



Gov. visits local police stations, reviews work Page 3



Al-Jarallah: Regional peace elusive until change of regime in Iran

— Details Page 2 —

KUWAIT ORDERS AIRLINES TO REFUND TICKETS WITHIN 15 DAYS

Defenses hold under Iran barrage

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The Ministry of Defense announced Tuesday that Kuwaiti air defense systems detected 17 hostile ballistic missiles within Kuwaiti airspace over the past 24 hours, 13 of which were intercepted and destroyed, while four fell outside the threat zones without posing danger.

In a media briefing, spokesperson of the ministry Colonel Saud Al-Atwan disclosed that the interception operations resulted in the fall of debris in several areas, causing minor material damage to some houses and disrupted some parts of the power grid, while no casualties were reported.

He added that 13 hostile drones were also detected, 10 of which were destroyed, while three fell outside the threat zones, without harming anyone.

He affirmed the readiness and resilience of the Kuwait Armed Forces in maintaining national security and protecting the sovereignty of the country under the current circumstances.

Moreover, the Ministry of Interior reported on the same day that explosive ordnance disposal teams handled 13 incidents in the last 24 hours caused by debris from defense interception operations. No injuries were reported, only material damage.

Brigadier General Nasser Bouslaib, spokesperson of the ministry, disclosed that the total number of reports since the Iranian attacks started has reached 511. He said the air raid sirens were activated 13 times over the past 24 hours, totaling 131 activations since the beginning of the aggression.

He also reminded the public about the special grace period for surrendering unlicensed firearms, ammunition and explosives -- until the end of working hours on April 1 at any police station.

He urged the public to avoid debris sites to ensure their safety and to allow the concerned teams to operate efficiently.

He concluded with prayers for the protection of Kuwait and the safety of its people.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Education confirmed that all the necessary measures have been taken to protect the students and staff, while ensuring uninterrupted learning through a flexible system that adapts to developments and maintains educational quality.

Remote learning continues with textbooks delivered door-to-door

Kuwait Airways simplifies travel with new Saudi transit visa option

Continued on Page 5

Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Iran drinks poison and pays compensation

REGARDLESS of the Iranian media's lies, Tehran has capitulated. When the Iranian regime's foreign minister says he has received the Supreme Leader's approval to end the war as quickly as possible, it signals that Iran is once again preparing to drink the poison.

However, it will not be like what happened in the 1980s, because the world has changed. Moreover, it will take decades to repair trust between Iran and its neighbors due to the transformations witnessed in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

The same applies to all Arab states, as the experiences they have endured cannot be forgotten easily.

Therefore, the dramatic developments of the past few days have determined how this phase is likely to end and may shape the regional trajectory for decades to come.

This situation forces the leaders of the Persian regime to do whatever they can to preserve their image in the eyes of their people.

From this perspective, one can understand the Iranian regime's demand that the United States acknowledge itself as the aggressor and agree to pay compensation to Iran.

Regarding the first condition, Iran's lead-

ers seem to ignore the fact that the issue is not limited to recent actions but spans a history of terrorism that began in 1979 and continues to this day. Therefore, it is Tehran that should acknowledge its aggression, not Washington or the Gulf capitals, which have suffered greatly from Iranian hostility.

Secondly, compensation is paid by the defeated, similar to what happened with Germany after World War II. Despite the fall of the Nazi regime and Hitler's death, Berlin continues to pay reparations to all countries harmed by Nazi aggression.

The same applies to Japan, which paid reparations for decades to the neighboring countries it attacked.

Continued on Page 5

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PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs a high-level meeting to review plans for boosting strategic reserves and ensuring the steady supply of essential goods across Kuwait.

Kuwait ramps up strategic reserves as Prime Minister reviews supply security

KUWAIT CITY, March 24, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired a meeting Tuesday to review plans to bolster strategic reserves and ensure availability of

essential goods. The meeting also discussed maintaining smooth supply chains and steady food flows to meet local market needs under current conditions.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai, Kuwait Supply Company Chairman Salah Al-Kulaib, and Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company CEO Mutlaq Al-Zayed.

Seven power lines damaged, repairs underway

Kuwait ministry denies fake power outage lists

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy has denied reports circulating on social media about lists of areas allegedly scheduled for power outages in the coming hours.

The ministry confirmed that the circulated information dates back to 2024 and is unrelated to current conditions.

Meanwhile, the ministry announced late Monday that seven overhead power lines in several areas of the country were taken out of service due to damage sustained from falling debris following air defense interceptions.



Hayat

In a press release, the ministry's official spokesperson, Eng. Fatima Jawhar Hayat, stated that the incident resulted in partial power outages in certain areas, but the technical units are working to restore services expeditiously.

She assured that specialized field teams will commence repair operations as soon as the sites are secured in coordination with security authorities.

Eng. Hayat affirmed that these teams will conduct a comprehensive damage assessment to facilitate the restoration of the affected lines in accordance with the highest safety and security protocols.

Furthermore, she emphasized that emergency crews are on high alert around the clock to deal with any grid disturbances and ensure the continuity of the national power supply.

She urged citizens and residents to exercise caution and rely exclusively on official sources for information, and stated the ministry would provide further updates as the situation evolves.

Day by Day

THEY say, "Make your heart like an international airport, with one hall for arrivals and another for departures. Welcome those who arrive, and say goodbye to those who leave. The heart is large enough for many people. The important thing is to keep your nerves calm and remain at ease. Ultimately, peace of mind and tranquility are what matter most."
... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Final call to surrender unlicensed ammos

10 Kuwaitis added to terror list

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday issued a circular to companies and financial institutions regarding the addition of 10 citizens to the national terrorism list.

This action is based on Ministerial Resolution No. 176/2025 regarding the executive regulations of the committee tasked to implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions issued under Chapter VII on combating terrorism and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The concerned authorities stressed the need for immediate compliance with the listing decision, as stated in articles 21, 22 and 23 of the

executive regulations. These articles stipulate the immediate freezing of funds and economic resources belonging to the listed individuals, whether held directly or indirectly, without delay or prior notice.

The resolution also prohibits the provision of funds, financial services or economic resources to the listed individuals, whether directly or indirectly, including through entities under their control.

The circular emphasized that the scope of the freeze extends to funds generated from or derived from the frozen economic resources.

The concerned authorities are required to notify the competent committee within 24 hours of implementing the freezing measures and to provide details about the funds and measures taken.

Continued on Page 5

'No walk-ins'

PACI shifts to morning-only

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) announced an update to its visitor reception procedures, effective Tuesday, March 24, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, PACI explained that evening visits will be suspended until further notice. Visitors will now be received during a single working period - morning shift - from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Visitors must book an appointment in advance through the "Meta" platform or the "Sahel" application. Transactions that can be completed online will not be accepted in person.

Flow disruptions push jet fuel prices above \$200 per barrel

Attacks on Kuwaiti refineries trigger global jet fuel crisis

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: In a development proving the fragility of global energy supply chains, attacks on the Ahmadi and Mina Abdullah refineries, along with the almost total disruption of shipping traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, triggered a rapidly escalating global crisis in jet fuel supplies, impacting international air traffic and the operating costs of airlines.

According to the report published by Windward, these developments removed about 10 percent of the world's seaborne jet fuel supply -- one of the biggest shocks to the aviation sector in years.

Kuwait plays a vital role in the jet fuel market, as it is the world's second-largest exporter after South Korea, with exports projected to reach about 260,000 barrels per day in 2025 or around 10 percent of global seaborne trade in this fuel. Majority of

these exports are in the Mina Al-Ahmadi and Mina Abdullah refineries, which account for 61 percent of total shipment, hence, any disruption there has direct and immediate impact on global markets.

Major markets such as France, the United States of America, Netherlands and Belgium rely heavily on Kuwaiti supplies, given the limited domestic production in Europe.

The Windward report revealed that 73 loaded jet fuel tankers (LR1 and LR2), including eight shipments, are stranded in the western part of the Strait of Hormuz, with new loading operations halted for more than three days. It indicated that this logistical disruption caused delays in global supply chains, increased maritime transportation costs, and disrupted refueling schedules at international airports.

Data from shipping tracking companies, such as Vortexa, showed that jet fuel flows through the Gulf have declined significantly, further increasing pressure on

European and Asian markets. Before the crisis worsened, jet fuel prices already surpassed \$202 per barrel on March 17, according to the Windward report.

As shortages intensified, prices began to climb even higher, prompting global airlines to take emergency measures, particularly rescheduling long-haul flights, reducing operational loads, seeking alternative fuel sources, and raising ticket prices to offset costs.

According to previous reports by Reuters and Bloomberg, jet fuel is about 25 percent to 35 percent of airlines costs, making any price increase a direct impact on the sector.

The repercussions of the crisis are not limited to Kuwait, as they extend to other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which are among the world's most important energy production and export hubs.

Continued on Page 4



8 Boursa Kuwait lists Trolley on the 'Premier' Market

8 Makhazen posts FY 2025 results



9 Jazeera Airways establishes critical supply chain corridor to Kuwait via Qaisumah

Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:29	Asr	15:23
Sunrise ..	05:48	Maghrib ..	18:01
Zohr	11:54	Isha	19:19

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

Resilient Gulf appreciates US position

Al-Jarallah: Regional peace elusive until change of regime in Iran

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers and Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism, emphasized the need to reopen the Strait of Hormuz in line with international demands, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an interview with Al Arabiya TV, Al-Jarallah said, "We have followed the statements of the Iranian Foreign Minister, and it seems he is not in control. Some of his statements contain fallacies and attempts to downplay the situation. Therefore, these statements are neither final nor accurate, and we do not know who is actually ruling Iran because the country is effectively without a leader.

We, as the people of the Gulf, do not want this war to end until the regime in Iran changes, because this regime is harmful to us and the region. We appreciate America's position and its actions, which we ourselves are unable to achieve."

Al-Jarallah emphasized that

without this war leading to a regime change, the results will not be satisfactory, stressing that, "We want the Iranian regime to be replaced with a civilized one, different from the one that has ruled Iran for the past 47 years."

Al-Jarallah stated that this regime has caused disruption in the region and across the world.

He went on to say, "At times, we listened to the speeches of the late Supreme Leader of the Iranian Revolution as if angels were speaking to us from heaven. The situation was frightening for us, and it led to the stagnation of Kuwait's development, hindering its progress and the advancement of its infrastructure.

The GDP of this region is \$7 trillion, which could bring prosperity to its people and make it a powerful force in the region. However, the Iranian regime has destroyed the Gulf states and harmed their people."

Al-Jarallah noted that US President Donald Trump has acted on



Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah talks.

everything he promised over the past twenty days, and even faster than expected.

He expressed regret that Iranians who defend their rulers have no access to accurate information, insisting that every statement made by the Iranian regime is proven false

within two days.

Al-Jarallah emphasized that the entire region was on edge, stressing that Trump would follow through on everything he said regarding Iran.

He explained that the Iranian regime is a nuisance to the region and the world. The Gulf states pos-

sess advanced and well-developed defense technology. Although Iran launched five thousand missiles and drones at the Gulf states, it achieved no success, creating much noise but posing no real threat.

Al-Jarallah highlighted that the Iranians themselves invited the Americans by threatening Israel and dragging their country into a quagmire that has destabilized the region.

He stressed that the continuation of the Iranian regime will not bring peace, emphasizing the necessity of regime change.

Al-Jarallah said, "Israel has existed since 1948. If Israel has unfortunately expanded, the responsibility lies with those who assumed the mantle of liberating Palestine."

He stressed that these were organizations that profited from crises, the latest being the October 7th War, instigated by Iran, which incited the Palestinians to attack Israel.

Al-Jarallah asked, "Wasn't Iran

the one that caused damage to Egypt in the Suez Canal, resulting in losses estimated at eight billion US dollars? Who invaded Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and Iraq through their proxies? Isn't it Iran that is working to destroy the Arab world, indeed, to destroy the Arab nation? Even Makkah and Madinah have not been spared from Iranian targeting. If we know the borders of Israel as described in the Talmud, then where are the borders of Iran, which has attacked Makkah and Madinah through the Houthis?"

Al-Jarallah said, "We will not see peace as long as the Iranian regime continues its policy of exporting its revolution to the states of the region."

Al-Jarallah concluded by asking, "Who caused the war in Yemen and spent money on it? Who is responsible for such devastation? Who instigated the Houthis to attack Saudi Arabia? And who destroyed Lebanon?"

MoH working full strength

All geared up: Dr Al-Awadhi

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY March 24: The Ministry of Health (MoH) intensified its preparations in order to raise health readiness to the highest level in view of the outbreak of war between the United States of America, Israel and Iran.



Dr. Al-Awadhi

This is part of a comprehensive national system for protecting society and ensuring the continuity of medical services. The proactive approach combined field readiness and resource management with institutional integration in various State entities, thus, improving the ability of Kuwait to deal with the repercussions of regional tensions.

From the very first moments of the escalation of tension in the region, the ministry held a series of emergency meetings, chaired by Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, with senior ministry officials in attendance. They reviewed emergency plans and updated response scenarios to align with the evolving situation, while closely monitoring regional developments round the clock.

The health preparedness and response strategies relied on proactive plans that include bolstering the strategic stockpile of medicines and medical supplies, reviewing supply chains, and increasing the readiness level of emergency departments, intensive care units and operating rooms. All health facilities operate at full capacity despite the reduced working hours in other government agencies.

To improve field response, the Health Operations Unit has been activated, along with intensified coordination with other relevant government agencies, primarily the ministries of Interior and Defense, to ensure integrated roles and rapid decision-making.

The emergency medical system operates through 79 centers and ambulance points, supported by a fleet of 222 ambulances and specialized technical staff working round the clock.

The ministry intensified environmental

monitoring procedures, including monitoring radiation levels in seawater, drinking water and airborne particles through 13 monitoring stations that are operating 24/7.

The Poison Control Center is also prepared to handle any emergency related to chemical or radioactive materials, and potassium iodide is available as needed.

Regarding health resource management, the ministry implemented temporary organizational measures, including postponing non-emergency surgeries and limiting outpatient clinic hours to one day for dispensing medications only.

Services gradually returned to normal, with scheduled surgeries and clinics resuming according to a flexible plan that balances preparedness and service continuity.

Primary healthcare centers continued their regular operations, with some operating round the clock, thus, helping to alleviate pressure on hospital emergency departments.

Moreover, official data issued by the ministry revealed that the total number of injuries related to the current events in the region reached 67, while one death was recorded.

The ministry announced at the beginning of the attacks that 12 injuries were recorded in Farwaniya, Jahra and Mubarak Al-Kabeer hospitals, ranging from moderate to minor, with one case requiring intensive care.

Later, Adan Hospital recorded 32 injuries, 15 of which were transferred to Jaber Hospital for specialized treatment. Five underwent surgery and one death was recorded.

On another day, 19 injuries were recorded and most of them are in stable condition. Two minor injuries were recorded in a separate incident, in addition to injuries sustained by two paramedics when shrapnel fell on an ambulance station. All cases were treated according to the highest standards of care.

Regarding operational capacity, the ministry announced that the bed occupancy rate reached 49 percent -- good capacity within a comprehensive healthcare system that includes seven general hospitals, 14 specialized centers and 118 primary healthcare centers. These facilities employ about 66,000 healthcare professionals.

The ministry provides psychological support services through 75 clinics and launched the 151 hotline that operates round the clock for psychological consultations.

It also confirmed that the blood supply is at reassuring levels, thanks to the expansion of donation campaigns that resulted in collecting about 2,000 units of blood -- an indication of community interaction with national efforts.



Kuwaiti and Arab Ambassadors in Poland and Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Radoslaw Sikorski at the meeting. KUNA photo

Continuous Iran hits threaten stability, seaways

KUWAIT CITY, March 24, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to Poland, Saad Al-Muhaini, stated on Tuesday that Iran's blatant attacks and violations against Kuwait and other regional countries threaten security, stability, and the freedom of navigation in international waterways, emphasizing Kuwait's inherent right to self-defense.

In statements to KUNA following a meeting between Arab Ambassadors in Poland and Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Radoslaw Sikorski, Al-Muhaini discussed

the repercussions of Iranian attacks.

During the meeting, he affirmed that Iranian threats are constantly increasing, pointing to repeated strikes using missiles and drones. He also highlighted the "threat to freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, which could lead to a global economic crisis and the outbreak of a large-scale conflict."

He further clarified that Kuwait has been targeted by drone and missile strikes that compromised its sovereignty and damaged infrastructure, civilian facilities, and commercial areas.

The Ambassador affirmed that the State of Kuwait is addressing these repeated and reprehensible attacks through diplomacy and international norms, guided by Islamic values and humanitarian principles, while maintaining its full commitment to the right of self-defense.

He called upon the international community to take immediate action to halt these violations, protect regional stability, and ensure the security of navigation in critical waterways, particularly the Strait of Hormuz.

India, Asian countries to resume Iran oil imports

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The possibility of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) amending the terms of its crude oil and refined product sales contracts with China, India and Asian markets in general to allow transportation via tankers from these countries has become a point of discussion.

This comes amid heightened attention to maritime developments, as ship tracking platforms showed Iran allowing two tankers bound for India, carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

According to the tracking data, these tankers loaded fuel in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait, in addition to another previous instance in which two Indian-registered LPG tankers were permitted to pass through the strait. The passage of these two vessels is being viewed as a potential early indication of a partial easing of tanker congestion in the Strait of Hormuz.

Hajjaj Boukhadour, a former official at the Arab Shipping Company and an oil analyst, stated in an exclusive interview with the newspaper that Iran's decision to allow two Indian tankers to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, despite ongoing congestion, signals the beginning of a resolution to the shipping bottleneck that has affected the strait since the outbreak of war at the end of last month.

He explained that a broader resolution allowing the passage of all vessels is likely to materialize sooner or later, pointing out that the two tankers bound for India were among those that had remained stranded for an extended period.

He said the Kuwaiti oil and petroleum product export contracts are typically structured in one of two ways. "The first involves delivering oil at Kuwaiti ports, with the importing party assuming responsibility for transportation to its destination," he disclosed. He added that most oil sales contracts follow this model, as buyers generally seek the most cost-effective arrangements. He stated that this mechanism has historically enabled clients of KPC to charter oil tankers from various countries.

Regarding the second option, Boukhadour revealed that Kuwaiti crude oil and its derivatives may be shipped from the ports of Ahmadi or Shuaiba to the importer's destination using Kuwaiti tankers or vessels chartered by KPC when necessary. "In such cases, KPC is not obligated to ensure delivery to the importer's port, and contracts do not require transportation exclusively via Kuwaiti tankers," he elaborated.

He expects that tankers carrying Kuwaiti oil and gas, particularly those owned by importing countries, will be permitted to transit through the strait. He was quick to add though that the existing contracts for the sale of Kuwaiti oil are unlikely to be amended, especially given their long-term nature.

In a related development, India announced plans to resume imports of Iranian oil, while several Asian refineries have shown interest in purchasing Iranian crude after the United States temporarily eased sanctions on Iranian oil imports for 30 days to mitigate the energy crisis stemming from the ongoing American-Israeli conflict with Iran.

Other Voices

The great advantages of 'miniature' screens

By Ahmad alsarraf

DESPITE the drawbacks and risks associated with smartphones, especially with the widespread use of social media and its applications, their benefits are undeniable.

The phone has become almost an extension of the human body. People rarely take a step, leave the house, or perform any task without it.

Hundreds of government agencies, banks, and private sector companies are accessed and managed through this vital yet potentially dangerous device. The mobile phone functions like dynamite, offering dozens of essential human and urban applications, while also having the potential to cause harm to thousands of people if misused.

At the same time, the phone has become a source of reassurance. Many places and routes that were once inaccessible are now reachable, giving users the confidence that they can know their location and call for help or rescue at any moment.

Modern mobile devices capture our time, attention, and focus, often preventing us from fully enjoying meals, listening to others, spending quality time with family and friends, pursuing hobbies, and more. Yet, there is a positive side - they help illuminate the path for millions and influence mindsets on a large scale. This is a task that previously required tremendous effort, many years, and significant expense.

In the past, a politician, religious leader, or public figure could make a statement that would appear in newspapers or on the radio, only to be forgotten the next day.

Today, however, the situation has changed. We can not only retain and re-

trieve what is said, but mobile devices can also search for and republish past statements, providing a clearer understanding of these individuals' history, opinions, and positions.

Individuals can now complete a wide range of tasks through mobile applications, including paying bills, purchasing necessities, renewing car registrations, or selling a vehicle and receiving payment. They can also carry out numerous other transactions, monitor whether medications are collected from government pharmacies on their behalf, or confirm grocery purchases made in their name. A person can receive blood test results, track employee travel times, receive notifications from the Ministry of Justice regarding court cases, renew licenses from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and verify deposits such as salaries, stock dividends, or cooperative society contributions in their bank accounts.

Users can also submit complaints to the National Human Rights Commission, particularly for non-citizens, request prison visits, or receive notifications when a power of attorney, general or special, has been issued by the Ministry of Justice. In addition, individuals can inquire about their bank account status by phone and receive instant alerts for any transactions.

What many do not know, or choose not to discuss, often because they feel powerless to stop it, is the intellectual shift caused by written and video content circulating on social media platforms. This content is influencing the minds of millions, both positively and negatively, particularly among young people due to constant exposure.

Conviction in ideas that were once taken for granted has begun to waver, along with the image of many figures, especially contemporary ones who were once influential, after their superficiality, falsehoods, and opportunism were exposed.

□ □ □

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Appeal upheld as sister takes over from father as caregiver

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The Administrative Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of a lower court that obligated the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) to change the designated caregiver for a person with disability from the father to the sister, including all resulting privileges, particularly the issuance of a caregiver assignment certificate under the sister's name for her to benefit from early retirement.

The case involves a citizen, represented by Attorney Dr. Fadhil Al-Basman, who filed a lawsuit so she could be appointed as caregiver for her brother with permanent moderate physical disability, instead of her father who is more than 70 years old and no longer physically capable of fulfilling caregiver duties.

The court pointed out that the administrative body's refusal to respond to or act on the request of the plaintiff even if she fulfilled the legal requirements and submitted the necessary documents is a negative ad-

ministrative decision that contradicts the law, hence, the need to annul it.

The court emphasized that the documents proved the disabled person's need for a caregiver and that the sister met the requirements in terms of shared residence, physical fitness and clean criminal record, in addition to the consent of the current designated caregiver.

It clarified that Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law No. 8/2010, its implementing regulations and related decisions permit changing the designated caregiver through a court order. This entails transferring the associated benefits, including the right to early retirement, to the new caregiver.

Al-Basman said the ruling proves that the administrative bodies are obligated not to obstruct the request of those entitled to care and the necessity of processing them in accordance with the law.

He added that the judiciary guaranteed justice for his client, affirming her right to take care of her brother and benefit from the legally stipulated privileges, such as early retirement.



Boukhadour

'Terror' networks erode Gulf states trust in Iran

"WHEN examining reports on cells linked to the Iranian regime in the Arabian Gulf states, it is clear that the concept of "exporting the revolution," enshrined in the Iranian constitution, is being systematically implemented. This reality calls for heightened security measures when dealing with groups that support this regime," columnist **Sheikh Eng. Fahad Dawood Al-Sabah** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"To avoid any misinterpretation, these groups belong to various sects. Focusing on sectarian identity is not only unhelpful but also highly detrimental to the social fabric of the Gulf states, which today more than ever require internal national unity and adherence to Gulf principles.



Al-Sabah

"National unity is the fundamental factor in thwarting all attempts by enemies to exploit any vulnerability.

"Standing by the political leadership and following the directives of the relevant authorities is the foundation of security.

"Kuwait today is in dire need of upholding national unity among all segments of society.

"The current Iranian regime relies on small networks, even in the economic sphere, seeing them as the optimal means to evade the sanctions imposed on it for 47 years.

"Over time, the regime has gained numerous advantages, leading to the normalization of smuggling networks, not only for everyday goods but also for drugs.

"Therefore, solutions must be unconventional and cannot rely on methods borrowed from the experiences of others.

"A haphazard approach is ineffective due to its disastrous consequences.

"During World War II, the United States imposed social isolation on Japanese residents, including those born on American soil and holding U.S. citizenship.

"The result was disastrous, as the country lost a vital part of its economic workforce at a time when every contribution was needed for the war effort.

"The Iranian regime's reliance on these networks further complicates matters, as they fuel social, economic, and security instability at a time when countries must maintain stability to effectively counter external threats.

"Since 1979, the Iranian regime has employed this tactic in many countries. In Argentina, for example, Iran maintained cells aimed at destabilizing the country, as well as in Bulgaria, the United States, and much of Latin America. This diverted the attention of security services from more immediate and critical threats.

"The regime also frequently used these networks to acquire components for its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

"Today, in the confrontation between Iran, the United States, and Israel, the Iranian regime has activated some of these cells and targeted the Gulf states, which for years have worked to prevent a clash between Tehran and Washington.

"These countries have played a significant role in this effort, opposing the use of their territories for Iran's activities.

"Instead of using this advantage to maintain friendly relations with its neighbors, Iran attacked them, thus destroying trust. The Gulf market had been Iran's lifeline, helping to support an economy that has been weakened by sanctions imposed since 1979.

"Today, Tehran has lost both this market and the trust it spent years trying to rebuild. What occurred in the last war has changed the relationship between Iran and its neighbors.

"This change is likely to last for decades, even if the Iranian regime undergoes changes in the coming years, because trust has been thoroughly eroded."

Also:

"Kenneth Pollack, a military analyst at the CIA, makes a point that can be summarized as follows - Since World War II, countries have attempted to overthrow foreign governments using air power, and it has been proven that toppling a regime without deploying ground forces is impossible," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Current US and Israeli military actions against Iran are likely to lead to several scenarios. The first, and most likely, is that the regime remains, but becomes even more reckless and aggressive toward the US and Israel than its predecessor, while becoming more committed to developing nuclear weapons. This regime would be far worse than the one before it.

"If the regime falls, Iran is likely to descend into civil war and widespread chaos. History provides countless examples of how the collapse of a government creates a security vacuum. Without a large ground force capable of immediate intervention to impose law and order, a devastating civil war would quickly erupt.

"The next most likely scenario in the event of a regime collapse is the establishment of a military dictatorship, not by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, but by the Iranian armed forces. This mirrors what happened in Iran after World War I, when the country de-

scended into chaos. Iran fell into civil war until Reza Shah Pahlavi, a Russian-backed Cossack commander in the old Iranian army, crushed all rivals, forced various ethnic groups into submission, and declared himself Shah.

"Such a military dictator might be harsh and unpopular, but would likely be far better than a headline regime, and this outcome could be preferable for many Arab states. One potential opportunity for regime change in Iran lies in eliminating Hezbollah in Lebanon. Removing this party, the Iranian regime's most important ally, would signal the Islamic Republic's possible demise and weaken the morale of its forces. If the Lebanese were to defeat Hezbollah, the Iranians might be emboldened to take similar action to overthrow the regime in their own country.

"Events in the Gulf region are unfolding rapidly, and we will address them sequentially, God willing. In summary, Iran is launching hostile drone and missile attacks on peaceful Gulf states and mobilizing its proxies to carry out acts of sabotage. However, its agents are being neutralized one by one in the Gulf, and its actions have harmed the global economy. Iran believes it is victorious and seeks a high price to end the war, while President Trump faces significant challenges in managing the situation with Iran."



"Today, there is no time for mere observation. All efforts must be focused on upholding the truth in the face of an oppressive enemy that disregards the values of Islam, goodness, and neighborliness," columnist **Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"This article, therefore, highlights the positive contributions of everyone, expressing gratitude and appreciation for all efforts, from the leadership to the lowest-ranking members of the state apparatus, and for all those working to strengthen unity, uphold national cohesion, boost morale, and exert maximum effort to prevent the enemy from achieving any of its objectives. It is essential that everyone fulfills their role to the fullest.

"A special tribute must be paid to those who sacrificed their lives to thwart the enemy. The righteous martyrs should serve as a symbol for all Kuwaitis and all who live on this blessed land. Their images should indeed be displayed everywhere.

"The Kuwaiti Army, the nation's impregnable shield, deserves foremost recognition. It has exerted extraordinary effort during this critical period and deserves our deepest gratitude. Every day, our armed forces thwart the enemy's attempts to destabilize the country. They work tirelessly to maintain stability and continue to succeed in this mission daily. Our thanks to them are immense.

"Gratitude is also due to the Ministry of Interior for its outstanding work, from Public Security and Traffic Police to the State Security apparatus and various other sectors that have maintained a stable security environment and eased the burden on the people. Their efforts allow us to live our normal lives, supported by the dedication of our armed forces and security services.

"Appreciation is equally due to the Kuwait Fire Force, which exerts exceptional efforts in all sectors. These men are among the first to deserve our heartfelt thanks.

"The National Guard serves as the second shield in maintaining the country's security. Its efforts are immense, and it has made many sacrifices for the sake of the nation. It, too, deserves our deepest gratitude.

"Cooperative societies have demonstrated a high degree of responsibility during this period, helping to maintain food security, and they deserve our thanks.

"We must also acknowledge our brothers, the farmers, who work tirelessly to preserve food security. They too merit our appreciation.

"Gratitude is also due to the health system throughout the country, which is making tremendous efforts to ensure self-sufficiency in medicine and to support the nation's well-being.

"Our deepest gratitude goes to the people who consider Kuwait their last refuge. They have made significant contributions, and we are truly thankful for all they do for the nation.

"While we acknowledge the efforts of all who have contributed, it is impossible to cover everyone in these few lines, as their efforts span every sector. However, the oil sector holds particular importance, as it has been the target of numerous attacks by the Iranian enemy. The men of this sector deserve our deepest gratitude for working under extremely challenging conditions.

"Yes, gratitude is due, but many observations remain, which are irrelevant at this moment. Once the war ends and security is fully restored, we must learn the lessons and work to close all gaps. Kuwait is, after all, our last refuge; we have no other. Protecting it is everyone's duty, yet gratitude alone is not enough.

"Finally, may God protect Kuwait, its people, and all who reside on its land, and may He lift this affliction."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

KFF chief reviews fire vehicles readiness



Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Maj. Gen. Talal Al-Roumi visits fire-fighting stations, reviews vehicles readiness in case of emergencies.



KUNA photos

KUWAIT CITY, March 24, (KUNA): The Chief of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Maj. Gen. Talal Al-Roumi paid a tour on Monday to fire-fighting vehicles to inspect technical preparation for the current situation.

During his tour, Al-Roumi reviewed the readiness of the vehicles and the new projects carried out by the workshop's teams, which included the development and manufacturing of several firefighting vehicles, in accordance with the highest operational standards, KFF said in a press statement.

Al-Roumi also praised the efforts by the technical teams, affirming that their distinguished work which has a direct impact on the field through the efficiency and speed of firefighting operations, as well as supporting the safety of the teams while performing their duties, the statement added.

Al-Roumi emphasized the importance of continuing development and innovation due to their essential role in enhancing readiness and improving response capabilities to various risks.



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah arrives at the Khaitan police station.

Policemen win praise

Gov. visits local police stations, reviews work

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah conducted an inspection tour of the Farwaniya and Khaitan police stations on Monday evening for monitoring security operations and assessing field readiness throughout the governorate's various security sectors.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Assistant Director of Security for Farwaniya Governorate Brigadier General Yahya Dashti, along with several senior officials, accompanied the governor during the tour.

They provided a detailed presentation of operational mechanisms and security procedures, highlighting the most significant efforts undertaken to maintain security and enhance stability.

Governor Sheikh Athbi reviewed the workflow, and praised the high level of competence demonstrated by Ministry of Interior's personnel.

He emphasized the importance of continuously raising the level of security readiness, expediting the response to and handling of various reports, and contributing to the consolidation of safety and security in the governorate.

Governor Sheikh Athbi stressed the need to intensify coordination and cooperation among relevant agencies, and work as a team to keep pace with evolving security challenges and achieve the highest levels of institutional performance.

At the end of the tour, the governor expressed his deep appreciation for the efforts of the security personnel, commending their dedication and sincerity in performing their national duty, and reaffirmed the governorate's continued support for all measures that enhance the security system.

KFF plays heroic role in ongoing regional war

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) has shown the highest level of heroism in defending Kuwait under the current circumstances, in close coordination with the military. KFF has proven its competence in protecting lives and properties, while dealing with diverse field challenges.

Since the start of the Iranian aggression, all the fire stations in the governorates have been on high alert, with advanced emergency plans and a high degree of readiness to operate in cooperation with the Kuwait Armed Forces, Ministry of Interior and Kuwait National Guard (KNG).

This level of integration is a manifestation of a deeply rooted institutional framework that recognizes crisis management as requiring unity, rapid decision-making, and precise execution. The role of KFF was clearly demonstrated through its response to the growing number of reports about fire incidents resulting from attacks on vital and residential areas.

In the midst of flames and rising plumes, the firefighting teams exhibited exceptional efficiency in extinguishing the fire and preventing its spread in a race against time to protect lives and limit losses, always putting Kuwait's safety first.

Their responsibilities extended beyond firefighting to include evacuations, securing affected sites, and managing emergencies with a high level of professionalism. These efforts contributed to saving numerous lives and protecting the properties of citizens and expatriates, reflecting the immense responsibility that firefighters carry when dealing with risks and challenges.

The wide distribution of fire stations in the governorates played a vital role in speeding up response to reports on fire incidents. This strategic spread led to immediate arrival at fire incident sites and highly efficient handling of the situation, thereby, reducing damage remarkably.

On the media front, KFF assumed a role equally important as its field operations. It delivered daily briefings and explanatory statements on Kuwait Television, outlining the nature of incidents handled and the measures taken like routine cases or those arising from the aggression. This approach strengthened transparency and helped reassure the public.

Director General of the Public Relations and Media Department at KFF Brigadier General Mohammad Al-Gharib highlighted the scale of efforts exerted by firefighting teams since the onset of the Iranian aggression.

He stated that the total number of reports from Feb 28 until Tuesday reached 959, including 78 unusual incidents like falling debris and drones. He confirmed that the teams dealt with 36 fire incidents, which were extinguished in a highly efficient manner. He said this is in addition to 42 clearing and security operations in the affected sites before handing them over to the relevant authorities.

Expedite 'meds' border passage

Traveler care priority: Al-Nuwaif

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The Director General of General Administration for Customs (GAC), Yousef Al-Nuwaif, along with Deputy Director General Saleh Al-Omar, visited the Nuwaiseeb border crossing to monitor operations and assess its readiness, ensuring efficient performance and streamlined entry and exit procedures, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

Al-Nuwaif emphasized the importance of facilitating passenger procedures.

He explained that, in coordination with Kuwait Airways, a dedicated lane has been allocated for its passengers through the Nuwaiseeb crossing. This will expedite procedures and provide a seamless passenger experience, while also facilitating the movement of goods and vehicles via the fast lane, in line with the highest operational standards.

During the inspection tour, Al-Nuwaif affirmed the need to prioritize medical supplies and medications, and expedite their entry to ensure swift delivery and meet urgent needs, particularly given the current circumstances requiring immediate pre-

paredness and response. He highlighted the activation of the economic lane systems, which help facilitate the entry of trucks and goods, reduce waiting times, and increase the efficiency of commercial transport. The tour also included a meeting with customs inspectors to congratulate them on Eid al-Fitr.

Al-Nuwaif commended their sincere efforts, dedication to their national duty, and vital role in protecting the ports and enhancing customs security. To support the port with the latest technologies, Nuwaiseeb Port has been equipped with X-ray inspection devices specifically for trucks, improving the efficiency of inspections, increasing detection accuracy, and expediting procedures without compromising security.

This tour is part of GAC's strategy to develop the customs work environment, raise port efficiency, and achieve a balance between speed and accuracy of control, in a way that serves the public interest and aligns with international best practices.



Kuwaiti dies in mishap: A 60-year-old Kuwaiti citizen died in a traffic accident when his vehicle rolled over on the Doha Link Road toward the Sulabiya Farms, reports **Al-Anba** daily.

According to a security source, the Ministry of Interior's operations room received a report about an accident near the entrance to the Sulabiya Farms at its intersection with the Doha Link Road. Emergency medical personnel and security forces immediately responded to the scene and dealt with the accident, which had resulted in the driver's death.



LOCAL

GCC ambassadors and India discuss strategic co-op and regional defense

NEW DELHI, March 24, (KUNA): Ambassadors of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to India met on Tuesday with External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar to discuss bilateral relations and regional developments, the Kuwaiti Embassy in New Delhi said Tuesday.

The envoys underlined the depth of GCC-India ties, praising India's support and solidarity, including calls between senior Indian officials and GCC leaders.

They expressed gratitude for India's supportive stances in international forums, including its support for UN Security Council Resolution 2817, and for its efforts in promoting regional and international security and stability.

Discussions covered escalating regional tensions, including Iranian attacks targeting GCC and Arab states, stressing the need to halt them and

ensure protection of civilians and vital infrastructure, including energy facilities, airports and water desalination plants.

They also emphasized safeguarding maritime navigation and international waterways, particularly in the Strait of Hormuz, amid concerns over threats to shipping and regional stability.

Kuwait's Ambassador to India Meshal Al-Shemali told KUNA the meeting, held at India's Ministry of External Affairs, reflects ongoing coordination and a longstanding partnership based on mutual understanding.

He stressed the importance of intensifying cooperation to confront security challenges, protect infrastructure and waterways, and maintain regional stability, condemning repeated Iranian attacks on Kuwait and countries in the region as violations of sovereignty and international laws and conventions.

MoE implements online classes to maintain academic progress

New schedules, teacher training in place

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The Ministry of Education started online classes Tuesday through the Microsoft Teams in order to guarantee the continuity of the educational process under the current circumstances, reports Al-Seyassah daily quoting sources.

Sources said the ministry implemented several measures to ensure the smooth conduct of classes in public, private, religious and special education institutions, while closely monitoring student attendance.

Sources disclosed that the school administrations distributed class schedules to teachers in line with the daily timetable that Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei presented during his extensive meeting with the educational officials before the Eid Al-Fitr holiday.

Meanwhile, the computer departments announced training courses through Microsoft Teams to develop the teachers' skills in using the platform, particularly for assigning homework and administering tests.

The ministry continued distance learning throughout the holy month of Ramadan, given the current circumstances in the country, reaffirming its commitment to ensure the continuity of education for students in accordance with plans laid down by the technical advisors.

This approach aims to prevent negative impact on students' academic progress, while ascertaining the health and safety of both the students and staff.

Furthermore, Al-Tabtabaei's meeting with officials from various sectors and departments before the Eid holiday aimed to monitor the progress of educational and administrative processes under the current circumstances, review the latest developments in distance learning, enhance coordination among the ministerial sectors, and ensure the integration of roles among educational leaders. Such coordination is intended to improve the overall performance and ensure the continuity of the educational process with a high level of efficiency.

They reviewed students' status during the distance learning period based on technical reports prepared by the guidance departments and educational stage supervisors in the educational districts. These reports

showed the progress of online classes, level of interaction and attendance, and the challenges faced by the educational field.

They also discussed the students' academic achievement levels in various subjects and reviewed the mechanisms for evaluating their performance. These included assignments, educational activities, and assessment methods suited to the nature of distance learning, guaranteeing the achievement of the required learning outcomes.

They deliberated on the proposed educational plans for the upcoming period, such as completing curricula according to flexible schedules, establishing support mechanisms for students facing learning difficulties, and strengthening the role of technical guidance in supporting teachers and enhancing their performance.

They talked about intensifying psychosocial support programs for students to promote stability and foster a safe and stimulating learning environment.

Al-Tabtabaei instructed the Educational Affairs Sector to make a clear schedule for classes in public education, special education, religious education and private schools at all educational levels, in view of with the current situation. He stated that studies should continue through distance learning after the Eid Al-Fitr holiday if the current conditions persist.

He asserted that this guarantees the continuity of the educational process within a clear and structured framework, while emphasizing the importance of monitoring attendance and tracking levels of student engagement to enhance the quality and sustainability of education.

The minister stressed the significance of continuously evaluating educational outcomes and utilizing feedback from the field to refine work mechanisms in the best interest of the students, while maintaining the high quality of education under the current circumstances.

He called for careful analysis of educational data and the adoption of appropriate decisions that balance student safety with the continuity of academic progress, thereby, ensuring overall stability in the

educational process.

He underscored the importance of improving technical readiness for the distance learning system, and instructed the relevant authorities to monitor and address the technical challenges that students and teachers face in using the Microsoft Teams platform.

He said immediate responses should be provided through the technical support teams in educational districts and those affiliated with the Technology and Information Systems General Directorate. He pointed out that this will help ensure the stability of online classes and the uninterrupted flow of the educational process.

He asked the administrative and financial sectors to take the necessary measures to facilitate transactions, simplify procedures and expedite their completion. He said all these should be carried out within the framework of operating at no more than 30 percent capacity, in accordance with Civil Service Commission (CSC) decision. He said this ensures the continuous provision of services, while maintaining efficiency and quality in line with the legal and administrative frameworks.

He stressed the importance of ongoing coordination among relevant departments to integrate efforts and overcome obstacles affecting workflow, whether educational or administrative.

He also emphasized the need to strengthen communication channels between the ministry and the educational field to promptly convey observations and challenges and address them effectively.

He then commended the tremendous efforts and commitment of all ministerial sectors, school administrations, and educational staff under the current circumstances.

In addition, acting Undersecretary of the ministry Eng. Mohammad Al-Khaldi set the school day for Grades Four and Five, as well as middle and high school levels, from 9:00 am to 12:35 pm, with five class periods per day, including two breaks and each period will last 35 minutes.

The decision, issued by Al-Khaldi before the Eid holiday, stipulates that special education schools will develop their own schedules in accordance with each school's plan. He said the start time for these schools must not exceed the approved start time for general education schools, indicating that these schedules shall take effect immediately and will remain in place until further notice.



KUNA photo
Ambassadors of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to India during their meeting with the Indian Minister of External Affairs.

PUC enhances visitor safety with complete online service platform

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The General Secretariat of the Council of Private Universities (PUC), announced that it is now accepting all transactions and inquiries from visitors through its official website, as part of its commitment to streamlining procedures and ensuring the continuity of services.

The Secretariat revealed that the services available electronically include

application procedures, issuance of "To Whom It May Concern" certificates, and applications for degree equivalency.

It encouraged visitors to use the electronic portal at www.puc.edu.kw to complete their transactions easily.

The Secretariat emphasized that this step reflects its commitment to the safety of visitors and employees under the current circumstances, and stressed its continued dedication to developing electronic services to achieve high-quality performance and faster processing.



Sahel alerts residents in advance

MEWRE resumes routine power maintenance ahead of summer

By Mohammed Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: Fatima Hayat, spokesperson for the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, announced the resumption of regular maintenance work on substations in various governorates as part of a plan to enhance the efficiency of the electrical grid and ensure continuity of service.

She revealed that the maintenance work will begin on Wednesday to improve the technical readiness of the electrical grid components and reduce unexpected outages, especially in preparation for the summer, when demand typically increases.

Hayat affirmed that the work is being carried out according to the highest technical standards and safety

procedures.

She explained that the ministry is committed to notifying customers in advance of the areas affected by the maintenance schedule. Notifications will be sent to customers via the Sahel application, and they will also be able to view the maintenance schedule through a link available on the ministry's official social media accounts.



Hayat

Hayat stressed that the maintenance work is being conducted according to carefully planned schedules to minimize any negative impact on customers, thereby contributing to the stability of the electrical system.

CSC sets new morning visitor hours

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced that visitors will only be received from 8:30am to 12:00 noon, reports Al-Anba daily.

Such a decision was taken due to the current circumstances in the country as well as to facilitate transactions and ensure the continuity of services for all beneficiaries in the visitors' reception hall.

Continued from Page 1

Attacks on

As parts of the system are disrupted, global markets are more vulnerable to fluctuations, especially in the aviation sector, which relies on stable and rapid energy flows.

The repercussions have started to gradually appear in global air traffic. Operating costs for airlines have risen, and the likelihood of flight delays or reductions has increased. Pressure is mounting on European airports that rely on imported fuel supplies.

In addition, some airlines have started increasing their use of reserve fuel or rerouting flights to avoid areas of tension, which raises fuel consumption and costs.

The severity of this crisis lies in several interconnected factors, specifically the high global dependence on the Gulf as a primary source of fuel, limited alternatives to compensate for the shortage of jet fuel, aviation sector's sensitivity to supply disruptions, and interrelationship between financial and energy markets.

Analyses issued by the International Energy Agency revealed that energy markets are more volatile when geopolitical chokepoints, such as the Strait of Hormuz, are threatened.

Meanwhile, the current jet fuel crisis reveals that the world remains dependent on the stability of the Gulf region, and specifically Kuwait, to ensure the continuity of global air traffic. With

tensions persisting, markets remain on edge, as any new development could redraw the map of global energy flows and determine the future of the aviation sector in the coming years.

International reports published by Reuters and Bloomberg disclosed that the expected post-war scenarios are divided into three phases: short-term, medium-term and long-term, as follows:

1. In the short term, jet fuel prices will continue to rise, increasing pressure on airlines and leading to greater reliance on strategic reserves.

2. In the medium term, supply chains will be reallocated towards alternative sources, with increased investment in refining capacity outside the Gulf and more focus on long-term contracts to secure supplies.

3. In the long term, efforts will focus on accelerating the transition to sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), diversifying energy sources in the aviation sector, and developing more resilient strategies for global supply chains.

Also, while the attacks revealed the fragility of some supply chains, they highlighted Kuwait's strategic role in the global energy market. Kuwait is not just an exporter, but a key logistical hub in the fuel trade, a major player in the stability of aviation markets, and a central part of the Gulf energy system.

With the return of stability, Kuwait is expected to play an even greater role in rebalancing markets and enhancing the reliability of supplies.

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Queen Cabana (2 persons).
2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons).

BHD 76.230 net
BHD 170.247 net

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2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons) per night.

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BHD 145.000 net

Book for Three nights
(Inclusive of breakfast)
(Non-refundable/Non-Cancellable)

Queen Cabana (2 persons) per night.
2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons) per night.

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Lunch Buffet will be served at **Café Marisol Restaurant** with price of **BD6.600/net** per person. Starts from 12:30 Noon to 15:30 hrs.

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Minister Al-Huwaila mandates swift task completion and real-time monitoring

MoSA maintains high efficiency amid 30 percent capacity shift

KUWAIT CITY, March 24. (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, affirmed on Tuesday the Ministry's commitment to continuous field monitoring of workflow and enhancing the quality of services provided to clients, ensuring swift completion of tasks and prompt response to feedback.

This statement was issued following an inspection tour conducted by Al-Huwaila within the government ministries complex to assess workflow under current circumstances and the implementation of the decision to operate at no more than 30 percent capacity.

Al-Huwaila stressed the need to remove any obstacles that might hinder work, enhance transparency in performance, and communicate achievements to the media to accurately reflect the Ministry's operations.

She highlighted the importance of following up on complaints received through various channels—whether via digital platforms, primarily the "Sahel" application, email, or in person—to ensure rapid and efficient handling.

The Minister directed the preparation of a comprehensive statistical report detailing the number and types of complaints received and the mechanisms used to address them, support-



Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, during her inspection tour of a number of the ministry's departments in the government complex to check on the progress of work.



Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, exchanges conversations with female employees of the ministry during the field tour to ensure the quality of services and facilitate the completion of transactions.

ing the development of institutional performance. She also emphasized the necessity of integrated efforts among departments to guarantee the continued provision of services with required efficiency while adhering to all applicable regulatory requirements.

Al-Huwaila called for redoubled efforts to facilitate transactions, stressing that the current phase requires flexibility in performance and speed in decision-making to serve the public interest and maintain service quality. She prayed to God Almighty

to protect Kuwait and its wise leadership and to perpetuate the blessings of security and stability upon the country.

During a review of the Citizen Service Department's operational mechanism, the Minister underscored the de-

partment's vital role in receiving and addressing complaints, particularly those related to cooperative societies, given their direct connection to the daily needs of citizens and residents under the current circumstances.

The Minister was accompanied on

the tour by the Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Social Welfare and Development Affairs, Director General of Social Development, Iman Al-Enezi, and the Director of Public Relations and Citizen Service, Meshaal Al-Mutairi.

Kuwait's FM receives calls from South Korea and Mongolia FMs

KUWAIT CITY, March 24. (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday received a couple of phone calls from his counterparts Cho Hyun Batmunkh of Mongolia.

During the phone conversa-

tions, they discussed the mounting regional military escalation as a result of the heinous Iranian aggression on the region's countries and its serious reflections and worrying impacts on regional and international security and stability, said the Foreign Ministry in a press release.

1,650 receive free checkups

Kuwait Heart Association wraps up 'Your Health in Ramadan' campaign

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: Secretary General of Kuwait Heart Association Dr. Rashid Al-Awaish announced the conclusion of the 'Your Health in Ramadan' campaign, which was held at the Kuwait Real Estate Market (Al-Darwaza) for 10 days and witnessed a remarkable turnout from market visitors.

Al-Awaish stated that the campaign had strong participation, with 1,650 individuals who were screened and underwent a range of medical tests conducted by the medical team. He said the campaign aimed to promote health awareness and encourage community members to undergo regular checkups.

He revealed that the test results showed that 26 percent of the participants have high blood sugar levels, 19 percent have high blood pressure

and 20 percent have high cholesterol levels. He emphasized that these indicators highlight the importance of intensifying awareness campaigns and expanding early detection screenings for chronic diseases, particularly cardiovascular conditions.

He pointed out that since its establishment in 1982, the association has remained committed to organizing community health initiatives that contribute to raising awareness and promoting preventive measures. He stated that the campaign is part of its efforts to engage directly with community members in public spaces, especially during Ramadan, by offering free checkups and health guidance.

He added that this year's campaign was organized amid the current circumstances in the region, indicating the association puts all its resources at the service of the State and the Ministry of Health to support health efforts whenever needed.

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry presented a comprehensive model for managing food security despite the circumstances that the region is experiencing and their repercussions.

This was achieved through the measures being implemented in view of the ongoing war between Israel and the United States of America on one side, and Iran on the other side. These measures include regulatory decisions that ensure market stability and uninterrupted flow of goods.

Since the start of the war, the ministry has affirmed that the strategic reserves of essential food commodities are at a normal and reassuring level, with additional quantities to cover longer periods. This move guarantees that the needs of citizens and expatriates are met without shortages.

The ministry emphasized that the supply chains are operating normally, without any disruption in supply or

distribution processes, thereby, boosting the morale of consumers, preventing the accumulation of goods and maintaining market stability.

It initiated the implementation of emergency plans by diversifying import sources and bolstering reserves in coordination with the private sector and milling companies, in anticipation of any regional or global developments, showing a high level of preparedness in dealing with crises.

The emergency teams of the ministry intensified the inspection of private company warehouses to ensure adequate supplies and the smooth flow of supply operations in accordance with the food security plan approved by the Cabinet.

Official data confirmed the huge capacity for local production, with bakeries exceeding domestic demand. Bakeries are equipped with generators and storage silos for continuous operation without relying on external supplies, thus, maintaining food security under all circumstances.

Regarding services, the ministry adjusted the operating hours of food distribution branches from 11:00 am to 11:00 pm daily, effective March 1, in order to ease access to supplies for beneficiaries and ascertain the readiness of the food distribution system.

It issued Ministerial Resolution No. 21/2026 on the stabilization of food prices, stipulating that prices before Feb 28 would be the maximum allowed, warning that penalties will be imposed on violators.

It also issued Resolution No. 20/2026 on prohibiting the export of food commodities without approval to ensure the availability of supplies in the local market.

On the other hand, the Supreme Emergency Committee held intensive meetings, chaired by Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai, with the participation of relevant authorities, to monitor developments, strengthen supply chains and ensure market stability.

The minister also conducted inspection visits to various facilities, such as the water bottling plants and Al-Fardha vegetable market in Sulaibiya. He reviewed stock levels, production capacity and supply mechanisms, indicating that factories are operating round the clock to meet the demand.

He inspected poultry companies, where the stability of the white meat sector and continuous operations according to the operational plans were confirmed, ensuring product availability in the market.

Meanwhile, the Commercial Con-

trol emergency teams continued to intensify their campaign to ensure compliance with the regulations and laws, resulting in the issuance of dozens of violation citations in the central and branch markets.

Moreover, the ministry has been coordinating with its Social Affairs counterpart to expand the operations of supply branches by allocating additional locations and increasing the operational capacity of cooperative societies.

This step includes supporting transportation operations and increasing manpower to improve the efficiency of goods distribution.

The ministry remains committed to support local products, in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Farmers Union, which greatly contributes to the ongoing efforts to maintain food security and the stability of strategic reserves.

These integrated efforts reflect a high level of preparedness and crisis management capabilities.

The ministry achieved a delicate balance between securing stocks, controlling prices and ensuring the continuity of services despite the regional challenges, which reinforced confidence in the robustness of the supply system and its ability to handle various situations.

Continued from Page 1

Iran drinks

Therefore, the GCC countries, which have suffered greatly from Iranian aggression, have the right to demand compensation for all damages.

Likewise, the United States and Israel will seek compensation. Countries affected by the closure of the Hormuz Strait and the ships left stranded also deserve reparations. This means that Iran, regardless of the government that comes to power after this war, will be required to pay a hefty bill that could take decades to settle.

This will undoubtedly trigger a major crisis in Iran, as the people, who have endured 47 years of poverty, hunger, and oppression, will not accept bearing the costs of the current regime's adventures. As a result, the people will revolt against the regime sooner rather than later.

Tehran's pretense of victory is largely deceptive. Every day, Iran demonstrates its subjugation and defeat. Its statements are intended for domestic consumption and are not directed at the international community.

In reality, Iran has entered an even darker tunnel, as the situation in the Middle East has changed significantly since the beginning of the war.

This change will not be complete unless Iran and all its proxies in the region pay a heavy price.

Undoubtedly, Iran will also have to pay reparations for the damage caused by its affiliated sectarian groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

Consequently, Iran must realize that it will never be the same as it was before this war.

Anyone who encourages Iran to target the Gulf states and Iraq, distance itself from Israel, or avoid antagonizing the United States is paving the way for Iran to fall into the abyss it has reached through reckless adventures.

Defenses hold

In accordance with the directives of Education Minister Syed Jalal Al-Tabtaba'i, online classes continue in all educational levels. School and administrative departments are operating remotely to maintain efficient oversight and organization.

For the first time, the second batch of the second-semester textbooks is being

delivered to the homes of students, ensuring uninterrupted access to learning materials.

Teacher training courses will also be conducted remotely from March 29 to April 9, with future adjustments based on evolving conditions.

Short quizzes are postponed until further notice, and final exam mechanisms are being planned to guarantee the safety of students and fairness, while maintaining accurate assessment standards.

The ministry praised the teachers' dedication and the full cooperation of parents, highlighting the national unity in supporting the continuity of education during this challenging period.

Furthermore, in a pivotal national moment that embodied the strength and resilience of military institutions in the country, the Ministry of Interior stood tall, its personnel steadfast in the heart of the battlefield, alongside the Kuwait Armed Forces, Kuwaiti National Guard (KNG) and Kuwait Fire Force (KFF).

This unified national effort is a testament to the tremendous efforts being exerted to protect the country and to maintain national security amid the treacherous Iranian attacks, demonstrating the highest level of readiness and mobilization.

Since the very first moments of the heinous Iranian aggression, the ministry has been implementing its comprehensive security plans with precision and competence. The intensive security deployments in all governorates boost the sense of security among citizens and expatriates under the current circumstances in the nation.

The ministry maintains an active presence by deploying its security personnel to various locations, including as borders and roads, raising the level of preparedness and ensuring immediate response to any emergency.

All reports received through the emergency hotline 112 are handled with unwavering determination and high morale.

The ministry remains committed to transparency and credibility, and it has so far issued 15 statements since the beginning of the aggression. These statements are about the latest developments and clarifications, which helped curb rumors, reassure the public, and bolster confidence in the security measures being implemented. The efforts of all security agencies, as well as the bomb disposal teams, which responded to reports of

shrapnel falling during defensive interception operations, were highlighted in the statements.

As part of ongoing field monitoring, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef has been conducting inspection tours at the borders and security sectors to assess the readiness of security personnel and guarantee the efficient and decisive performance of duties in order to maintain national security. He also inspected several sites damaged by the attacks and provided guidance on maintaining national security.

Meanwhile, in a press statement, the ministry explained that the inspection tours are aimed at monitoring security performance and assessing the level of field readiness.

Undersecretary of the ministry Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wahib inspected a number of checkpoints belonging to the security directorates, General Traffic Department and Emergency Police General Department, accompanied by Head of the Security Directorates Sector Major General Hamad Al-Munifi and Head of the Traffic and Operations Affairs Sector Brigadier General Abdullah Al-Atiqi.

In a related development, the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) on Tuesday instructed the airlines and travel agencies in the country to refund canceled tickets within 15 working days.

PACA spokesperson Abdullah Al-Rajhi said this is in light of the suspension of commercial flights to and from Kuwait International Airport since Feb 28, with the aim of protecting the rights of affected passengers. He stressed that these passengers are entitled to full refund for unused tickets, and unused portions of partially used tickets, even if originally non-refundable, without obligating rescheduling or vouchers without consent.

Al-Rajhi stated that passengers may also reclaim unused hotel bookings and other services, including car rentals, extra baggage and insurance, with agencies required to seek recovery or provide proof if unavailable.

He added that refunds must be processed through the original payment method or as agreed with the passenger, allowing only pre-disclosed service fees.

He clarified that the directive applies to all canceled or unused bookings from Feb 28 until official resumption of airport operations, regardless of the refund

request date.

He called for full cooperation to expedite refunds within the specified period, warning that violations will be referred to the Complaints and Arbitration Committee as per Article 21 of Law No. 31/1987 on regulating the air transport market in Kuwait.

Commenting on this decision, head of the Federation of Travel and Tourism Agencies Mohammad Al-Mutairi affirmed that the circular issued by the DGCA is clear and fair for all parties involved in the contractual relationship—whether the passenger or the travel agency.

He pointed out that the circular clearly stipulated the permissibility of deducting the agreed and disclosed service fees and charges from the passenger at the time of booking, even if the booking is non-refundable. He said this provision is based on an important legal principle—the right of travel agencies to collect payment for their services, provided these services are advertised and agreed upon in advance.

He added "travel agency fees are payment for actual services, such as booking procedures, follow up and coordination with airlines and service providers."

He then stressed the need for all parties to abide by the circular, ensuring balance between protecting the rights of travelers and guaranteeing the continuation of the vital role of travel agencies in the market.

He confirmed that the federation supports clear and fair regulatory measures and it is committed to educating customers about their rights and responsibilities, thereby, enhancing transparency and stability in the sector.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Airways announced that passengers can now obtain a transit visa to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as part of its ticket booking services.

The service is available through all Kuwait Airways sales offices and its Customer Service Call Center, allowing travelers to complete visa arrangements conveniently while booking their flights. Travelers can contact the airlines through WhatsApp +965-1802050 or customer service number 171. The required documents include a personal photo (white background) and copies of the civil identification card and passport.

In latest developments, airstrikes battered Iran and Iranian missiles and drones targeted Israel's Tel Aviv and

sites across the Mideast on Tuesday, even as President Donald Trump said the United States was in talks with the Islamic Republic to end the war.

With thousands more U.S. Marines on their way to the Gulf, both sides firing barrages and Iran denying any negotiations are taking place, the war's tempo remained high a day after Trump delayed his self-imposed deadline for Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran's chokehold on that crucial waterway has snarled international shipping, sent fuel prices skyrocketing, and threatened the world economy.

Pakistan offered to host diplomatic talks, but Iran remained defiant, vowing to fight "until complete victory."

Any talks between the U.S. and Iran would face monumental challenges. Many of Washington's shifting list of objectives—particularly over Iran's ballistic missile and nuclear programs—remain difficult to achieve. Meanwhile, it's not clear who in Iran's government would have the authority to negotiate—or be willing to, as Israel has vowed to continue taking out leaders after killing several.

Iran remains highly suspicious of the United States, which twice under the Trump administration has attacked during high-level diplomatic talks, including with the Feb. 28 strikes that started the current war.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif wrote on X that his country is ready to "facilitate meaningful and conclusive talks" to end the Iran war.

The U.S. had agreed "in principle" to join talks in Pakistan, according to three Pakistani officials, one Egyptian official and a Gulf diplomat, while mediators were still working to convince Iran. The Pakistani officials said the "quiet diplomacy" had grown more complicated since news of it leaked.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to provide the details to the media. The State Department declined to comment on the reported efforts and referred instead to Trump's comments about talks he says are underway directly between Iran and the U.S.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's office said he has been talking about the war this week with his counterparts in several countries. But Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf called the idea of negotiations "fakenews"—and an Iranian

military spokesman issued a newly defined statement.

"Iran's powerful armed forces are proud, victorious and steadfast in defending Iran's integrity, and this path will continue until complete victory," Iranian state television quoted Maj. Gen. Ali Abdollahi Aliabadi as saying Tuesday.

Aliabadi did not say what victory would look like, but Iran's military could be trying to warn against offering concessions in any possible negotiations.

The Egyptian official said efforts are centered on "trust-building" between the U.S. and Iran, with the aim of bringing about a pause in fighting. Israel is not involved.

The official, who is involved in the efforts, said the priority is to prevent attacks on both Iran's and Gulf Arab countries' energy infrastructure and that they were working on a "mechanism" for Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Talk of negotiations briefly drove down oil prices and boosted stocks.

10 Kuwaitis

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ministry of Interior announced on Monday setting a final exceptional deadline for the surrender of unlicensed firearms, ammunition, and fireworks until the end of official working hours on Wednesday, April 1, 2026.

No legal or punitive measures will be taken, during this period, against anyone who voluntarily surrenders their firearms, ammunition, and fireworks, in accordance with the relevant legal provisions and as part of efforts to encourage cooperation with the competent authorities, the Ministry said in a press statement.

As soon as the specified grace period ends, the law will be firmly enforced, and all necessary legal measures will be taken, including inspection and seizure operations, in line with the approved legal frameworks the statement added.

Furthermore, all the unlicensed firearms, ammunition, and fireworks should be surrendered through all police stations across the country.

The Ministry urged rapidly benefiting from this opportunity, given its impact on strengthening security, protecting the community, and enabling violators to rectify their status.

Senate confirms Mullin to lead DHS

US senators consider deal to fund Homeland Security but not ICE enforcement

WASHINGTON, March 24, (AP): US Senators are discussing a proposal to end the Homeland Security budget stalemate by funding much of the department, including the Transportation Security Administration airport workers going without pay, but excluding ICE's enforcement and removal operations that have been core to the dispute.

The potential breakthrough came after a group of Republican senators headed to the White House late Monday to meet with President Donald Trump. Senators said they expected the negotiators to work through the night hammering out the details and present written proposals for both parties to discuss Tuesday at their weekly caucus lunches.

"All I can say is that the discussions have been very positive and productive, and hopefully headed in the right direction," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer told reporters late in the evening: "Both sides are working in a serious way."

The sudden shift in the monthlong standoff comes as US airports are jammed with long lines after routine Homeland Security funding was halted, leaving TSA understaffed during the spring travel season. Democrats are refusing to fund Homeland Security without restraints on Trump's

immigration enforcement and mass deportation operations after the deaths of two US citizens during ICE protests in Minneapolis.

Trump took the extraordinary step over the weekend of ordering Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers to provide airport security, drawing alarm from some lawmakers that it could escalate tensions.

The contours of the deal under consideration would fund most of Homeland Security, but exclude funding for one main part of ICE - the enforcement and removal operations that are core to Trump's deportation agenda.

Under the package being floated, ICE's Homeland Security Investigations would be funded as well as Customs and Border Protection, but with new guardrails to position officers from those divisions in their traditional roles, rather than as they have been used more recently in immigration roundups in cities. It would also include a number of changes in immigration operations that Democrats have demanded, including mandating that officers wear body cameras and identification.

Since so much of ICE is already funded through Trump's big tax breaks bill, and immigration officers are still receiving paychecks during the partial government shutdown, senators said



US Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., talks to reporters about a funding bill to end the shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security shutdown that began more than a month ago, at the Capitol in Washington on March 23. (AP)

the new restraints would also be imposed on operations that rely on that funding source, as well.

"I'm going to be working through the night," said Republican Sen. Katie Britt of Alabama, a chief negotiator who returned from the White House meeting hopeful they had a solution to "land this plane."

"We're going to be working dili-

gently," she said.

Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., who was not part of the group at the White House, said his understanding was that there was a "sense of urgency" coming from the talks.

Coons described various choices before the senators at this point - from no money at all for ICE but also no restraints on the agency operations, to

fully funding ICE but with more of the restraints Democrats have demanded, to a middle option of funding most of DHS excluding ICE's enforcement and removal operations. That middle option is what he and other senators understood was broadly on the table after the White House talks.

"First step is to get the proposal in writing," said Sen. Angus King, the Independent from Maine. "I want to see exactly what that means."

Senators late Monday also confirmed Markwayne Mullin as Homeland Security secretary. He takes over for Kristi Noem, who led the department's immigration enforcement operations that erupted with the public outcry and the funding standoff.

Mullin provides a potentially new face for the immigration operation. During his confirmation hearing last week, Mullin touched on another key demand Democrats want - ensuring a judge has signed off on warrants that immigration officers use to search people's homes, rather than simply relying on administrative warrants issued by the department.

"This is significant," Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vt., said about the progress toward changes. "Noem is gone. That's a big deal."

Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., said he was hopeful senators could work

things out. "Look, there's a lot of different variables in the equations," he said. "I'm hopeful we'll get there."

A former mixed martial arts fighter and collegiate wrestler who has led early-morning workout sessions in the members-only House gym, he became close with members of both parties and is often seen as a negotiator in partisan Washington.

It is his loyalty to Trump that landed him the job, and he's not expected to sway from the president's approach. Mullin was a strong supporter of Trump's immigration agenda and ICE officers before being tapped for the DHS job.

"I can have different opinions with everybody in this room, but as secretary of homeland I'll be protecting everybody," Mullin said during his confirmation hearing.

Mullin's first challenge will be to restore routine funding to the department that has been blocked since mid-February as Democrats demand tighter restraints. They want immigration officers to identify themselves and not wear masks; refrain from enforcement operations around schools, churches, hospitals and other sensitive locations; wear body cameras; and obtain a judge's approval on warrants before entering people's homes or private spaces.

Shifting mail ballot deadline will complicate plans for November elections: state officials

WASHINGTON, March 24, (AP): As he left the chambers of the US Supreme Court, where justices had just heard arguments Monday over whether to prevent states from counting mail ballots that arrive after Election Day, Nevada Secretary of State Cisco Aguilar texted his staff 3,000 miles away.

His directive: Get ready to plan how to run November's midterm elections if the high court changes the rules when it issues its decision in June.

"The challenge is educating voters shortly before the election how the election is going to work," Aguilar, a Democrat, said. "That doesn't happen overnight. The election planning happens long before."

Election officials in Nevada and 13 other states that allow regular mail ballots sent by Election Day but arrive some period of days afterward to be counted had their attention trained on Monday's arguments, where conservative justices appeared skeptical of such grace periods. Fifteen other states have grace periods specifically for military and overseas voters.

Mail ballots, also called absentee ballots, have been the source of conspiracy theories from President Donald Trump, who groundlessly blames them for his loss in the 2020 election. The Republican National Committee and



A worker pushes a cart of received mail ballots at the L.A. County Ballot Processing Center on Nov 4, 2025, in City of Industry, Calif. (AP)

Libertarian Party sued to overturn Mississippi's law permitting the counting of mail ballots postmarked by Election Day that arrive up to five days later, the case the high court is now considering.

During the nearly two-hour-long arguments, Justice Brett Kavanaugh, one of the court's supermajority of six conservatives, asked RNC attorney Paul Clement if a ruling during the court's

typical time in June would run afoul of a court principle to avoid handing down decisions that can disrupt upcoming elections.

"June would give them plenty of time," Clement said of election administrators overseeing November's voting.

Tammy Patrick, a former Arizona election official who is chief programs

officer at the National Association of Elections Officials' Election Center, said that's not the case. Most election offices have already printed flyers, signs and even ballot envelopes with the current election deadlines for use in November. They would have to scramble to reprint that material, usually done months or years in advance to save money. "Nobody has put in their budget to reprint all of their educational material for the midterms," Patrick said. "That's the hard spot election administrators are in."

Monday's case revolves around just a fraction of the ballots counted during an election year.

In Nevada, for example, 98% of all mail ballots arrive before Election Day. Of those that arrive later, 95% land the next day. In Illinois, another state that allows late-arriving ballots, 106,000 ballots arrived within the state's 14-day grace period in 2024, just under 2% of the 5.5 million votes cast in that election.

The biggest challenge if the mail ballot deadline were to change would be informing voters that they faced a tighter deadline, said Matt Dietrich, spokesperson for the Illinois State Board of Elections. He said the board would work local election offices to spread the word.



In this still image taken from a video provided by KBMT, smoke rises near the Valero Port Arthur Refinery in Port Arthur, Texas on March 23. (AP)

Massive explosion at largest oil refinery in Texas, say officials

HOUSTON, March 24, (AP): An oil refinery fire near the Texas coast was put out Tuesday and a shelter-in-place order was lifted, hours after a large explosion at the complex shot plumes of smoke into the air, officials said.

No one was injured in Monday's explosion at the Valero refinery in Port Arthur, about 90 miles (145 kilometers) east of Houston, Mayor Charlotte M. Moses said. She had urged residents in parts of the west side of the city to stay put.

"There's been an explosion, yes, but we're OK; everybody's OK," she said. "They're trying to put the fire out as quickly as possible."

Residents at least several miles away said they felt their homes shake. Some schools in the area were closed Tuesday as a precaution.

The explosion comes amid a spike in gas prices driven by uncertainty over the global oil supply because of the Iran war.

The refinery has about 770 employees and can process about 435,000 barrels of oil per day, according to Valero's website. The plant refines heavy sour crude oil into gasoline, diesel and jet fuel. Images and video posted online show a large plume of smoke and flames billowing out from the refinery.

Europe's far right backs Orbán as Hungary coming election puts leader's brand to test

BUDAPEST, Hungary, March 24, (AP): The leaders of over a dozen European far-right parties gathered in Hungary's capital on Monday in a show of support for Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, a nationalist figure beloved by US and European conservatives whose performance in a pivotal election in April could set the tone for the movement's future.

Orbán, who retook power in Hungary in 2010, has long been seen as a key figure in the global far right, well before US President Donald Trump entered the 2016 presidential race.

The Hungarian leader's political successes - four straight election victories, his broad takeover of Hungarian government institutions, media and academia, and his emphasis on family values - led many in the U.S. and Europe to see him as a shining example of far-right dominance.

But three weeks before Hungarians go to the polls, most surveys show Orbán is lagging behind a center-right challenger - a sign that his 16-year reign, and his influence over the conservative movement, could be drawing to a close.



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, (third from left), stands with, (from left): Geert Wilders of the Netherlands, France's Marine Le Pen, Italy's Matteo Salvini, Belgium's Tom Van Grieken and Latvia's Ainars Šlesers during an assembly of European far-right parties with Orbán's Patriots for Europe group, in Budapest, Hungary on March 23. (AP)

Kim Lane Scheppele, a professor of sociology and international affairs at Princeton University, said that while Orbán has both "gained a huge amount

of power in Europe" and become a darling of Trump's MAGA movement, he has a lot at stake in the upcoming election.

Denmark votes as Frederiksen seeks third term after Greenland crisis

COPENHAGEN, Denmark, March 24, (AP): Danish voters went to the polls Tuesday in a general election, with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen seeking a third term at the helm of the Scandinavian country after a standoff with US President Donald Trump over the future of the kingdom's semiautonomous territory of Greenland.

More than 4.3 million people are eligible to have their say in the vote for the new Folketing, or parliament, in Copenhagen, which is elected for a four-year term.

Frederiksen called the election in February, several months before she had to in apparent hopes that her resolute image in the crisis over Greenland would help her with voters in the European Union and NATO member country.

In her second term, her support had waned as the cost of living rose - something that, along with pensions and a potential wealth tax, has been a prominent campaign issue.

The 48-year-old center-left Social Democrat is known for strong support of Ukraine in its defense against Russia's invasion and for a restrictive approach to migration - continuing a tradition in Danish politics that now goes back two decades.

Seeking to counter pressure from the right and pointing to a possible



People receive their ballots at a polling station at City Hall in Copenhagen, Denmark, on March 24, during the general election. (AP)

surge in migration because of the Iran war, Frederiksen announced proposals this month that include a potential "emergency brake" on asylum and tighter controls on criminals who lack legal residence. Her government had already unveiled a plan to allow the deportation of foreigners who have been sentenced to at least one year in prison for serious crimes.

Two center-right challengers hope to oust Frederiksen as prime minister. One is in her current gov-

ernment - Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen of the Liberal, or Venstre, party, which headed several recent administrations.

The other is Alex Vanopslagh, 34, of the opposition Liberal Alliance, which calls for lower taxes and less bureaucracy, and for Denmark to abandon its refusal to use nuclear power. But a recent admission from Vanopslagh to taking cocaine earlier in his time as party leader may have dented his chances.

Italian voters reject judicial reform in setback for Prime Minister Meloni

ROME, March 24, (AP): Italian voters on Monday rejected a judicial reform backed by conservative Premier Giorgia Meloni, delivering a stinging setback to the right-wing government one year ahead of national elections. "Italian citizens have decided and we respect their decision as always," Meloni said in a video posted on Instagram. She pledged, as anticipated, to complete her mandate, which runs into 2027.

"We will move forward as we always have: with responsibility, determination, and above all, with respect for Italy and its people," Meloni said, admitting some "regret for a missed opportunity to modernize Italy."

The "No" camp won almost 54% of the vote against the government-backed "Yes" campaign, which secured about 46%, according to final results released by the Interior Ministry.

Turnout over the two-day ballot, which began Sunday, was considerably higher than expected at almost 59% following a polarizing campaign. It energized the center-left opposition,



Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni casts her ballot in a referendum on judicial reform, in Rome on March 23. (AP)

which framed the reform as a threat to judicial independence, while simultaneously exposing divisions within Meloni's right-wing coalition.

The proposed judicial reform had

been billed by Meloni's coalition as a key step toward streamlining Italy's judicial system - long criticized as slow, bureaucratic, and vulnerable to political influence.

Russia fires nearly 400 drones at Ukraine in overnight attack

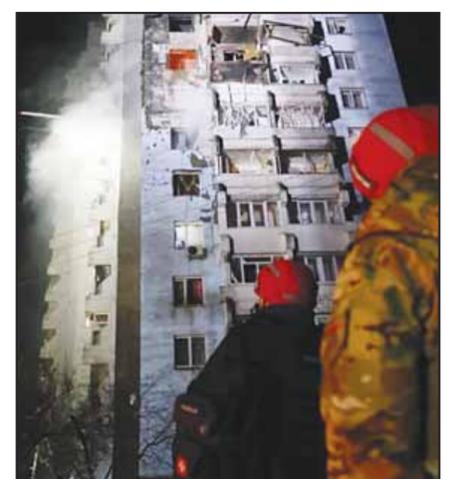
KYIV, Ukraine, March 24, (AP): A major Russian drone and missile attack on civilian areas of Ukraine killed four people and injured at least 27, officials said Tuesday, while Moscow's army stepped up efforts to break through Ukrainian front-line defenses in what could be the start of an anticipated spring ground offensive.

Russia fired almost 400 long-range drones at Ukraine overnight, Ukraine's air force said, in its biggest attack in weeks. The onslaught continued into Tuesday morning as dozens of drones targeted the capital Kyiv during daylight.

Russia also launched 23 cruise missiles and seven ballistic missiles at Ukraine during the night, hitting at least 10 locations across the country, according to the air force.

Ukrainian civilians have endured relentless barrages since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbor more than four years ago. U.S.-brokered talks between Moscow and Kyiv over the past year have brought no respite, with Russia rejecting Ukraine's offer of a ceasefire, and in recent weeks the Iran war has diverted international attention from Ukraine's plight.

On the roughly 1,250-kilometer (750-mile) front line snaking along eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, the short-handed defenders have been bracing for a new offensive by Russia's bigger army as the weather improves.



Rescue workers try to put out a fire of a residential building burning after a Russian drone attack on Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine on March 24. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

Asia

Vietnam to build first N-power plant with Russia's help: Russia and Vietnam have signed an agreement to construct Vietnam's first nuclear power plant, the Russian government said in a statement on Monday.

According to the statement, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Minh Chinh attended the signing ceremony, along with Alexey Likhachev, director general of Russia's state nuclear corporation Rosatom.

Mishustin said earlier that the project would bolster cooperation in high technology and both basic and applied scientific research.

According to the Vietnam News Agency, Pham Minh Chinh is paying an official visit to Russia from March 22 to 25 at the invitation of Mishustin. (Xinhua)

Eatery fire kills 2 in Vietnam: A mother and her child were killed in a fire at a vegetarian eatery in southern Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City on Monday night, the Vietnam News Agency reported Tuesday.

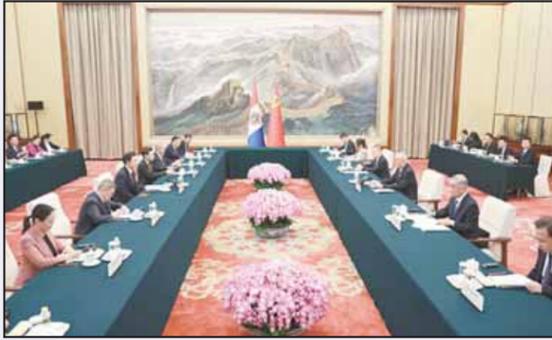
The victims were asleep when the fire engulfed the house.

A neighboring resident said the house was closed at the time of the incident, with many tables, chairs and glass cabinets placed in front of the entrance, hindering access to the interior, local daily VnExpress reported.

Authorities are investigating the cause of the fire. (Xinhua)

Senior CPC official meets Mongolian People's Party delegation: Cai Qi, a senior official of the Communist Party of China (CPC), met with a delegation led by Nyam-Osor Uchral, chairman of the Mongolian People's Party and chairman of Mongolia's State Great Hural, in Beijing on Tuesday.

Cai, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and a member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee,



Cai Qi, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and a member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, meets with a delegation led by Nyam-Osor Uchral, chairman of the Mongolian People's Party and chairman of Mongolia's State Great Hural, in Beijing, capital of China on March 24. (Xinhua)

noted that the two heads of state had in-depth communication on the overall and strategic issues of China-Mongolia relations last September, pointing out the direction for the further development of bilateral relations.

Cai called on the two sides to jointly implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state, take the building of a China-Mongolia community with a shared future as a guide, enhance exchanges and mutual learning among ruling parties,

deepen cooperation in areas such as jointly building the Belt and Road, promote people-to-people bonds, jointly safeguard international fairness and justice, and push the China-Mongolia comprehensive strategic partnership to a higher level.

Uchral said developing friendly relations with China is a top priority in Mongolia's foreign policy, adding that Mongolia adheres to the one-China principle and supports the major global initiatives proposed by China. (Xinhua)

Small eruption reported on NZ's White Island: New Zealand's White Island has experienced a small volcanic eruption, sending up a brief plume of ash late Tuesday, authorities said.

Earth Sciences New Zealand reported that the eruption occurred at 5:35 p.m. local time, producing a small pulse of dark grey volcanic ash that rose about 1,300 meters before quickly dissipating, which was captured on cameras from the Bay of Plenty mainland on New Zealand's North Island.

The volcanic alert level was raised to 3, indicating minor volcanic activity, while the aviation color code was lifted to orange. Experts warned that the activity could re-escalate without warning, but ashfall affecting the mainland remains unlikely.

The White Island, 48 km off the North Island, showed steam emissions recently. (Xinhua)

Motorcycle-bus collision kills 2 in Sydney: Two teenage boys have died after the motorcycle they were riding collided with a bus in western Sydney on Monday night.

The police force in the state of New South Wales (NSW) said that emergency services were called to reports of a collision on a transitway reserved for buses and emergency vehicles in Sydney's outer western suburbs at around 7:10 p.m. local time on Monday.

Officers arrived at the scene and found that an off-road motorcycle had collided with the side of a commuter bus and become trapped underneath the vehicle.

The rider and passenger of the motorcycle, boys aged 15 and 14, were treated by ambulance paramedics but died at the scene. (Xinhua)

Summit with Japan is off unless Tokyo drops 'its anachronistic' ways: Kim Yo Jong

N.Korea's Kim vows to 'irreversibly' cement country's nuclear status: state media

SEOUL, South Korea, March 24, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has pledged to irreversibly cement his country's status as a nuclear power while maintaining a hard-line stance toward South Korea, which he called the "most hostile" state, state media said Tuesday.

In a speech Monday to Pyongyang's rubber-stamp parliament, Kim accused the United States of global "state terrorism and aggression," in an apparent reference to the war in the Middle East, and said the North will play a more forceful role in a united front against Washington amid rising anti-American sentiment. But Kim didn't call out US President Donald Trump by name and said whether his adversaries "choose confrontation or peaceful coexistence is up to them, and we are prepared to respond to any choice."

His comments largely aligned with his statements at last month's ruling Workers' Party Congress, where he vilified Seoul but left open the door for dialogue with the Trump administration, urging Washington to drop its demands for the North's nuclear

disarmament as a precondition for talks.

State media said the Supreme People's Assembly, which concluded its two-day session Monday, passed a revised constitution but did not specify the changes. There had been expectations the revisions would codify South Korea as a permanent enemy and remove references to shared nationhood. That's in line with Kim's hard-line stance after he declared in 2024 that the North would abandon its long-term goal of a peaceful unification with the South.

Analysts say Kim's vilification of South Korea reflects his view that Seoul, which helped arrange his first meetings with Trump in 2018 and 2019, is no longer a useful intermediary with Washington but an obstacle to his push for a more assertive regional role. He has also shown sensitivity to South Korean soft power, driving aggressive campaigns to block the influence of its culture and language among North Koreans as he seeks to tighten his family's authoritarian grip.

In his speech, Kim expressed pride in the country's rapid expansion of nu-



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, its leader Kim Jong Un delivers a speech during a session of the Supreme People's Assembly at parliament in Pyongyang, North Korea on March 23. (AP)

clear weapons and missiles in recent years, calling it the "right" choice to counter future threats and "hegemonic pursuits" by "gangsterlike" imperialists, a term the North often uses for the

United States and its allies.

"The dignity of the nation, its national interest and its ultimate victory can only be guaranteed by the strongest of power," Kim said. "The

government of our republic will continue to consolidate our absolutely irreversible status as a nuclear power and will aggressively wage a struggle against hostile forces to crush their (anti-North Korean) provocations and schemes."

Kim has suspended all meaningful dialogue with Washington and Seoul since the collapse of his second summit with Trump in 2019 over US-led sanctions on the North.

Kim has recently been prioritizing Russia in his foreign policy, sending thousands of troops and large amounts of military equipment to support Moscow's war in Ukraine, possibly in exchange for aid and military technology. Facing the possibility of the war winding down, analysts say Kim may try to keep his options open by taking a more measured approach toward Washington to preserve future dialogue, with the long-term aim of securing US sanctions relief and tacit recognition as a nuclear state.

However, some experts believe that the United States and Israel's joint attacks on Iran and the killing of Tehran's previous supreme leader may

have raised Kim's bar for reviving dialogue with Washington.

Separately, North Korean state media said Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko will visit the country at Kim's invitation, but did not immediately say when the visit will take place.

Also:

SEOUL, South Korea: The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Monday a summit between her brother and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi won't happen if Japan sticks to "its anachronistic" approach.

Kim Yo Jong's statement came after Takaichi told reporters last week that she had informed US President Donald Trump during a summit in Washington that she had "a very strong desire" to meet Kim Jong Un.

"But this is not the one that comes true, as wanted or decided by Japan," Kim Yo Jong said. "In order for the top leaders of the two countries to meet each other, Japan should first be determined to break with its anachronistic practice and habit."

US sends drones to Nigeria to join troops sent for intelligence, training: defense official

DAKAR, Senegal, March 24, (AP): The United States has deployed drones to Nigeria, a US defense official said Monday, as the West African country's military faces a multifaceted security crisis.

The MQ-9 drones, also known as Reapers, were deployed after 200 U.S. troops arrived in Nigeria last month to provide training and intelligence. The drones, which can fly at altitudes over 40,000 feet and can loiter for more than 30 hours, have been flown by both the US military and the CIA over the Middle East for years, in Afghanistan, Iraq and over Yemen during the American bombing campaign there.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is battling a complex security crisis, especially in the north of the country. Among the most prominent Islamic militant groups active in Nigeria are Boko Haram and its breakaway faction, which is affiliated with the Islamic State group and is known as Islamic State West Africa Province, or ISWAP. There is also the IS-linked Lakurawa, as well as other "bandit" groups that specialize in kidnapping for ransom and illegal mining.

A spokesperson for AFRICOM, the US Africa Command, told The Associated Press the U.S. troops "are working alongside their Nigerian counterparts to provide intelligence support, advisory assistance, and targeted training in support of the Nigerian Armed Forces."

The troops and the MQ-9 drones are based at Bauchi Airfield, a newly built



Police officers secure the scene of a March 16 bomb blast at a market in Maiduguri, Nigeria on March 17. (AP)

airport in the northeast of the country, the spokesperson said. The number of drones deployed remains unclear.

MQ-9 drones cost around \$30 million apiece and have separate models for land and sea. They can also be used to carry out airstrikes but AFRICOM says they will only be used in Nigeria for intelligence-gathering and training.

The deployment is part of a new security partnership agreed on after U.S. President Donald Trump alleged that Christians are being targeted in Nigeria's security crisis. The US launched

strikes against IS forces on Dec 26.

The US had previously operated a major drone base in neighboring Niger, but it was shut down after the ruling military junta expelled US troops from the country.

Earlier this month, three suspected suicide bombings killed at least 23 people and wounded 108 others in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state. No group claimed responsibility, but suspicion quickly fell on Boko Haram, which in 2009 launched an insurgency in northeastern Nigeria to enforce its radical interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law.

Also:

LORIN, Nigeria: An explosion killed at least one person and injured an unspecified number of people Monday in Nigeria's north-central Kwara state, police said, in the latest attack in an area where Muslim militants have been increasingly active.

The explosion, believed to have been from an improvised explosive device, went off in the early morning in a village near Woro in the Kaiama district, in an area where an armed group slaughtered more than 160 people in February.

Police spokesperson Toun Ejire-Adeyemi in Kwara state told The Associated Press an investigation into the explosion has been launched. The blast struck a commercial vehicle that was heading to neighboring Niger state, she said.



Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro stands at the entrance of his home where he is under house arrest in Brasilia, Brazil on Sept 2, 2025. (AP)

Brazil ex-prez Bolsonaro's health improves: doctor

SAO PAULO, March 24, (AP): Former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro was transferred to a regular hospital room in the capital of Brasilia as he recovers from pneumonia, one of his doctors said Monday.

The news of the far-right leader's improvement came hours after Brazil's attorney general paved the way for him to be put in house imprisonment instead of being returned to jail.

Bolsonaro, who governed between 2019 and 2022, is serving a 27-year sentence for leading a coup attempt in 2023.

Dr. Brasil Caiado told reporters in Brasilia that there's no established date for Bolsonaro to be discharged. The former president was hospitalized on March 13 after feeling ill at the Papuda penitentiary in the Brazilian capital. Three days later, the 71-year-old was put in semi-intensive care.

The embattled ex-leader was transferred from the local federal police headquarters to a larger cell in January. His family and allies have repeatedly asked Brazil's Supreme Court to allow him to carry out his sentence, which he began serving in November, under house arrest.

Mexican authorities rescue 229 migrants found in back of truck

XALAPA, México, March 24, (AP): Mexican authorities found 229 migrants on Monday packed in the back of a truck traveling through the eastern Mexican state of Veracruz, the first such encounter in months, marking a potential uptick in migration since US President Donald Trump took office.

José Manuel Pozos, the state's deputy government secretary, said that they found migrants trapped in a truck reported stolen after they began to call for help from a police impound lot. Most of the migrants were from Central America, 17 were minors and a number were dehydrated, he said.

Veracruz is one of a number of states that masses of migrants have historically crossed to reach the United States, and are preyed upon by cartels and other criminal groups. They are often packed into trucks in dangerous conditions to evade authorities while being smuggled north.

But as migration north has plummeted since Trump took office, cases are few and far between.

An employee at the Xalapa vehicle impound lot, where the truck was taken, told The Associated Press that the trailer had been stopped about 45 kilometers (28 miles) southeast of the city and that hours after arriving at the lot, workers began to hear shouting and banging coming from inside.

When they realized people were locked inside, they called emergency services to open the vehicle, said the worker, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

In the afternoon, the migrants were removed from the impound lot in state police buses, but Veracruz police did not report where they were being taken. Generally, migrants without legal status are handed over to Mexico's immigration agency.

Over the years, migrant smugglers have used all kinds of vehicles to transport foreigners through Mexico, usually overcrowded, in poor conditions, and at risk of dying in the process, as happened in a deadly accident in southern Mexico in 2021 or when 53 migrants died after being abandoned inside a truck in San Antonio, Texas, in 2022.



People stand around a military cargo plane that crashed after taking off from Puerto Leguizamo, Colombia, a remote municipality in the Amazonian province of Putumayo on March 23. (AP)

At least 66 killed in Colombia military plane crash, says head of armed forces

BOGOTA, Colombia, March 24, (AP): A military transport plane with 128 people on board, mostly soldiers, crashed shortly after taking off Monday in Puerto Leguizamo, Colombia, killing at least 66 people and leaving dozens injured, the head of Colombia's armed forces said.

General Hugo Alejandro López Barreto said that four military personnel were still missing.

"Sadly, as a consequence of this tragic accident, 66 of our military elements died," he said.

"At the moment, we have no information, or indications, that it was an attack by an illegal armed group," Barreto added.

In a video posted on social media, Deputy Mayor Carlos Claros said that the bodies of the victims were taken to the small town's morgue, and that the only two clinics in town treated the injured before they were flown to larger cities. Puerto Leguizamo is located in

Putumayo, an Amazonian province that borders Ecuador and Peru.

"I want to thank the people of Puerto Leguizamo who came out to help the victims of this accident," Claros told Colombian television station RCN.

Defense Minister Pedro Sánchez said on X that the plane that crashed Monday was transporting troops to another city in Putumayo.

Images shared online by Colombian media outlets showed a black cloud of smoke rising from a field where the plane crashed and a truck with soldiers rushing to the site.

The airplane had 128 people on board, including 115 were from the Army, 11 crew members and 2 from the National Police, Barreto said 57 people were evacuated.

Media outlets shared videos of soldiers being rushed from the site on motorcycles driven by local residents, while another group of residents tried to put out the fire that the plane crash had

created in a field surrounded by dense foliage.

Carlos Fernando Silva, the commander of Colombia's air force, said details of the crash were not yet known, "except that the plane had a problem and went down about two kilometers from the airport."

The air force commander added that two planes, with 74 beds, were sent to the area to fly the injured back to hospitals in the capital, Bogota, and elsewhere.

Petro seized on the accident to promote what he called his longtime campaign to modernize planes and other equipment used by his country's military, saying those efforts have been blocked by "bureaucratic difficulties" and suggesting that some officials should be held accountable.

"If civilian or military administrative officials are not up to the challenge, they must be removed," Petro said.

Africa

Zimbabwe's ex-minister released on bail: Zimbabwe released on bail the leading opponent of planned constitutional amendments that would extend the rule of the country's 83-year-old president and have the post elected by Parliament, not the people.

Former finance minister Tendai Biti was granted \$500 bail on Monday, ordered to report to the police twice a week, and surrender his passport, his lawyer Chris Ndlovu said. Biti has also been barred from convening or addressing a public gathering without notifying the police as part of the bail conditions.

It's the highest profile detention yet of critics of the attempt to allow President Emmerson Mnangagwa to extend his rule, due to end in 2028, by two years. Police in recent months have banned meetings and arrested people for gathering to express opposition.

Biti leads the Constitutional Defenders Forum, a group



Biti

campaigning against the amendments. Ndlovu said Biti and programs director Morgan Ncube are accused of holding a public meeting without notifying the police. They were detained on Saturday in the eastern city of Mutare. (AP)

17 killed in S.Sudan drone strikes: At least 17 people were killed, and 25 others injured in drone strikes targeting residential neighborhoods in Lagawa city in West Kordofan state, southern Sudan, according to a statement by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and an eyewitness.

In a statement on Monday, the RSF said that "these systematic attacks on hospitals, markets, and residential areas across several cities in the Kordofan and Darfur regions, using drones, constitute a grave and explicit violation of international humanitarian law, which prohibits targeting civilians and civilian objects."

The RSF called for an independent international investigation to hold those responsible accountable.

An eyewitness inside the city told Xinhua, "Early this morning, we heard loud explosions, followed by thick plumes of smoke rising from several neighborhoods in central Lagawa."

"Projectiles fell on some homes in the eastern part of the city, resulting in casualties," the witness added, confirming the reported deaths and injuries. (Xinhua)

Kuwait crude surges to \$163.08 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 24, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil spiked USD 6.58 during Monday trading to reach USD 163.08 per barrel compared with USD 156.50 pb last Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Tuesday.

Brent future also jumped USD 2.40 to USD 108.81 pb and West Texas Intermediate edged 64 cents higher to USD 98.96 pb. Oil prices have been rising significantly because of the conflict in the region.

Business

The listing underscores confidence in the national economy's strength and institutional stability

Boursa Kuwait lists Trolley on the 'Premier' Market

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: Boursa Kuwait announced the listing of Trolley General Trading Company ("TROLLEY") on the "Premier" Market, with trading in the company's shares commencing on Wednesday, 25 March 2026. In line with the company's activities and the exchange's classification criteria, Trolley has been listed under the Consumer Discretionary sector. Following this listing, the total number of listed companies on the exchange has reached 141, including 40 companies on the "Premier" Market.

Trolley offered 35% of its issued share capital through a private secondary offering, aimed at diversifying its shareholder base, strengthening corporate governance practices and expanding its investor base. The offering, which was conducted from 15 to 19 February, was met with overwhelming demand from local and international institutional investors, with subscription coverage surpassing 15 times of the initially offered shares, at a total demand of KD 777 million.

The successful completion of the listing at this exceptional time sends a strong message about the institutional resilience of Kuwait's business environment, underscoring the firm confidence in the strength of the national economy and the ability of its financial institutions to operate efficiently and steadily amid current regional conditions.

The listing also serves as a practical demonstration of business continuity in the Kuwaiti capital market, in line with best-in-class international standards, reinforcing investor confidence at both the local and international levels. The market's ability to sustain activity and expand its capital base despite these challenges reflects a robust investment environment grounded in transparency and governance, while supporting sustainable economic development.

"The listing of Trolley on the "Premier" Market marks an important step that reflects the continued development of the Kuwaiti capital market and its growing role in supporting the national economy. Boursa Kuwait continues to advance the market environment in line with international best practices, enhancing its investment appeal and expanding the base of listed companies," said Boursa Kuwait CEO Mr. **Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi**.

"The successful completion of this listing amid current regional challenges stands as a testament to the strength of the capital market apparatus and the institutional resilience of the country's business environment. Not only is this a new quality listing, but it is also a clear demonstration of business continuity, the efficiency of the market's infrastructure



Mohammad Al-Osaimi



Faisal Boodai



Fahad Al-Mukhaizim

and its ability to operate steadily in line with the highest international standards despite ongoing challenges."

Al-Osaimi noted that Boursa Kuwait continues to work in close coordination with its partners in the capital market apparatus and relevant state entities to ensure the efficient continuity of market operations. He also reaffirmed the exchange's commitment to providing a robust investment environment grounded in transparency and governance, strengthening the confidence of both local and international investors in the resilience of the national economy and the solidity of Kuwait's institutional framework, as well as its ability to maintain financial sector stability and sustainability under all conditions.

The listing of Trolley represents a quality addition to the roster of listed companies on Boursa Kuwait, contributing to greater sector diversification within the market. The listing also creates investment opportunities for a broad base of individual and institutional investors, supporting ongoing efforts to develop Kuwait's capital market, deepen its liquidity and enhance its attractiveness as a leading investment destination in the region.

Since its establishment in 2010, Trolley has successfully redefined the concept of convenience retail in the local market. Over more than fifteen years, the company has built an integrated operating model supported by an extensive network of branches throughout Kuwait's governorates, in addition to its recent expansion into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, cementing its position as one of the most prominent brands in the retail sector.

The listing marks a strategic milestone in

Trolley's corporate journey, opening access to capital markets while enhancing the company's transparency, governance and disclosure practices as well as providing the momentum needed to support future expansion plans and strengthen the company's position as a public entity committed to delivering sustainable returns and long-term value for its shareholders.

"The listing of Trolley General Trading Company on Boursa Kuwait marks a historic milestone and a strategic turning point in our journey, reflecting our strong commitment to strengthening corporate governance and transparency in line with international capital market standards. It also highlights the success of our business model and reinforces our confidence in the resilience of the national economy and the ability of Kuwaiti companies to evolve into leading public entities that contribute to private sector growth," said Trolley Chairman Mr. **Faisal Yacoub Boodai**.

"Founded more than fifteen years ago, Trolley emerged with an ambitious vision to redefine the convenience retail experience in line with evolving consumer needs and expectations. Through our sustained efforts, we have built an integrated network of branches across Kuwait, becoming part of consumers' daily lives. Today, we begin a new chapter of growth through this important platform, which will enable us to enhance our competitiveness, accelerate our expansion plans locally and regionally and deliver sustainable long-term value to our shareholders," he added.

The Trolley Chairman concluded his statement, saying, "I would like to extend our

sincere appreciation to the Capital Markets Authority and Boursa Kuwait for their continued efforts in developing an attractive investment environment and facilitating the listing process. We also thank our listing advisor, National Investments Company, as well as our partners, our team and all those who contributed to the successful completion of the private secondary offering and listing. This collective effort has enabled us to stand today as a "Premier" Market listed company, and we are looking ahead to a promising future that reflects our ambitions and those of our shareholders."

Trolley appointed National Investments Company and EFG Hermes UAE Limited as joint global coordinators and joint bookrunners for the offering, with National Investments Company also appointed as subscription agent and listing advisor.

The two firms were responsible for coordinating and managing all stages of the offering, including organizing the bookbuilding process, engaging with institutional investors and aligning efforts across relevant stakeholders to ensure execution in line with regional and international best practices.

They also played a key role in supporting the company throughout the preparation phase by providing strategic advice on the offering structure and mechanics, enhancing the attractiveness of the investment proposition.

National Investments Company provided technical and regulatory advisory services in its capacity as listing advisor, ensuring full compliance with all applicable listing requirements and overseeing coordination

with regulatory authorities and all parties involved in the offering process.

"This offering represents a significant strategic step in the development of the local capital market and reflects the growing confidence in National Investments Company's ability to manage complex investment transactions in accordance with the highest regulatory and professional standards," said National Investments Company Board Member and Chief Executive Officer, Mr. **Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizim**.

"Our team successfully delivered a comprehensive and integrated process that encompassed financial structuring, marketing strategies, and bookbuilding, in addition to allocating the offering in a manner that ensured a seamless transition to the "Premier" Market, while maximizing value for investors and elevating transparency and professionalism throughout the entire process," he added.

Al-Mukhaizim concluded his statement by extending his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Capital Markets Authority, Boursa Kuwait, and Kuwait Clearing Company for their constructive cooperation and their effective and professional role in supporting this transaction, which directly contributed to the successful listing of the company with high efficiency and within the planned timeline. "The success of this offering reflects the spirit of teamwork and professionalism demonstrated by our teams across all stages of the transaction," he added.

The appointment of these financial institutions reflects their strong track record and extensive expertise in managing offerings and listings, ensuring the process is executed with the highest levels of efficiency and professionalism while supporting the successful listing and strengthening the company's presence in the Kuwaiti capital market.

Boursa Kuwait reaffirms that the strength of nations lies in unity and solidarity, as it continues to fulfill its national and economic role with responsibility and resilience in collaboration with the capital market apparatus, recognizing that the stability of the financial market serves as a fundamental pillar of trust and stability in the country.

The exchange emphasized that the continued operation of trading activities with efficiency and transparency reflects the strength of state institutions and their ability to ensure business continuity and protect the foundations of the national economy under all circumstances and prays for the continued security, stability and prosperity of the State of Kuwait, its leadership and its people.

Boursa Kuwait closes in red, trading value tops KD 75 mln

KUWAIT CITY, March 24, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Tuesday's trading in negative territory, with the general market index slipping 43.09 points, or 0.51%, to end at 8,434.83 points.

Total trading activity reached 225.7 million shares across 22,120 cash transactions, with a combined value of KD 75.4 million (around USD 230.7 million).

The main market index registered the sharpest decline, losing 113.21 points, or 1.43%, to settle at 7,776.87 points.

Trading in this segment involved 82.2 million

shares through 7,422 transactions worth KD 12.6 million (USD 38.5 million).

The premier market index also edged lower by 30.16 points, or 0.33%, closing at 9,012.32 points. A total of 143.5 million shares changed hands across 14,698 transactions, valued at KD 62.8 million (USD 192 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index saw a steeper decline of 272.53 points, or 3.31%, finishing the session at 7,967.07 points, with 73.7 million shares traded through 6,077 transactions totaling KD 10.9 million (USD 33.3 million).

Available on KFHOnline

KFH strengthens money transfer solutions through Western Union

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) continues to lead the way in delivering advanced digital banking solutions, offering customers a wide range of local and international money transfer services through KFHOnline mobile application, in cooperation with Western Union's global network.

This partnership enables KFH customers to make fast and secure money transfers, whether in cash, directly to bank accounts, or to digital wallets in various countries. Users can easily select beneficiaries and access Western Union's extensive worldwide network.

These services reflect KFH's commitment to genuine digital transformation in the banking sector, allowing customers to carry out financial transactions seamlessly through clear and efficient electronic steps, while maintaining the highest security standards. The result is greater efficiency and an enhanced digital experience that meets customers' expectations. Western Union operates one of the world's largest and most trusted money transfer networks, with retail locations in more than 200 countries and territories. Customers can also make payments to billions of bank accounts and millions of digital wallets and cards globally.

Through these services, KFH further enhances the customer experience by providing fast, safe, and convenient transfers that meet diverse financial needs. The partnership also strengthens KFH's digital capabilities and reaffirms its commitment to offering comprehensive financial solutions, a commitment clearly reflected in the growing customer demand for this service.

KFH's strong performance in e-banking is evident in the wide range of services available through the KFHOnline app. These services include the instant issuance of virtual cards, opening additional accounts without a branch visit, card activation and deactivation, creating deposits, adding beneficiaries, and conducting account balance and transaction inquiries.

Furthermore, the app facilitates chequebook requests, gold trading (buying and selling), financing requests, managing children's accounts, WAMD instant payment service, and sending and receiving money through KFH Pay, alongside other advanced digital banking services.

KFH also provides innovative services such as Live FX Pricing for real-time currency exchange rates, instant transfers to KFH-Turkey through the RippleNet network, and digital wallet compatibility with Garmin, Fitbit, and Samsung smart devices. Additionally, customers can instantly issue bank cards via self-service kiosks available in KFH branches.

Solid performance after strategic transformation

Makhazen posts FY 2025 results

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: Makhazen, the new operating brand of Agility Public Warehousing Company KSCP, today announced its financial results for the year ended 31 December 2025.

For FY 2025, Makhazen reported net profit from continuing operations of KD 49.3 million, or 19.31 fils per share, an increase of 13.1% compared to the same period last year. EBITDA increased 37.8% to KD 83.1 million and EBIT increased 42.9% to KD 74.9 million, while revenue stood at KD 151.5 million, these results reflect solid performance across the Group's operating businesses.

As of December 31, 2025, Makhazen total assets stood at KD 1.1 billion and equity attributable to shareholders stood at KD 569.9 million. Net debt stood at KD 199 million.

2025 Performance
In a pivotal year, the company completed its strategic transformation and repositioned itself as a national platform for infrastructure and industrial services, with a clear focus on the local market and a strengthened role in supporting Kuwait's economic development.

Despite the structural changes during the year, Makhazen's Kuwait operations remained resilient, delivering stable revenues and improved operating profitability.

Dividends Distribution
The board has recommended a distribution of 2 fils per share for the year ended 31st December 2025, subject to approval by the general assembly.

Important Accounting Notes
Deconsolidation of Agility Global

Following the distribution of Agility Global shares as in-kind dividends, Makhazen's stake decreased to 25% and is now accounted for as an associate.

Impairment of assets
During their meeting, the Board of Directors has approved to take



Faisal Sultan

provisions related to the investment in Korek and certain investment properties, with the aim of addressing the auditors' qualifications and ensuring compliance with applicable accounting standards, as a result, a one-off accounting loss of KD 214 million was recognized for the year 2025. At the same time, the Company will continue to pursue the necessary legal actions to protect shareholders' rights.

Operational and Strategic Update

During 2025, Makhazen continued executing its strategic expansions among different projects. South Village (S2) construction is progressing well, S2 is a logistics and commercial development serving Sabah Al-Ahmed City, one of Kuwait's largest new urban developments.

The project that Metal & Recycling Company was awarded by KNPC and KIPIC, is also on the right track. The facility will recover valuable metals from spent catalysts and support Kuwait's industrial sustainability objectives. Global Clearinghouse Systems continues to deliver solid operational perfor-

mance supported by network optimization and expansion of service offerings.

As for the company's investment portfolio, as of 31 December 2025, Makhazen held a 25% strategic stake in Agility Global, which continues to achieve strong performance across its portfolio companies. For FY 2025, Agility Global reported net earnings of \$240 million and revenue of \$5.1 billion. Total assets stood at \$13.4 billion and Shareholders' equity at \$5.8 billion.

Chairman's Statement
Faisal Jamil Sultan, Chairman of Makhazen, said:

"Our transformation into a Kuwait-focused infrastructure, logistics, and industrial services company has become fully embedded across our operations. Our core business in Kuwait continues to perform strongly, supported by disciplined execution, enhanced efficiencies, and steady advancement across a high-quality project pipeline aligned with national development goals. We are confident that our Kuwait-centric strategy positions Makhazen for sustainable growth and long-term value creation for our shareholders."

Update on Regional Developments

Makhazen is actively monitoring the evolving geopolitical situation across parts of the Middle East and has implemented its business continuity and contingency plans. Makhazen expresses its appreciation to the Kuwaiti government and relevant authorities for their continued efforts in maintaining security and stability. The company remains committed to supporting national priorities and contributing to the continuity of essential services and supply chains.

The company also extends its appreciation to its teams, particularly frontline personnel, for their continued dedication and professionalism.

Financial Summary (Continuing Operations)

Million Kuwaiti Dinar	FY 2025	FY 2024	Variance (%)
Revenue	151.5	149.9	+1.1%
EBITDA	83.1	60.3	+37.8%
Net Profit	49.3	43.6	+13.1%



Delivers first shipment of fresh produce from India, reinforcing national food security during regional disruption

Jazeera Airways establishes critical supply chain corridor to Kuwait via Qaisumah

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: Jazeera Airways has successfully established a vital supply chain corridor into Kuwait via Qaisumah Airport (AQL) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, successfully transporting its first shipment of 4.5 tons of fresh fruits and vegetables from Chennai, India, into Kuwait through a seamless multimodal operation. This marks a significant milestone in providing additional resource of sustaining the country's access to essential goods supply during ongoing regional challenges.

The cargo was flown into Qaisumah Airport, and then transported overland into Kuwait, ensuring continuity of supply for perishable goods despite airspace and operational constraints. This initiative builds on Jazeera Airways' ongoing efforts to maintain critical connectivity for Kuwait, extending beyond passenger travel to support essential supply chains that underpin daily life.

At a time when traditional logistics channels are under pressure, the ability to participate in moving essential commodities such as perishables efficiently and reliably has become increasingly important. Fresh produce, with its limited shelf life, requires speed, precision and coordinated execution across borders. Jazeera Airways' ability to deliver under these conditions highlights both operational agility and a strong commitment to national priorities.

Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer of Jazeera Airways, said: "In the current environment, connectivity is not only about moving people, it is also about ensuring the continued flow of essential goods into Kuwait.



Jazeera Airways on tarmac.

Establishing this supply chain corridor via Qaisumah allows us to support the national food reserves at this critical time. This is a responsibility we have embraced as Kuwait's national carrier, and one we will continue to build on."

The establishment of this cargo corridor not only addresses immediate supply needs but also sets the foundation for a more flexible and responsive logistics network going forward.

The operation required close coordination with multiple stakeholders across Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and India, including aviation authorities, customs, ground handling teams, and logistics partners. From uplift in Chennai to final delivery in Kuwait, the process was executed with tight timelines to preserve product freshness and quality.

Barathan added: "We are especially thankful for the ongoing support from the government entities both in Kuwait and KSA for helping facilitate this effort."

By leveraging its alternative operating model via Qaisumah – which already supports passenger movement through integrated air and overland transport – Jazeera Airways has now expanded its capabilities to include cargo, further strengthening Kuwait's resilience in the face of disruption.

In challenging times, ensuring access to essential goods becomes a matter of national importance. Through this initiative, Jazeera Airways reaffirms its commitment to supporting Kuwait – keeping supply lines open, markets moving and communities sustained.

Oil gains, stocks rise as traders weigh Trump's Iran comments

Asian stocks mostly rebound as Trump hints at a possible end to the Iran war

TOKYO, March 24, (AP): Asian benchmarks mostly rebounded Tuesday, echoing cautious relief that swept through Wall Street after President Donald Trump said the United States has talked with Iran about a possible end to their war.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 added 1.1% in afternoon trading to 52,102.08, recovering some of the losses it suffered the previous day.

Toyota Motor Corp.'s stock price gained 0.9% after it announced overnight that it was investing \$1 billion in its Kentucky and Indiana auto plants. That's part of a plan to invest up to \$10 billion in the U.S. over the next five years that the Japanese automaker announced in November. Japanese manufacturers have been eager to show their contribution to American jobs and economic growth.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.2% to 8,379.40. South Korea's Kospi edged up 2.7% to 5,550.95. Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 2.2% to 24,908.00, while the Shanghai Composite added 1.3% to 3,862.39.

Global markets have been on a roller-coaster ride over worries about the war in Iran, which began in late February, especially nations in Asia, which are severely affected by any lack of access to the Strait of Hormuz, crucial for energy shipments from the Middle East.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude gained \$3.16 to \$91.29 a barrel. Brent crude the international standard, added \$2.90 to \$102.84 a barrel, reversing course after easing overnight on Wall Street that came after Trump said the United States and Iran held productive talks "regarding a complete and total resolution of our hostilities in the Middle East" over the last two days.

Iran denied such talks took place and Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said that "fake news is used to manipulate the financial and oil markets" in a post on X.

"Still, while there's clearly a long way to go until some sort of ceasefire is agreed, and peace restored, we do at least seem to have taken the first step towards those ends," said Michael Brown, senior research strategist at Pepperstone.



Currency traders watch monitors near a screen showing the Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI), top center, and the foreign exchange rate between U.S. dollar and South Korean won, top center left, at the foreign exchange dealing room of the Hana Bank headquarters in Seoul, South Korea, Tuesday, March 24, 2026. (AP)

Over the weekend, Trump had threatened to "obliterate" Iran's power plants if it doesn't open up the Strait of Hormuz within 48 hours. The narrow waterway off Iran's coast has become a sore point for Trump and the economy because a sharp slowdown in traffic is preventing oil tankers from leaving the Persian Gulf to supply customers around the world.

On Monday, the S&P 500 rose 74.52 points to 6,581.00. The Dow Jones Industrial Average went from a surge of nearly 1,135 points during the morning to a more modest gain of 540 before accelerating to finish with a climb of 631, or 1.4%, to

46,208.47. The Nasdaq composite jumped 299.15, or 1.4%, to 21,946.76.

Stocks of smaller companies were also strong, and the Russell 2000 index of smaller stocks jumped a market-leading 2.3%.

Treasury yields also eased in the bond market following Trump's announcement. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.35% Monday from 4.39% late Friday. But it remains solidly above its 3.97% level from just before the war.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar edged up to 158.66 Japanese yen early Tuesday from 158.35 yen. The euro cost \$1.1581, down from \$1.1610.

Gas crunch squeezes workers from Manila to Buenos Aires

High gas prices force global budget cuts

A birthday beach trip. Weekend jaunts with the kids. Even a bedtime beer.

As gas prices remain high, people around the globe are stretching their paychecks, giving up small comforts as everyday costs bloat and they try to keep up with their biggest bills.

"For now, we're still managing to hold on," said Luis Catalano, a taxi driver waiting to fuel up at a gas station in Buenos Aires, Argentina. "But I don't know for how long."

Even as glimmers of hope for a potential breakthrough in the war in Iran emerged, the conflict persisted for a 24th day on Monday and the vital oil pathway of the Strait of Hormuz remained at a virtual standstill.

Across continents, the costs were hitting home.

"You can't make it to the end of the month," said German Toledo, a 38-year-old road safety worker who was fueling up at the YPF station where Catalano idled. Like others, Toledo said surging gas prices have piled on to other rising costs and stagnant wages, making the pain more acute. His salary hasn't budged in five years.

One job, Toledo said, is no longer enough to make ends meet.

U.S. President Donald Trump injected a bit of optimism Monday that relief might arrive at the pump, saying talks were ongoing with Iranian leaders and that they were eager to make a deal

end the war. Those claims drove down global oil prices, with the price for a barrel of Brent crude falling 9.7% to \$101.26, down from nearly \$120 last week.

Iran denied any talks had been held, and its parliament speaker called Trump's claims a ploy to manipulate markets. Either way, the news had no immediate impact on consumer prices.

Oil follows snaking journeys that can take weeks to go from drill sites to gas pumps. It must pass through refineries, where it is turned to fuel, before it is shipped off via pipelines and tankers to terminals, and then on to gas stations. Pump prices similarly lag global markets, sometimes taking weeks to respond.

So, motorists continue to bear the cost.

"I'm just barely getting by," said Catalano. As with any economic disruption, people with the least have been hurt the most, leaving them to scour already bare-bones budgets for new places to cut back.

Kevin Plucken, a 35-year-old janitor in Cologne, Germany, can only afford to put 20 euros of gas into his car at a time. On the hunt to cut his "burdensome" costs, he's had to change how he spends his weekends. Instead of driving his two children for an activity somewhere, he looks for things to do close to home.

"It's just too expensive," he said.

At sites dotted around the globe, it seemed many could agree that the spike in gas was just the latest blow for average people who've grown accustomed to relentless high costs.

"Everything is going up," said Felicia Iwasa, of Lagos, Nigeria. "The economy is not easy for us."

In the Philippine capital of Manila, drivers of the colorfully adorned street icons known as "jeepneys" have likewise struggled, with costs for the diesel they rely on rising even higher than gasoline. The vehicles morphed out of jeeps left behind by American troops during World War II. They were modified, reproduced, and outfitted in showy décor, becoming a key way of getting around for working-class Filipinos.

Johnny Pagnado, a 55-year-old driver, said he's cutting whatever costs he can, down to his nightly bedtime bottle of beer. But he worries about longer-term impacts, like how he'll afford to send four children to college.

Another driver, 34-year-old Sandy Roño, said a beach trip to celebrate his birthday next month is likely off. He couldn't even afford his rent last month and wasn't able to make the payment on his jeepney.

If prices stay so high, Roño said, he'll be forced to find new work.

"I'll stop driving and look for another job," he said. (AP)

Asia leans on coal to tackle fuel crisis

BANGKOK, March 24, (AP): Asian countries are turning to coal as the Iran war disrupts oil and gas shipments.

The continent is exposed because it relies on imported fuel, much of it passing through the Strait of Hormuz - a chokepoint for about a fifth of global oil and natural gas trade.

LNG is a natural gas cooled to liquid form for easy storage and transport. It has been promoted as a bridge fuel in the shift from oil and coal to cleaner energy sources. The U.S. has sought to expand exports of LNG across Asia. It burns cleaner than coal, but still emits climate change-causing gases, especially methane.

The war has countries shifting back to coal to cover LNG shortfalls. India is burning more coal to meet higher summer demand. South Korea has lifted caps on electricity from coal. Indonesia is prioritizing using its domestic supply. Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam are boosting coal-fired power.

Burning more coal risks worsening smog in major cities, slowing the transition to renewable energy and increasing the region's planet-warming emissions.

Coal is a short-term fix, experts say, while renewables are the long-term solution. Continued reliance on coal exposes Asia to future shocks, said Julia Skorupska of the global coalition Powering Past Coal Alliance.

"This kind of crisis is a real sort of warning," she said.

Coal is integral to Asia's emergency energy plans. Its wide availability in Asia makes it the default backup when renewables or gas fall short, said Sandeep Pai, an energy expert at Duke University. China, the top coal consumer and producer, has built record coal power generating capacity since 2021 to improve its energy security. Its national policy calls for continued use of coal, even as its vast clean energy capacity offers some relief.

India, the second-largest coal consumer and producer, is bracing for a scorching summer and will rely more on coal to meet peak demand of 270 gigawatts - nearly twice the electricity Spain can produce. It has enough coal for about three months, with some stockpiles earmarked for small businesses.

Two Indian liquefied petroleum gas shipments totaling more than 92,700 tons recently made it through the Strait of Hormuz. Such imports will likely be directed to industries such as fertilizer production rather than power generation, Pai said.

Coal advocates such as Michelle Manook of FutureCoal say the shortfall would be worse without coal and future use should be strategic. "The lesson has to be diversity," she said.

Pauline Heinrichs, who studies climate and energy at King's College London, points to China's boosting use of coal to offset hydropower shortfalls due to droughts, worsening emissions that contribute to climate change.

"You learn to respond to shocks generated by certain insecurities by reproducing the insecurity," she said.

Adding to the vulnerability for import-dependent countries, Indonesia, the world's largest exporter, is prioritizing domestic use over exports. That could tighten regional supplies and push global prices higher, said Putra Adhiguna of the Energy Shift Institute.

Coal prices are set globally, leaving importers exposed to swings and disruptions. More coal does not guarantee cheap or reliable power, said Russell Marsh of E3G.

Vietnam is already facing that volatility. It increased imports after weather-related shortages, but supplies from Indonesia are now uncertain so it's considering importing coal from the U.S. and Laos, according to energy market tracker Argus Media.

The main price for coal used in Asia, called Newcastle coal from Australia, has risen 13% since the war began.

Higher prices will also hurt Southeast Asia, the world's third largest coal-consuming region, including the Vietnam, Philippines and Thailand, which are boosting coal power.

More coal use now will slow and possibly undermine long-term efforts to phase out coal-fired power.

Indonesia was already struggling to meet targets to retire coal plants early, with financing delays even before the Iran war.

Coal power in Indonesia was 48% more expensive in 2024 than in 2020 due to aging plants and higher costs, according to the U.S.-based Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis or IEEFA. Subsidies to the national utility rose 24% to \$11 billion, about 5% of the national budget.

Jakarta has promoted use of LNG to ease a shift from coal. But the renewed coal use "sends a signal" that switching to gas "is not as easy as it sounds," Adhiguna said.

South Korea has pledged to retire most coal plants by 2040 and halve its emissions by 2035. But it is allowing more use of coal when air pollution is low and LNG is in short supply.

In 2023, South Korea needed a major renewable expansion - about 8 gigawatts of new wind annually - to meet net-zero goals, Agora Energiewende said. Growth has been slow, with renewables supplying just 10% of electricity in 2024, versus a global average of 32%, according to IEEFA.

Over the past 11 years, South Korea has committed \$127 billion to fossil fuels. That's 13 times more than it spent on renewables, with 60% of export finance going to LNG and \$120.1 billion spent on fuel imports in 2024 alone, said Joojin Kim of Solutions for Our Climate.

South Korea still plans to phase out use of coal, but the recent moves could outlast the crisis, Kim said. "The concern is not just the decision itself. It is the precedent it sets."

For countries with limited coal, like Thailand, the impact on electricity prices would be minimal, as coal accounts for too small a share of capacity, said Jitsai Santaputra of The Lantau Group. Domestic coal makes up less than 10% of the Thai energy mix.

As part of the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait participates in radio interview

KUWAIT CITY, March 24: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) continues to strengthen the awareness content it provides to its customers and all segments of society in Kuwait through its participation in the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign, in cooperation with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association, to successfully achieve the campaign's objectives.

On this occasion, Ali Bu Hamad, Head of Complaints and Customer Protection at ABK, participated in a radio interview on Marina FM, where he provided an overview of the campaign's key objectives and highlighted the most important ways to protect customers, safeguard their data, and combat banking and financial fraud.

During the interview, emphasis was placed on the importance of not sharing personal banking information with any third party and avoiding interaction with fake advertisements requesting card numbers or PIN details. The discussion also stressed the importance of carefully reviewing the details contained in OTP messages before entering the code when conducting online transactions.

Listeners were also encouraged to contact the Bank immediately upon noticing any suspicious transaction to enable the Bank to block their banking cards.



Part of the interview.

Customers may do so through several channels, including the call centre, the automated response service, the Bank's mobile application, or by visiting any of its branches located across Kuwait.

The interview also highlighted that ABK adopts the highest security standards



to protect all customer accounts, while encouraging customers to use secure ATMs located within bank branches or public locations when travelling outside Kuwait and to never allow others to use their banking cards.

ABK also provides dedicated awareness content related to the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign across its social media platforms, branch screens, website, and mobile application, reflecting its role as a leading financial institution committed to fulfilling its responsibilities

ties within the local market.

This radio interview forms part of a series of events and initiatives organised by ABK throughout the year in support of the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign. These initiatives help educate customers about their rights and responsibilities when dealing with banks, types of banking cards and accounts, digital services, services for people with disabilities, as well as saving and investment options licensed by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association, among others.

College grads most gloomy about job prospects

It's a bad time to hunt for new jobs, most US workers say in new Gallup poll

WASHINGTON, March 24, (AP): Americans' outlook on the job market has turned increasingly pessimistic, a surprisingly negative shift given the low unemployment rate but one that likely reflects an ongoing hiring drought.

Just 28% of workers in a quarterly Gallup survey conducted late last year said now is a "good time" to find a quality job, with 72% saying it is a bad time. Those figures are a sharp reversal from just a few years ago, in mid-2022, when 70% said it was a good time.

Americans have quickly gotten more pessimistic: As recently as late 2024, just under half of workers still said it was a good time to search for a job. The current survey was conducted during the final three months of 2025, long before the Iran war that has sent oil and gas prices soaring and threatens to slow the economy as Americans redirect more of their dollars to filling gas tanks and away from other spending.

The figures help explain other surveys that show Americans have a largely bleak view of the economy, even as many headline measures suggest it has been growing and job losses are low.

Job pessimism is especially pronounced among college graduates. The shift is likely because hiring in many white-collar professions has been unusually weak for the past two years, in areas such as software, customer service and advertising.

The survey found a split based on education levels, with just 19% of

workers with a college degree thinking that now is a good time to find a quality job, while 35% of workers without a college degree are optimistic.

A separate Gallup survey of U.S. adults overall found that college graduates' optimism about the job market is the lowest it's been since 2013. Meanwhile, the gap in job market sentiment between Americans with and without a college degree was at its widest in that survey since Gallup started asking the question in 2001.

Just about 2 in 10 workers ages 18-34 think now is a good time to find a job, compared to about 4 in 10 workers ages 65 and older who say the same.

Gallup's survey is consistent with what economists call the "low-hire, low-fire" job market: Businesses are largely holding onto their workers and measures of layoffs remain quite low. As a result, older workers are largely secure in their jobs. But hiring is also quite sluggish, making it harder for younger workers to break in and find permanent work.

It also found that younger workers are much likelier than older workers to say they're actively looking for a new job or watching for opportunities. Most Gen Z and Millennial workers say they're at least watching for opportunities, while about three-quarters of baby boomers say they're not looking at all.

The Gallup results come as government data shows that overall hiring is at its weakest level in more than a decade. The Labor Department tracks

a "hiring rate," or the proportion of people who are hired each month as a percent of those with jobs. The hiring rate dropped to 3.2% last November, around when Gallup conducted its survey, the lowest since March 2013. It was 3.9% before the pandemic.

A hiring rate at that 3.2% is quite low: When it was last reached in March 2013, the unemployment rate was 7.5%, as millions of Americans were still struggling to find work after the 2008-2009 Great Recession. It suggests it is much harder to find a job now than the unemployment rate would indicate.

Government data also shows that there are more unemployed people - 7.4 million - than available jobs, at 6.9 million. That is a reversal from the first few years after the pandemic, when vacancies outnumbered those out of work.

Gallup's survey also found that workers have a dimmer view of their current life and future prospects than at any point since 2009, when the firm began measuring the workforce's life evaluations.

Other surveys echo Americans' generally dark view of the economy. The Conference Board's consumer confidence survey was just 91.2 in February, not far from its pandemic-era lows and down from nearly 130 before the pandemic.

More people believe jobs are "easy to get" than "hard to find," the Conference Board's survey finds, but the gap has narrowed steadily in recent years.

EU, Australia boost trade ties

Trade deal bans Australian 'prosecco' label in future

MELBOURNE, March 24, (AP): The European Union and Australia on Tuesday agreed on the final text of a free trade agreement, some two years after negotiations broke down over Australian demands for more red meat market access and complaints about Australian products labeled with traditionally European names such as prosecco.

The breakthrough comes as both the EU and Australia seek to diversify their trading networks and reduce their economic reliance on China and exposure to uncertain U.S. tariffs.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese signed the agreement at the Australian Parliament House after protracted negotiations that began in 2018. The leaders said the pact demonstrated that both sides benefitted from rules-based trade.

"Today we are telling an important story to a

world that is deeply changing. A world where great powers are using tariffs as a leverage and supply chains as vulnerabilities to be exploited," von der Leyen told reporters.

"In our story, open rules based trade delivers positive some outcomes. Trust matters more than transactions," she added.

Albanese said the context in which the agreement was reached was an important factor in allowing negotiations that collapsed in October 2023 to restart.

"This is both the European Union and Australia asserting that we believe in free and fair trade, that we understand that trade advances the prosperity of both trading entities who are involved, that it is in our interest to get this done," Albanese said.

The leaders also announced a new defense partnership that will bring closer military cooperation and the start of negotiations toward Australia becoming an associate of the research and innovation funding program Horizon Europe.

Albanese said the defense partnership would provide a framework for the EU and Australia to cooperate on global challenges, marking as areas of collaboration defense industries, maritime security,

cyber security, countering terrorism and combating hybrid threats such as disinformation.

"It shows our shared commitment to global peace and security, including reaffirming our steadfast support for Ukraine in the face of Russia's illegal full-scale invasion," Albanese said.

Albanese said the pact also removed tariffs on key Australian exports including wine, seafood and horticulture.

The EU will open two tariff rate quotas of a total of 30,600 metric tons (33,731 U.S. tons) for Australian red meat, with 55% of that duty free.

Under the trade deal, Australian producers of prosecco, traditionally a sparkling wine from northern Italy, will be banned from using the name on exports 10 years after the pact takes effect.

A start date for the pact has not been announced.

The pact will also help the EU secure supplies of critical raw materials including lithium and tungsten.

An EU free trade deal with four South American countries will begin on May 1 after more than a quarter-century of negotiations and new global economic uncertainty.

Tech giants like Apple promote trade-in programs

E-waste crisis grows as recycling lags

SAN FRANCISCO, March 24, (AP): Many consumers are guilty of filling drawers or closets with old laptops, cellphones, fitness trackers and other electronic devices once they are no longer needed. It's hard to know where to recycle those items, or it seems costly and inconvenient.

The world generates millions of tons of electronic waste - also called e-waste - each year. According to the United Nations' most recent estimate, people worldwide produced 137 billion pounds (62 million metric tons) of e-waste in 2022, and only about 22% of it was properly recycled. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that less than a quarter of e-waste is recycled in the U.S. each year.

Keeping e-waste out of landfills is important because the devices contain materials that can harm the environment. Electronics can also contain precious metals and rare earths that are hard to source, making recycling valuable to businesses.

"The way that we're creating and using and disposing of these devices has generated this completely unsustainable waste stream," said Rick Neitzel, an environmental health sciences professor at the University of Michigan. "And there's no signs of that abating at all. In fact, the trend continues to accelerate."

Experts say that if more consumers recycle their e-waste, it could even drive down the cost of some electronics. Here are some tips.

While all recycling comes with challenges, it is often more confusing to recycle e-waste than a plastic bottle or cardboard box. Common containers can be recycled curbside or in public bins, but it often takes some research to figure out where to take an electronic device.

"Cardboard comes in many shapes and sizes, but at the end of the day, it's still cardboard," Neitzel said.

Electronics, on the other hand, can range from a small earbud to a large refrigerator, each with different materials inside, he said. Recyclers need to be able to extract each component and material efficiently. That is a complex, energy-

intensive and expensive process.

But the efforts are worth it. Components such as steel, aluminum, copper, gold, silver, plastics and even glass, can be recovered and reused, said John Shegerian, founder of Electronic Recyclers International.

Keeping harmful materials out of landfills is another incentive.

"These electronics - which could and have historically ended up in our landfills or in other inappropriate places - can leak all the stuff that's contained there within: Mercury, lead, cadmium, beryllium, arsenic. All these things are horrible if they get into our environmental ecosystem," Shegerian said.

Experts say recovering precious metals from devices also helps the environment by lowering the need to mine more of those resources.

Some consumers may be hesitant to recycle devices because of the personal data stored on them. Experts say that in order to protect your data, start with a factory reset - not just deleting files.

Resets restore the device to its original settings and thoroughly remove data. It's important to follow the manufacturer's guidance, as each device has different steps. Wiping an Android phone, for example, requires different steps than wiping an iPhone. The Cyber Security and Infrastructure Agency provides guidance on data protection, including where to look for manufacturer instructions.

Even factory resets may leave traces of data, so some recyclers will go as far as shredding a device's hard drive - and verify it's been destroyed. What's left goes through the recycling process.

If an item is newer and still in working condition, manufacturers may refurbish and resell it. Some charities and recyclers can also refresh devices so they can be given to those in need.

Look for major electronics and computer manufacturers that allow for their old equipment to be shipped back as part of buy-back offerings, or dropped off at a partnering site. Apple, for example, offers a credit toward a fu-

ture purchase if your trade-in is current enough. Otherwise, they provide free recycling for older models.

Salvation Army and Goodwill Industries have donation programs that accept some used electronics, but it is important to check with your store to find out exactly what they need. Consumers should avoid inundating places with items that can't be sold or disposed of properly.

Even if a device can't be refurbished, manufacturers are still a good first place to check, experts say.

"The manufacturers are where we want this stuff to end up because they know their products, they know best and most efficiently how to recycle them," Neitzel said.

Retailers such as Best Buy and Staples accept devices big and small for recycling. Best Buy will also haul away televisions and larger appliances for a fee when new models are purchased, then work with electronics recyclers.

While local governments typically don't accept electronics in curbside recycling, many have drop-off locations that can be researched on their websites.

"Typically, if you're dropping them off at a government-run electronic waste collection station, you can be confident in that," Neitzel said.

Recycle Nation allows consumers to look specific items up and find locations in their zip code that will take those items.

Other mail-in options include Amazon and Waste Management. Consumers can order boxes to their home, fill them up with their items, and ship it back.

Some programs charge small fees. Some return sites, for example, charge a few-dollar processing fee - such as \$5 per monitor, or a set cost per the weight of returns or by the car-load if you drop off in person.

And even when a device can't be refurbished, recycling is important for the domestic supply chain of minerals and rare earths, said Terence Musho, an associate professor of engineering at West Virginia University.

Trump pays \$1 bln to kill US offshore wind leases

PROVIDENCE, March 24, (AP): The Trump administration will pay \$1 billion to a French company to walk away from two U.S. offshore wind leases as the administration ramps up its campaign against offshore wind and other renewable energy.

TotalEnergies has agreed to what's essentially a refund of its leases for projects off the coasts of North Carolina and New York, and will invest the money in fossil fuel projects instead, the Department of Interior announced Monday.

President Donald Trump's administration has tried to halt offshore wind construction, but federal judges repeatedly overturned those orders.

The Interior Department hailed the "innovative agreement" with the French energy giant and said, "the American people will no longer pay for ideological subsidies that benefited only the unreliable and costly offshore wind industry."

Environmental groups denounced the deal as an alternate way to block wind projects, with one group calling it a "billion-dollar bribe" to kill clean energy.

"After losing again and again in court on his illegal stop-work orders, Trump has found another way to strangle offshore wind: pay them to walk away," said Lena Moffitt, executive director of Evergreen Action.

In his second term, Trump has gone all in on fossil fuels, which he says will lower costs for families, increase reliability and help the U.S. maintain global leadership in artificial intelligence.

TotalEnergies had already paused its two projects after Trump was elected.

The company pledged to not develop any new offshore wind projects in the United States. CEO Patrick Pouyanné said in a statement that TotalEnergies renounced offshore wind development in the United States in exchange for the reimbursement of the lease fees, "considering that the development of offshore wind projects is not in the country's interest."

Pouyanné said the refunded lease fees will finance the construction of a liquefied natural gas plant in Texas and the development of its oil and gas activities, calling it a "more efficient use of capital" in the U.S.

After it makes those investments, TotalEnergies will be reimbursed, up to the amount paid in lease purchases for offshore wind, according to the DOI.

"We welcome TotalEnergies' commitment to developing projects that produce dependable, affordable power to lower Americans' monthly bills," Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said in a statement.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, said Trump was "us-

ing a pay-not-to-play scheme" to pressure the French company not to build offshore wind, calling it "an outrageous abuse of taxpayer dollars." Hochul said she remains committed to moving forward with an "all-of-the-above approach" that includes renewables, nuclear power and other energy sources.

North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein, a Democrat, said this is "a terrible deal for the people of North Carolina and our country."

"Our state has the offshore wind potential to power millions of homes with renewable American-made energy. It's ludicrous and wasteful that the Trump administration is spending \$1 billion in taxpayer money to pay off a company to stop it from investing private dollars to create the clean energy we need," Stein said in a statement.

The Biden administration sought to ramp up offshore wind as a climate change solution. Trump began reversing U.S. energy policies his first day in office with executive orders aimed at boosting oil, gas and coal. Globally the offshore wind market is growing, with China leading the world in new installations.

The Interior Department halted construction on five major East Coast offshore wind projects days before Christmas, citing national security concerns. Developers and states sued, and federal judges allowed all five projects to resume construction, essentially concluding that the government did not show the risk was so imminent that construction must halt.

On Monday, one of the wind farms targeted by the administration, Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind, started delivering power to the grid for Virginia. The developer, Richmond-based Dominion Energy, announced the milestone.

Ted Kelly, clean energy director at the Environmental Defense Fund, called the proposed deal "an outrageous misuse of taxpayer dollars to prevent Americans from having clean, affordable power exactly when they need it most."

East Coast states are building offshore wind because it boosts affordable electricity supply on the grid, even as natural gas prices are rising, Kelly said.

TotalEnergies purchased a lease for its Carolina Long Bay project in 2022 for about \$133 million. It aimed to generate more than 1 gigawatt there, enough to power about 300,000 homes. It purchased the lease off New York and New Jersey, also in 2022, for \$795 million.

This was planned as a larger project, with the potential to generate 3 gigawatts of clean energy to power nearly one million homes. TotalEnergies is involved in major offshore wind projects in Europe and Asia.

600+ workers strike at Bath Shipyard

Strike hits General Dynamics Bath Iron Works Shipyard in Maine

PORTLAND, March 24, (AP): Hundreds of designers, clerks and technicians went on strike Monday in Maine at one of the U.S. Navy's largest shipbuilding contractors.

The Bath Marine Draftsmen's Association went on strike at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works after members voted to reject the shipyard's proposed wage offer over the weekend. The union represents 627 workers at the historic shipyard, which has built naval ships in Bath for more than a century.

The strike arrived several weeks after a morale-boosting appearance in which U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth touted the need to boost defense manufacturing. It is also taking place as the U.S. intensifies its war effort in Iran.

The union said in a statement that the shipyard's offer does not address the members' concerns about wages, insurance coverage and retirement income security.

"We had hoped the company took to heart the statements made by Secretary Hegseth here at GD BIW on February 9th because, our membership certainly did," union President Trent Vellella said in an emailed statement

that also said General Dynamics "continues to make record profits off our labor."

The shipyard negotiated with the union for three weeks and has been unable to reach accord on a new collective bargaining agreement, said David Hench, a spokesperson for Bath Iron Works. Hench said the company's proposal includes "historic annual wage increases" of 10.1% in the first year followed by 4% in each of the following three years.

The company plans for business operations to continue during the strike through the use of salaried personnel, subcontractors and other employees who elect to come to work, the shipyard said on its website. The shipyard's total workforce is about 6,800 people, Hench said.

"The company is continuing to negotiate in good faith with the BMDA to explore opportunities to better align company and union objectives," Hench said in an emailed statement.

The Bath Marine Draftsmen's Association is affiliated with the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America,

which is commonly known as the UAW and is one of the country's largest unions. The BMDA members at Bath Iron Works work as designers, non-destructive test technicians, technical clerks, laboratory technicians and associate engineers, the union said in a statement.

Members picketed outside the shipyard Monday in cold and drizzly weather. Workers said they would continue picketing around the clock until they ratified a new contract.

Bath Iron Works is a major shipbuilder for the Navy and was awarded a multiyear contract to build several Arleigh Burke-class destroyers in 2023. The Arleigh Burke is a guided missile destroyer that Navy officials have described as the "backbone of the Navy's surface fleet." The Navy exercised an option last year to add an additional destroyer to the contract.

The Navy accepted delivery of the future USS Harvey C. Barnum, Jr., a member of the Arleigh Burke class, last year and it's due to be commissioned next month, Hench said.

Shipyard representatives did not immediately respond to a question about whether the strike would slow production.

NewsGuard says it is forced to bow to vindictive power

Media-rating firm says Trump agency threatens its livelihood

NEW YORK, March 24, (AP) — As media organizations go, NewsGuard cuts a low public profile as it follows its mission of issuing credibility ratings about news outlets. The Trump administration knows about it, though, and the company has joined a lengthening list of journalism organizations to face the White House's wrath.

A dispute between President Donald Trump's regulators and the news monitoring service has spilled into court, with NewsGuard Technologies suing the Federal Trade Commission and its chairman, Andrew Ferguson, to shut down an investigation. The FTC accuses the company of trying to suppress conservative speech. NewsGuard says it is being forced to kneel before vindictive power.

Since Trump returned to office in January 2025, the Republican administration has fought The Associated Press in court over the outlet's claim it is being punished for not adopting his preferred name for the Gulf of Mexico; settled with CBS News' corporate parent in a dispute over "60 Minutes" editing; sued The Wall Street Journal for its reporting on Trump and Jeffrey Epstein; and is in a legal fight with The New York Times over Pentagon reporting restrictions.

NewsGuard's lawsuit, filed last month in US District Court in the District of Columbia, accuses Trump's FTC of "brazenly using its power not for any issue concerning trade or commerce but rather to censor speech simply because it disagreed with NewsGuard's judgments about the reliability of news sources."

The FTC calls NewsGuard's accusations "untethered from both law and fact."

Like the Federal Communications Commission under Brendan Carr, Ferguson's FTC is a normally sleepy federal

agency that has sprung to life to address issues of importance to Trump and his supporters, particularly involving the media. The FCC has launched investigations of media companies and this weekend Carr, responding to a Trump complaint about negative coverage of the Iran war, warned broadcasters "running hoaxes and news distortions" to correct course or see their licenses threatened.

Ferguson has made no secret about where he takes his cues. He said in an interview in July that "I am a law enforcer, and I will follow the law. But the policy priorities are set by the man the people chose to run this government."

The liberal lobbying group Media Matters for America was one of his targets. A federal judge last summer halted an FTC investigation over efforts to promote advertising boycotts of companies the group opposes, saying the inquiry violated MMA's free speech rights.

While NewsGuard may not be a big name, money is at stake for news outlets friendly to the president. The company began in 2018, started by Court TV founder Steven Brill and Gordon Crovitz, a former Journal publisher. NewsGuard uses journalists to examine thousands of news outlets and websites, giving them ratings based on the credibility and reliability of their journalism.

A monthly subscription costs \$4.95. Much of its business comes from companies that advise advertisers where to hawk their products, showing them which news sites may be toxic to their brands, and artificial intelligence companies looking to see where they would be more likely to find information they could trust.

NewsGuard made an enemy of the Trump-friendly television network Newsmax, giving its website a 20 on a scale

where 100 is the best score. NewsGuard says "this website is unreliable because it severely violates basic journalism standards." Newsmax has since repeatedly urged Republican lawmakers or regulators to do what they can to silence NewsGuard, the company said in its lawsuit.

"NewsGuard was started by Steve Brill to target conservative media and get ad agencies to deny them advertising revenue as a means of censorship," Newsmax spokesman Bill Daddi said. "Brill is a Democratic Party activist and donor over many decades with a long history of advocating for liberal causes. He is not a respected journalist and in no way should be running a ratings service used by major ad agencies."

Brill said his only political activity was working for Republican John Lindsay, New York City's mayor in the late 1960s and early 1970s, while a college and law school student. "I have been a journalist ever since," Brill said. Federal records show Brill donated to more than a dozen political campaigns in the 1990s and 2000s, primarily Democrats but including some Republicans.

NewsGuard says its ratings are based on clearly defined criteria, such as whether or not an outlet publishes false or misleading material, whether it distorts arguments and uses multiple sources, whether it distinguishes between news and opinion and regularly corrects errors. To counter charges that it unfairly boosted liberals, the company noted times where Fox News scored higher in its ratings than the former MSNBC.

Yet the conservative Media Research Center has published studies contending that NewsGuard is more likely to give higher ratings to outlets with a liberal bent. In court papers,

the FTC said it began investigating NewsGuard because congressional investigators connected the company's services to "coordinated actions to demonize disfavored media entities."

The agency has asked the company to produce reams of internal documents, emails, financial reports and subscriber lists dated to its founding. Not only does NewsGuard consider that task unduly expensive and burdensome, it worries that regulators will use that information to target its subscribers.

The FTC, as a condition to approving a merger of two of the world's biggest media buying firms, Omnicom and IPG, prohibited the new company from using a service that reviews and rates news sites. That is designed to eliminate the company's ability to deny advertising based on politics, the agency said.

It has already cost NewsGuard business, the company asserts.

"The whole idea that any speaker has to justify to the government that it's not biased is a really troubling thought," Brill said in an interview. "We have a constitutional right to be biased. It just so happens that we started the company on the core principle that we were going to be totally apolitical."

The FTC's press department did not return a message seeking comment. But in court papers, the agency said it was conducting a broad investigation into whether advertiser boycotts violated antitrust laws and that it has issued more than a dozen orders for information similar to the one given to NewsGuard. The company's charges are "completely meritless," the agency said.

If its order was so demanding, the FTC wondered why it took NewsGuard eight months after it was issued to sue.

People

Victim gets \$59m

Jury finds Bill Cosby guilty of 1972 assault

LOS ANGELES, March 24, (AP) — A civil jury in California found Monday that **Bill Cosby** was liable for drugging and sexually assaulting a woman in 1972 and awarded her \$59.25 million.

After a nearly two-week trial in Santa Monica, jurors found Cosby, 88, liable for the sexual battery and assault of Donna Motsinger. They awarded her \$17.5 million in past damages and \$1.75 million for future damages, including "mental suffering, loss of enjoyment of life, inconvenience, grief, anxiety, humiliation, and emotional distress."



Cosby

Then in a second phase of the trial Monday afternoon, they awarded an additional \$40 million in punitive damages.

Cosby's attorney, Jennifer Bonjean, said in an email after the initial award earlier Monday that they are disappointed and fully intend to appeal the verdict. She did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the punitive damages.

Deliberations lasted about two days.

The decision came nearly five years after Cosby was freed from prison in Pennsylvania when the state Supreme Court threw out a criminal conviction based on similar allegations. He has settled some similar lawsuits and has been ordered to pay in others, but Monday's award is likely the most he has had to pay in a case.

"This verdict is not just about me - it's about finally being heard and holding Mr. Cosby accountable," Motsinger said in a statement. "I have carried the weight of what happened to me for more than 50 years. It never goes away. Today, a jury saw the truth and held him accountable. That means everything. I hope this gives strength to other survivors who are still waiting for their moment to be heard."

Motsinger had been a server at a restaurant in Sausalito near San Francisco who said in her lawsuit, filed in 2023, that Cosby had invited her to his stand-up comedy show at a theater in nearby San Carlos. Both were in their 30s at the time. She said Cosby gave her wine and two pills that she believed were aspirin, and that she was going in and out of consciousness as two men put her in a limousine.

"She woke up in her house with all her clothes off, except her underwear on - no top, no bra, and no pants," the lawsuit said. "She knew she had been drugged and raped by Bill Cosby."

In court filings, Cosby's lawyers argued that the allegations rested almost entirely on speculation and assumption, saying Motsinger "freely admits that she has no idea what happened."

Motsinger's lawsuit moved with surprising quickness through the California courts, taking just 2 1/2 years from filing until verdict while other lawsuits against him stalled.

"We are grateful to the jury for their careful attention to the evidence and to Ms. Motsinger for the extraordinary courage it took to come forward," said Jesse Creed, one of her attorneys from the Panish Shea Ravid law firm that represented her.

Cosby did not testify at the trial, whose witnesses included Andrea Constand, the Temple University sports administrator he was convicted of sexually assaulting in a Pennsylvania criminal court in 2018. The state's Supreme Court threw out the verdict and Cosby was freed from prison after serving nearly three years of a three- to 10-year sentence.

Motsinger first made her allegations anonymously in a 2005 lawsuit filed by Constand.

The Associated Press does not typically name people who say they have been sexually abused unless they come forward publicly and consent to be named, as Constand and Motsinger have.

Film



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Margot Robbie in a scene from 'Wuthering Heights.' (AP)

'Adaptation lacks depth of classic novel'

'Wuthering Heights' fails to impress in China

BEIJING, March 24, (Xinhua) — As Catherine and Heathcliff once again roam the Yorkshire moors on screens around the world, the tragic lovers are finding a chillier reception than expected from audiences in China.

"Wuthering Heights," the latest adaptation of Emily Bronte's 1847 classic, is directed by Emerald Fennell and stars Margot Robbie and Jacob Elordi. The reinterpretation by the British filmmaker, who won the Oscar for best original screenplay for "Promising Young Woman," has performed robustly elsewhere, grossing more than 227 million US dollars globally to date.

But the numbers tell a bleaker story in China. The drama mustered just around 17.19 million yuan (about 2.49 million US dollars) as of Thursday, with 2.03 million yuan raked in on its opening day last Friday, according to Maoyan, one of China's major online ticketing platforms.

Although the first week's ticket sales do not necessarily determine the overall box office revenue of a movie, such disparity is striking, especially given that the source novel, a reading material for many schools in China, enjoys a devoted following among Chinese readers. So what accounts for the film's tepid performance during its debut week in the world's second-largest movie market?

Part of the explanation lies in timing. Unlike many international markets, where the film opened around Valentine's Day, its release in China came during a box-office lull, just after the lucrative Spring Festival holiday had ended.

With nationwide attendance declining, local blockbusters from the holiday period have continued to dominate. "Pegasus 3," a racing comedy and the season's highest-grossing film, took in more than 25 million yuan last Sunday, over eight times the earnings of "Wuthering Heights" on the same day.

But the reasons behind its underperformance extend beyond scheduling alone. For many Chinese moviegoers, the bigger issue is the movie itself, and specifically how it measures up to a beloved literary work. For many of those who had spent time and money seeing the drama in movie theaters, this high-profile adaptation falls short of their expectations.

According to the synopsis on the international review platform IMDb, the movie is described as "a passionate and tumultuous love story" that explores "the intense and destructive

relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw."

However, many Chinese moviegoers believe the latest film fails to fathom the rich themes of the original novel. A top comment on Douban, a popular review platform, praised the film's "nearly impeccable visual presentation," but lamented that "the tragic force of the original work is almost gone."

"The movie almost strips the original novel of its complex characters and social context, only leaving plots of desire and betrayal," another Douban user wrote. "Its obsessive emphasis on physical and emotional entanglement between the leads makes it more of a sensational romance."

For viewers unfamiliar with the culturally dense source novel, such comments may deter a ticket purchase. "I won't watch it," read a comment beneath a critical post on social media.

Industry insiders believe the muted response to a big-budget, star-driven production, which makes bold use of visuals, reflects a broader shift in the mindset of Chinese consumers.

"Chinese moviegoers today are more rational," said Mu Chen, head of a movie research institute. "Instead of simply buying tickets for heavily-marketed and star-studded movies, they check online ratings, read reviews and ask around to find movies that offer a genuinely rewarding experience."

An article on a professional social media account noted that while some Hollywood films have struggled in the Chinese market recently, this does not signal a blanket rejection of imports. It pointed to the success of Disney's "Zootopia 2" in the Chinese market as evidence.

Data shows that the animated sequel, the top-grossing imported film in Chinese box office history, has amassed more than 4.5 billion yuan since its release in November 2025, highlighting the enormous market foundation and consumption demand in China.

Last year, other imported films, including James Cameron's epic sci-fi film "Avatar: Fire and Ash" and Universal's "Jurassic World Rebirth," also generated strong responses from Chinese audiences and bagged considerable earnings.

"Regardless of origin, the films that achieve both commercial success and critical acclaim in China today are those that deliver authentic emotional resonance and invite real-world reflection," the article said.

Suit raises alarm over irreversible impact on Kennedy Center

Preservation groups sue to block Kennedy Center changes

WASHINGTON, March 24, (AP) — A coalition of cultural and historic preservation groups is suing to block further physical changes to the Kennedy Center ahead of a two-year closure that President Donald Trump insists is necessary to renovate the prominent performing arts venue.

The lawsuit against Trump, the Kennedy Center and others in the administration, doesn't dispute the need for routine maintenance and repairs. But it argues that the more substantial changes Trump has hinted are in the works should go through the typical review process that governs many major projects in the nation's capital.

Trump has suggested changes at the Kennedy Center could be so dramatic that the steel supporting the structure could be "fully exposed."

"Demolition, new construction, major reconstruction,

major renovation, or major aesthetic transformation of the Kennedy Center would permanently destroy historic fabric, degrade the monumental core's vistas and public grounds, and compromise the Kennedy Center's memorial purpose and architectural integrity, causing permanent, irreversible harm that no subsequent remedy can fully undo," the suit argues.

White House spokesperson Liz Huston said Trump is "committed to making the Trump-Kennedy Center the finest performing arts facility in the world."

"We look forward to ultimate victory on the issue," she said.

A representative for the Kennedy Center didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Some of the lawyers involved in Monday's lawsuit have pursued separate legal cases challenging other

moves by Trump to alter Washington's historic core, including his decision last year to suddenly knock down the East Wing of the White House to make way for a ballroom. In the Kennedy Center suit, the lawyers pointed to a "broader pattern of unauthorized damage to historic buildings in the capital district."

A judge rejected the ballroom suit last month, ruling it was unlikely to succeed on the merits.

After ignoring the Kennedy Center for much of his first term, Trump has wielded tremendous influence over the venue during his return to office. Just a month into his second term, he ousted the center's previous leadership and replaced it with a hand-picked board of trustees that named him chairman. He brought in Richard Grenell to serve as president, a position he held until last week when Matt Floca assumed the role.



A woman walks outside The John F. Kennedy Memorial Center For The Performing Arts on Feb 2, 2026 in Washington. (AP)

AI companion services exposing children to harmful content

Concerns rise as AI blurs line between real, fake content

BERLIN, March 24, (Xinhua): A video on social platform X, purportedly showing Israeli soldiers weeping behind a wall, drew more than 1.6 million views before investigators found it was generated using artificial intelligence (AI).

The incident highlights how AI advances are making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between real and fabricated content, raising concerns about the reliability of digital information.

The example underscores how the ongoing war in Iran is no longer fought solely on the battlefield, but also online.

An investigation by German public broadcaster ZDF found multiple inconsistencies in the above-mentioned footage. In one scene, a soldier wears a patch bearing the Israeli flag; in another, the patch is missing. The text on the patch is also nonsensical -- a common flaw in AI-generated imagery.

Comments under the post highlighted inconsistencies in the uniforms, sound effects and firearms, further casting doubts on the video's authenticity.

The spread of AI-generated content has been testing the credibility of professional news organizations.

In February, ZDF recalled one of its New York-based correspondents and later dismissed her over a report on a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operation that was found to contain AI-generated footage. A watermark of the Sora video-generation tool was visible in the corner of

the frame.

"The damage caused by disregarding journalistic standards is significant. At its core, the issue is the credibility of our reporting," said ZDF Editor-in-Chief Bettina Schausten.

Beyond individual cases of fabricated content, experts warn that AI may also reshape how public opinion itself is formed.

Even more troubling than fabricated content is AI's ability to manufacture the illusion of public opinion. In a recent Policy Forum article in the journal Science, an international team of researchers warned that digital manipulation is entering a new phase driven by so-called AI swarms.

In this phase, misinformation is no longer spread only by isolated bot accounts. Increasingly, it is amplified by coordinated clusters of AI-generated personas posing as real users.

"We are talking about a system of AI agents that can be controlled by an individual or an organization," said David Garcia, a social data researcher at the University of Konstanz.

"They have persistent identities and memory, and they can mimic human behavior. They can be coordinated toward a common goal while still varying their language and tone, and they are able to respond in real time to events and to human reactions," he said.

Garcia said that the risk lies in the possibility that ma-

nipulators could use large language models to construct an "alternative social reality."

"Through a gradual yet persistent process, AI swarms can create the impression that a particular view is widely shared," he said. "That can shape public opinion and even alter social norms. When many seemingly independent voices repeatedly express the same stance, the illusion of a majority can emerge, even when no such majority exists."

As these risks grow, researchers and institutions are stepping up efforts to detect and contain them.

"Content should be screened for patterns of coordinated behavior to help identify AI swarms more quickly," Garcia said.

Researchers have also called for stronger oversight to track how AI-generated accounts influence public debate and to identify coordinated manipulation at an early stage.

Garcia said the earlier such networks are uncovered, the less able they will be to erode public trust or to present a diverse range of social views as a single consensus.

Some of these efforts are beginning to take shape. On Monday, the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI) said it had launched a new deepfake detection project, "Check First. Vote Smart," together with the DFKI spin-off Gretchen AI and the Rhineland-Palatinate State Agency for Civic Education.

The tool allows users to forward suspicious Instagram images in two steps, after which the system assesses whether the material is AI-generated or manipulated and estimates the likelihood it is fake.

Bernhard Kukatzki, director of the Rhineland-Palatinate State Agency for Civic Education, said disinformation had become one of the most pressing challenges in today's information environment.

At a time when citizens are confronted with manipulated content on a daily basis, the ability to critically assess information is an essential skill, Kukatzki said.

Also:

CANBERRA: Australia's online safety regulator has issued a warning that artificial intelligence (AI) companion chatbots are exposing children to harmful content.

A report published on Tuesday by the federal government's eSafety Commissioner found that popular AI companion services are failing to protect children from sexually explicit content and not doing enough to prevent users from generating child abuse material.

The regulator served four providers of AI companion services with transparency notices asking how they are tackling online safety issues and found that none of them had robust age verification measures in place.

Fashion



Models wear creations by Shengze Silk during China Fashion Week (Spring) 2026 in Beijing, China, Tuesday, March 24. (AP)

Lifestyle

'Nature provides a shield'

People 'bathe' in nature to escape news overload

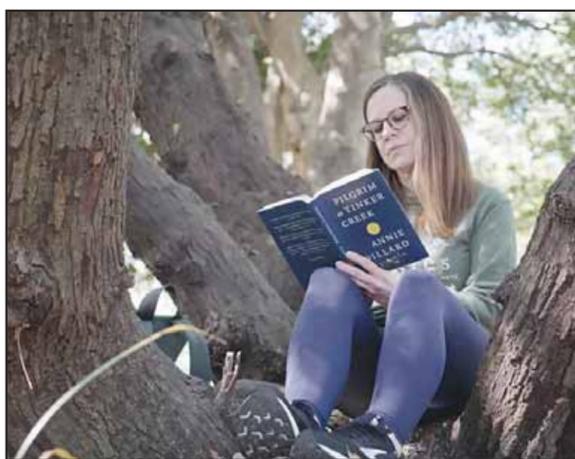
RALEIGH, N.C., March 24, (AP): For two hours, Claire Jefferies wanted to get away from the war in Iran and the rising gas prices and just commune with nature. And, so, she treated herself to a little forest bathing.

"When I'm here, it's almost like a protective bubble around me," the human resources director said amid oaks and flowering magnolias at the JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh, North Carolina. "It provides a shield."

The Sunday morning session was led by certified forest therapy guide Shawn Ramsey. Jangling a tiny brass bell, she called her dozen or so charges to gather for meditation, breathing exercises and to commune with nature.

"I invite you to really spend the next 10 minutes just exploring this area," she said, her own eyes closed. "Really focusing on your breath, on your footsteps. All the natural sounds around you. Maybe the man-made sounds, too. Thinking about the forest's natural rhythm and how are part of that here in this urban, forested environment."

Based on the Japanese wellness practice of Shinrin-yoku, the activity has been known to reduce stress, improve mood, lower blood pres-



Claire Jefferies reads a book in the crotch of an oak tree during a 'forest bathing' session at the JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh, N.C., on Sunday, March 22. (AP)

sure and boost the immune system. Although the arboretum is in a busy section of a growing city, Ramsey said the benefits of tuning out and getting in touch with nature are the same. She led the group of about a dozen through the various gardens, having them

crush conifer twigs between their fingers and smell them, or just touch trees.

"You know, in this day and age, there's a lot of stress and anxiety and chaos," she said. "And people are searching for ways to kind of cope with that."

crush conifer twigs between their fingers and smell them, or just touch trees.

"You know, in this day and age, there's a lot of stress and anxiety and chaos," she said. "And people are searching for ways to kind of cope with that."

Transportation safety researcher Alan Mintz came with a friend. He had to be reminded to leave the talk of news at the entrance.

"I think it's important for people to take the opportunity to exist in natural spaces, both to unwind and relax, so that it can be easier to interact with other people," he said as he stood in the dappled light filtering through the trees. "And to take a moment to appreciate beautiful things. That way, hopefully, they can carry that forward and have more of an appreciation for other people and other cultures that they might be less experienced with."

Jefferies had to remind a friend to stop talking about news as they walked beneath the gently waving canopy.

"That focus back into spending time in nature and the healing power of that, and just remembering that we're part of something bigger, that we're all connected," said the mother of a 9-year-old son. "And that what we do in our actions that we take really matter to the rest of the world. And so there's no better place to see that than here, where you can see all of the interconnectedness and the ways that this plant life naturally supports one another. Doesn't take more than they need."

Tech Tip

Group chats etiquette

Group chat rules you're ignoring, but shouldn't

NEW YORK, March 24, (AP): Communicating on group chats has quickly become a way of life, but what are the rules?

We used to use email, the phone or talk in person. Now we use platforms like iMessage, WhatsApp or Slack to coordinate a night out with friends, a kid's birthday party, a work project or even to discuss sensitive military information -- as US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth did by sharing details of airstrikes in a Signal chat.

But while group chats have exploded in popularity because of their informality, that also creates its own challenges: Discussions can veer off topic, repetitive or basic questions can irritate group members, and that viral meme you think is funny could also offend.

The principles of digital etiquette remain the same as other kinds of etiquette, but they are also "context specific and many of the rules are implicit rather than explicit," said Rupert Wesson, a director at DeBrett's, the British etiquette guide, who outlined key tips for The Associated Press.

Etiquette is always based on the idea of care and consideration for others, Wesson said. So it helps to think about how the recipients might be affected by your message.

That means, for example, not wasting other members' time by asking questions that could be easily answered by doing a Google search, or scrolling up or searching through the previous posts.

The Trent Windsurfing Club near Nottingham, England, which communicates with members using both WhatsApp and email, spells out other considerations in a 15-point list on its website.

"Don't get angry if someone doesn't respond to your messages in a group. No one is obliged to do so. Better send him/her a direct message," the club says.

Also, "Before sending a video, picture, meme or any content, analyze if such material will be in the interest of the majority of the members of the group."

And avoid sending videos or files that are very large, because "nobody likes to saturate the memory of their smartphone or waste their data/internet plan on nonsense," its guidance says. The club did not respond to a request for comment.

Remember the aim of the chat. Always consider the chat group's purpose. For those created with a specific and practical function in mind, just stick to the task and don't post any more than you need to, Wesson said.

On the other hand, "some groups are there for frivolity and here, more is more," he added.

It should be obvious, but don't post personal stuff in a company or business-related chat, and refrain from posting work-related material in a group with friends or family.

It doesn't hurt to lurk first before weighing in, partly because on some chat platforms new members

can't see what was posted before they joined.

"It is always best to err on the side of caution until you are very clear on the purpose and culture of the group," Wesson said.

Do you need to respond to every message? There's often someone who feels the need to type out a reply to every post, even if it's just to say "thanks." But doing so in a big group might be somewhat akin to an email reply-all storm.

Wesson advises considering how many people are in the chat.

"If there are three of you in the group, a response, if only an emoji, is almost expected," Wesson said. "In group of 50 or more it is practically a criminal offense."

Keep it clean and decent, especially at work.

This is an especially important point when it comes to work communications, with many white collar workers now using chat platforms like Slack and Microsoft Teams rather than email to communicate.

These platforms feel less formal than email but don't forget to follow the same guidelines as you do with other company communications.

"Assume anything messaged can be forwarded and be especially cautious of work chats (however informal they appear)," Wesson said. "As countless people have discovered at employment tribunals, any diversion into anything indecorous can be career limiting." Chat messages should be short and sweet.

One reason is that your words could come across differently depending on the person reading the message, so stick to using short sentences to avoid being misinterpreted.

If it's about work, and you want to discuss something in more length and detail, consider an in-person meeting, a phone call, or email instead.

"No one wants to read a 7-inch-long unformatted message when an organized attachment would have worked better," the American etiquette experts at The Emily Post Institute, advised in a blog post on business communications.

It's not a college essay, so the rules around grammar, punctuation or even emoji don't need to be too strict.

"You should not feel too constricted and nor should you judge others for playing fast and loose with the King's English," Wesson said. "Just let brevity and clarity be your guide."

Speaking of emoji, they're fun and can convey your meaning as well as the most thoughtful turn of phrase, Wesson said. But don't abuse them because they can be a "minefield."

There's a world of difference between, for example, the crying emoji and the crying with laughter emoji, he said. It's best to play it safe and avoid emoji when, for example, sending condolences, Wesson said.

Disney show cast reunites to mark 20-year milestone

Cyrus returns to her roots for 'Hannah Montana' special

LOS ANGELES, March 24, (AP): Sporting that "Hannah Montana" blonde hair and bangs, Miley Cyrus went back to her roots -- celebrating 20 years of the TV show that launched the career of a real-life pop star.

Cyrus reunited with cast members of "Hannah Montana" in Los Angeles Monday evening for the premiere of the "Hannah Montana 20th Anniversary Special."

Cyrus told The Associated Press that the milestone has given her a chance to see the character and series from "a new perspective." Cyrus, who began the Disney Channel show at age 13, played Miley Stewart, a tween and middle-schooler hiding her secret life as a famous pop singer.

"Getting to be on the outside now, getting to be grown and be a part of it in a way that I couldn't when I was in the middle of it before, and all the chaos and the schedule and the performing of it all," Cyrus said, "now it just gets to be a celebration. So it

is a new perspective. I love that."

The anniversary special, which started streaming Tuesday on Disney+ and Hulu, celebrates 20 years since the show's premiere. Filmed in front of a live audience, it features music, archival footage and an interview with Cyrus -- now 33 and a genuine pop star -- conducted by podcast host Alex Cooper.

Addressing the audience at the premiere, Cyrus paid tribute both to fellow cast members and fans. "Without you all, this show would have never been what it is, and I love saying what it is, not what it was," she said.

"Tonight isn't about looking back into the past, but it's about what it means to us still tonight," she said.

Jason Earles, who played Miley's brother Jackson, told the AP that watching the show now highlights how much time has passed.

"I think if you go back and you watch the episodes, there's

enough dated references like old flip phones and stuff that you go, 'Oh no, no, this show was a little while ago,'" he said.

Cody Linley, who played Miley's on-and-off boyfriend Jake Ryan, reflected on the impact of portraying a teen heartthrob.

"It's hard to believe that there were girls that had pictures of me with my shirt off in their locker and they would have me sign it," Linley said. "And it's hard not to let it go to your head, because you have to remember that it's an image that they are seeing. It's not you."

Also attending the premiere was country singer Lainey Wilson, who recalled working as a "Hannah Montana" impersonator early in her career.

"From 8th grade to 12th grade, five years of my life, I would open up the show as Lainey Wilson, I would run behind a tree and put on my 'Hannah Montana' get-up," the singer said. "I did birthday parties, fairs, festivals ... I was hitting the roads."



Miley Cyrus arrives at the premiere of 'Hannah Montana 20th Anniversary Special' on March 23, at El Capitan Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

CERN takes step toward delivering antiprotons to researchers

Scientists test transporting antimatter on first-ever road trip

GENEVA, March 24, (AP) — Scientists in Geneva are taking some antiprotons out for a spin — a very delicate one — in a truck, in a never-tried-before test drive.

If this so-called antimatter comes into contact with actual matter, even for a fraction of an instant, it will be annihilated in a quick flash of energy. So experts at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, known as CERN, will, over the course of four hours Tuesday, are taking about 100 antiprotons on the road.

The antiprotons are suspended in a vacuum inside a specially designed box and held in place by supercooled magnets.

After easing them from the lab and onto the truck, the scientists are taking the antimatter on a half-hour drive to test how — if at all — the infinitesimal particles can be transported by road without seeping out. If all goes well, the antiprotons will be returned back to the lab.

The hard part: Manipulating antimatter, like antiprotons, can be tricky business. As scientists understand the universe today, for every type particle

that exists, there is a corresponding antiparticle, exactly matching the particle but with an opposite charge.

If those opposites come into contact, they “annihilate” each other, setting off lots of energy, depending on the masses involved. Any bumps in the road on the test journey that aren’t compensated for by the specially-designed box could spoil the whole exercise.

Tuesday’s practice is a first step toward making good on hopes, one day, to deliver CERN antiprotons to researchers at Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, Germany, which is about eight hours away in normal driving conditions.

The antiprotons have been encased in a 1,000-kilogram (2,200 pounds) box called a “transportable antiproton trap.” It’s compact enough to fit through ordinary laboratory doors and fit on a truck. It uses superconducting magnets cooled to -269 degrees Celsius (-452 Fahrenheit) that allows the antiprotons to be remain suspended in a vacuum — not touching the inner walls, which are made of ... matter.



This image, taken from video, shows a truck transporting antiprotons in a first-ever test drive to study antimatter at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, CERN, in Meyrin, near Geneva, Switzerland, March 24. (AP)

The mass in Tuesday’s test — slightly less than that of about 100 hydrogen atoms — is so little, experts say, that the worst possible outcome is the loss of the antiprotons. Even if they do touch

matter, any release of energy would be unnoticeable, only an oscilloscope, which picks up electrical signals, would be able to detect it.

The trap, says CERN spokeswoman

Sophie Tesauri, “is supposed to contain these antiprotons no matter what: if the truck stops, if it starts again, if it has to slam on the brakes — all that.” Work remains: The trap can contain the antiprotons on its own for only about four hours, and the drive to Düsseldorf is twice that.

The Geneva-based center is best known for its Large Hadron Collider, a network of magnets that accelerates particles through a 27-kilometer (17-mile) underground tunnel and slams them together at velocities approaching the speed of light. Scientists then study the results of those collisions.

But the sprawling, buzzing complex of scientific experiment is more than just about smashing atoms together: the World Wide Web, for example, was invented here by Britain’s Tim Berners-Lee in 1989.

Heinrich Heine University is seen as a better place to study antiprotons in-depth, because CERN — with all its other activities — generates a lot of magnetic interference that can skew the study of antimatter.

But to get them there, those antiprotons will have to avoid touching any-

thing on the way.

The center’s Antiproton Decelerator, where a proton beam gets fired into a block of metal, causes collisions that generate secondary particles, including lots of antiprotons. It’s billed as a unique machine that produces low-energy antiprotons for the study of antimatter.

CERN’s “Antimatter Factory,” lab officials say, is the only place in the world where scientists can store and study antiprotons.

The center has been experimenting with antimatter for years, and has made breakthroughs on measurement, storage and interaction of antimatter. Two years ago, the team transported a “cloud” of about 70 protons — not antiprotons — across CERN’s campus.

It’s a similar drill this time, except that with antiprotons, a much better vacuum chamber is needed, according to Christian Smorra, head of a team behind the apparatus designed to store and transport antimatter.

Jittery test teams weren’t available for interviews before the exercise, but were expected to explain the results afterward on Tuesday.

Indonesia ramps up TB fight with national strategy

WHO urges faster, country-led action to combat tuberculosis in Western Pacific

MANILA, March 24, (Xinhua) — The World Health Organization (WHO) in the Western Pacific region called for accelerated, country-led action to combat tuberculosis (TB) on Monday.

The WHO regional office in Manila called for transforming TB care, decentralizing services, and scaling up innovation to fight the world’s deadliest infectious diseases.

“Bringing TB services closer to communities and rapidly expanding access to new diagnostic tools, in an environment free of stigma, are essential to reaching everyone in need,” said Saia Ma’u Piukala, WHO regional director for the Western Pacific, on the eve of World TB Day, observed annually on March 24.

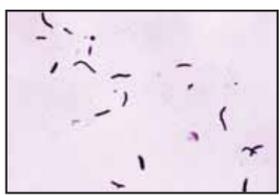
Piukala added that integrating TB services at the primary health care level improves early detection, reduces treatment delays, and helps prevent transmission, while ensuring vulnerable populations are not left behind.

In 2024, about 2.9 million people were affected by TB across the Western Pacific, according to the WHO.

However, stagnant funding, persistent risk factors — such as smoking, under-nutrition, alcohol use, and diabetes — and competing health priorities continue to threaten essential TB services.

The WHO also urged countries to accelerate the rollout of near-point-of-care molecular tests that can detect TB, including drug-resistant forms, more quickly and accurately.

The UN health agency stressed that sustained domestic investment is key to protecting gains and strengthening



This 1966 microscope photo, provided by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, shows Mycobacterium tuberculosis bacilli, the organism responsible for causing the disease tuberculosis. (AP)

health security. It noted that every US dollar invested can yield up to 43 US dollars in health and economic returns.

Indonesia is intensifying its fight against TB by rolling out a series of strategic measures to curb infections, improve case detection, and accelerate progress toward its ambitious goal of eliminating the disease by 2030.

TB remains a major public health challenge in Indonesia. According to the Global TB Report 2024, the country has the second-highest TB burden in the world, after India. It is estimated to record around 1.09 million TB cases and 125,000 deaths each year, equivalent to roughly 14 deaths every hour.

“The medicine exists and is very effective, but the disease has never been fully resolved,” Indonesian Minister of Health Budi Gunadi Sadikin said during a recent hearing in the House of Representatives in Jakarta.

He stressed that Indonesia is stepping

up efforts to tackle the high number of cases through coordinated national strategies and improvements in health system performance. The country is working to ensure that one million TB patients are identified and linked to treatment within a year, with a treatment success rate targeted at 90 percent, he added.

Indonesia’s anti-TB strategy includes the development of the National TB Strategic Plan 2025-2029, formulated based on the findings of a national TB program review conducted with support from the WHO.

Cambodia has achieved remarkable results in the fight against TB over the past more than two decades, Prime Minister Hun Manet said on Tuesday.

In a message to mark World TB Day under the theme of “Yes! We can end TB!”, Hun Manet said TB-related deaths declined by 77.5 percent to 18 per 100,000 people in 2024 from 80 in 2000. He added that new TB cases fell by 68 percent to 272 per 100,000 people in 2024 from 853 in 2000.

Hun Manet said TB treatment is free-of-charge, with a high cure rate of over 90 percent.

“About two decades ago, Cambodia was among the countries with a high TB burden in the world, but now, Cambodia has become a model for the world in controlling the disease effectively,” he said.

He added that despite this success, Cambodia still needs to accelerate its efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goal of ending the TB epidemic by 2030.

‘Focus on overall health, not just weight’

As demand for GLP-1 pills and shots surges, healthy habits are still key

NEW YORK, March 24, (AP) — Whether they’re using weekly shots or daily pills, more Americans than ever are turning to anti-obesity drugs to lose weight and boost health.

About 1 in 8 US adults say they are taking a GLP-1 drug, according to a recent survey by the health research group KFF.

Just since January, more than 600,000 prescriptions have been written for Novo Nordisk’s new Wegovy pill, the company said. Early analysis suggests that more than a third of users are new to the drugs, according to Truvena, a health care data company.

But medication alone isn’t the answer, experts caution. It also takes lifestyle changes — healthy diet, exercise, adequate sleep and stress management — to reap the biggest benefits from the drugs known as GLP-1s.

“The biggest mistake people make with GLP-1 medications is thinking the prescription is the treatment,” said Dr. Katherine Saunders, an obesity medicine expert at Weill Cornell Medicine and co-founder of FlyteHealth, a weight-loss treatment company.

GLP-1s can spur weight loss and health benefits on their own, but the effects are larger and last longer when the drugs are combined with lifestyle changes, a recent review of nearly three dozen studies found.

Here’s what experts say you should know about GLP-1 drugs and healthy habits:

Obesity is a big driver of chronic disease, including conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. But the focus should be overall health and not just the numbers on a scale, said Dr. Jody Dushay, an endocrinologist and obesity expert at Harvard Medical School.

“Health is what you eat, how much you move your body, what is your blood sugar, what is your blood pressure, what is your cholesterol,” she said. “All of those things are really important.”

The GLP-1 drugs work by targeting hormones in the gut and brain that slow digestion and target appetite and feelings of fullness. That effect “levels



A dosage of Wegovy, a drug used for weight loss, is displayed in Front Royal, Va., March 1, 2024. (AP)

the playing field,” said Saunders, making it easier to adopt healthy habits like eating less and moving more.

“Social media and advertising sometimes create the impression that these medications are a quick fix, but obesity is a complex, chronic, progressive disease” that requires ongoing medical management, she added.

The clinical trials of anti-obesity medications like Wegovy and Zepbound included structured lifestyle programs along with the medication, which are advised along with every new prescription.

That results not only in significant weight loss, but improved health markers. A February study of more than 98,000 US military veterans found that those who used a GLP-1 and adhered to six to eight healthy habits had a 43% lower risk of serious cardiovascular events such as stroke and heart attack than those who didn’t use the drugs and followed three or fewer such habits.

Lifestyle habits “can substantially amplify the benefits of modern medications” noted Dr. Frank Hu, a lead author and chair of the nutrition department at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

To maximize the benefits of GLP-1s and reduce potential side effects like nausea, vomiting, constipation and muscle loss, Dushay and other experts offer specific advice.

Maintain muscle by eating 20 grams to 30 grams of protein per meal, which could include fish, poultry, yogurt and beans. Eat more fiber and drink more water — as much as 8 to 12 cups a day. If heartburn or nausea is a problem, avoid fried foods and spicy foods, and don’t lie down after meals.

Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic exercise a week, or, ideally, about an hour a day. Add in 30 minutes of strength training two or three times a week, such as lifting weights or using resistance bands.

Get enough sleep — seven to nine hours a day for a healthy adult. Take steps to reduce mental and emotional stress.

Finally, check in with a health care provider about your progress. The GLP-1 drugs can have rare but serious side effects, the experts noted.

“Someone really does need to keep- ing track of: What is the pace of your weight loss? What are your side effects? And not just mailing you a prescription every month,” Dushay said.

AI tool bridges linguistic divide in virtual medicine

China rises as medical AI hub to ASEAN

NANNING, March 24, (Xinhua) — In a high-tech hall at Guangxi Medical University in south China, a digital avatar came to life, speaking fluent Vietnamese to a room full of delegates from across Southeast Asia.

The scene unfolded at a ceremony on March 16, marking the official launch of the Guangxi Medical Artificial Intelligence Research Institute, the latest milestone in China’s regional “AI + Healthcare” strategy.

Positioned as a specialized platform for China-ASEAN medical intelligence sharing, the institute was officially launched in Nanning, the capital of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Its debut reflects the rising importance of regional hubs in China’s broader AI strategy, aiming to export localized and cost-effective healthcare solutions to neighboring countries.

Guangxi, the only Chinese provincial-level region sharing both land and sea borders with ASEAN, leverages a “shared clinical profile.” From hereditary blood disorders like thalassemia to tropical infectious diseases, the medical challenges in Guangxi closely mirror those faced across Southeast Asia, from Hanoi to Bangkok.

“Given our unique advantage of possessing a massive volume of characteristic clinical data, the institute will serve as a strategic hub,” said Li Lang, vice president of Guangxi Medical University.

“We import top-tier algorithms from China’s tech hubs

like Beijing and Shanghai, train them on our unique disease profiles, and refine them with ASEAN-specific data, so they truly accommodate local needs,” Li added.

The launch drew a crowd of high-profile regional stakeholders, including Singapore’s Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) and Vietnam’s Hue Central Hospital, alongside sectoral heavyweights such as Beijing Yidu Technology Holdings Co., Ltd., and Shanghai SenseTime Shancui Healthcare Technology Co., Ltd.

These projects represent the vanguard of the region’s AI development strategy, in which high-end algorithms from China’s tech capitals are retooled for the specific linguistic and pathological makeup of ASEAN, according to Li.

At the heart of this portfolio is Urology’s Talk, described as the world’s first interactive medical AI specializing in urology and supporting multiple ASEAN languages.

Unlike general-purpose chatbots, Urology’s Talk is trained on specialized medical corpora to navigate the “last kilometer,” enabling the seamless integration of clinical data into cross-border medical consultations, explained Cheng Jiwen, vice president of the First Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi Medical University and one of the minds behind the platform’s development.

“Telemedicine often falls short not because of the tech, but because of linguistic barriers,” said Cheng. “We are bridging the clinical gap for minority dialects that global models often ignore. It allows for high-fidelity care between a specialist here in Nanning and a patient in rural Vietnam without the frictions of a human translator.”

The system currently supports Mandarin, English and Vietnamese, with Thai, Burmese and Khmer modules in the pipeline.

Cheng emphasized the importance of building a rich local-language corpus, as many patients do not use “textbook” terminology. “In Vietnam and Cambodia, the same chest pain might be described with everyday phrases that a standard model simply doesn’t recognize,” Cheng said.

Beyond standard clinical protocols, efforts have also been made to modernize China’s traditional healing methods by digitizing ancient practices to meet growing regional demand for more integrated healthcare.

Led by Huang Feng, a cardiovascular specialist at the Guangxi hospital, the AI Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Constitution Identification Device digitizes the four traditional diagnostic methods — watch, hear, ask and touch to feel the pulse — via computer vision and big data.



Rescue workers try to bring a whale stranded on the Baltic Sea coast back into deep water, near Timmendorfer Strand, Germany, Monday, March 23. (AP)

Rescuers try to refloat a stranded humpback whale

Rescue teams in northern Germany are working to refloat a humpback whale stranded in shallow water in the Baltic Sea.

Experts gathered Tuesday morning on the Timmendorfer Strand beach to find a way to pull the 10-meter-long (30-foot-long) mammal off the ground after the high tide around midnight was not suf-

ficient for the animal to swim free under its own power, German news agency dpa reported.

Earlier rescue efforts on Monday afternoon with police boats, inflatable boats and the help of firefighter drones guiding the rescue efforts were also unsuccessful.

The animal is still alive, it breathes, makes sounds and occasionally lifts

its head, Carsten Mannheimer of the marine conservation organization Sea Shepherd told dpa.

Experts assume that the whale is a young male, as males, unlike females, tend to migrate. It also seems to be the same whale that has been spotted several times in the port of Wismar in eastern Germany in recent weeks. (AP)

once again demonstrated that Cambodia is a country of outstanding natural richness and global biodiversity significance.

“Our karst ecosystems are not only home to rare and newly discovered species, but they also provide cultural, spiritual and economic value to local communities,” he said.

Atitya said Cambodia is strongly committed to strengthening the protection and sustainable management of these unique landscapes.

“We will continue to work closely with our partners to ensure that development is balanced with conservation, so that our natural heritage is safeguarded for future generations,” he said.

Sothearen Thi, Karst Biodiversity Coordinator for Fauna & Flora-Cambodia Programme, said Cambodia’s karst areas are a treasure trove of scientific secrets waiting to be uncovered.

New species, rare wildlife discovered in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, March 24, (Xinhua) — A new biodiversity survey has revealed the vast array of species living within karst ecosystems in western Cambodia’s Battambang province, the conservationists said a joint press release on Monday.

Exploring over 60 caves across ten hills in the province, the survey uncovered a treasure trove of extraordinary creatures, many found nowhere else on Earth, the press release said.

Led by Fauna & Flora-Cambodia Programme in collaboration with Cambodia’s Ministry of Environment, some of the most significant findings of the survey included the discovery of many species that are new to science such as three new geckos, two micro-snails, and two millipedes, while other new 3 geckos and a new pit viper species are currently being described, it added.

The survey confirmed the presence of several global threatened species,

including the Sunda pangolin, Indonesian silvered langur, long-tailed macaque and green peafowl, the press release said, adding that this finding highlights the urgent need to protect this habitat.

Karst landscapes are formed from limestone hills and caves, creating unique features such as sinkholes, springs and underground streams. Although still little explored, karst is one of the most biodiverse habitats on Earth, with high levels of endemism. These landscapes are also culturally and spiritually important to local communities and are increasingly valued for ecotourism.

Karst areas face growing threats from quarrying, poorly managed tourism, wildfire, illegal logging and wildlife hunting, the press release said.

Khvay Atitya, an undersecretary of state and spokesperson for the Ministry of Environment, said the survey



An AI Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Constitution Identification Device, developed by the First Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi Medical University, undergoes pilot operation in Niamey, Niger, on Jan. 10, 2026. (Xinhua)

'This is not the time to throw everything out'

England sticking with Key, McCullum and Stokes despite Ashes humbling

LONDON, March 24, (AP): England is not sacking anybody following the 4-1 Ashes loss in Australia.

A review of the tour by the England and Wales Cricket Board, announced within hours of the final match in January, was concluded on Monday. Firing people would "be the easy thing to do," ECB chief executive Richard Gould said but he insisted, "This is not the time to throw everything out."

Managing director Rob Key, coach Brendon McCullum and captain Ben Stokes kept their jobs after the best England side to go to Australia in 14 years lost the Ashes in 11 days with two games to spare.

"Moving people on can sometimes be the easy thing to do. That's not the route that we're going to take," Gould said. "I've seen the driving ambition and determination that we're lucky enough to have within our leadership group to take the lessons from the Ashes and move forward."

Stokes welcomed the decision in a post on Instagram and said the last three months were the hardest of his captaincy.

"Baz, Rob and myself have the passion and desire to take this team forward, we are going to give you everything we have, we know we made mistakes along the way and we have learnt from those mistakes, you learn more from failure than success," Stokes wrote. "I have got so much more to give to this role and I'm so happy that I get to do it with Baz and Rob."

"Being England captain ... I do not take it for granted," he added. "It has its highs and it has its lows, it makes you want to smile it makes you want



In this file photo, England's Ben Stokes appeals successfully for the wicket of Australia's Jake Weatherald during play on day two of the fifth and final Ashes cricket test between England and Australia in Sydney. (AP)

to cry. It completely and utterly consumes you and feels like it's the only thing in your life at times."

Gould previously was the chief executive of Bristol City soccer club and said the ECB would not follow the same route as soccer's hire-and-fire culture.

"Cricket is a very unique sport in that it takes a team of leadership ... it's not like football where there's a single point of failure or success with a manager," he said. He added the ECB would not "select or deselect management based on a popularity campaign."

The main criticisms of England's tour were poor preparation, player misbehavior, and selection mistakes.

At a press conference at Lord's, Gould and Key said McCullum and Stokes have not had a "bust up," they did not want McCullum to "completely change" but "to evolve," the behavior of some players was "unprofessional," there will be more consequences for underperforming, and a commitment to "better long-term planning" ahead of major test series.

Some changes were already implemented for the Twenty20 World Cup, where England reached the semifinals. Gould implied that performance saved McCullum.

Key acknowledged that England supporters would be disappointed to see the management team go unpunished.

"I know people want punishment and that people then should be sacked for that," Key said. "That doesn't mean we don't feel like we've gone through some serious pain: Brendon, myself, Ben. It's been as tough a time as I think I've had."

'Haas on a different journey'

Bearman builds momentum after breakthrough debut

BEIJING, March 24, (Xinhua): There is a moment in every young driver's career when the mythology of Formula 1 collides with reality. For Ollie Bearman, that moment arrived without warning during the 2024 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix weekend, when Ferrari's regular driver Carlos Sainz was laid low with appendicitis.

Bearman, a Ferrari Academy graduate who speaks fluent Italian, had been preparing for that weekend's Formula 2 race when he was handed an unexpected call from F1's most storied team, with almost no preparation and little time to process the scale of the opportunity.

"It was definitely crazy to get the late call and to have the pressure of driving," the 20-year-old Briton tells Xinhua in Shanghai, almost two years to the day since his debut. "I had a bit of impostor syndrome at the start, but after I did two or three laps I saw that I was more or less on the pace straight away. I remember every moment." Bringing his new mount home seventh that weekend helped establish Bearman as an F1-ready driver rather than simply a promising junior. Yet the broader context of that season offered a more uncertain picture, as his 2024 F2 campaign with Prema failed to gain momentum, leaving him 12th in the standings, several places below teammate Kimi Antonelli.

At a time when both drivers were positioning themselves for a step into F1, Antonelli's trajectory to the Mercedes seat soon to be vacated by Lewis Hamilton appeared cleaner, while Bearman's path relied more heavily on moments of opportunity rather than sustained results.

Even he recognises how much depended on that unexpected Ferrari debut, which arrived during what he describes as a difficult period in his junior career.

"It was a really tough year for myself and my teammate in F2 that year, so I was very lucky to get the race," he says. "But I believe in fate a little bit. I think I'll always be a bit in debt to Carlos for that opportunity." Two further substitute appearances for Haas later that year, stepping in for the indisposed Kevin Magnussen, helped reinforce the impression that Jeddah had not been a one-off but the beginning of something more substantial.

By 2025, Bearman had graduated to a full-time seat with Haas, although the opening phase of his rookie season exposed the typical growing pains of a young driver adapting to F1.

Difficult weekends at Silverstone, Budapest and Spa tested both his confidence and technical understanding, placing him in situations that demanded resilience rather than immediate results.



Ollie Bearman

Uruguay names Valverde, Araujo for warm-ups

MONTEVIDEO, March 24, (Xinhua): Real Madrid midfielder Federico Valverde and Barcelona defender Ronald Araujo were among 28 players named in Uruguay's squad for friendlies against England and Algeria.

The squad also includes Atletico Madrid defender Jose Maria Gimenez, Flamengo midfielder Giorgian de Arrascaeta and Al-Hilal striker Darwin Nunez.

Manager Marcelo Bielsa recalled veteran goalkeeper Fernando Muslera, who has not played for his country since June 2022.

The 39-year-old Estudiantes player, who has been capped 133 times since his international debut in 2009, is hoping to join a select group of players to appear in five editions of football's showpiece tournament.

Uruguay will play England at Wembley on March 27 and Algeria in Turin four days later.

The matches will provide the last chance for Bielsa to test his players before finalizing his squad for the World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Uruguay will begin its campaign against Saudi Arabia in Group H on June 15.

Uruguay squad: Goalkeepers: Santiago Mele, Fernando Muslera and Sergio Rochet.

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Gattuso says 'no alibis' for WCup playoff as he sends Chiesa home

Italy plays Northern Ireland

ROME, March 24, (AP): Coach Gennaro Gattuso acknowledged that only "someone without blood running through their veins" wouldn't feel nervous as Italy attempt to avoid failing to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup.

Gattuso is still just as feisty and gritty as when he played on the Italy team that won the country's fourth World Cup in 2006.

Ahead of Thursday's playoff match against Northern Ireland, he also suggested he sent home talented winger Federico Chiesa in what could amount to a definitive break with the standout player of the European Championship trophy run five years ago.

"It's undeniable that there's nervousness," Gattuso said. "Only someone without blood running through their veins wouldn't feel it. But we need to do a good job of transmitting a lot of positivity."

Positivity, however, is not what describes Italy's performances in the playoffs for the previous two World Cups, when the Azzurri were eliminated by Sweden and North Macedonia, respectively.

Italy is in jeopardy at the same stage for the coming World Cup in North America after two losses to Norway in qualifying. The Azzurri need to beat Northern Ireland at home in Bergamo and then Wales or Bosnia and Herzegovina away next week to avoid going at least 16 years without even playing a match at soccer's biggest event.

"There are no alibis," Gattuso said. "It's useless to think if we could have done better. The only thing we should be thinking about is Thursday's game. Forget that we've won four World Cups, two Euros and an Olympic title. For us, the only game is Thursday's."

"All of the players that are here today know what we're playing for and how important it is."



Left: Italy's head coach Gennaro Gattuso gestures during the Italian team press conference in Florence, Italy. Right: In this file photo, Italy's Federico Chiesa celebrates after scoring his sides second goal during a Euro 2024 Group C qualifying soccer match between Italy and North Macedonia. (AP)

Chiesa was sent back to Liverpool upon briefly rejoining the national team for the first time after an almost two-year absence.

"He had some minor (physical) issues and we decided that it was useless for him to stay," Gattuso said.

But then why are other injured players like Sandro Tonali, Gianluca Scamacca and Alessandro Bastoni staying with the team? Especially after Gattuso announced when he took over from the fired Luciano Spalletti in June that injured players would remain with the squad to improve team spirit.

"Because not every player has the same frame of mind," Gattuso said. "When I hear that someone is wavering that's when I know I need to make a choice. We decided it together. He felt he wasn't up to it and he went home. I need to accept it."

Bologna winger Nicolò Cambiaghi has replaced Chiesa.

Chiesa has played only sparingly since joining Liverpool from Juventus two years ago and started only one Premier League match this season.

Northern Ireland also lost a key player Monday when center back Daniel Ballard was ruled out with an injured hamstring. The Sunderland defender is among the few with Premier League experience on Northern Ireland's team.

Conor Bradley, Northern Ireland's captain and a Liverpool right back, was already out injured.

Since Gattuso was not able to convince soccer authorities to set up a training camp in the four months since Italy last played, he and delegation chief Gianluigi Buffon embarked on a tour up and down Italy - plus trips to London, Saudi Arabia and Qatar - to share dinners with the squad players in order to maintain team spirit.

"There was no white board or markers," Gattuso said. "We didn't go to talk about football or tactics. ... We were there to create team unity."

Gattuso said he chose to play in Bergamo's 23,500-seat stadium to create a more positive atmosphere. When Italy lost to Norway at the San Siro in November, he noticed that AC Milan and Inter Milan fans would whistle at players from opposing clubs.



'There were quite a few sandbox meetings'

Exhausting negotiations deliver historic deal

NEW YORK, March 24, (AP): The intense, all-night negotiations over the WNBA's collective bargaining agreement were new to many on both sides.

The grueling discussions lasted eight days and went well into the early morning hours each session. Well over 100 hours were spent hammering out the transformational deal that was agreed to in principle early last Wednesday morning.

From "sandbox" meetings to delicacies from a local bakery and a stroll down Fifth Avenue during the St. Patrick's Day parade, it wasn't just discussions that took place during the negotiations.

Here's a look behind the scenes at some of what happened during the marathon sessions as told to The Associated Press.

Representatives for the WNBA and its players met at three different places in New York - The Langham Hotel, NBA headquarters and union headquarters. At all three spots, each side had its own areas to talk as well as a central meeting room where discussions took place.

There wasn't much face-to-face time between the two sides during the endless hours of negotiating each day. They'd get together for an hour in the main room where conversations could be civil or turn heated. The two sides would then head back to their own areas to digest what had happened and mull over proposals.

Many of the discussions took place in smaller groups. Union outside counsel Deborah R. Willig and WNBA outside lawyer Shannon Farmer had many side conversations, which the players fondly called "sandbox" meetings.

"There were quite a few sandbox meetings," union executive committee member Brianna Turner said. "Sandbox definitely had a positive tone to it."

Willig said she's known Farmer for a long time and they have negotiated numerous other deals with each other over the past 20-25 years.

"We went out of the room to see what would fly on either side," Willig said.

"Nothing was ever done. I mean, I want to be very clear, nothing was ever done that was not communicated to the staff and to the leadership."

When the meetings moved back to The Langham Hotel for the final day, WNBA staff rolled a cart with printers, monitors and other electronics down Fifth Avenue during the St. Patrick's Day parade for the 14-block trip from league headquarters.

While revenue sharing and housing were the big items that took a lot of time to discuss and settle on over the course of the in-person meetings, there were many smaller issues that needed to be ironed out.

Even before the sides started meeting on March 10, they had agreed on many things that would be in the CBA. Still, there was a lot left that needed to be done. With so many of the items impacting the economic structure, it wasn't so simple to get things done quickly.

"I couldn't necessarily tell you specifically when things were done, but up until Friday, the small groups that we were meeting in were more effective," union president

Nneka Ogumike said. "That's when things started taking more motion."

Alysha Clark kept a journal of the eight days and at one point when they were discussing rookie salaries, the veteran was able to pull up her rookie contract on her computer. Clark, drafted in the second round in 2010, earned roughly \$36,000 her first year. Now through the hard work of the union and the league, rookies would be making potentially 10 times that.

With negotiations going on for hours, both sides needed to figure out nightly dinner orders. Ogumike gave that responsibility to Clark, who was glad to lead the charge.

"They weren't heated discussions, but they were stressful," Clark recalled, laughing. "Nneka delegated to me and thank goodness we are all foodies. (Brianna Turner) is a foodie who loves to explore, too, so I said to her I needed her help."

Brazilian, Italian and Mexican were some of the top choices from the players' side. Bagels were catered every morning, and Brianna Stewart brought pastries from her

favorite Brooklyn bakery one morning.

"It's near my house, so it's where I always get good stuff," Stewart said. "So I grabbed some baked goods to bring in for everyone to enjoy."

The league also had its own negotiations each night about what food to get. Some nights it was sushi, others it was Mexican or Italian.

Each side definitely had a sweet tooth, with ice cream brought in a few times.

Each negotiating session went well past midnight and into the early morning hours, stretching up to 15 or 16 hours some days. Part of that was negotiating tactics to try to tire out the other side, but both knew how important this deal was and didn't want to make any mistakes.

"There were points in time where it reached 3 or 4 (a.m.), where I would say, and the other side would say to call it quits for the night," Willig said. "We can't be wrong. We can't miss language, we can't make mistakes. This is too important. So let's just reconvene, let everybody get some sleep, be clear-eyed the next day."

Players sometimes left hours before the lawyers for both sides did.

On the final night, the players said they had just left a meeting when a few minutes later they were called back into the main meeting room.

No one expected the in-person negotiations to take as long as they did. Clark, Turner and Ogumike all flew in for the meetings and had originally thought they'd be able to get the CBA done before the weekend.

Clark said one of her goals this year was to pack only carry-ons as often as possible and that's what she did for the negotiations. She had to stop by a few stores to pick up some clothes and when she went home for a day to broadcast the Tennessee state championship she came back ready to stay for the long haul.

"The second go-round I packed a few extra options," she said. "If I'm here longer than my suitcase allows, I'll pop over to Adidas."



WNBA players and union members pose for a photo in an elevator after a negotiating session at the NBA headquarters in New York. (AP)

Decision by the French league expected on Thursday

PSG faces setback as Lens says 'no' to match postponement

PARIS, March 24, (AP) — Paris Saint-Germain wants to postpone its Ligue 1 title clash with Lens because it falls between the Champions League quarterfinal legs against Liverpool.

Lens has rejected moving the April 11 home fixture, saying the French league would be relegated "to accommodate the European ambitions of certain parties."

A decision by the French league is expected on Thursday. The league has previously helped its teams in European competitions.

Ligue 1 is enjoying a close title race. Lens sits one point behind PSG having played one game more.

Their showdown is a thorn for Champions League defending champion PSG, which is scheduled to host Liverpool three days beforehand, and play the return leg at Anfield three days afterward.

The French league previously postponed PSG's home match against Nantes - the game in hand it has on Lens - because it fell between the two last-16 ties against Chelsea. A rested PSG routed Chelsea 8-2 on aggregate.

But while Nantes agreed to reschedule, Lens sees things far differently.

"It appears to us that a worrying sentiment is taking hold: that of a French league gradually being relegated to the status of a mere variable to accommodate the European ambitions of certain parties," Lens said in a statement posted on X. "This is a peculiar conception of sporting

fairness, one that is difficult to find parallels with in other major continental competitions."

Lens argued that it has the 10th biggest budget in Ligue 1 - way behind PSG's colossal spending power - and its smaller squad would be exposed to a hectic schedule. Lens is also playing in the French Cup semifinals on April 21.

"Changing the date of this match today would mean that Lens would be deprived of competition for 15 days, followed by matches every three days," Lens said. "A schedule that corresponds neither to the one established at the start of the season, nor to the resources of a club that could absorb this type of new constraint without consequence."

Lens won its only French title in 1998 compared to a record 13 championships for PSG, which sealed last season's trophy with ease. PSG lost only twice and those defeats came after the title was sealed.

"Beyond this specific case the question raised is more fundamental: that of the respect due to the competition itself," Lens added. "It is legitimate to question this when, on its own soil, the league sometimes seems relegated behind other ambitions."

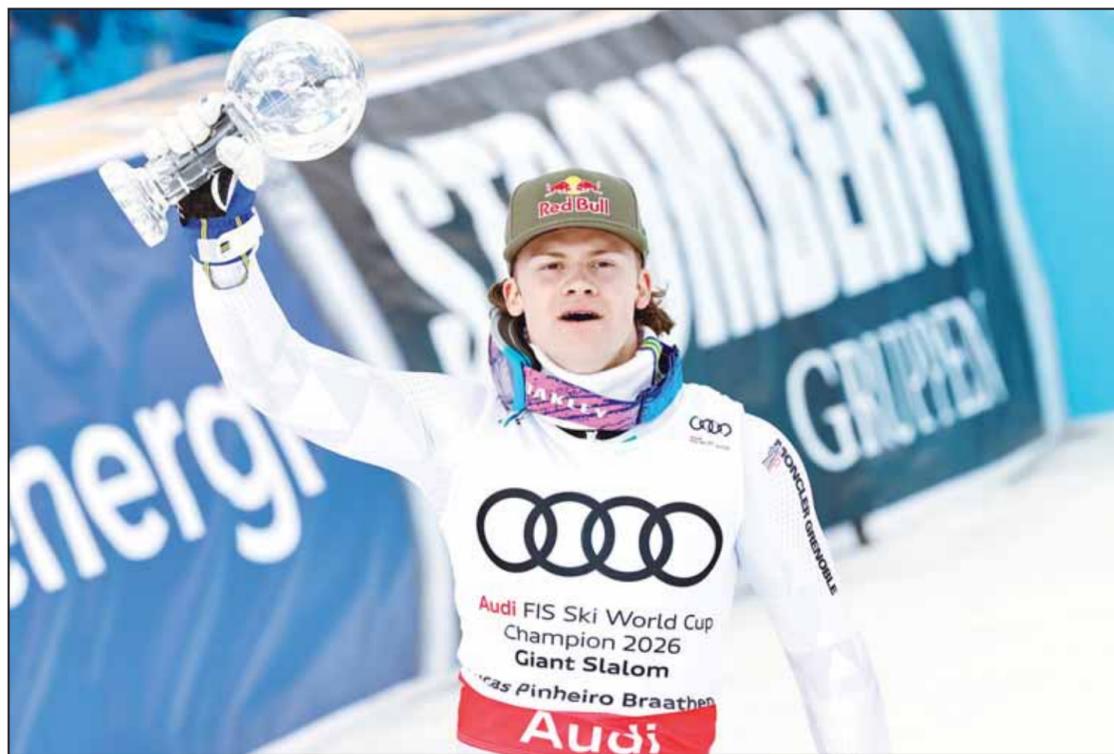
But another factor could weigh against Lens.

Strasbourg reportedly wants its league game at Brest on April 12 rearranged because it falls between its Conference League quarterfinal against German club Mainz.



PSG's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, center, heads the ball during the French League One soccer match between Nice and Paris Saint-Germain in Nice, France. (AP)

Pinheiro Braathen wins World Cup giant slalom to take season title



Brazil's Lucas Pinheiro Braathen celebrates winning the globe trophy for the alpine ski, men's giant slalom discipline title, at the Lillehammer World Cup Finals, in Hafjell, Norway. (AP)

Aicher's third place puts Shiffrin overall trophy on hold

HAFJELL, Norway, March 24, (AP): Olympic champion Lucas Pinheiro Braathen added the World Cup giant slalom season title on Tuesday in a stunning campaign for the Brazilian skier.

Racing on the slope where he grew up, the Norway-born star projected his first-run lead to finish 0.58 seconds ahead of Loic Meillard, who would have taken the season-long title had Pinheiro Braathen failed to finish.

Pinheiro Braathen won the season-long slalom title in 2023 when skiing for Norway, then split months later with the national ski federation in a dispute over sponsorship. That pushed him toward competing for his mother's home nation after sitting out an entire season.

At the start of racing on Tuesday, Swiss superstar Marco Odermatt led the giant slalom standings but he failed to complete his first run.

The 25-year-old Pinheiro Braathen skied with calm assurance to claim the title that never looked at risk.

On seeing his winning time, he saluted fans by raising his right index finger and slowly skied toward a bank of photographers and screamed with joy. He turned to look into the finish-area television camera and yelled "Vamos!"

In third place was Pinheiro Braathen's childhood friend Atle Lie McGrath, trailing by 0.87.

The men's World Cup season ends on Wednesday with the slalom title at stake. The Vermont-born McGrath leads the standings with Pinheiro Braathen his closest challenger.

Odermatt already secured the World Cup season titles in downhill, super-G and overall but could not retain his giant slalom title.

The Swiss star has seemed fatigued in recent weeks and does not relish the softer spring-like snow typical of World Cup courses in March. The temperature was 7 degrees (44 F) when the second run started at 12:30 p.m. local time.

Mikaela Shiffrin vs. Emma Aicher for the most prestigious title in women's skiing will go to the season-ending final race on Wednesday.

Shiffrin won yet another slalom - her ninth in 10 World Cup starts this season - by a massive margin of 1.32 seconds ahead of Wendy Holdener.

That earned Olympic champion Shiffrin 100 points in the race for the World Cup overall title but Aicher's impressive third place, awarded 60 points, kept the American's lead in the standings below 100.

Shiffrin will start the season-ending giant slalom on Wednesday 85 ahead of the German who must win to deny the American superstar a women's record-tying sixth overall title in her stellar career.

"It's weird to say battle with somebody who I consider a friend," Shiffrin said of Aicher. "These last races have been super exciting for me to be part of it."

"I'm so excited to watch what she does in the future but for now we have one more race to decide this one."

The odds are stacked in Shiffrin's favor.

Aicher has never won a World Cup giant slalom and has a career-best finish of fourth, achieved this month at Are, Sweden.

Shiffrin, the 2018 Olympic champion in giant slalom, can seal the overall title herself with a top-15 result on Wednesday that will earn at least 16 points.

Swiss skier Holdener gave an assist on Tuesday by taking second place ahead of Aicher by just 0.04. That kept 20 World Cup points off Aicher's tally.

Shiffrin's 110th career race win on Tuesday is already by far the most in the World Cup by any man or woman. Ingemar Stenmark is next best with 86 wins in the 1970s and '80s.

A sixth overall title on Wednesday would match Austrian downhill great Annemarie Moser-Pröll for the women's World Cup record.

Moser-Pröll won five straight titles from 1971-75 then a sixth in 1979. Shiffrin won three straight from 2017-19, then back-to-back titles in 2022 and '23.

Shiffrin did set a women's World Cup record on Tuesday: Nine wins in a discipline is a single-season best in 60 years on the circuit. She long ago sealed her record ninth career slalom season title.

"This season has been so exciting, quite like a whirlwind," she said. "I'm grateful for it."

The sun is shining on Shiffrin as the season sets with warm temperatures of 7 degrees Celsius (44 F) and softening snow that barely slowed the greatest slalom skier.

White's mystery 4-year England absence finally ends

MANCHESTER, England, March 24, (AP) — Arsenal defender Ben White is back in the England squad for the first time since walking out on the team midway through the last World Cup.

White was called up by national coach Thomas Tuchel on Monday for friendlies against Uruguay and Japan as a replacement for the injured Jarell Quansah. White previously made himself unavailable to England following his premature departure from the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and never publicly declared why.

Former coach Gareth Southgate wanted 28-year-old White before the 2024 European Championship but was unable to persuade him.

"For me, that is a great shame," Southgate said at the time. "He would be in this squad but he's not available to us and I have to focus on who can help us."

White left the 2022 World Cup early for what the English Football Association said were "personal reasons."

His exit was sudden, shortly before England's first game of the knockout stages. At the time, the FA asked that "the player's privacy is respected" without giving further detail.

Southgate later dismissed reports there was a



In this file photo, Arsenal's Ben White, left, duels for the ball with Bournemouth's Milos Kerkez during the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Bournemouth in London. (AP)

problem between White and then-England assistant Steve Holland, and his prolonged absence from the national team remained a mystery. Tuchel took over from Southgate last year and said he would reach out to the Arsenal player, who has remained

one of the top defenders in the Premier League.

White's call-up raises the potential of him being part of England's squad for the World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

White has previously spoken of his unusual attitude to soccer, revealing that he rarely watches matches.

"I just loved the game, I was always playing it, never watching it," he told Sky Sports in 2021.

If he plays against Uruguay on Friday or Japan the following Tuesday - both at Wembley - it will be his first England appearance since his fourth cap against Ivory Coast in March 2022.

Tuchel also called up Newcastle's Harvey Barnes as a replacement for Arsenal forward Eberechi Eze.

Club Brugge midfielder Hans Vanaken and Arsenal winger Leandro Trossard have been ruled out of Belgium's upcoming friendly matches in the United States ahead of the World Cup.

The Belgian federation said on Monday that both players are hampered by physical issues and won't join their teammates. They had been called up by coach Rudi Garcia in a group of 28 players on Friday.

Griezmann set to seal Orlando City move

Klopp dismisses Madrid speculation

ISMANING, Germany, March 24, (Agencies) — Former Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp has dismissed as "nonsense" a suggestion he could take over as Real Madrid coach next season and said he hasn't heard from the Spanish club.

Klopp hasn't coached since his shock departure from Liverpool in 2024, when he said he was "running out of energy." He's stayed in the game as the Red Bull group's head of global soccer, overseeing clubs like Leipzig, Salzburg and the New York Red Bulls.

"It's all just nonsense. They haven't even called once, not one single time. And my agent is over there, you can ask him too, they haven't called him either," Klopp said in televised comments about speculation linking him to Real Madrid.

He was speaking at an event on Monday in his role as a TV pundit for the World Cup.

Klopp didn't rule out a return to coaching someday but said he wasn't thinking about the Germany job in case Julian Nagelsmann were to leave after the World Cup.

"At the moment I'm obviously not thinking about that at all and luckily there isn't any reason to do that," he said in comments reported by German agency dpa.

Last month, Red Bull said it was "extremely satisfied" with Klopp's work after a report in an Austrian newspaper claimed his role was in question because the drinks giant's clubs hadn't made enough progress in the year since he took charge.

Atletico Madrid forward Antoine Griezmann will leave the club at the end of the season to join Major League Soccer side Orlando City.

Spanish sports dailies Diario AS, Sport and El Mundo Deportivo are among the outlets reporting that Griezmann has been given permission by Atletico to travel to the United States during the current international break to sign his contract with Orlando City, with club sources confirming the move.

"Antoine Griezmann has been authorized by his club to travel to Orlando during his days off in order to make progress in the discussions linked to his future," the source said on Monday.

There had been speculation that Griezmann could leave Atletico in February while the MLS transfer window was still open, but the 35-year-old's strong form

and the fact that Atletico remains in the Champions League and has also reached this season's Copa del Rey final persuaded him to stay until the end of the current campaign.

Griezmann is Atletico's all-time leading scorer with 211 goals and ranks fourth in appearances in the club's history, having played 488 matches over 10 seasons.

Borussia Dortmund has dipped into the German second division to appoint a new sporting director who won praise for making impactful transfers on a budget.

Ole Book steps up from Elversberg, a team from a town of around 13,000 people. That's less than one-sixth of the capacity of Dortmund's stadium.

He'll replace Sebastian Kehl, who had been sporting director since 2022, including for Dortmund's run to the 2024 Champions League final. He left with Dortmund 9 points off Bundesliga leader Bayern Munich and with uncertainty over the future of key defender Nico Schlotterbeck, who has a year left on his contract.

"In our conversations we soon noticed that Ole has an extremely great hunger for success, high ambitions and tremendous team spirit," Dortmund's spokesman for the management Carsten Cramer said in a statement.

"This aligns with our values and what we want to embody at Borussia Dortmund. Now the task is to shape the future of our club in a bold and successful way. That's what drives us."

Czech police detained dozens of people in a soccer match-fixing scandal.

Czech Football Association head David Trunda said it started the case several years ago by alerting police to its suspicion of match fixing and bribery, without elaborating. Local media reported it happened in the top four club leagues and possibly youth competitions.

A total of 47 people face a disciplinary investigation, Trunda said.

"We will do everything to ensure that the betting mafia disappears from the Czech sports," he added.

State prosecutors confirmed the detentions and said officers from the organized crime unit conducted raids across the country.

The scandal has broken out just two days before the final stage of World Cup qualifying.

The Czechs are in the World Cup playoffs; they meet Ireland on Thursday in Prague and the winner hosts Denmark or North Macedonia for a spot in the tournament co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

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United States' Mikaela Shiffrin holds the globe trophy for the alpine ski, women's slalom discipline, at the Lillehammer World Cup Finals, in Hafjell, Norway. (AP) - See Page 15

Sports

Pistons snap Lakers 9-game winning streak

OKC beats short-handed 76ers

PHILADELPHIA, March 24, (AP): Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 22 points, Jalen Williams added 18 in his return to the lineup and the Oklahoma City Thunder won their 12th game in a row Monday night with a 123-103 victory over the short-handed Philadelphia 76ers.

Jared McCain had 13 points for the Thunder in his first game in Philadelphia since last month's trade. The defending NBA champions improved to 57-15, the best record in the league.

VJ Edgecombe scored 35 points for the 76ers, who played without Tyrese Maxey, Joel Embiid and Paul George. Philadelphia began the day as the No. 7 seed in the Eastern Conference play-in tournament but was just a half-game back of fifth-place Toronto.

Williams was back in the lineup after missing 16 games with a right hamstring strain.

Pistons 113, Lakers 110

In Detroit, Daniss Jenkins scored a career-high 30 points, including six in the final 34 seconds, and Detroit ended Los Angeles' nine-game winning

streak.

The Pistons overcame 32 points from Luka Doncic and 24 from Austin Reaves to win their fourth straight and seventh in eight games. Jalen Duren added 20 points and 10 rebounds.

Doncic was cleared to play Sunday after the NBA rescinded his 16th technical foul of the season, which triggers a one-game suspension.

LeBron James went scoreless in the first half, but finished with 12 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds.

Pacers 128, Magic 126

In Orlando, Pascal Siakam scored 37 points and blocked Paolo Banchero's attempted layup in the final seconds to help Indiana end their franchise-record 16-game losing streak with a win over Orlando.

Banchero scored 39 points for the Magic, who have lost five straight.

Banchero drove to the basket with a chance to tie the game after Orlando won a jump ball with 6.4 seconds left. But 7-foot-1 Jay Huff and the 6-9 Siakam were under the basket, and Banchero could not get the shot over them.

Jarace Walker had 20 points for the Pacers, and Aaron Nemith added 19. Andrew Nembhard, who hit a 3-pointer with 1:33 remaining for Indiana's final points, finished with 13 points, 14 assists and seven rebounds.

Bulls 132, Rockets 124

In Chicago, Matas Buzelis' layup in the final seconds put Chicago ahead to stay and Collin Sexton came off the bench to score 25 points as Chicago beat Houston Rockets.

Houston's loss, combined with San Antonio's 136-111 win over Miami, allowed the Spurs (54-18) to clinch the Southwest Division.

The Bulls (29-42) led by as many as 22 points after scoring a season-high 41 points in the first quarter. But, Chicago trailed by four points late and needed Buzelis' basket with 10.2 seconds remaining to move ahead to stay and post their first win over Houston in the teams' last five games.

Spurs 136, Heat 111

In Miami, Victor Wembanyama scored 26 points as San Antonio beat Miami Heat for their sixth straight win.

Wembanyama added 15 rebounds and five blocks for the Spurs. Keldon Johnson scored 21 points while adding six rebounds. Dylan Harper went 9 of 14 from the field (3 for 5 from 3-point range) to finish with 21 points.

Norman Powell led the Heat with 21



Chicago Bulls guard Collin Sexton (2) drives as Houston Rockets guard Reed Sheppard (15) guards during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Chicago. (AP)

points. Tyler Herro had 18 points.

Hawks 146, Grizzlies 107

In Atlanta, Nickail Alexander-Walker scored 26 points and eight Atlanta players scored in double figures as the Hawks routed Memphis.

Atlanta outscored the Grizzlies in the first three quarters and had an insurmountable 41-point advantage at 116-75 after three periods. The Hawks led by 10 points (32-22) after one and 25 points (71-46) at halftime on the way to their 11th straight home win and 13th victory in 14 games. Atlanta kept its lead around 40 points through most of the final period, which was won by the Grizzlies 32-30.

Clippers 129, Bucks 96

In Inglewood, Kawhi Leonard scored 28 points in 25 minutes and Los Angeles pummeled Milwaukee.

Brook Lopez added 19 points.

Darius Garland had 15 points and six assists, and the Clippers won consecutive games following four straight losses. They made all 18 of their free throws and got back to .500 with 10 games remaining in the regular season after having a 6-21 record on Dec. 18.

Gary Trent Jr. paced the Bucks with 20 points off the bench. Ryan Rollins led their starters with 13, and Milwaukee had five players in double figures.

Raptors 143, Jazz 127

In Salt Lake City, RJ Barrett scored 27 points, Sandro Mamukelashvili added 23 and Toronto defeated Utah.

Ja'Kobe Walter had 21 points and Scottie Barnes finished with 20 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds as the Raptors (40-31) stopped a two-game skid. They remained a half-game ahead of Atlanta for fifth place in the Eastern

Conference - the top six teams are assured a playoff berth without needing to qualify via the play-in tournament.

Utah rookie Ace Bailey had 37 points and Bryce Sensabaugh scored 24 off the bench for the Jazz (21-51), who have lost six of seven and are eliminated from playoff contention.

Warriors 137, Mavericks 131, OT

In Dallas, Moses Moody scored 23 points before crumpling to the floor with an apparently serious left knee injury late in overtime as Golden State beat Dallas, extending the Mavericks' home losing streak to 12 games, their longest in 32 years.

Moody had just stolen the ball from Mavericks rookie standout Cooper Flagg near midcourt and was all alone at the basket when his left leg buckled as he went up for the shot. He lost the ball and went to the floor holding his

knee with 58 seconds remaining in the extra period.

Play continued at the Dallas end until the ball went out of bounds. After the whistle, Warriors coach Steve Kerr put his hands to his face as the Mavericks' home arena went silent. Players and medical staff surrounded Moody, who stayed down for several minutes before being taken off in a cart.

Trail Blazers 134, Nets 99

In Portland, Toumani Camara had career highs of nine 3-pointers and 35 points to help Portland beat Brooklyn, the Trail Blazers' largest margin of victory this season.

The Nets have lost eight straight and 18 of the last 20. Brooklyn (17-55) is a game behind Indiana (16-56) and a half-game behind Washington (16-55) for the best draft lottery odds.

Club will be a gateway to attract Kuwaiti talent to English football

Birmingham Albion taps Al-Dhafiri's expertise

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

BIRMINGHAM, England, March 24: Newly established English football club Birmingham Albion has appointed Kuwaiti executive Tawari Madloul Al-Dhafiri to its management committee as part of a major strategy to strengthen administration, governance, and international expertise.

Al-Dhafiri, known for his extensive experience in both sports management and economics, will play a key role in guiding the club's strategic decisions - particularly amid the financial and administrative challenges faced by English clubs at all levels of the Premier League.

"Joining Birmingham Albion is a great honor," Al-Dhafiri said. "I look forward to contributing my experience to serve the club and working together with the team to achieve our goals. Integrating efforts across all departments is essential

for long-term success and sustainability."

Founded by ambitious young Kuwaitis Faisal Al-Sarbel and Badr Al-Anzi, Birmingham Albion will launch its first season this August. The club aims to provide a platform for Kuwaiti talent, giving young players the opportunity to compete and develop in English football.

Al-Dhafiri highlighted the progress already made, including partnerships with an Italian company for players' uniforms, a Saudi supplier for sporting equipment, and a scouting platform for talent. The club is also finalizing agreements with English sponsors to support its growth and development.

"This is a unique opportunity for Kuwaiti players to showcase their skills internationally," Al-Dhafiri said. "Birmingham Albion will be a gateway for local talent to reach the English leagues while strengthening the club's institutional and investment foundations."



Tawari Madloul Al-Dhafiri

'A lot of frustration and anger'

Mbappé says left knee injury 'all gone' as France ramps up for the World Cup

PARIS, March 24, (AP): As the World Cup looms, France star Kylian Mbappé says his left knee that bothered him for weeks is now fine.

The Real Madrid striker was used as a substitute in his team's last two matches as he works his way back into form and has joined his France teammates ahead of a couple of friendlies in the United States this week.

"There was a lot of frustration, a lot of anger, and then also some anxiety at one point," Mbappé told French media at a promotional event. "I had reached a stage where I didn't know what was wrong with me. I didn't go through that period in the best way. I wasn't the happiest player in the world. But I'm happy now because it's truly behind me. It's all gone."

Mbappé had been in great form until he sprained his knee at the end of last year. The former Paris Saint-Germain player, who joined Madrid in the summer of 2024, played throughout January but was then sidelined for three-and-a-half weeks before making his

latest comeback.

"I wanted to be very cautious so as not to come back too quickly and risk a relapse or pick up another injury

elsewhere," he said. "I wasn't afraid of reinjuring my knee, but of getting hurt somewhere else, because after four or five weeks without playing, you have

to get all the other muscles going again. That's why I took my time."

Mbappé also lashed out at the "baseless" information that circulated during his absence.

"A lot of people gave a diagnosis, even though until not very long ago I didn't have one myself," he said. "From that point on it was easy to say that everything being said was wrong. I heard a lot of things - surgery, that I might not play again, that I wouldn't be able to play in the World Cup. It was all completely baseless."

Mbappé, who has 38 goals in 35 matches this season across competitions, said he was happy Madrid played well in his absence. The club sits in second place in La Liga and goes up against Bayern Munich next month in the Champions League quarterfinals.

He added that he hopes to play with France during the international break as Les Bleus ramp up preparations for the summer World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada.



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappé, right, and Atletico Madrid's Koke challenge for the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

Single-leg fixtures

Jeddah to host Elite CL knockouts after delays



AFC Elite Champions League trophy.

KUALA LUMPUR, March 24: The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has announced that four postponed AFC Elite Champions League matches in the West Zone will now be played as single-leg fixtures in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, next month due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

Following earlier postponements on March 1 and 3, 2026, the AFC confirmed that all remaining knockout stage matches in the West Zone will adopt a centralized, single-match format to ensure safety and maintain the competition schedule.

The Round of 16 matches will take place on April 13 and 14 at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium and Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal Stadium in Jeddah. Unlike the East Zone, where matches were played over two legs, the West Zone fixtures were impacted by the escalation of the conflict involving the United States and Israel against Iran and its regional repercussions.

Three Saudi clubs are in the Round of 16:

Al-Ittihad vs. Al-Wahda (UAE)
Al-Ahli, the defending champions, vs. Al-Duhail (Qatar)

Al-Hilal vs. Al-Sadd (Qatar)
The final Round of 16 matches will feature Shabab Al-Ahli (UAE) against Tractor (Iran).

The final stages of the competition are scheduled to be held in Jeddah from April 16 to 25.

To accommodate a packed continental calendar, the AFC also announced:

Quarter-finals and semi-finals of the AFC Champions League 2 (2025-2026) and AFC Challenge Cup will be played as single-leg matches on April 19 and 22, with host stadiums to be announced later.

AFC Champions League 2 West Zone quarter-finals:

Al-Hussein (Jordan) vs. Al-Ahli (Qatar)

Al-Nassr (Saudi Arabia) vs. Al-Wasl (UAE)

AFC Challenge Cup quarter-finals:

Muras United (Kyrgyzstan) vs. Al-Ansar (Lebanon)

Kuwait Club (Kuwait) vs. Al-Shabab (Oman)

The AFC's decision ensures the competition continues safely while maintaining the integrity of the tournaments in light of ongoing regional tensions.