taken offline, according to independent research firm Rystad Energy.

Only handful of tankers have reportedly passed through the strait.

"The truth is that at this point, much of the market is operating in the fog," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary. "For context, the strait normally handles roughly 25 oil and LNG tankers every single day."

If the war continues to hamper the production and transportation of oil from the Persian Gulf, it could cause a damaging surge in inflation.

Members of the International Energy Agency are making a record 400 million barrels of oil available from emergency

reserves, though it appears to have done little to reassure markets.

In early equities trading Monday, a handful of chip and data storage stocks led the way. Micron, Western Digital, SanDisk and Intel all rose between 3% and 5% before markets opened.

A deal between companies in the business of physical self-storage units was also moving shares. National Storage Affiliates soared 26% in premarket after it announced that it was being bought by Public Storage in an all-stock deal worth about \$10.5 billion. Public Storage was down about 3.5% on the news.

At midday in Europe, Germany's DAX edged 0.2% higher while the CAC 40 in Paris was unchanged. Britain's FTSE 100 gained 0.5%.

In Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 edged 0.1% lower to 53,751.15, while the Kospi in South Korea climbed 1.1% to 5,549.85.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 1.5% to 25,834.02 after the Chinese government reported stronger than forecast economic data for February. The Shanghai Composite index shed 0.3%, however, to 4,084.79.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 gave up 0.4% to 8,583.40.

Taiwan's Taix edged 0.2% lower, while India's Sensex was little changed.

Back in the U.S., higher expectations for inflation complicate the Federal Reserve's efforts to bring interest rates lower to help the economy. The U.S. central bank is not expected to cut rates at its policy meeting this week.

A new snapshot of consumer spending Friday showed that inflation crept higher in January, even before the Iran war caused oil and gas prices to spike.

The Commerce Department reported Friday that consumer prices rose 2.8% in January compared with a year earlier. But excluding volatile food and energy, core prices rose 3.1%, the highest jump in nearly two years.

KFH Go smart branches and KFHOnline app

KFH offers Eidiyah through branches & digital channels

KUWAIT CITY, March 16: In line with its commitment to providing seamless banking services and sharing the joy of Eid Al-Fitr with its customers, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) is offering new "Eidiyah" banknotes in various denominations. The service is available through the KFHOnline app, KFH Go smart branches, and traditional branches across Kuwait, in addition to concierge delivery service for selected customer segments.

KFH Executive Manager Digital Channels, Meshal Mandani explained that the bank is committed to keeping pace with digital transformation, reaffirming its leadership in providing innovative payment solutions and secure, flexible options for digital cash transfers. He added that customers will be able to send Eidiyah digitally starting from the first day of Eid Al-Fitr through the KFHOnline app, using the WAMD service and KFH Pay links,



Meshal Mandani

which allow funds to be transferred quickly and conveniently.

Mandani explained that the bank has completed its preparations to offer Eidiyah banknotes through all KFH branches across Kuwait, enabling customers to obtain new banknotes ahead of Eid Al-Fitr. Customers will also be able to withdraw Eidiyah from KFH Go smart branches located in seven locations across Kuwait, starting Wednesday for two days. ATMs will dispense the most requested denominations: KD 1, KD 5 and KD 10.

He noted that KFH also offers an Eidiyah delivery service for Private Banking and Premium customers. The service is coordinated through relationship managers to meet specific cash requirements, reflecting the bank's commitment to providing tailored services while ensuring privacy and convenience for these customer segments.

Bessent says it's not to pressure on Strait of Hormuz

Iran conflict puts Trump-Xi meeting in doubt

WASHINGTON, March 16, (AP): President Donald Trump may delay his China trip due to the Iran war, but Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Monday it's not to pressure Beijing on the Strait of Hormuz.

Bessent said any delay to Trump's trip to Beijing would not be because of disagreements over the Iran war or efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

"If the meeting for some reason was rescheduled, it would be rescheduled because of logistics," he said. "The president wants to remain in D.C. to coordinate the war and traveling abroad at a time like this may not be optimal."

Trump has suggested he may delay the much-anticipated visit to China at the end of the month as he seeks to ramp up the pressure on Beijing to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz and calm oil prices that have soared during the Iran war.

In an interview Sunday with the Financial Times, Trump said China's reliance on oil from the Middle East means it ought to help with a new coalition he is trying to put together to get oil tanker traffic moving through the strait after Iran's threats have throttled global flows of oil. The Republican president said "we'd like to know" before the trip whether Beijing will help. "We may delay," he said in the interview.

The uncertainty underscores just how much the U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran have reshaped global politics in the past two weeks. Calling off the face-to-face visit with Chinese President Xi Jinping could have its



U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent, left, shakes hands with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, right, during a bilateral meeting between the United States and China, in Geneva, Switzerland, on Saturday, May 10, 2025. (AP)

own major economic consequences: Relations between Washington and Beijing have been fraught as both sides have threatened the other with steep tariffs over the past year.

The White House did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

In Beijing, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said only that China and the U.S. have maintained communication on Trump's visit. "Head-of-state diplomacy plays an irreplaceable strategic guiding role in China-U.S. relations," Lin Jian said at a daily briefing.

Bessent made his comments in Paris, where he was meeting with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng for a new round of trade talks that were

meant to pave the way for Trump's Beijing trip. The U.S. and China have declared a truce that has prevented both sides from levying dueling tariffs, but the stakes remain high. "We had a very good two days here," Bessent said, adding a statement "reaffirming the stability" between the two countries would be issued "in the next few days."

In the early days of the Iran conflict, Trump had said U.S. Navy vessels would escort oil tankers through the strait, and downplayed the threat posed by Iran. But as oil prices soared, he and his administration have been forced to consider new options - including the idea, broached this weekend, for other countries to join the push with their

own warships. So far, none has yet formally heeded the call.

Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One as he returned to Washington from a weekend in Florida that the U.S. had spoken to "about seven" nations about offering military support. He wouldn't say which ones, though, and demurred when he was asked directly about China - though he subsequently suggested that he'd made such an offer to Beijing.

"China's an interesting case study," he said, noting its reliance on Gulf oil. "So I said, 'Would you like to come in' and we'll find out. Maybe they will, maybe they won't."

War in Iran has sent the price of oil skyrocketing, which has raised the price Americans pay at the pump, just as the midterm election season begins to heat up. China, though, has faced its own economic pressures and recently lowered its 2026 target for growth slightly to 4.5% to 5%, its slowest projected growth since 1991 - meaning prolonged disruptions in the strait could have long-term impacts for Beijing as well.

Lin, at the briefing in Beijing, did not respond directly to questions about Trump's call for outside help in the strait. He noted the impact on goods and energy trade and repeated his government's call for an end to the fighting.

"China once again calls on all parties to stop military actions immediately, avoid further escalation of tensions, and prevent instability in the region from having a greater impact on global economic development," he said.

EU weighs action to keep Strait of Hormuz open

BRUSSELS, March 16, (AP): The European Union is seeking more strategic clarity about the U.S. and Israel's plans for Iran and when the conflict might end as the bloc weighs whether to send ships to help shore up security in the Persian Gulf.

"It is in our interest to keep the Strait of Hormuz open, and that's why we are also discussing what we can do in this regard from the European side," Kaja Kallas, the EU's foreign policy chief, said Monday ahead of a meeting of the 27-nation bloc's foreign ministers in Brussels.

U.S. President Donald Trump has asked allies - including France, China, Japan, South Korea and Britain - to help secure the strait for global shipping.

Kallas said the EU could expand its Operation Aspidos naval mission to protect shipping in the Red Sea up into the Persian Gulf, or it could form a "coalition of the willing" with member nations contributing military capacity on an ad hoc basis.

The war in Iran, sparked on Feb. 28 airstrikes by Israel and the U.S., has driven up energy prices worldwide, with Brent crude up more than 40%. But the conflict has also disrupted the wider global supply chain beyond oil, affecting everything from pharmaceuticals from India, semiconductors from Asia and oil-derived products like fertilizers that come from the Middle East.

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

France has said it is working with countries - President Emmanuel Macron mentioned partners

in Europe, India and Asia - on a possible international mission to escort ships through the strait but has stressed it must be when "the circumstances permit," when fighting has subsided.

French senior officials, speaking anonymously on ongoing talks, said The Netherlands, Italy, and Greece had shown interest and that Spain might be involved in some way.

Outside the EU, the U.K. may also be part of it if they have some capabilities available, the officials said. They mentioned the Red Sea-focused Operation Aspidos as a possible model for a naval mission to the Persian Gulf.

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl said it will be important for the U.S. and Israel to define "when they consider the military aims of their deployment to have been reached."

He said before meeting his EU colleagues in Brussels that "we need more clarity here" from the U.S. and Israel.

At the same time, Wadepuhl said the Iranian government poses a significant danger to the region, the freedom of shipping and the global economy, and "this danger definitely must not continue." He said he would back sanctions against those responsible for blocking the Strait of Hormuz, without elaborating.

Once there's clarity on the U.S.-Israeli aims, Wadepuhl said it will be time to enter a phase in which "a security architecture for this whole region" is defined. He said that will also entail speaking to Iran.

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel said the EU remains uncommitted to any military action.

"The fact is, for the moment, the EU is not directly part of the situation. So we need to decide if we are going to be part or not. That's an important decision," Bettel said.

Operation Aspidos was formed to thwart attacks to shipping in the Red Sea by Somali pirates and Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who have yet to join the current fray. Saudi Aramco manages a pipeline network that bypasses the Strait of Hormuz to deliver oil to the Red Sea port city of Yanbu.

"If we want to have security in this region, then it would be easiest to actually already use the operation that we have in the region and maybe change a bit," Kallas she said. "There is also talk of coalition of the willing in this regard, but we also need to see what could be the fastest to provide this opening for the Strait of Hormuz, but of course, as you can see, it's not easy."

The EU is anxious that a potential refugee crisis in Iran will develop if the war continues.

"Although for now, the conflict has not translated into immediate migratory flows toward the EU, what the future holds remains unclear and necessitates the full mobilization of every migration diplomacy tool we have at our disposal," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in a statement Sunday.

Estonian Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna said that his country has been a staunch supporter of the U.S., but that it needs to "know as well what are the plans...in the region."

He said U.S. allies in Europe want to understand Trump's "strategic goals. What will be the plan?"

Africa's energy gap draws long-term Gulf investors

Gulf investors seen likely to keep funding Africa renewable energy despite the Iran war

NAIROBI, March 16, (AP): Middle Eastern sovereign wealth funds and state-backed companies are unlikely to scale back renewable energy investments in Africa despite disruptions from the Iran war, analysts say, given the strong long-term economic and strategic reasons driving such funding.

Investors made wealthy by the Gulf region's abundant oil and gas increasingly are turning to Africa's clean energy sector, attracted by rising electricity demand, rapid urbanization and the continent's growing role in global supply chains tied to critical minerals and manufacturing.

A report released last month by the Clean Air Task Force found that more than \$101.9 billion had flowed into Africa's renewable energy sector from Gulf countries by end of 2024, led by the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain. Much of the investment has been concentrated in North Africa, Southern Africa and parts of East Africa, while West Africa has attracted relatively limited funding.

"Africa remains one of the few regions where demand growth is unequivocal," said Matthew Tilleard, chief executive of CrossBoundary Energy, a Nairobi-based firm that develops and operates renewable energy projects. "Short-term shocks may delay individual transactions, but the biggest infrastructure opportunities require a long-term view of risk and value."

Africa faces one of the world's largest electricity gaps. About 600 million people across the continent still lack access to power and many more face unreliable supplies. Governments have increasingly turned to private investors to help finance solar, wind and hybrid power projects to expand generation capacity without overstressing public finances.

That gap has created opportunities for Gulf investors looking to diversify beyond oil and gas.

"Ultimately, Gulf investments in Africa tend to be driven by pragmatic national interests and strategic returns," said Louw Nelson, a political analyst at Oxford Economics. "There is currently a significant amount of energy investment underway across Africa, which are long-term projects that have been years in the making, so we don't anticipate major disruptions."

Overseas investments in renewable energy form part of broader strategies among Middle Eastern countries to diversify their economies and adapt to a global shift toward cleaner energy.

Joab Okanda, an energy and development analyst, said the disruptions to oil and gas shipments due to the war with Iran may strengthen the case for renewable energy investment since they show how vulnerable such supply

routes can be.

"These companies, many of them state-owned, hold significant capital but also understand that the world is gradually transitioning away from fossil fuels," Okanda said. "Investing in renewable energy allows them to diversify their portfolios and position themselves for the energy systems of the future."

Africa's energy sector sits at the center of several global economic shifts, including the energy transition and the soaring demand for minerals such as cobalt and gold that are used in many high-tech products.

"For investors, renewable power projects can provide strategic access to industries beyond electricity generation," Tilleard said. "Power plants built to supply mines, or large industrial operations can position Arab investors close to supply chains for minerals used in batteries and other technologies."

Okanda said perceived risks, including currency volatility and policy uncertainty especially in West Africa, continue to shape where such investors invest.

"Generating power is only one part of the equation," Okanda said. "You also need transmission systems and a functioning electricity market where the electricity can actually be sold and paid for."

\$1.6 trillion trade pact faces Trump's demands for changes

Tricky negotiations begin Monday to renew a trade pact between the United States, Mexico and Canada

WASHINGTON, March 16, (AP) — Every day more than \$4 billion worth of goods cross the United States' borders with Canada and Mexico — U.S. auto parts headed for car factories in northern Mexico, cartons of Mexican avocados bound for California supermarkets, Canadian aluminum destined to become cans of Campbell Soup.

Much of this bustling cross-border commerce is duty-free, thanks to the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA, that President Donald Trump negotiated with America's northern and southern neighbors during his first term.

But the future of the USMCA, which took effect July 1, 2020, is cloudy as the three countries begin what could be a tempestuous attempt to renew the pact this year. The United States is demanding changes to the treaty, and the top U.S. trade negotiator told Politico in December that Trump would be willing to pull the United States out of the pact if he can't get the deal he wants. Trump also suggested last fall that the United States could negotiate separate deals with Canada and Mexico, ending the three-country North American bloc that previous administrations saw as crucial to competing economically with China and the European Union.

The talks kick off Monday between U.S. and Mexican trade officials. The North American economies could agree to renew USMCA as it is for another 16 years — a prospect that appears unlikely. Or they could keep working on ways to improve it; under a convoluted renewal process, they have until 2036 to reach an agreement — or the pact expires.

Meantime, any USMCA country can pull out of the pact provided it gives its two partners six months' notice — an option that Canada and Mexico, heavily dependent on trade with the United States, fear the impulsive Trump might end up choosing.

At stake is \$1.6 trillion worth of annual trade in goods between the United States and its two USMCA partners. Mexico and Canada are far ahead of China in both exports to and imports from the United States. American farmers are especially keen to see the deal renewed: Last year, they shipped nearly \$31 billion in agricultural products to Mexico and \$28 billion to Canada.

U.S. imports from Canada and Mexico were spared the worst of Trump's 2025 tariffs; many goods compliant with USMCA rules continued to enter the United States duty free. Still, a number of products did not get protection from the U.S. levies, including medium- and heavy-duty trucks, which face a 25% tariff. A 50% tariff on steel, aluminum and copper remains in effect, as does a 17% tariff on Mexican tomatoes.

The USMCA replaced the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement negotiated by President George H.W. Bush and signed into law by President Bill



President Donald Trump speaks during an event at the White House to sign a new North American trade agreement with Canada and Mexico, Jan. 29, 2020, in Washington. (AP)

Clinton.

Trump and other critics had criticized NAFTA as a killer of U.S. jobs because it encouraged U.S. companies to relocate factories south of the border to take advantage of low-wage Mexican labor and then send goods back to the United States duty free.

The USMCA, ratified by Congress with rare support from Republicans and Democrats alike, ended up being very similar to NAFTA. But it did contain provisions designed to encourage factories in the region to pay higher wages and make sure that more of what they made originated in North America.

The new pact updated North American trade rules for the digital age. The USMCA, for instance, bars the United States, Mexico and Canada from slamming each other with import taxes on music, software, games and other products sold electronically.

A proud Trump declared the USMCA "the fairest, most balanced and beneficial

trade agreement we have ever signed."

But the president's enthusiasm seems to have waned. In January, he expressed little interest in the upcoming talks to renew the agreement. The effort, he said, offered "no real advantage to us. It's irrelevant to me."

The USMCA did little to ease one of Trump's biggest complaints: The U.S. deficit in the trade of goods with Mexico, which rose last year to a record \$197 billion as the United States reduced its reliance on Chinese imports. The U.S. also ran a merchandise trade deficit with Canada of \$46.4 billion last year, a decrease from 2024.

"Improvements are required for it to deliver the high-wage U.S. manufacturing powerhouse and balanced trade (Trump) promised and we need," said Lori Walach, director of the Rethink Trade program at the American Economic Liberties Project.

The United States plans to push for a series of changes, including stronger rules to ensure that goods from China won't slip into the United States under USMCA; to encourage more production in the United States; and to ensure more access to Canada's protected dairy market for U.S. farmers.

Mexico's core priorities are to avoid a major rewrite of the agreement and to make rules of origin more flexible — allowing imports of parts from outside North America when they are not available in the region. Mexican negotiators also want assurances that anything agreed to will stick, providing insurance against Trump's unpredictability and his enthusiasm for tariffs.

Mexico wants to minimize tariffs as much as possible. Mexican Economy Secretary Marcelo Ebrard said Mexico wants to strengthen the dispute resolution system already in place under the treaty. That would not eliminate the possibility of tariffs, but it would provide clear, swift channels for seeking solutions when problems arise, he said.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum's administration will have to simultaneously manage existing security issues, which are ongoing after the killing of Jalisco New Generation Cartel's leader in late February, and which could influence economic matters.

Mexico anticipates that Canada will join the talks later, but its top priority in the coming months is to reach agreements and maintain the free trade with the United States, its main commercial partner.

Mexico is pushing the idea that the treaty is also good for the U.S. "The integration of our countries is an absolute prerequisite for the United States to remain competitive," Ebrard said recently. "We must move forward together; otherwise, we will not succeed"

From tire pressure to speed

Drivers can save gas with simple changes

DETROIT, March 16, (AP) — When gas prices spike, filling up gets more painful. But consumers can do something to stretch their fuel just a little farther: Change the way they drive.

"It's a hard one to swallow, right? You gotta put gas in to go about your day and get to work and pick the kids up from school," said Michael Crossen, Consumer Reports' manager of auto testing.

Here are seven tips from experts for drivers looking to use less gas:

Vehicles are designed for maximum efficiency around highway speeds, said Sean Tucker, managing editor for compact and full-size vehicles at Kelley Blue Book.

"Stick to 65 (mph, 105 kph) on the highway," Tucker said. "Today's cars are geared to be most efficient at that speed, and you lose quite a bit of fuel efficiency the faster you go."

Some estimates suggest slowing down increases gas mileage as much as 14%.

"If you have a hard time doing that, cruise control is your friend," Tucker said. This maintains a set vehicle speed, which cuts the need to press on the gas pedal, and avoids fluctuations like jerky acceleration or hard braking.

Experts also recommend coasting to stoplights, whether there is a red light ahead or a green light that is likely to change soon.

Use a vehicle's automatic start-stop ignition, experts say. This shuts off the engine at stoplights or when idling, and restarts it once the accelerator is pressed.

"If you're stuck in traffic and you see it bumper to bumper for a while and you have start-stop, don't turn that off," said David Bennett, AAA senior automotive manager. "Allow the engine to turn on and off as it's needed."

That's especially true for when drivers don't need to blast air conditioning while waiting for long periods of time.

Many drivers have roof racks on top of their vehicles or bike racks on the back. It takes extra fuel to push that structure through the air — experts have found it can cost several miles per gallon.

"If you're not actually using those devices, it's like dragging a parachute behind your car," Crossen said. "Any other type of accessories that basically cause drag, you want to lose those."

If you're carrying heavy items in your back seat, trunk or truck bed, and you don't need them, leave them at home.

Experts say it's important that tires are properly inflated,

based on what the vehicle's manual recommends. Checking tire pressure every other fill-up is one suggestion.

"Lower-inflated tires will increase the resistance on the road, so properly inflated, the vehicle is going to drive a little bit smoother and be able to accelerate properly," Bennett said. Expect an impact on gas mileage by as much as 10%, estimates say.

Auto shops might also be able to make some simple changes to improve a vehicle's fuel economy.

"If you're finding that you are not getting close to what you're supposed to, then you need to go to the mechanic," Tucker said.

For example, they might replace the air filter, or oxygen sensors that tell the engine how rich to make the fuel mixture.

Figure out a carpool if you can, and you're effectively splitting costs with the other participants.

And be more thoughtful in planning and organizing your driving to make fewer trips overall.

"Don't make unnecessary stops. Don't drive all the way across town just to save a dollar on eggs," Crossen said. "Plan your trips. Don't drive if you don't have to."

Some cars require more expensive premium gas, and that's what they should get, experts say. But sometimes drivers are filling up with premium when their vehicle doesn't need it — and will do just fine on cheaper regular gas, they say.

Regardless of your octane choice, you can be mindful of the quality of your gas. Consider whether a local station carries what's called "Top Tier gas" — gas developed with additives aimed at clearing carbon deposits from your engine. During periods of high prices or shortages, it isn't a requirement, but it's good for vehicles long term.

Apps such as GasBuddy are great resources to compare local gas prices or prices along a driver's route back home.

Experts say to also start thinking about getting gas when you're around half a tank. That gives you some flexibility to watch for lower prices.

The average age of a vehicle on the road these days is about 12 years, and newer vehicles are more fuel efficient than older ones. Not everyone can afford a new vehicle, but when it's time, shoppers can consider a hybrid if they're not ready to go fully electric.

And if you're ready to get off gas entirely, EVs — including plenty of used models — are out there.

Airlines urge action

Shutdown leaves TSA workers unpaid

NEW YORK, March 16, (AP) — The CEOs of the nation's top airline companies, including American, Delta, Southwest and JetBlue, are imploring Congress to restore funding to the Department of Homeland Security and embrace a bipartisan solution to pay federal aviation workers including airport security officers during the partial government shutdown.

"Once again, air travel is the political football amid another government shutdown," the executives wrote in an open letter to Congress that was published Sunday online and in The Washington Post.

The letter, which was also signed by the CEOs of the cargo companies UPS, FedEx and Atlas Air, said that Congress should pass the Aviation Funding Solvency Act and the Aviation Funding Stability Act, which would guarantee air traffic controllers are paid regardless of the government's funding status, as

well as the Keep America Flying Act. That measure would offer the same protections to Transportation Security Administration officers tasked to provide security and to screen all travelers.

"It's difficult, if not impossible, to put food on the table, put gas in the car and pay rent when you are not getting paid," the letter said.

The current partial shutdown affects only the Department of Homeland Security, which includes TSA. Democrats in Congress refused to fund the department over objections to its immigration enforcement tactics. The lapse marks the third shutdown in less than a year to leave TSA workers temporarily without pay — and once the government reopens, to have to wait for back pay.

Democratic lawmakers have said DHS won't get funded until new restrictions are placed on federal

immigration operations following the fatal shootings of Alex Pretti and Renee Good in Minneapolis earlier this year.

The CEOs noted that with spring break in full swing, FIFA's World Cup 2026 approaching and celebrations for America's 250th birthday throughout the year, the stakes are high. The letter said that U.S. airlines expect 171 million passengers this spring season.

As the latest partial shutdown drags on, there have been long security lines at a growing number of U.S. airports.

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

Homeland Security posted on its X account last week that more than 300 TSA agents have quit since the start of the shutdown.

First US slaughterhouse strike in decades

Colorado meatpacking workers walk out

GREELEY, March 16, (AP) — About 3,800 workers at one of the nation's largest meatpacking plants went on strike Monday in Colorado in what union representatives said is the first walkout at a U.S. beef slaughterhouse since the 1980s.

The strike at the Swift Beef Co. plant in Greeley began Monday morning, said Claire Poundstone, an attorney representing United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7. Poundstone said she expected workers to participate in the strike line through the evening.

"We'll be here all day," she said.

The strike follows accusations from union officials that owner JBS USA retaliated against workers and committed other unfair labor practices amid contract negotiations. A previous contract expired at midnight Sunday.

A message was sent early Monday seeking comment from a spokesperson at JBS USA.

The strike comes at a 75-year low for the U.S. cattle population, with a Jan. 1 inventory of 86.2 million animals — down 1% from the prior year. Beef prices have added to economic anxiety in the U.S., while the administration of President Donald Trump has turned to a trade deal with Argentina in efforts to lower prices for food, including beef.

It also follows the January closure of a meatpacking plant in Lexington, Ne-

braska, which was expected to ripple through the local economy and community.

At the Greeley plant, the company tried to intimidate workers to quit the union in one-on-one meetings, union general counsel Matt Shechter said.

Cordova said 99% of workers voted to authorize the strike. No formal negotiations took place over the weekend after the company refused a union request to negotiate on Saturday, Shechter said.

JBS USA had said in statement that any employee who didn't want to strike would have work and be paid. The company said it would operate two shifts at the plant Monday and would temporarily move production as needed to other JBS facilities.

The statement said the company operates in full compliance with federal and state labor and employment laws.

"Our goal is to minimize impact to our customers, our partners, and the broader marketplace while we work toward a fair resolution in Greeley," the company said.

It's the first strike at a U.S. slaughterhouse since workers walked out at a Hormel plant in Minnesota in 1985, Cordova said. That strike lasted more than a year and included violent confrontations between police and protesters, according to the Minnesota Historical Society.

Poland's economic rise pushes it into world's top 20

POZNAN, March 16, (AP) — A generation ago, Poland rationed sugar and flour while its citizens were paid one-tenth what West Germans earned. Today its economy has edged past Switzerland to become the world's 20th largest with over \$1 trillion in annual output.

It's a historic leap from the post-Communist ruins of 1989-90 to today's European growth champion that economists say has lessons on how to bring prosperity to ordinary people — and that the Trump administration says should be recognized by Poland's presence at a summit of the Group of 20 leading economies later this year.

The transformation is reflected in people like Joanna Kowalska, an engineer from Poznan, a town of half a million people midway between Berlin and Warsaw. She returned home after five years in the U.S.

"I get asked often if I'm missing something by coming back to Poland, and, to be honest, I feel it's the other way around," Kowalska said. "We are ahead of the United States in so many areas."

Kowalska works at the Poznan Supercomputing and Networking Center, which is developing the first artificial intelligence factory in Poland and integrating it with a quantum computer, one of 10 on the continent financed by a European Union program.

Kowalska worked for Microsoft in the U.S. after graduating from the Poznan University of Technology in a job she saw as a "dream come true."

But she missed having a "sense of mission," she said.

"Especially when it comes to artificial intelligence, the technology started developing so rapidly in Poland," Kowalska added. "So it was very tempting to come back."

The guest invitation to the G20 summit is mostly symbolic; no guest country has been promoted to full member since the original G20 met at the finance minister level in 1999, and that would take a consensus decision of all the members. Moreover, the original countries were chosen not just by GDP rank, but by their "systemic significance" in the global economy.

But the gesture reflects a statistical truth: In 35 years — a little less than one person's working lifetime — Poland's per capita gross domestic product rose to \$55,340 in 2025, or 85% of the EU average. That's up from \$6,730 in 1990, or 38% of the EU average and now roughly equal to Japan's \$52,039, according to International Monetary Fund figures measured in

today's dollars and adjusted for Poland's lower cost of living.

Poland's economy has grown an average 3.8% a year since joining the EU in 2004, easily beating the European average of 1.8%.

It wasn't simply one factor that helped Poland break out of the poverty trap, says Marcin Piątkowski of Warsaw's Kozminski University and author of a book on the country's economic rise.

One of the most important factors was rapidly building a strong institutional framework for business, he said. That included independent courts, an anti-monopoly agency to ensure fair competition, and strong regulation to keep troubled banks from choking off credit.

As a result, the economy wasn't hijacked by corrupt practices and oligarchs, as happened elsewhere in the post-Communist world.

Poland also benefited from billions of euros in EU aid, both before and after it joined the bloc in 2004 and gained access to its huge single market.

Above all, there was the broad consensus, from across the political spectrum, that Poland's long-term goal was joining the EU.

"Poles knew where they were going," Piątkowski said. "Poland downloaded the institutions and the rules of the game, and even some cultural norms that the West spent 500 years developing."

As oppressive as it was, communism contributed by breaking down old social barriers and opening higher education to factory and farmworkers who had no chance before. A post-Communist boom in higher education means half of young people now have degrees.

"Young Poles are, for instance, better educated than young Germans," Piątkowski said, but earn half what Germans do. That's "an unbeatable combination" for attracting investors, he said.

Solaris, a company founded in 1996 in Poznan by Krzysztof Olszewski, is one of the leading manufacturers of electric buses in Europe with a market share of around 15%. Its story shows one hallmark of Poland's success: entrepreneurship, or the willingness to take risks and build something new.

Educated as an engineer under the Communist government, Olszewski opened a car repair shop where he used spare parts from West Germany to fix Polish cars. While most enterprises were nationalized, authorities gave permission to small-scale private workshops like his to operate, according to

Katarzyna Szarzec, an economist at the Poznan University of Economics and Business. "These were enclaves of private entrepreneurship," she said.

In 1996, Olszewski opened a subsidiary of the German bus company Neoplan and started producing for the Polish market.

"Poland's entry to the EU in 2004 gave us credibility and access to a vast, open European market with the free movement of goods, services and people," said Mateusz Figaszewski, responsible for institutional relations.

Then came a risky decision to start producing electric buses in 2011, a time when few in Europe were experimenting with the technology. Figaszewski said larger companies in the West had more to lose if switching to electric vehicles didn't work out. "It became an opportunity to achieve technological leadership ahead of the market," he said.

Challenges still remain for Poland. Due to a low birth rate and an aging society, fewer workers will be able to support retirees. Average wages are lower than the EU average. While small and medium enterprises flourish, few have become global brands.

Poznan Mayor Jacek Jaśkowiak sees domestic innovation as a third wave in Poland's postsocialist economic development. In the first wave, foreign countries opened factories in Poland in the early 1990s, taking advantage of a skilled local population.

Around the turn of the millennium, he said, Western companies brought more advanced branches, including finance, IT and engineering.

"Now it's the time to start such sophisticated activities here," Jaśkowiak says, adding that one of his main priorities is investing in universities.

"There is still much to do when it comes to innovation and technological progress," added Szarzec, the Poznan economist. "But we keep climbing up on that ladder of added value. We're no longer just a supplier of spare parts."

Szarzec's students say more needs to be done to reduce urban-rural inequalities, make housing affordable and support young people starting families. They say Poles need to acknowledge that immigrants, such as the millions of Ukrainians who fled the Russian invasion in 2022, contribute to economic development in an aging population.

"Poland has such a dynamic economy, with so many opportunities for development, that of course I am staying," said Kazimierz Falak, 27, one of Szarzec's graduate students. "Poland is promising."

Business Plus



Oil shortages could ripple across industries

From plastics to food: Oil's hidden economic role



Disruptions to crude oil transport could affect more than fuel supply chains. (AP)

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

By André O. Hudson

Rochester Institute of Technology

Tensions in the Middle East often trigger concerns about rising gasoline prices. But disruptions to oil supplies could affect much more than the cost of filling up a car. That's because crude oil is not only burned as fuel. It is also the raw material for thousands of products that modern societies depend on, including plastics, fertilizers, clothing fibers, medicines and electronics.

As a biochemist, I'm interested in how certain chemicals can shape society, and oil is a prime example.

The stakes become clearer when looking at the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway between Iran and Oman. About one-fifth of the world's petroleum liquids consumption passes through the strait each day, making it one of the most important oil shipping

routes on Earth. If conflict significantly disrupts traffic there, the effects could ripple far beyond energy markets.

Crude oil is a complex mixture of hydrocarbons - molecules made mainly of carbon and hydrogen. Refineries and chemical plants separate and transform these molecules into smaller chemical building blocks known as petrochemicals.

Some of the most important petrochemical building blocks include chemicals such as ethylene, propylene and benzene. Manufacturers can then convert these building blocks into more complex forms, which make up plastics, solvents, synthetic rubber and other industrial materials.

While fuel is a well-known product, fuels actually represent only a portion of what is produced from crude oil. The refining process generates a wide range of petroleum-based materials used to manufacture everyday items, such as plastics, medicines, electronics, cosmetics, clothing fibers and household goods.

One of the most visible uses of oil is the production of plastics. Scientists can link individual

petrochemical molecules to form polymers, which are long chains of repeating units that create materials such as polyethylene, polypropylene and polystyrene.

Because plastics are lightweight, durable and relatively inexpensive, they have become essential to global manufacturing.

These plastics appear in countless products, including food packaging and water bottles; medical equipment, such as syringes and IV bags; electronics casings and appliances; automotive parts; and construction materials, such as pipes and insulation.

Even technologies designed to reduce carbon emissions depend on them. Wind turbines, solar panels and electric vehicles all contain plastic components derived from petrochemicals.

Oil and natural gas also play a critical role in agriculture. Modern fertilizers rely on nitrogen compounds, such as ammonia. Ammonia is produced through the Haber-Bosch process, which uses hydrogen typically derived from natural gas or other fossil fuels.

These fertilizers replenish nutrients in soil and dramatically increase crop yields. Without them,

global food production would be far lower. Petrochemicals are also used to produce pesticides, herbicides and plastics used in irrigation systems and agricultural equipment.

Petrochemicals also appear in many everyday consumer goods. Synthetic fabrics, such as polyester, nylon and acrylic, are made from petrochemical feedstocks. These feedstocks are the basic chemicals, made from crude oil or natural gas, that serve as the starting ingredients for products widely used in clothing, carpets and furniture.

Petroleum-derived ingredients are also common in cosmetics and personal care products. Certain lotions, shampoos and lipsticks rely on these compounds because they help stabilize formulas and extend shelf life.

Petrochemicals are also important in medicine. Petroleum-derived chemical intermediates - compounds made during the process of turning raw materials into a final product - are used to manufacture pharmaceuticals, medical tubing, sterile packaging and disposable gloves.

These materials help hospitals

maintain sterility and safety in health care environments.

Because oil and petrochemical feedstocks move through global shipping routes, disruptions in one region will affect supply chains worldwide. The Strait of Hormuz is particularly important. If conflict or political tensions continue to interrupt shipping through the Strait, oil prices will rise quickly. Energy analysts have long warned that disruptions to the strait could send shock waves through global markets. The impact would not be limited to transportation fuels.

Petrochemical industries depend on steady supplies of crude oil and natural gas liquids as raw materials. If those supplies become more expensive or harder to obtain, manufacturers could face higher production costs.

The proportion of crude oil used for petrochemical feedstocks to create plastics, fertilizers and other materials represents around 10% to 20% of oil consumption. Most crude oil is refined for fuel production, including gasoline, diesel and jet fuel, so these fuel supply chains would likely be the first to take a hit. But over time, disruptions could affect the availability and price of products ranging from plastics and packaging to fertilizers, synthetic clothing fibers and even food.

Because petrochemicals are often used behind the scenes as ingredients rather than finished products, the connection many agricultural, medical and consumer goods have to oil is easy to overlook. Yet, petrochemicals form a hidden foundation for modern economies. They enable large-scale agriculture, advanced health care systems and global manufacturing supply chains.

At the same time, concerns about climate change and plastic pollution are driving research into alternatives. Scientists are developing bio-based plastics made from plant materials, improving recycling technologies and exploring new ways to produce fertilizers with lower carbon emissions.

For now, the modern world remains deeply dependent on oil, not only for energy but also for the materials that shape everyday life. When news headlines focus on disruptions to oil supply, the consequences may extend far beyond the gas pump, affecting the products that underpin modern society. (AP)

Oil remains central to modern life

Conflict fuels inflation risks

Economic 'fog of war' complicates policy decisions

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

By Michael Klein

Tufts University

The "fog of war" refers to confusion and uncertainty on the battlefield and the attendant possibility of fatal error. This principle has a parallel when it comes to the economic consequences of wars as well, especially when they occur in a region that is a chokepoint for the production and shipment of one-fifth of the world's oil and a third of its natural gas.

Although no one really knows how deeply the ripple effects of the joint U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran will impair the global economy, the Gulf kingdom of Qatar issued a dire warning on March 6, 2026, that reflects those concerns: "This will bring down the economies of the world," Qatar's energy minister said.

The impact includes one of the largest oil price shocks in history, which briefly pushed the price of crude to nearly US\$120 a barrel on March 8.

As for the U.S. economy, it was

already showing signs of weakness. Data released on March 6 showed an unexpected loss in jobs in February.

As an economist, I expect the biggest economic risks of this war to be inflationary pressures and slowing growth due to the rising price of oil. In addition, uncertainty from the "economic fog of war" could make consumers reticent to spend and businesses hesitant about hiring and investing. These conditions will make it challenging for policymakers to steer the economy.

There is currently, and likely to be for some time, great uncertainty about the length of the war in Iran, the range of countries involved and its costs. All of these factors will determine how much the war hurts economies in the U.S. and across the globe.

We do know there will be disruptions to the supply of oil and liquefied natural gas, which is difficult to ship through the Strait of Hormuz, and from the fiscal costs associated with this military action.

As of March 9, the price of crude oil was hovering a little under \$90 a barrel after reaching \$118 a day earlier. That's up from \$67 before the U.S. and Israel began bombing Iran on Feb.

28, driving up gasoline prices across the U.S. The majority of oil and liquefied natural gas produced in the Middle East travels through the Strait of Hormuz - but the threat of attack has made travel through this waterway uninsurable, which has brought shipping through this vital passage to a virtual halt.

This is also an expensive military campaign for the United States, which has already seen the loss of aircraft and a depletion of its stock of missiles. Early estimates of the cost of the war were nearly \$1 billion a day.

The 1979 Iranian Revolution also brought about a spike in the price of oil, which was an important contributing factor to the United States and Europe experiencing an economic phenomenon called "stagflation" - a portmanteau of stagnant growth and high inflation.

This is unlikely to be repeated to the same extent now. Economies are less dependent upon oil and natural gas than they were in the late 1970s and early '80s. And the U.S. is not beginning the war with a previous decade of high inflation that made it more difficult to reduce price pressures, since expectations of inflation feed into

actual inflation.

Still, supply shocks are challenging to address, as the world saw with the COVID-19 pandemic, and policymakers will likely have to make some difficult choices that involve hard trade-offs.

One of the questions arising from supply shocks is whether a central bank should raise interest rates to combat inflation or lower them to offset weakness in the economy and rising unemployment. Lifting rates brings down inflation by reducing demand for loans and curbing growth, while lowering rates has the opposite effect.

In both the late 1970s and during the onset of the pandemic, the Federal Reserve opted to keep rates low to help support the economy and the job market. In both cases, this led to a spike in inflation.

The inflation of the late 1970s and early '80s was brought down by a strong reversal of monetary policy with high interest rates, causing a recession that was, at that time, the deepest since the 1930s. Notably, the reduction of inflation in the wake of COVID-19 did not require a similar economic downturn to achieve that goal. An important reason for that is the long history of low inflation in the

decades before the 2020s and the "anchoring" of inflation expectations.

But there are reasons to be concerned.

While the Fed now has a well-deserved anti-inflation reputation, its credibility with financial markets is at risk because of President Donald Trump's attacks on Chairman Jerome Powell, the prosecution of Federal Reserve Board member Lisa Cook and the appointment of a new chair who many suspect will push for lower rates because that's what the president wants.

Concerns that these actions could lead to higher inflation can become a self-fulfilling prophecy that brings about the very thing that people are worried about. Seeds of new inflation pressures may be falling on fertile soil.

Uncertainty triggered by the war is not the only negative economic signal. Tariff policy, cuts to government employment, rising federal debt and the possibility of financial vulnerabilities are all weighing on the U.S. economy. A spike in the price of oil could very well set off greater weakness, and even a recession, as consumers and businesses pull back from spending. (AP)

The Fed's credibility is at risk amid political pressure

editor's choice



Anderson wins best director as Jordan, Buckley and 'Sinners' score historic victories

'One Battle After Another' triumphs at Oscars

LOS ANGELES, March 16, (AP): Paul Thomas Anderson's "One Battle After Another" was crowned best picture at the 98th Academy Awards, handing Hollywood's top honor to a comic, multi-generational American saga of political resistance.

The ceremony Sunday, which also saw Michael B. Jordan win best actor and "Sinners" cinematographer Autumn Durald Arkapaw make Oscar history as the first female director of photography to win the award, was a long-incoming coronation for Anderson, a San Fernando Valley native who made his first short at age 18 and has been one of America's most lionized filmmakers for decades. Before Sunday, Anderson had never won an Oscar.

But "One Battle After Another," the favorite coming in, won six Oscars, including best director and best adapted screenplay for Anderson, the Oscars' first trophy for best casting and best supporting actor for an absent Sean Penn.

"I wrote this movie for my kids to say sorry for the housekeeping mess that we left in this world - we're handing off to them," said Anderson while accepting the screenplay trophy. "But also with the encouragement that they will be the generation that hopefully brings us some common sense and decency."

Ryan Coogler's Jim Crow-set, blues-soaked vampire tale "Sinners," which came in with a record 16 nominations, also landed some big and even historic wins. Coogler, the widely loved filmmaker, won the first Oscar in an unblemished career that started out with Jordan in 2013's "Fruitvale Station."

Arkapaw was also the first Black person to win for best cinematography. Only the fourth female cinematographer ever nominated, her win was a long-incoming triumph for women behind the camera.

"I really want all the women in room to stand up," said Arkapaw. "Because I don't feel like I get here without you guys."

And Jordan, one of Hollywood's most liked leading men, won best actor in one of the night's closest races. The Dolby Theatre rose to its feet in the most thunderous applause of the night.

"Yo, momma, what's up?" said Jordan after staggering to the stage.

The Oscar night belonged to Warner Bros., the studio of "One Battle After Another" and "Sinners," which scored a record-tying 11 wins. It was an oddly poignant note of triumph for the fabled studio, which weeks earlier agreed to a sale to Paramount Skydance, David Ellison's rapidly assembled media monolith. The \$111 billion deal, which awaits regulatory approval, has Hollywood bracing for more layoffs.

But "Sinners" and "One Battle After Another" - the much-acclaimed heavyweights of the season - were each Hollywood anomalies: big-budget originals born from a personal vision. In a year where anxiety over studio contraction and the rise of artificial intelligence often consumed the industry, both films gave Hollywood fresh hope.

Jessie Buckley won best actress for her performance as Agnes Shakespeare in "Hamnet," making her the first Irish performer to ever win in the category. At an Oscars where no other acting award seemed a sure thing, Buckley cruised into Sunday's Oscars at the Dolby Theatre as the overwhelming favorite.

"It's Mother's Day in the U.K.," said Buckley on the stage. "I would like to dedicate this to the beautiful chaos of a mother's heart."

From the start, when host Conan O'Brien sprinted through the year's nominees as Amy Madigan's character in the horror thriller "Weapons" in a pre-taped bit, Sunday's ceremony was quirky, a little clunky and preoccupied with the shifting place of movies in culture. There was, of all things, a tie for best live-action short film.

As expected, the Netflix sensation "KPop Demon Hunters," 2025's most-watched film, won best animated feature, as well as best song for "Golden." It was a big win for Netflix but a more qualified victory for the movie's producer, Sony



Jose Antonio Garcia, from left, Florencia Martin, Leonardo DiCaprio, Cassandra Kulukundis, Regina Hall, Shayna Mahale, Teyana Taylor, Michael Bauman, Paul Thomas Anderson, Anthony Carino, Will Weike, Sara Murphy, Chase Inffiniti, Christopher Scarabosio, and Andy Jurgensen accept the award for best picture award for 'One Battle After Another' during the Oscars on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Michael B. Jordan, winner of the award for actor in a leading role for 'Sinners,' poses in the press room at the Oscars on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Jessie Buckley, winner of the award for actress in a leading role for 'Hamnet,' poses in the press room at the Oscars on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Amy Madigan, winner of the award for actress in a supporting role for 'Weapons,' poses in the press room at the Oscars on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

Pictures. Though it developed and produced the film, Sony sold "KPop Demon Hunters" to the streaming giant instead of giving it a theatrical release.

On Netflix, "KPop Demon Hunters" became a cultural phenomenon and the streaming platform's biggest hit. It has more than 325 million views and counting.

"This is for Korea and Koreans everywhere," said co-director Maggie Kang.

Another Netflix release, Guillermo del Toro's "Frankenstein" picked up three awards for its lavish craft, for costume design, makeup and hairstyling and for production design.

Amy Madigan won best supporting actress for her performance in the horror thriller "Weapons," a win that came 40 years after the 75-year-old actor was first nominated, in 1986, for "Twice in a Lifetime." Letting out a giant laugh as she hit the stage, Madigan exclaimed, "This is great!"

Hosting for the second time,

O'Brien began the Dolby Theatre show alluding to "chaotic and frightening times." But he argued that the current geopolitical climate made the Oscars all the more resonate as a globally unifying force.

"We pay tribute tonight, not just to film, but to the ideals of global artistry, collaboration, patience, resilience and that rarest of qualities today - optimism," O'Brien said. "We're going to celebrate. Not because we think all is well, but because we work, and hope, for better."

Throughout the show, O'Brien hit a number of targets, like Timothée Chalamet - who again missed out on winning his first Oscar, this time for "Marty Supreme" - for his diss of opera and ballet. But the ceremony seldom wasn't shadowed by politics, whether in references to changes under U.S. President Donald Trump or the recently launched war in Iran.

Joachim Trier, whose Norwegian family drama "Sentimental Value" won best

international film, quoted James Baldwin in his acceptance speech: "All adults are responsible for all children," he said. "Let's not vote for politicians that don't take this seriously into account."

Presenter Jimmy Kimmel, whose late-night show last year was suspended after comments he made about Charlie Kirk's killing, was among the most blunt.

"There are some countries that don't support free speech," said Kimmel. "I'm not at liberty to say which. Let's just leave it at North Korea and CBS."

Shortly after, "Mr. Nobody Against Putin," a film about a Russian primary schoolteacher who documents his students' indoctrination to support Russia's war with Ukraine, won best documentary.

"Mr. Nobody Against Putin" is about how you lose your country," co-director said. "And what we saw when working with this footage is that you lose it through countless, small, little acts of

complicity." "We all face a moral choice," he added, "but, luckily, a nobody is more powerful than you think."

Elegy also marked the Oscars. Producers expanded the in memoriam segment following a year that featured the deaths of so many Hollywood legends, including Keaton, Robert Duvall and Redford. Barbra Streisand spoke about Redford, her "The Way We Were" co-star. "Bob had real backbone," said Streisand, who called Redford "an intellectual cowboy" before singing a few bars of "The Way We Were."

Billy Crystal paid tribute to Rob and Michele Reiner, who were killed in their home in December. Crystal, a close friend of Rob Reiner's who memorably starred in 1989's "When Harry Met Sally..." and 1987's "Princess Bride." In his moving remarks, Crystal quoted the latter.

"All we can say is: Buddy, how much fun we had storming the castle," said

Crystal. Yet again, the night's final award again didn't go to a streaming release; Apple's "CODA" remains the only streaming film to achieve that distinction. "Sinners" and "One Battle After Another" were both theatrical releases shot on film.

Apple's top contender this time, the Formula One race drama "F1," a movie that it partnered with Warner Bros. to distribute theatrically, won for best sound. The lone blockbuster of the year to go home with a win was "Avatar: Fire and Ash," for visual effects.

Some of O'Brien's best digs came at the expense of the streamers. Netflix chief Ted Sarandos, he joked, was in a theater for the first time. The host also lamented the lack of nominees for Amazon MGM: "Why isn't the website I order toilet paper from winning more Oscars?"

"I'm honored to be the last human host of the Academy Awards," said O'Brien. "Next year it's going to be a Waymo in a tux."

Bold gowns, sleek suits and classic glamour redefine awards-night fashion

Stars deliver modern and colorful looks on Oscars red carpet

LOS ANGELES, March 16, (AP): Pops of color dominated the Oscars red carpet as stars like Renate Reinsve to Chase Inffiniti stunned in colorful gowns that put a modern twist on traditional Oscar's red carpet dressing.

Reinsve radiated on the carpet in a bright red Louis Vuitton strapless dress with a high side slit and curved train. She paired the look with a red lip and her hair slicked back. For her first Academy Award ceremony, Inffiniti opted for a pale lavender mermaid-style ruffle dress also by Louis Vuitton that she wore with a shimmering jeweled choker. The Hollywood darling has delivered strikingly stylish looks across award show season for her role in "One Battle After Another."

For cinema's biggest night, some stars marked their moment with designs that evoked old Hollywood glamour.

Rose Byrne arrived in a timeless custom black Dior gown embroidered with colorful beaded flowers. Actor Wunmi Mosaku of "Sinners" showcased classic elegance in an off-the-shoulder teal sequined Louis Vuitton dress while also showing off her baby bump.

Inspired by Grace Kelly's 1956 Oscar's dress, Jessie Buckley wore a color-blocked Chanel dress with a light pink skirt and lipstick-red shawl over her shoulders.

"This was a much more colorful carpet than past events throughout the awards season," Halie LeSavage, Marie Claire's senior fashion news editor,

said. "It feels like the nominees and the presenters are loosening up and really getting into a celebratory mood for the last big show of the season."

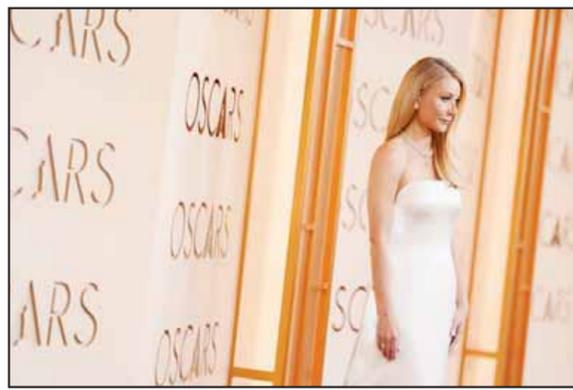
In keeping with their colorful animated film, the cast of "KPop Demon Hunters" delivered a splash of eye-catching colors to the red carpet in their regal gowns. Arden Cho chose Korean designer Miss Sohee with a structured black lace mermaid gown and an opulent vibrant green silk stole designed with an intricate nature scene. Co-star Ji-young Yoo posed in a two-toned blue Carolina Herrera ball gown with a romantic sweetheart-shaped neckline.

Balanced among all the colorful attire, the Pantone color of the year, Cloud Dancer, once again had its moment. Actors in off-white gowns glistened in front of the cream backdrop of the carpet. Emma Stone sparkled in her simple yet captivating opalescent paillette dress with its low back and scoop neckline.

Elle Fanning added a romantic touch to the carpet in her white Givenchy by Sarah Burton dramatic ball gown adorned with wisteria flowers. Fanning accented her scene-stealing dress with a Cartier wisteria-shaped necklace from 1903.

Like Fanning, ELLE's Beauty Director, Kathleen Hou said the red carpet stars sported polished and slicked back updos to draw the attention to their gowns.

Gwyneth Paltrow kept it minimalist and sexy with her Giorgio Armani Privé ivory silk strapless gown that re-



Gwyneth Paltrow arrives at the Oscars on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

vealed one long cut out down the sides of her dress.

Red carpet risk-taker Timothée Chalamet stayed on trend in an off-white Givenchy by Sarah Burton suit with matching white shirt, tie and shoes. He accessorized his looks with rings and sunglasses. Chalamet famously wore a butter yellow suit by the same designer last year.

"For his whole Oscars campaign, Timothée has really used fashion to tell a story, to promote his role in 'Marty Supreme,'" Hine said. "All white suggests he's at the end of the tour."

Gowns on the carpet featured luxuri-

ous fabrics, textures and even feathers. Demi Moore emerged on the carpet in a whimsical, fully feathered, green-toned Gucci dress. Moore, who was not nominated for an Oscar, certainly stole the spotlight from her peers with her dramatic gown.

Actor Pedro Pascal integrated feathers in a more subtle way with a large, feathered brooch fastened to his custom Chanel look by Matthieu Blazy.

The latest designer to helm the French house has been the talk of the town with fashionistas lining up at Chanel stores to buy his collection.

Fashion trailblazer Teyana Taylor

wore a fitted feathered white and black sheer dress on the carpet by Blazy.

Teyana's dress is also my front-runner for best dressed of the night because it took a lot of those Chanel codes that fashion fans really love and made them feel so fresh and so Teyana," LeSavage said. "They're a house that doesn't do a lot of bodycon or sheer. It tapped into a whole bunch of different elements that felt very glamorous and very Oscars but also aligned with all of the risks that Teyana has been taking throughout her awards season run this year."

In another take on feathers by Blazy, Nicole Kidman wore an off-white feathered gown with a corseted peplum bodice that was dipped into a cream color at the hem.

While the women flaunted vivid colors on the carpet, the men subverted traditional codes of black-tie attire with their suiting. Oscar night performer Shaboozey rarely disappears on the carpet with his modern takes on black tie attire. The red-carpet style maven sported a Balenciaga tailcoat look with a vest and a pearl pocket chain and matching pearl earrings.

"Sinners" star Michael B. Jordan brought out a golden pocket chain that accentuated his Louis Vuitton suit. His costar Miles Caton was one of the few male actors to add color to the carpet. Caton walked the carpet in an all-plum colored look from AMIRI with a matching plum jacket, tie and trousers. "What we have been seeing in re-

cent years is men embracing designer fashion spins on the traditional tuxedo, especially younger actors," Samuel Hine, GQ's global fashion correspondent said. "Their participation in the fashion world is an important part of the promotion of their personal brands."

"Sinners" director Ryan Coogler and actor Jacob Elordi were some of the few Oscar attendees that donned the traditional black tie look of a bow tie.

Oscar attendees sometimes make more than fashion statements. Actors chose to make political statements on the carpet by calling for a ceasefire in Gaza with their 'Artists4Ceasefire' pins. The organization issued new pins with a design by Shepard Fairey that now feature a dove and a lotus flower wrapped with a barbed wire. Actor Charithra Chandran added the pin to her lush, bright-green ball gown.

Saja Kilani of "The Voice of Hind Rajab" wore the pin with her chic black dress on the carpet.

"Our struggles are all connected, so is our liberation," she told The Associated Press.

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, Javier Bardem said he wore a pin to protest the war. On Sunday he re-wore the pin, which read, "No a la Guerra" or "No to war" on the carpet. Onstage while presenting, Bardem spoke out against the current global turmoil, saying, "No to war and free Palestine."

— See Also Page 12

Style Icons



Elle Fanning arrives at the Oscars on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Kaia Gerber arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Teyana Taylor arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Priyanka Chopra Jonas arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Olivia Rodrigo arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Meg Ryan arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026.



Ava DuVernay arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Kendall Jenner arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Simone Ashley arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Nicole Kidman arrives at the Oscars on March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Kim Kardashian arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Anne Hathaway arrives at the Oscars on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Selby Drummond arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Hailey Bieber arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Eiza González arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Naomi Watts arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Georgina Chapman arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Stephanie Saganami arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Grace Gummer arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Zoe Saldana arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Arden Cho arrives at the Oscars on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Dua Lipa arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)



Mary J. Blige arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026. (AP)

HEALTH/SCIENCE

China's Kuaizhou-11 Y7 rocket launches 8 new sats

JIUQUAN, March 16, (Xinhua): China on Monday launched the Kuaizhou-11 Y7 carrier rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China, sending eight new satellites into preset orbits.

The rocket blasted off at 12:12 p.m. (Beijing Time) from the launch site.

Also:

TAIYUAN: China successfully launched a remote sensing satellite from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch

Center in north China's Shanxi Province on Sunday.

The Yaogan-50 02 satellite was launched at 9:22 p.m. aboard a modified Long March-6 carrier rocket and has entered its planned orbit. The launch mission was a complete success.

The satellite will be mainly used for land survey, crop yield estimation, and disaster prevention and relief.

This launch marked the 633rd flight mission of the Long March carrier rocket series.



A modified Long March-6 carrier rocket carrying the Yaogan-50 02 satellite blasts off from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in north China's Shanxi Province on March 15. (Xinhua)

Interest in smart health products already on the rise

China advances AI-powered digital healthcare for higher medical efficiency, accessibility

BEIJING, March 16, (Xinhua): From artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted diagnosis to smart health platforms, China is intensifying efforts to embed AI across its evolving digital healthcare ecosystem, seeking to further boost efficiency and broaden access to quality medical services.

The outline of the country's 15th Five-Year Plan, adopted at the national legislative session, emphasizes the need to obtain the leading strategic position in AI industry applications from 2026 to 2030.

This year's government work report also vows to "advance and expand the AI Plus Initiative," and "encourage large-scale commercial application of AI in key sectors and fields," while recognizing biomedicine as an emerging pillar industry, among others.

As part of the broader "Healthy China Initiative," the digital and smart drive of healthcare is expected to facilitate in-depth health data analysis, support clinical decisions and improve access to medical care, according to experts.

"Digital technologies are a key lever for reshaping healthcare delivery and narrowing the urban-rural gap in medical resources," said Ge Minghua, a national lawmaker and director of Zhejiang Provincial People's Hospital.

In recent years, China has made significant achievements in public health, with the average life expectancy reaching 79 years in 2024 and the basic medical insurance coverage remaining above 95 percent. The full-life-cycle health service chain, from disease prevention to treatment, rehabilitation and long-term care, is continuously extending.

Currently, AI has made solid strides in China's healthcare sector -- as of May 1, 2025, the country had released approximately 300 medical large models, and county-level remote medical imaging services handled more than 68 million cases, making AI an increasingly important tool for grassroots healthcare.

Medical large models and health AI applications -- exemplified by Ant Group's "Ant Afu" -- have rapidly proliferated, reflecting strong public demand for professional, convenient health services.

Harnessing AI applications can improve out-of-hospital healthcare de-



A visitor tries a wheelchair robot at the Intelligent Healthcare exhibition area of the 138th edition of the Canton Fair in Guangzhou, south China's Guangdong Province, Oct. 31, 2025. (Xinhua)

livery and boost public health, said Huo Yong, a national political advisor and chief cardiologist expert at Peking University First Hospital.

Experts believe that deep integration of AI and healthcare services will also provide a key engine and focal point for developing new high-quality productive forces in the health sector.

Zhu Tongyu, a national political advisor and vice president of Shanghai Medical College of Fudan University, noted that the use of portable AI-powered diagnostic devices allows doctors to monitor the health of

patients in local communities or even in distant locations.

Such technologies help promote tiered healthcare services and optimize the distribution of medical resources, Zhu added.

Interest in smart health products is already on the rise. Digital health management devices such as smart body-fat scales are becoming popular among younger consumers, while home rehabilitation exoskeletons assist paralyzed seniors in independent walking.

Behind such expansion is China's fast-developing AI sector. By 2025, the country's AI core industry had reached more than 1.2 trillion yuan (about 174 billion U.S. dollars), and the integration of big data, AI, the Internet of Things, and 5G with healthcare services is expected to drive growth across the entire medical industry chain.

Ding Lieming, a national political advisor and a member of the Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party, said that the intelligent transformation of R&D paradigms is accelerating the translation of scientific and technological achievements into practical applications.

"For the biopharmaceutical industry, which has long development cycles and high risks, AI can shorten R&D timelines and costs, and improve quality and efficiency," Ding said.

Yet, Huo Yong noted that challenges persist at various levels, including technology, policy, and practical scenarios. He suggested breaking down isolated models and "data silos" through national-level data interoperability, while also exploring a tiered governance system for healthcare large models.

He further emphasized strengthening out-of-hospital health services, focusing on high-demand areas such as patient consultation, report interpretation, and personalized health management plans to fully realize the application value of AI.

Epidemiologist Zhang Wenhong, a national political advisor, told media that the entry of AI into healthcare should complement, not replace, human work. "We cannot neglect investment in people and infrastructure. AI should empower medical professionals rather than substitute them," he said.

Drought in Kenya leaves 3.3 mln facing hunger: Red Cross

Nearly 3 million malnutrition patients treated in Afghanistan

KABUL, March 16, (Xinhua): Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health said nearly 3 million people suffering from malnutrition received treatment across the country over the past 11 months, according to a report by Tolo news on Monday.

The ministry said the patients, mainly children, breastfeeding mothers, and pregnant women, were treated during the last 11 months as part of nationwide efforts to address malnutrition, which remains one of the country's most pressing public health concerns, the report said.

International organizations have warned that the situation could become more serious in the coming years. Due to declining humanitarian assistance and ongoing economic difficulties, the number of malnourished women and children in Afghanistan could rise to nearly 5 million by 2026.

Malnutrition continues to affect many vulnerable families across Afghanistan, highlighting the need for sustained health services, nutritional support, and greater awareness about proper feeding and care. Enditem

Also:

ABUJA: Nearly 6.4 million children under the age of five are suffering from acute malnutrition across Nigeria's northeast, northwest, and north-central regions, a dire consequence of the conflicts in Africa's most populous country, the International Committee of the Red Cross



Latifa Bakkar attempts to give oxygen to her severely malnourished 2½-year-old son, Abu Bakar, as a nurse inserts an intravenous cannula into his arm at Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan on Feb 15, 2026. (AP)

(ICRC) has said.

In a report released Monday, the ICRC noted that more than 15 years into the armed conflict in northeast Nigeria, food insecurity is threatening the lives of many of the country's youngest citizens.

"Children, as well as pregnant and lactating women, are most at risk. In hard-to-reach areas, especially in **Borno** and parts of **Yobe**, rates of severe acute malnutrition remain persistently high," the humanitarian organization said.

Without access to farmland or stable income, the link between displacement, food insecurity, and malnutrition becomes direct, and

children are often the first to suffer, the ICRC said.

It gave instances of severe cases in the northeastern part of Nigeria, including the case of **Umar**, a 22-month-old baby admitted to a nutritional stabilization center in **Damaturu**, the capital of Yobe State, whose "face and feet were so swollen that his skin seemed stretched to the limit."

Without urgent treatment, children with this condition rarely survive, the ICRC said.

"The swelling was a sign of nutritional edema, a severe form of acute malnutrition usually caused by a prolonged lack of essential nu-

trients in the body," the statement quoted Samira Hassan, a nurse at the Damaturu nutritional stabilization center.

NAIROBI: The drought situation in Kenya is worsening with more than 3.3 million people in arid and semi-arid lands facing starvation, the Kenya Red Cross said.

The drought emergency has evolved beyond a climate shock into a full-scale humanitarian crisis, affecting 23 out of 47 counties, the humanitarian agency said in a statement issued in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

"More than 3.3 million people are in need of food assistance, 1.5 million of them urgently need water, and over 200,000 children are battling severe acute malnutrition," it said, calling for scale-up of water trucking, provision of food aid, malnutrition treatment, and livestock support.

Beatrice Askul, cabinet secretary for East African community, arid and semi-arid lands and regional development, said on Wednesday that the number of Kenyans facing hunger will rise to 3.6 million by June.

Askul noted that ongoing heavy rains in the other parts of Kenya, which authorities said have killed 50 people, have not eased the drought conditions in the affected regions.

The government and its partners have stepped up mitigation measures, including the provision of food, water, and cash transfer programs, Askul added.



The AREA Services building in Shamokin, Pa is decorated in pink ribbons for Breast Cancer Awareness month on Oct 4, 2012. (AP)



A doctor holds a vial of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine Gardasil in Chicago on Aug 28, 2006. (AP)

Women survive cancer more often but face worse side effects: study

CANBERRA, March 16, (Xinhua): Women are more likely than men to survive cancer but also face a higher risk of severe side effects from treatment, an Australian-led study has revealed.

Published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, the research led by Australia's Adelaide University identified consistent differences between male and female cancer patients in both survival and treatment toxicity, a university statement said Monday.

Researchers found female patients had a 21 percent lower risk of death than male patients but a 12 percent higher risk of severe toxicities.

These sex-based differences were largely consistent across 12 advanced solid tumor types as well as treatment modalities including chemotherapy, targeted therapies and immunotherapy, suggesting they stem from underlying biological mechanisms, not just drug-specific effects, the researchers said.

The study provides some of the clearest evidence yet that biological sex is a key predictor of outcomes in cancer care, said lead author Natansh Modi.

"Sex is a fundamental biological factor that influences immune function, drug metabolism, body composition and tumor biology," said Modi, lecturer at Adelaide University.

The findings have important implications for how drugs are evaluated and prescribed, strengthening the case for routinely reporting and acting on sex-specific evidence in clinical research, the authors said.

The study analyzed data from more than 20,000 cancer patients across 39 clinical trials supporting U.S. Food and Drug Administration approvals between 2011 and 2021, and spanned advanced solid tumor types including lung, colorectal, melanoma, and breast cancers.

Meanwhile, an international research team has created a 3D-printed implant that could open up new avenues for the treatment of severe tissue damage, according to a statement by the Israel Institute of Technology on Sunday.

The implant, known as a tissue flap, combines muscle and fat tissues with an integrated network of blood and lymphatic vessels, enabling rapid integration into the damaged area. This built-in vascular system delivers oxygen and nutrients immediately, while the lymphatic network removes fluids, critical factors for tissue survival and function.

Currently, patients with major tissue loss require an autologous flap surgery, harvesting tissue from another part of their own body, as transplants from other people are often rejected.

The new engineered flap may overcome these challenges and could lead to personalized implants tailored to each patient's injury.

In experiments on rats, the flap quickly integrated with the host tissue, supporting normal muscle growth, stable fat cells, and proper blood flow.

The researchers used a special bio-ink and a bioreactor to grow the blood vessels under conditions that mimic natural blood flow.

Rising global uncertainty

Malaysia strengthens tech capabilities

KUALA LUMPUR, March 16, (Xinhua): Malaysia is stepping up efforts to strengthen its domestic technological capabilities in artificial intelligence (AI), semiconductors and digital technology, while building a more robust innovation ecosystem to secure strategic control over technologies critical to the future economy.

Malaysian Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Chang Lih Kang said in a statement on Monday that the ongoing conflict in West Asia highlights the increasingly uncertain global environment.

"In such times, every country must prioritize national resilience, across the economy, energy, technology and supply chains. Malaysia is no exception," he said.

He emphasized the importance of technological sovereignty, noting that countries cannot rely entirely on foreign technology for critical systems involving data, communications, cybersecurity and digital infrastructure.

"Malaysia continues to

strengthen domestic capabilities to ensure strategic control over the technologies that underpin our future economy," he said.

Chang also pointed to the impact of geopolitical tensions on the global energy market, urging the expansion of alternative energy sources and an accelerated transition to sustainable energy.

Diversifying the national energy mix, he said, is crucial for both environmental sustainability and long-term energy security.

The minister highlighted that rapid technological advances, particularly in AI, pose new challenges. In conflict situations, technologies such as AI, data analytics and digital media can be misused to spread misinformation. Responsible governance, ethical use, and public awareness are essential to prevent such misuse.

"Malaysia must continue to strengthen national resilience through science, technology and innovation to remain competitive and prepared for future challenges," he added.



Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim delivers his keynote address during the ceremony of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers' meeting and related meetings at the Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on July 9, 2025. (AP)

SPORTS

Young wins The Players Championship with clutch birdie

DeChambeau takes LIV Golf Singapore

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla., March 16, (AP): Cameron Young picked up a big title to go with his major talent, making the most clutch birdie of his career with a shot into 10 feet on the wind-blown island green for birdie and winning The Players Championship when Matt Fitzpatrick missed an 8-foot par putt on the final hole.

Young played bogey-free on the back nine where so many hopes faded. His sand wedge for birdie on the par-3 17th tied him for the lead. And then he blistered a 375-yard drive - the longest ever on the 18th at the TPC Sawgrass - that set up a par and a 4-under 68.



Captain Bryson DeChambeau of Crushers GC reacts after his chip onto the fourth green during the final round of Aramco LIV Golf Singapore in Sentosa, Singapore. (AP)

It was only his second victory on the PGA Tour. He tied the tour record with seven runner-up finishes before finally winning late last summer in the Wyndham Championship. But this is the PGA Tour's crown jewel, loosely known as the fifth major, and the pressure was just intense at the end.

Fitzpatrick was a stroke back after a 68.

Ludvig Aberg, who had a three-shot lead going into the final round, imploded on the back nine with shots into the water on consecutive holes. He shot 40 on the back nine for a 76 and tied for fifth.

Young finished at 13-under 275. He earned \$4.5 million and moved to No. 4 in the world.

Bryson DeChambeau hit his drive into the water and still won the play-off with a par at LIV Golf Singapore when Richard T. Lee of Canada missed a 2-foot par putt.

DeChambeau birdied the par-5 18th for a 5-under 66. Lee birdied four of his last six holes for a 66. They finished on 14-under 274 at Sentosa Golf Club. Lee Westwood closed with a 70 and finished third, his best finish in LIV.

Lee was trying to become the first wild card - players not affiliated with a team - to win in the LIV Golf League. It looked certain the playoff would go another hole when Lee had a 2-footer for par. He jabbed at it with a quick stroke and it spun out hard off the left lip.

It was DeChambeau's first victory over 72 holes since he won the U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2 in 2024, and it was his fourth title on LIV Golf. Jon Rahm finished fifth, ending a stretch of five tournaments he won or was runner-up.

The 4 Aces captained by Dustin Johnson won the team competition for the second straight week.



Cameron Young holds The Players Championship Trophy after Young won the final round of The Players Championship golf tournament in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. (AP)

Former Women's PGA champion Hannah Green closed with a 2-under 70 for a one-shot victory over Cassie Porter and Agathe Laisne to become the first Australian to win the Women's Australian Open since 2014. The tournament was co-sanctioned by the Ladies European Tour.

Jeongeun Lee6 won the Epson

Tour's IOA Golf Classic in Longwood, Florida, for her first victory since the 2019 U.S. Women's Open. The 29-year-old South Korean birdied the par-3 18th for a 6-under 65 and a one-stroke victory. She finished at 13-under 200 at Alauqua Country Club. Jiwon Jeon was second after a 63. She parred the final four holes.

Will Florimo closed with a 3-under 69 to hold off Haydn Barron for a two-shot victory in the Heritage Classic on the PGA Tour of Australasia.

Daniel van Tonder rallied with a 9-under 63 for a two-shot victory over Wilco Nienaber and Allen John in The Courier Guys Playoffs: The Serengeti Playoffs on the Sunshine

Tour in South Africa.

Fuka Suga was the only player to break 70, closing with a 3-under 69 in a six-shot victory at the Taiwan Foxconn Ladies on the Japan LPGA.

Jinyeong Lim had a 68-65 weekend to win the Rejuran Championship by one shot over Yewon Lee on the Korea LPGA.

Antetokounmpo nets 31 before injury as Bucks cruise past Pacers

SGA keeps record 20-point streak alive as OKC tops T-wolves for 8th straight victory

OKLAHOMA CITY, March 16, (AP): Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 20 points and 10 assists, and the Oklahoma City Thunder defeated the Minnesota Timberwolves 116-103 on Sunday for their eighth straight win.

Gilgeous-Alexander barely extended his record streak of games with at least 20 points to 128. He had just 10 points heading into the fourth, and he re-entered the game with 7:10 left after resting.

He scored on a stepback against Anthony Edwards with 1:46 remaining and was fouled to reach 19 points. With the crowd standing and chanting "M-V-P!" he drained the free throw to keep the streak alive and push himself further past Wilt Chamberlain's old mark of 126.

Chet Holmgren had 21 points and nine rebounds and Isaiah Joe added 20 points for the Thunder, who improved to a league-best 53-15.

Julius Randle scored 32 points and Edwards added 19 for the Timberwolves.

The Thunder forced 22 turnovers while committing just seven. Oklahoma City attempted 101 shots while Minnesota tried 77.

Oklahoma City ran out to a 9-0 lead and held the Timberwolves scoreless for nearly three minutes at the start.

Bucks 134, Pacers 123

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 31 points and pulled down 14 rebounds before leaving the game with an injury, and the Milwaukee Bucks beat the Indiana Pacers.

Antetokounmpo landed awkwardly as he completed a dunk late in the third quarter. He briefly remained in the game and dunked again on Milwaukee's next possession. He got fouled the possession after that and attempted a pair of free throws before heading to the locker room.

"My guess is he hyperextended his knee, but I'm guessing," Bucks coach Doc Rivers said.

Antetokounmpo also had eight assists while Bobby Portis scored 29 points and added 10 rebounds. Ryan Rollins shot 8 for 12, including 3 for 5 from beyond the 3-point line, to finish with 20 points, seven assists and three steals.

Knicks 110, Warriors 107

In New York, Jalen Brunson had 30 points and nine assists, and the New York Knicks rallied from a 21-point deficit against a patchwork Golden State lineup to beat the



Portland Trail Blazers' Deni Avdija, left, goes up to shoot against Philadelphia 76ers' Tandon Watford (12) and Andre Drummond during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)



Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo (34) spins as he drives to the basket against Indiana Pacers' Jay Huff (32) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Milwaukee. (AP)

Karl-Anthony Towns had 17 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks, while OG Anunoby and Jordan Clarkson both had 14 points. The Knicks took a while to wake up in their return home from a five-game road trip before eventually picking up their third straight victory.

The Knicks led briefly in the opening minutes of the game and then not again until the final minutes of the third quarter after back-to-back baskets by Brunson.

Brandin Podziemski scored 25 points for the Warriors, who had Stephen Curry and most of their recognizable names on the bench in their season-high fifth straight loss. Quentin Post had a career-high 22 and Gui Santos finished with 20.

Curry missed his 17th straight game with right knee pain and inflammation.

Mavericks 130, Cavaliers 120

In Cleveland, Cooper Flagg scored 27 points, Naji Marshall added 25 and the Dallas Mavericks bounced back from a 33-point loss to Cleveland two days ago to defeat the Cavaliers.

The Mavericks, who were routed 138-105 on Friday night, pulled away in the second half to snap a seven-game losing streak against the Cavaliers.

P.J. Washington had 20 points and 11 rebounds for Dallas, which won for just the second time in 11 games.

It was the 12th time this season Flagg has scored at least 27 points.

The top overall pick in the 2025 NBA Draft was 10 of 17 from the field and also had 10 assists and six rebounds in 33 minutes.

Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell had 26 points and Max Strus scored 24 points in his season debut. The seventh-year forward missed the first 67 games because of a broken left foot.

76ers 109, Trail Blazers 103

In Philadelphia, Quentin Grimes scored 14 of his season-high 31 points in the fourth quarter as the short-handed Philadelphia 76ers beat the Portland Trail Blazers.

The Sixers were playing without Joel Embiid, Tyrese Maxey and Kelly Oubre Jr. due to injuries.

Justin Edwards scored 21 points, and VJ Edgecombe had 18 points and a career-high 12 rebounds for the rookie's third double-double this season.

Deni Avdija led Portland with 25 points, and Jerami Grant added 20. But the Trail Blazers shot just 17 for 53 from 3-point range (32.7%). Donovan Clingan added 11 points and 15 rebounds.

Raptors 119, Pistons 108

In Toronto, Brandon Ingram had a game-high 34 points and the Toronto Raptors defeated the Detroit Pistons.

RJ Barrett added 27 points and six rebounds for Toronto, which has won back-to-back games.

The win helped the Raptors hang on to sixth in the Eastern Conference. Jakob Poeltl and Scottie Barnes each had a double-double. Poeltl finished with 21 points and a season-high 18 rebounds while Barnes added 14 points and 10 rebounds for Toronto.

Kings 116, Jazz 111

In Sacramento, DeMar DeRozan scored a season-high 41 points and had 11 assists to help the Sacramento Kings hold off the Utah Jazz.

DeRozan, who passed Hall of Famer Tim Duncan last week for 18th place on the NBA's career scoring list, was 11 of 21 from the floor while reaching 40 points for the first time since Feb. 2, 2025. It's the 417th time he has scored 20 or more points while shooting at least 50 percent.

Precious Achiuwa added 20 points and 11 rebounds in the matchup of the two worst teams in the Western Conference. Killian Hayes, who signed an extension with Sacramento earlier in the day, had 16 points and eight assists. Nique Clifford and Daegwon Plowden each scored 10.

The Kings (18-51) have won four of five.

Keeper makes save with injured hand

Stuttgart tightens grip in Champions League race



Stuttgart's Ermedin Demirovic, left, and Leipzig's Nicolas Seiwald fight for the ball during the Bundesliga soccer match between VfB Stuttgart and RB Leipzig in Stuttgart, Germany. (AP)

BERLIN, March 16, (Agencies): Stuttgart strengthened its position in the race for Champions League qualification with a narrow home win over RB Leipzig in the Bundesliga, a match decided by a costly second-half error from goalkeeper Maarten Vandevoordt that allowed Deniz Undav to score the only goal.

Before kickoff, the two sides were level on points, each with 14 wins, five draws and six defeats, with Stuttgart sitting fourth only on goal difference ahead of Leipzig in what was effectively a direct battle for a Champions League place.

The opening exchanges were balanced, but Leipzig created the first clear chance when Yan Diomande sent a low pass toward Romulo near the penalty spot, only for the effort to drift wide. Soon after, Christoph Baumgartner threatened from a corner while Stuttgart gradually began to enjoy longer spells of possession.

The host also created chances as the pressure increased. Ermedin Demirovic went close with a header from a Chris Fuhrich cross, but the ball slipped wide, while Leipzig remained dangerous on the break and nearly struck when David Raum released Baumgartner, who fired over from an unmarked position.

After the interval, the match remained cautious until Leipzig came close through Nicolas Seiwald, whose header forced Alexander Nudel to react sharply and push the ball onto the post. Moments later came the decisive moment, when Vandevoordt attempted to play out from the back and sent the ball straight to Fuhrich.

He quickly fed Undav inside the box, and the striker calmly rolled the ball into the right corner in the 56th minute. Leipzig struggled to respond, and its best late chance saw Willi Orban hit the post with a header. The result leaves Stuttgart three points ahead of Leipzig and level on points with third-placed Hoffenheim.

"We had that famous bit of luck on our side, but overall, it was a superb fighting performance. The team really earned it today with great spirit and support for one another. Today I am a happy man with a squad that fought outstandingly," Stuttgart coach Sebastian Hoeneß said.

Meanwhile, Union Berlin's stand-in goalkeeper Matheo Raab made a last-minute diving save with his injured right hand on his top-division debut to ensure his team held on for a 1-0 win at Freiburg in the Bundesliga.

Union had already used all its substitutions when Raab injured his hand in a collision with Freiburg's Bruno Ogbus while diving to punch away a high ball in added time.

"In that moment I only felt pain," Raab told broadcaster DAZN. "We couldn't make any more changes and I wanted to somehow play out those last few minutes. There's nothing you can do but grit your teeth, somehow get the glove back on and get this thing done."

Raab used the same hand for an acrobatic diving save to keep out Niklas Beste's curling shot and ensure Union took the win. Jeong Woo-yeong had put the Berlin team in the lead with a low shot earlier in added time.

An injury to regular starter Frederik Rønnow meant Raab was playing in the Bundesliga for the first time since arriving at Union in July. He said he powered through with adrenaline. "I waited so long for this and didn't want it taken away."

Union rose two places to ninth, one place behind Freiburg.

Also Sunday, Deniz Undav scored for the fifth Bundesliga game in a row as a goalkeeping blunder handed Stuttgart a 1-0 win over Leipzig to strengthen its push to qualify for the Champions League.

WNBA commissioner says progress made in collective bargaining talks

NEW YORK, March 16, (AP): WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert said progress is being made towards getting a new collective bargaining agreement done.

The two sides met for another marathon negotiating session that started Sunday afternoon and ended around 3 a.m. Monday morning.

"We're working as hard as we can to get it done as quickly as possible," Engelbert said. "It's complex. There's a lot. There's a lot of system elements. There's a lot of structure elements. ... This is a big, big league and we want to do everything we can for the players. So, we're going to keep

making progress."

It's been a long week of discussions with the WNBA and union meeting face-to-face for more than 72 hours since the first in-person bargaining session Tuesday.

"We are going to keep going. We're going to get this deal done," Engelbert said. "And, you know, it's going to be historic."

Union executive council members Breanna Stewart, Na'phesa Collier and Alysha Clark were the first to leave at 2 a.m. Nneka Ogwumike and union leadership left an hour later after a 14-hour day.

"The fact that they just don't want to stop, both sides, it's not just the league side, it's even the union," said Connecticut Sun president Jen Rizzotti. "They want to get it done. I think it's admirable to know that they're paying attention to the fact that this is crucial and time is of the essence and we need to have a season." The key sticking points have been revenue sharing and housing.

"It's very important for us to nail those two things down, which is I think the biggest thing on the agenda today," Ogwumike, the union's president, said Saturday between bargaining sessions. "So we want to make sure that we can get

that." League proposals have involved net revenue - revenue after expenses - and union ones have talked about gross revenue - revenue before expenses.

When negotiations first started more than a year ago, the union was asking for 40% of gross revenue and had come down to 26% before the marathon in-person bargaining session Tuesday. The league had been offering more than 70% net revenue for the players.

Teams have paid for player housing in the WNBA since the beginning and the league wanted to amend that in the new CBA.

China again finishes first in the medals table

Paralympics end with another Ukraine boycott amid Russia's return

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy, March 16, (AP): A closing ceremony boycotted by Ukraine signaled the end of the Milan Cortina Winter Paralympics on Sunday, hours after the U.S. Para ice hockey team won the final gold medal of the Games that were marked by the return of the Russian flag and national anthem to the global sports stage.

China continued its dominance as a Paralympic powerhouse and topped the medals table with 15 golds, two more than the United States, which matched its total from the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games.

The Milan Cortina Games marked the 50th anniversary of the Winter Paralympics. The Russian anthem, which hadn't played at the Paralympics in more than a decade, rang out eight times at Milan Cortina after the victories of Russian athletes who were competing under their own flag again at the Paralympics for the first time since the 2014 Sochi Winter Games.

Ukraine led the boycott of both the opening and closing ceremonies to protest the presence of the Russians. It accused the International Paralympic Committee of discrimination against its athletes throughout the Games. The IPC said Ukraine seemed to try to politicize the event.

The Milan Cortina Paralympics began less than a week after the United States and Israel launched a military attack on Iran. Para cross-country skier Aboulfazi Khatibi, the only Iranian set to compete, had to withdraw because he could not travel safely to Italy. Para skier Sheina Vaspi was the only athlete from Israel who competed.

The Paralympic Games were back in Italy 20 years after being held in Turin. It was the 14th edition of the Winter Paralympics since the inaugural edition in Ornskoldsvik, Sweden, in 1976.

The Russian flag made its official return at the opening ceremony in Verona, and



Dancers perform during the closing ceremony at the 2026 Winter Paralympics, in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. (AP)

its national anthem was played for the first time at these Games after Para alpine skier Varvara Voronchikhina won gold last Monday.

The anthem had not been heard at any Olympics or Paralympics since the 2016 Rio

de Janeiro Summer Games.

Russian athletes were back competing under their own flag in the Winter Paralympics after years of having to do so as neutral athletes because of the country's doping violations and military conflicts.

The return of the Russian flag and anthem was seen by some as a signal of a possible full-fledged return to Olympic circles ahead of the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles.

After topping every Summer Paralympics since 2004, China again finished first in the medals table at the Winter Paralympics. Russia was third with eight gold medals. China won 44 medals in total, 20 more than the Americans.

Host Italy ended in fourth place with seven gold medals, the same as Austria where siblings Veronika and Johannes Aigner dominated Para alpine skiing.

Veronika Aigner was one of three athletes with four gold medals, along with American Para cross-country skiers Oksana Masters and Jake Adicoff. Masters, the most decorated American Winter Paralympian, won a bronze in addition to her four gold medals. Adicoff is the first out gay American male Winter Paralympic champion.

Milan Cortina marked the biggest Winter Paralympics ever with a total of 611 Para athletes from 55 nations, surpassing the previous record of 564 Para athletes from 48 countries in 2018.

A record number of female Para athletes competed for the fourth straight Paralympic Winter Games, the IPC said. There were 160 female competitors at Milan Cortina, 24 more than the previous record at the 2022 Beijing Winter Games.

A total of 27 nations won medals across 79 medal events in six sports, the greatest number of countries to win at least one medal at a Paralympic Winter Games since the 1994 Lillehammer Games.

English clubs aim to avoid Champions League wipeout



Real Madrid's Dean Huijsen scores his side's third goal during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Elche CF, in Madrid. (AP)

Bodø/Glimt on brink of quarterfinals

LONDON, March 16, (AP): English teams are playing this week to avoid a wipeout in the Champions League round of 16, with the reputation of the Premier League at stake.

All six English clubs - a record entry for any country in the competition - failed to win a first-leg game last week and only Premier League leader Arsenal is now clearly favored to advance.

Arsenal hosts Bayer Leverkusen on Tuesday with the teams tied 1-1 and shapes as the most likely to represent Europe's richest league in the quarterfinals.

A hat trick of three-goal losses - albeit all on the road against high-class opponents - had many commentators using a famous saying credited to Michel Platini about the tiring English season.

English soccer is "lions in the winter, lambs by the spring," Platini said while UEFA president from 2007-15, quoting a phrase that seems to have come from the former Yugoslavia decades ago.

On Tuesday, Manchester City will start 3-0 down at home to Real Madrid and Chelsea faces a 5-2 deficit against defending champion Paris Saint-Germain.

Tottenham trails 5-2 at home to Atletico Madrid on Wednesday, when Liverpool will hope the aura of its Anfield home can help overcome a 1-0 loss in the first leg at Galatasaray. Newcastle goes to Barcelona tied at 1-1.

In the two games without an English team, the remarkable Norwegian underdog Bodø/Glimt takes a 3-0 lead to Sporting Lisbon on Tuesday and Bayern Munich is up 6-1 hosting Atalanta on Wednesday.

Here's a look at the round of 16 picture:

Ten years ago, Real Madrid promoted a former player from within the club in January as a largely



PSG players celebrate at the end of the first leg of the Champions League round of 16 soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea, in Paris. (AP)

untested first-team coach after giving his storied predecessor just a few months until firing him.

It worked out well for Zinedine Zidane. He won that season's Champions League title - and the next two after that - on replacing Rafa Benitez, who had himself once lifted the trophy with Liverpool.

A decade on, Alvaro Arbeloa is Madrid coach in the same circumstances as Zidane, who he played for just rarely in that 2015-16 season.

Arbeloa passed his biggest coaching test last week against Man City, two months since being the surprise internal choice to replace Xabi Alonso. The latter, another former Madrid star, had been lured last year from a hugely successful job at Leverkusen.

Inspiration for the win against Pep Guardiola's Man City was captain Fede Valverde, who scored a stunning first-half hat trick thriving in a team that was without injured superstars Kylian Mbappé and Jude Bellingham.

Mbappé is set to return to action from his left knee injury in Manchester, at a stadium where he

scored one goal in each of the three times he played there for Monaco, then PSG and Madrid.

Bodø/Glimt should have no fear going to Sporting's 52,000-seat José Alvalade Stadium that is more than six times bigger than its home stadium.

Coach Kjetil Knutsen's team already won this year in front of bigger crowds and intense atmospheres at Atletico's Metropolitan Stadium and the San Siro against Inter Milan.

Glimt's shocking 2-1 win at Atletico in the last round of league-phase games in January meant squeezing into the 24-team knockout phase placed 23rd in the 36-team standings. A 2-1 win in Milan completed a 5-2 scoreline in the knockout playoffs round in February.

Both teams should be fresh in Lisbon after skipping scheduled domestic league games at the weekend to help them prepare.

Before kickoff at Stamford Bridge, many eyes will be on Chelsea's players to see if they try to do another team huddle around the center spot.

It provoked a bizarre image Saturday when Premier League referee Paul Tierney was encircled by Chelsea huddling before a 1-0 loss to Newcastle. The widespread reaction across English soccer was derision for the huddle and Chelsea coach Liam Rosenior's claim his players wanted to show "respect for the ball."

In Paris last week, Chelsea huddled before kickoff in both halves and was booed by PSG fans the second time.

The positioning of Slovenian referee Slavko Vinčić will be keenly watched Tuesday.

If Bodø/Glimt goes through then Arsenal or Leverkusen will be next to visit the 8,000-seat Aspmyra Stadium inside the Arctic Circle for the first leg on April 7 or 8.

Real Madrid and Bayern are on course to meet in the knockout phase for the 11th time in the Champions League era that started in 1992.

US beats Canada to complete historic clean sweep in Olympics, Paralympics

MILAN, March 16, (AP): Three weeks after the United States beat Canada in the Olympic hockey finals, the Americans overcame their neighbors again to win Paralympic gold and complete the sweep at Milan Cortina.

In front of a packed arena, Jack Wallace scored a hat trick to help the U.S. beat Canada 6-2 in Sunday's Para ice hockey final and become the first nation to win all three of the hockey tournaments at the Olympics and Paralympics in the same year. There is currently no women's division at the Paralympics as it is classified as an open-gender sport.

Kayden Beasley, Declan Farmer - the tournament's MVP - and Brody Roybal scored the other goals for the U.S. Liam Hickey bagged both goals for Canada, which pushed its rivals hard before conceding three in the final period.



The United States of America team celebrate at full-time after winning the Para Ice Hockey Gold Medal Game between United States of America and Canada in Milan. (AP)

"I'm glad we got it done because I think there's a little bit more pressure with the men and women getting the golds too," U.S. captain

Josh Pauls said. "But I'm happy we could do it for USA hockey and I think it really just shows like how much they ... invest in the grass-

roots programs because we have so many young players coming up and playing pivotal roles on our teams."

One of those he's seen progress at close hand is Wallace.

"It doesn't get much better than that," Wallace said with a broad smile when asked about his hat trick.

The 27-year-old Wallace, who grew up loving hockey, had his right leg amputated above the knee after a water-skiing accident at age 10 and thought his dreams of playing the sport at the highest level were over before discovering Para ice hockey.

"I think watching Jack Wallace go from the player he was when he first started, from a kid who just wanted to be back on the ice after losing his leg and now to watch him score a hat trick, it's just so awesome to be a part of people's lives and to watch them succeed and put in the work," Pauls said.

'Very complex situation'

5 women rejoin Iranian soccer squad in Malaysia after abandoning asylum

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, March 16, (AP): The Iranian women's soccer team had yet to reveal plans to leave Malaysia after most of the seven squad members who created a diplomatic furor by accepting asylum in Australia a week ago have rejoined their teammates in Kuala Lumpur, a sport official said Monday.

The squad flew from Sydney on March 10 after being knocked out of the Women's Asian Cup in Australia, leaving behind six players and a support staff member who had accepted protection visas.

Four players and the staffer have since rejoined the team in Kuala Lumpur, the latest flying in on Monday. No reasons have been given for the changes of heart, but the Iranian diaspora in Australia blames pressure from Tehran. Some suspect the team is remaining a 10-hour flight from Sydney until the two outstanding players are persuaded to rejoin them from Australia.

The team is being supported in Kuala Lumpur by the Asian Football Confederation. The confederation's general secretary, Windsor Paul John, said the team was waiting in Malaysia's largest city to make flight connections to their war-torn homeland.

"It could be today, tomorrow or next week," Windsor told reporters in Kuala Lumpur. "We are just waiting for them to tell us their plans."

Windsor said his confederation had not received any direct complaints from players about returning home, despite media reports their families in Iran could face retaliation for the team failing to sing their national anthem before the opening match.

"We couldn't verify anything. We asked them and they said, 'No, it's ok,'" he said. "They are actually in high spirits... they didn't look afraid."

Iranian authorities have welcomed the women's decisions to reject asylum as a victory against Australia and U.S. President Donald Trump.

Iran's squad had arrived in Australia for the tournament shortly before the war in the Middle East began on Feb. 28, complicating travel arrangements.

Assistant Immigration Minister Matt Thistlethwaite described the women's plight in Australia as a "very complex situation."

"These are deeply personal decisions, and the government respects the decisions of those that have chosen to return. And we continue to offer support to the two that are remaining," Thistlethwaite said. Those who stayed in Australia have been moved to an undisclosed safe location and are receiving assistance from the government and the Iranian diaspora community, he said.

Kylie Moore-Gilbert, a political scientist at Sydney's Macquarie University who spent more than two years in Iranian prisons on spying charges from 2018 to 2020, said "winning the propaganda war" had overshadowed the women's welfare.

"The high stakes made the Iranian regime sit up and pay attention and try to force their hand in response, in my view," Moore-Gilbert said.

"I do think in this case, had these women quietly sought asylum without that publicity around them, it's possible that the Islamic Republic officials might have, as they have in the cases of other Iranian sports people in the past who've defected ... simply allowed that to happen," she added.

Iran's Tasnim News Agency said the players who left Australia were "returning to the warm embrace of their family and homeland," describing their return as a failure of what it called an American-Australian political effort.



Members of Iran's women's football team arrive at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, Malaysia. (AP)

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President of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region Fabrice Pannekoucke, center left, and President of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region Renaud Muselier wave the Paralympic flag at the closing ceremony of the 2026 Winter Paralympics in Cortina, Italy. (AP) - See Page 15

Sports

Man United moves into 3rd, Tottenham holds Liverpool



Liverpool's Hugo Ekitike escapes tackle by Tottenham's Pedro Porro during the Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Tottenham in Liverpool, England. (AP)



Manchester United's Matheus Cunha sends a cross by Aston Villa's Lamare Bogarde during the Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Aston Villa in Manchester, England. (AP)

Fernandes nears assists record; Forest climbs out of bottom three

MANCHESTER, England, March 16, (AP): Bruno Fernandes closed in on the Premier League's assists record as Manchester United tightened its grip on a return to the Champions League with a 3-1 win against Aston Villa.

Tottenham avoided extending an unwanted club low by halting its losing run with a late equalizer to draw 1-1 with Liverpool.

Fernandes provided assists for two of United's goals against Villa to take his tally for the season to 16. The record for a single Premier League campaign is 20 - jointly held by Thierry Henry and Kevin De Bruyne.

Fernandes, who now has 100 assists as a United player, has up to eight more games to set a new record in English soccer's top division.

Of more importance to United was a seventh win in nine games under head coach Michael Carrick. United is third -- three points clear of Villa in fourth.

Liverpool is two points further back in fifth after squandering victory against Spurs when Richarlison struck in the 90th minute to stun the Anfield crowd. Tottenham had looked set to extend its all-time worst losing run to seven games in all competitions when trailing Dominik Szoboszlai's first-half free kick.

The draw left Tottenham one point clear of the relegation zone.

Nottingham Forest climbed out of the bottom three on goal difference with a 0-0 draw against Fulham.

Crystal Palace and Leeds also drew 0-0.

Fernandes' double assist saw him set a new club record for United in a single Premier League season - overtaking David Beckham's 15 in 1999-2000.

"It is a huge achievement for me, but the main achievement will be finishing in the top spots at the end of the season," he said.

United is on course for a return to the Champions League after two seasons outside of European club soccer's top competition.

The top four are guaranteed to qualify, with English teams likely to earn a fifth spot because of their performances in Europe this season.

The victory saw United close the gap on second-place Manchester City to seven points.

"At the end of the day, we'll see where we finish, and if we can finish second, even better," Fernandes said. "Even though it wouldn't change much what we are getting next season, we want to finish as high as possible, that's obvious."

Casemiro headed United in front from Fernandes' corner in the 53rd minute. Villa leveled through Ross Barkley, but Fernandes was the provider again when Matheus Cunha sidefooted past Emiliano Martinez.

Benjamin Sesko came off the bench to score his eighth goal in 10 games and effectively seal the win.

Igor Tudor picked up his first point as Tottenham interim coach at the end of a week that has seen speculation around his position intensify.

On the back of four straight losses since his appointment last month, Tudor

went into the game at Anfield with pressure mounting. And inside 18 minutes, Spurs trailed to Szoboszlai's goal.

But a reprieve came in the form of Richarlison's late strike, which may place more scrutiny on Liverpool coach Arne Slot.

After delivering the league title in his first season at the club, he is now fighting to secure a top five finish.

Liverpool is fifth - one point ahead of Chelsea.

"It is a home game and we were ahead for so many minutes. Of course, it is two points dropped," Slot said.

Liverpool hosts Galatasaray in the Champions League round of 16 on Wednesday, trailing 1-0 after the first leg.

West Ham's draw with Man City on Saturday meant Forest dropped into the bottom three.

But Forest quickly climbed back out of the relegation zone on goal difference with a point at home against Fulham.

Tottenham is one place and one point above Forest.

Spurs defender Radu Dragusin described the draw with Liverpool as "massive for our season."

Leeds is 15th on 32 points - three points clear of the bottom three.

It could have been an even better day for Daniel Farke's team had Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored with a first-half penalty. But Leeds held on for a point even after going down to 10 men when Gabriel Gudmundsson was sent off before halftime.

Alternative proposals rejected by the Argentine Football Association

Argentina vs. Spain Finalissima in Qatar called off

NYON, Switzerland, March 16, (AP): UEFA said that the game between Argentina and Spain known as Finalissima that was supposed to be held in Qatar has been canceled after the widening Middle East war.

The game between South American champion Argentina and European champion Spain was scheduled to be held in Doha on March 27. It was going to be a marquee matchup between the teams led by Lionel Messi and Lamine Yamal before this summer's World Cup in North America.

But the security of the game was put into serious doubt when Iran intensified its attacks on neighboring countries in retaliation to the aerial attacks by United States and Israel that are now in their third week.

"After much discussion between UEFA and the organizing authorities in Qatar, it is announced today that due to the current political situation in the region, the Finalissima between UEFA EURO 2024 winners Spain and CONMEBOL Copa América 2024 champions Argentina cannot be played as hoped in Qatar on 27 March," UEFA said in a statement.

Argentina and Spain were to play at Lusail Stadium, which staged the epic 2022 World Cup final. Argentina won a penalty shootout against France after Messi scored twice and Kylian



In this file photo, spectators fill the stands during the World Cup round of 16 soccer match between Portugal and Switzerland, at the Lusail Stadium in Lusail, Qatar. (AP)

Mbappé got a hat trick in a thrilling 3-3 draw.

Other venues had reportedly been considered as alternatives to Doha, including Spain's capital. UEFA, however, said all other feasible alternatives it explored "ultimately proved unacceptable to the Argentinian Football Association."

"The first option was to stage the match at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on the original date with a 50:50 split of supporters in the

stadium," UEFA said. "This would have provided a world-class setting, befitting of such a prestigious event, but Argentina refused."

The option of staging the event over two legs - one in Madrid on March 27, the other in Buenos Aires before the Euros and Copa America in 2028 - was also rejected. Argentina had proposed to play the match later this year after the World Cup but Spain had no available dates.

South American soccer body Con-

mebol said in a statement on Sunday that Argentina's soccer federation (AFA) received an offer from UEFA to play the match in Italy on March 27, but the defending World Cup and Copa America champions countered that the game take place on March 31.

"Regrettably, UEFA said the match taking place on the 31st - only four days after their original offer - was not possible, and so the Finalissima was cancelled," the South American confederation said. "CONMEBOL and AFA regret deeply that, despite all the efforts and the manifested interest in playing the match in a neutral ground since the first moment, it was not possible."

Argentina won the inaugural edition of the Finalissima in 2022 with a 3-0 victory over Italy at Wembley Stadium in London.

The violence in the Middle East, where Iran is hitting the Gulf Arab states with drone and missile attacks, has stranded travelers, upset economic markets and sent oil prices soaring.

It has also impacted the world of international sport beyond the Finalissima. Formula 1's races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia scheduled for April have been called off due to the war, while President Donald Trump has suggested that Iran not participate in this summer's World Cup that is co-hosted by the U.S.

AFC says Iran is still set to play at W.Cup

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, March 16, (AP): A leading soccer official in Asia says Iran is still set to play at the World Cup which kicks off in June in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

In a social media post last week in reaction to comments from U.S. President Donald Trump, Iran's national soccer team said "no one can exclude" it from playing in the global tournament.

Asian Football Confederation general secretary Windsor John said the sport's continental governing body has heard nothing to suggest Iran won't contest the World Cup.

"They are our member. We want them to play," he told a news conference in Kuala Lumpur, where the AFC is based. "As far as we know, Iran is playing."

"It's a very emotional moment, everybody is saying a lot of things. At the end of the day, it's the (Iran soccer) federation who should decide if they're playing and, as for today, the federation ... has told us that they're going to the World Cup."

Trump had posted on social media that the Iranian team was welcome at the World Cup despite the ongoing war with Iran but that "I really don't believe it is appropriate that they be there, for their own life and safety."

Iran is set to play all three of its World Cup group games in the U.S., which is co-hosting the tournament with Mexico and Canada.

The regional war has put doubt on Iran's ability to fulfill its World Cup entry, and sports minister Ahmad Donyamali told state TV last week that the current circumstances meant it was not possible to play.

But the Iran team's riposte on Instagram confirmed it still wants to participate, and pointed out that the tournament is run by FIFA, soccer's world governing body, not Trump or the U.S. Iran is scheduled to play in Inglewood, California, against New Zealand on June 16 and Belgium on June 21, before finishing group play in Seattle against Egypt on June 27.

Sinner, Aryna Sabalenka claim their first titles at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS, Calif., March 16, (AP): Jannik Sinner beat Daniil Medvedev in the Indian Wells final 7-6 (6), 7-6 (4) on Sunday, winning seven straight points to rally from a 4-0 deficit in the second-set tiebreak and claim the title without dropping a single set.

The No. 2-ranked Italian beat Medvedev for the ninth time in their last 10 matches to claim his first title at the California desert tournament. Medvedev handed top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz his first loss of the year in the semifinals of the BNP Paribas Open.

Sinner congratulated fellow Italian Kimi Antonelli, who won Formula One's Chinese Grand Prix earlier.

"It hasn't anything to do with tennis, but it has been a special day for Italy," Sinner said. "Because I'm a huge Formula One fan and having a very, very young Italian, Kimi, bringing Italy back home at the top, it's amazing. So, thanks, Kimi, thanks Formula One, and see you next year."

World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka beat Elena Rybakina 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (6) in the women's final Sunday for her first Indian Wells title. Sabalenka, a runner-up in 2023 and '25, finished off the win with a big serve that Rybakina hit long.

It was a sweltering afternoon on the court as the temperatures soared into the 90s. The 27-year-old Sabalenka had a chance to close out the third set but was broken at 5-4. Rybakina found herself with a championship point in the tiebreaker, only to have Sabalenka hit a backhand winner.

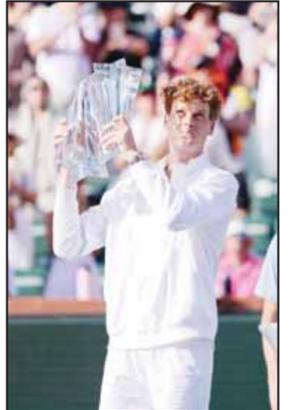
"I think the whole idea going into this match was to be mentally strong, to stay strong, no matter what, to show with the body language that I'm here, I'm fighting," Sabalenka said in a post-match interview on the Tennis Channel. "You have to get a win with incredible tennis and that was the whole idea going into this one. I'm happy that it really worked."

It's been quite a stretch for Sabalenka. First, a puppy and then an engagement ring from Brazilian businessman Georgios Frangulis.

Now, a title in the desert. "I'll remember it for the rest of my life," she said.

This marked the 16th time the two players have met, with Sabalenka now holding a 9-7 advantage. Rybakina of Kazakhstan beat Sabalenka at the 2025 WTA Finals championship and the Australian Open two months ago. She also edged Sabalenka in the finals at Indian Wells in 2023.

"It was a very difficult match," Rybakina said after the match as she con-



Jannik Sinner, of Italy, holds the winner's trophy after defeating Daniil Medvedev, of Russia, during a final match at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)



Aryna Sabalenka, of Belarus, poses for photos after defeating Elena Rybakina, of Kazakhstan, to win the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, Calif. (AP)

gratulated Sabalenka. "There's not much time to celebrate for Sabalenka, who was set to leave Sunday night for the Miami Open, where she's the defending champion."

"Probably will have a couple drinks on the plane and that's it," Sabalenka said. "I'm defending champion there, so I have to bring my best tennis there. But with these vibes that I'm taking from here, I think I'll be able to be there and to fight and to do my very best to defend that beautiful trophy."

Laporta wins 5 more years as president of Barcelona

BARCELONA, Spain, March 16, (AP): Joan Laporta was reelected as the president of FC Barcelona for another five years after winning a leadership vote among members of the Spanish soccer powerhouse.

Shortly after midnight in Barcelona, the club announced Laporta had won.

His only rival, Víctor Font, had earlier conceded defeat and congratulated Laporta "for his unquestionable victory."

With the counting now over, Barcelona said Laporta received 68% of the votes.

The club said that more than 48,000 of Barça's 114,000 club members cast ballots at Camp Nou Stadium or at four other voting stations across Catalonia in northeastern Spain and in Andorra.

"Thanks to this marvelous club, where its fans still vote to decide who

will be their president and executive board," Laporta said in his victory speech inside an auditorium at Camp Nou, flanked by members of his incoming board.

Laporta successfully presided over Barça from 2003-10 during the glory years of coach Pep Guardiola and a young Lionel Messi.

He was voted back into his post in 2021 when the club was in a dire economic situation after the lavish spending on players by president Josep Bartomeu and the financial hit of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Laporta responded to the crisis by deciding Barcelona could no longer afford Messi, who left for Paris Saint-Germain, and selling off some club assets, including 25% of its Spanish league TV rights for the next 25 years.