



Kuwait enhances higher education readiness amid current conditions Page 4



KUWAIT SUMMONS IRANIAN ENVOY FOR THIRD TIME

Fuel tank fire at Kuwait airport after drone strike

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Ibn Tashfin's response to Alfonso's message – 'You shall see'

The King of Castile vowed to crush Andalusia but was defeated there.

He faced a fearless man from the heart of the desert.

Alfonso boasted, "My army can fight jinn, humans, and even the angels of heaven."

He tried to deceive Ibn Tashfin but failed and was defeated.

The Emperor of Europe fled under cover of night with only a hundred soldiers.

The "conquering commander" died poor and unknown in a Damascus alleyway.

Tariq ibn Ziyad, who famously burned his own ships behind him, was betrayed by his commander.

He defeated the Visigothic army, which was much bigger than his own army, and conquered Andalusia.

The conqueror of Andalusia was swallowed by oblivion, and no one knows where he is buried.

3



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Demons at the helm: The reality of the Iranian regime

A TRUE state is defined by a single decision, not a collection of conflicting ones. This is the principle we have long maintained and find necessary to emphasize once again, in light of the intensifying Iranian hostilities toward the Gulf and various Arab nations.

Incidents over the last three weeks have validated this observation, evidenced by the reciprocal strikes involving the United States of America, Israel and Iran in June.

The Iranian leadership imposed numerous conditions in both instances.

The initial conflict concluded, leaving the Iranian state with deep-seated wounds that remain difficult to address without meeting the demands.

We saw a familiar pattern that emerged today. Iran is acting as if it is victorious and in a position to dictate terms despite having grown significantly weaker since the start of the conflict.

For 47 years, the Gulf states have witnessed the inconsistent stances and broken promises of the mullahs' regime.

This stems from the fact that Tehran has never operated under a singular, cohesive decision-making authority. The state appears to be governed by shadowy entities rather than a transparent leadership.

The intentions of the regime are frequently conveyed by anonymous 'sources,' rather than accountable individuals.

This exposes the underlying reality – a fractured power structure devoid of unified direction. While Khomeini provided a clear center of authority, his intransigence pushed a nation of immense potential wealth into the cycle of poverty, scarcity and repression, instead of prioritizing the prosperity of the Iranian people. His stubbornness resulted in the eight-year war.

The current situation made this reality unmistakably clear. Tehran has spoken with many conflicting voices following the recent announcement of potential negotiations between Iran and the United States of America.

One narrative suggests that a third nation is facilitating the discussions, while another entirely dismisses any communication with Washington.

Simultaneously, the Revolutionary Guard offers a distinct perspective, claiming that Iran, rather than America, is dictating the terms of engagement.

This defiant stance is echoed by the Speaker of Parliament and the Iranian Foreign Minister.

In contrast to these internal denials, certain diplomatic sources reported that remarkable progress is being made to organize high-level meetings in Islamabad.

It is widely recognized regionally and globally that Iran operates as a totalitarian state masked by a democratic facade.

The current political landscape is marked by a total lack of clear authority for engagement, the Supreme Leader's status remains a mystery, and the president has disappeared from public life for several days without any communication, indicating profound isolation.

For 47 years, the Gulf states have grown accustomed to the inconsistent stances of the mullahs' regime, which has never operated under a singular, cohesive decision-making authority.

This landscape of internal contradictions is destined to continue until a unified leadership emerges, or until the status of the new Supreme Leader is brought to light.

It is expected that he will find himself forced to repeat the bitter declaration of Khomeini in 1988, who admitted to "drinking poison" when he accepted the United Nations Resolution 598 – a move that signaled a crushing defeat after an eight-year war, which cost nearly two million lives on both sides.

The current political landscape has shifted fundamentally. The confrontation is no longer a triangular regional dispute involving Tehran, Washington and Tel Aviv. It has evolved into a global stand against the Iranian regime that has systematically eradicated every opportunity for peaceful coexistence.

What really concerns us in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states is the adoption of a resolute new strategy centered on a single imperative – the Iranian leadership must be held fully accountable for its entire legacy of aggression from 1979 to the present day, irrespective of any potential internal transitions, while ensuring the absolute protection of our nations against future hostilities, regardless of the geographic harshness that complicates the regional rule.

Pulling the seeds of such aggression, in all its forms – whether through overt strikes or more insidious provocations – remains an absolute necessity and a far superior course of action than the 47 years of strategic stagnation we have endured under the mullahs' regime.

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Part of the emergency session of the United Nations Human Rights Council with the participation of the State of Kuwait. KUNA photo

- Falling debris becomes growing risk
- EPA dismisses air quality rumors
- U.N. Rights Council backs Gulf states, adopts resolution against Iran attacks
- Iran rejects ceasefire as US reinforces military footprint

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (Agencies): The Ministry of Defence announced Wednesday that the air defense systems detected 20 hostile ballistic missiles and nine hostile drones within the airspace of the country over the past 24 hours.

In a media briefing on the latest field developments related to the Iranian aggression against Kuwait, Defense Ministry spokesperson Colonel Saud Al-Atwan revealed that 13 missiles were intercepted and

destroyed, while seven fell outside the threat zone, without posing any danger.

He added that six drones were destroyed, while two targeted a fuel tank at Kuwait International Airport, causing a fire that the concerned teams are currently dealing with and no casualties were reported. He said one drone fell outside the threat zone.

He affirmed that the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) task force destroyed one unmanned aerial vehicle and five drones within its area of responsibility. He considers this a manifestation of the strong coordination and integration among military institutions.

Continued on Page 5

Day by Day

THOSE who have experienced life's trials, in both pain and joy, say, "Do not rely on love, for it is rare; nor on people, for they are fickle; nor on time, for it is fleeting. Rather, rely on God, for He is the Most Almighty."

It is right to place trust in God, the Almighty. Let the days unfold as they will, and be content with what fate decrees. God's ways with His creation are mysterious.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai inspects local markets to monitor tomato supply. MoCI photo

Free delivery eases farmers' burden

Tomato shortage just a holiday blip

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Head of the Kuwaiti Farmers Union Ahmed Al-Adwani confirmed that there is no tomato shortage, attributing the scarcity in some markets to the Eid Al-Fitr holiday.

He pointed out to the newspaper that during the holiday, some major markets, such as the Kuwaiti Farmers Union market and others, were closed, which may have caused slight

shortage not only of tomatoes but other products as well. "Currently, farmers are experiencing a transitional phase between the end of the tomato growing season and the beginning of the new one," he added.

He stressed that the available supply is good and it is gradually returning to the pre-holiday level, as affirmed by the statistics and continuous monitoring in coordination with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Continued on Page 5

Warning issued amid flood threat

Kuwait raises emergency readiness as storms to lash through Thursday

By Mohammad Ghanem and Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The Ministry of Public Works raised its preparedness level to the highest degree in view of the expected rainfall, as heavy rain in various parts of the country was forecasted, starting in the North and gradually extending to the South throughout the day.

Director for Operations at the ministry Eng. Fares Al-Duqbasi confirmed in a statement to Kuwait TV that preparations are being carried out as per the directive of Public Works Minister Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, and in coordination with other concerned government agencies like the Meteorological Department, Civil Defense General Directorate, Kuwait National Guard (KNG) and Ministry of Interior, to ensure rapid response to any emergency.

Continued on Page 4

Handover aims to boost public safety

Surrender weapons by 1st April or face strict penalties, says Mol

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Director of the Security Media Department at the Ministry of Interior Colonel Othman Al-Ghareeb clarified that the statement issued by the ministry on the weapons and ammunition surrender initiative aimed to give those concerned a chance to rectify their situation without legal repercussions.

Al-Mansouri said the ministry previously conducted a comprehensive weapons collection campaign, which included strictly applying the law after the deadline to hold accountable anyone found possessing unlicensed weapons.

He stated that the current initiative allows the voluntary surrender of weapons and ammunition without recording any data or taking action against those

who do so. He pointed out that anyone possessing an unlicensed weapon can go to the nearest police station, and surrender it easily and safely without fear or hesitation.

He emphasized that this opportunity is available only until April 1, then the law will be strictly enforced against anyone possessing a weapon or ammunition without a license, indicating that the penalties include imprisonment and fine.

He urged all those concerned to take advantage of the initiative and surrender their weapons, as this move aims to protect them, their families and their community. He warned that unnecessarily possessing weapons could pose grave danger, especially in moments of anger.

He added that security forces continue to monitor and apprehend anyone who dares to tamper with national security, stressing that there will be no leniency for anyone proven to be involved in activities that threaten national security.

He reiterated that surrendering weapons during this period is a national duty and a genuine contribution to maintaining national security and stability.



Al-Ghareeb



Jazeera Airways expands network to 20+ destinations during regional disruption



ALSAYER and Lexus debut the new IS350 with refined performance and design

EP stands with Gulf against Iran attacks: President

BRUSSELS, March 25, (KUNA): European Parliament (EP) President Roberta Metsola expressed Tuesday her solidarity with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states following what she described as blatant Iranian attacks.

Her remarks came during a meeting that brought together Metsola and representatives of major European political parties with the heads of GCC diplomatic missions to the European Union.

She affirmed the European Parliament's condemnation of the Iranian strikes and its solidarity with the peoples of the GCC.

Metsola noted that such attacks undermine regional and global security and stability, while also expressing the European Parliament's ap-



Metsola

preciation for the efforts made by GCC countries to ensure the safety and security of European citizens in the Gulf.

In a statement to KUNA, Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium and Head of its Missions to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Nawaf Al-Enezi said that

GCC ambassadors stressed, during the meeting, that the Gulf countries are not part of the war, while maintaining their legitimate

right to self-defense in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

The GCC ambassadors also conveyed the need to send a clear message regarding Iran's continued challenge to the international community and its failure to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 2817, which condemned the unjustified Iranian attacks and called on Iran to immediately halt such actions.

They further stressed the importance of safeguarding maritime security to ensure the continuity of supply chains and the stability of global energy markets, as well as the need for Iran to stop targeting vital civilian facilities and infrastructure in GCC countries.

Other Voices

An article by a sincere friend

By Ahmad alsarraf

Lawyer Emad Al-Saif wrote an article in Al-Qabas daily that I would like to highlight, as its subject matter relates to what we must do after the war.

Emad Al-Saif laments our inability, after liberation from the yoke of Saddam's occupation, to achieve many of the hopes and aspirations we once cherished and to realize the vision of a new Kuwait, after learning the lessons of the invasion and charting a course for our national interests, rights, and relationships.



alsarraf

Those hopes have been lost, and we have learned nothing from those harsh lessons.

We have repeated the same past mistakes without changing our strategy in dealing with neighboring and distant countries within the three frameworks of the Gulf, the Arab world, and the international community.

The writer, Emad Al-Saif, poses some crucial questions - Will we change now, specifically after the end of this war in which we are not a party? Will we revise our vision, strategies, perspectives, and international relations, or will we wait for another war or crisis to reconsider our situation and relationships?

To address these questions, Al-Saif reviewed the most important issues that should be on both the official and public agenda.

He emphasized that the role of Kuwaitis in offering opinions and advice to their government has never depended on the existence of a parliament or popular representation.

The first issue is our relationship with our American ally and friend, with whom we have defense agreements. However, we are unaware of the specifics of these agreements, including the obligations, duties, and rights of each party.

Over time, and especially after this war, discussions about these agreements—their obligations and the benefits they bring to both sides—have become a topic of national debate and government policy.

Kuwait cannot forgo defense agreements with major powers, particularly its American ally, given the turbulent regional environment, whose shape is uncertain after the end of this war and with the continued presence of the Iranian regime, regardless of its strength and influence in the region.

The second issue concerns our relationship with the Arab world and the bitterness arising from the disappointing stances of most Arab countries, excluding the Gulf states, during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait.

Those stances remain etched in our memory, as we witnessed these countries celebrating our suffering and supporting the Iraqi invasion.

Today, many of the same countries and peoples, if not more, openly support aggression against the Gulf states through their deliberate silence, showing no shame. They have even refrained from condemning Iranian attacks, repeating the same tired rhetoric that justifies conspiracy and aggression against us.

After Kuwait's liberation from the Iraqi invasion, there were two approaches to dealing with these countries and peoples - either a complete boycott or a

more cautious approach, considering Kuwait's need for international support, particularly at the United Nations.

There was an opportunity for these countries to retract their positions supporting the Iraqi invasion, apologize to Kuwait, and restore cordial relations.

Today, the situation is different and requires a new approach. We have no outstanding interests with any of these countries. Our dealings must be Gulf-wide and unified, based on sound and objective principles, rather than reacting to a few spiteful individuals on social media who do not represent their countries or peoples.

The third issue is intra-Gulf relations, which is the most important, vital, and urgent.

The situation can no longer tolerate delays or procrastination. The continued existence of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in its current form has become a burden on the people of the Gulf. The leaders of the Gulf states need a clear and transparent meeting to determine the council's fate - either to continue or to dissolve.

If the decision is to continue the GCC out of a sense of existential threat, which will persist after the current war if the Iranian regime emerges unscathed, how will the Gulf states collectively address the reality of a war ending with a sudden decision by the United States and Israel?

Just as the Iranian regime's attacks on each Gulf state were painful and disastrous, individual responses by each state to this political and regional reality would be even more damaging.

A joint defense strategy is essential, followed by a unified foreign policy, and then coordinated policies in the economy and oil sector, along with a serious revival of the confederation project among the Arabian Gulf states.

The time has come for complete defense unity in the aftermath of the recent war.

On the domestic front, the most important issue is national unity. Let us be frank... This war will have its effects and repercussions on the state and society. Campaigns questioning loyalty and patriotism, and leveling accusations of treason, will inevitably emerge, fueled by a small number of ignorant and zealous individuals.

This environment is their primary market, where they thrive and profit.

The state, which has taken firm steps in addressing the issue of national identity and combating citizenship forgery, must remain vigilant against the schemes of sectarian opportunists who claim the right to issue certificates of patriotism to some and accusations of treason to others.

Just as Kuwaitis were able to confront racist rhetoric and recognize its dangers during the state's campaign against citizenship forgers and dual nationals, they are certainly capable, with their awareness and experience, of confronting hateful sectarian discourse.

Every citizen is honorable and patriotic until proven otherwise by a final judicial ruling in a state security case related to high treason.

We have a clear example in the words of His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad (May God protect and preserve him), in which he presented the national prescription for resilience and the comprehensive plan to confront the dangers of war.

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Most power lines restored in 24/7 scramble by teams

All systems stable, working efficiently: Hayat

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The official spokesperson for the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, Fatima Hayat, announced the completion of repair works on several electricity transmission lines that were damaged due to falling debris early on Tuesday. This comes as part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to maintain the stability of the electrical system and ensure the continuity of power supply to customers.

Hayat explained that most of the damaged overhead lines have been repaired, with 4 out of 7 lines re-

stored to service according to the highest approved technical standards and safety procedures, after completing inspection and technical evaluation works.

All repair and securing works were carried out efficiently and effectively according to the approved emergency plan, with continuous field monitoring and necessary technical tests to ensure the integrity of the electrical network components, enhance readiness, and raise reliability levels in different areas.

Technical teams are working around the clock to complete the repair of the remaining lines and restore them to service as quickly as possible, in accordance with the

highest quality and safety standards.

Hayat commended the significant efforts exerted by the national workforce of engineers, technicians, and field workers, who worked with a high spirit of national responsibility around the clock.

She confirmed that the electrical system is stable and operating efficiently.

Hayat emphasized that the ministry is fully committed to continuing its work according to the highest standards of quality and safety, to safeguard the security and sustainability of energy in the country.

Meanwhile, the Board of Directors of the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) postponed the issuance of its decision on the request of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to award the tender for the supply, installation, operation and maintenance of the Doha desalination plant using reverse osmosis technology (Phase II), pending further review.

The ministry requested award-

ing the contract to the lowest bidder that meets the requirements and specifications, at a value of about KD114.28 million.

The project is in line with the efforts of the ministry to augment the strategic water reserve. It is expected to add around 60 million imperial gallons of potable water per day, without the need to mix it with groundwater, which is the main advantage of reverse osmosis technology.

It also balances electricity and water production at the East and West Doha desalination plants, especially during the winter months when electricity demand decreases, while water demand remains stable. This enhances operational efficiency and reduces energy consumption.

The utilization of reverse osmosis units is expected to reduce energy consumption compared to flash distillation units, because they rely on electricity without the need for thermal energy.



Hayat



KUNA photo

Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy, Nasser Al-Qahtani meets Italian Chief of Defense Staff, Luciano Portolano, at the Ministry of Defense headquarters in Rome.

Kuwait, Italy discuss attacks

Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy, Nasser Al-Qahtani met on Wednesday with the Italian Chief of Defense Staff, Luciano Portolano, at the Ministry of Defense headquarters in Rome, as part of efforts to enhance bilateral coordination and consultation.

The meeting, attended by Kuwait's military attache in Italy, Brigadier General Khaled Al-Shalal, addressed Iran's blatant and unjustified attacks on Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states,

including the targeting of civilians and vital infrastructure, in violation of national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

According to a statement from the Kuwaiti Embassy in Rome, both sides stressed the importance of strengthening international cooperation to counter threats to maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz, highlighting the broader impact on global energy security, economic stability, and supply chains. (KUNA)

Panel set up to control affairs of rights bureau

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait issued a ministerial decree on Tuesday to form a three-member committee to manage the affairs of the National Human Rights Bureau for six months, or until a new board of directors is appointed, whichever comes first, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The decision aims to ensure the continuity and smooth operation of the bureau without disruption.

According to a press release from the Ministry of Justice, the committee is chaired by acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice Awatif Al-Sanad, with acting Assistant Undersecretary for Technical and Administrative Affairs Nouf Al-Qabandi serving as Deputy Head, and Bashar Al-Muwaizri, First Secretary in the Human Rights Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a member.



Al-Sumait

French embassy says visa section reopened

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (KUNA): The French Embassy to Kuwait announced on Tuesday it re-opened the visa section and the resumption of consular services, as well as working at the visa application centre, Capago, after a period of suspension.

In a news statement, the embassy urged those who want to obtain visas for France to follow regular procedures.

It added that applicants must begin their application online through the official French visa website and book an appointment in advance at the visa application centre.

'Knowledge Hour' event focus on plan to avert fraud at workplace

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The Kuwait Association of Accountants and Auditors (KAAA) is organizing the virtual Knowledge Hour on Thursday, titled "Employment Fraud," with the participation of Head of the Center for Certified Fraud Examiners (Kuwait Branch) Sheikha Al-Safi.

Sabah Al-Jalawi, Chairman of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Federation of Professional Associations and Bodies and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the association, emphasized the importance of the event. He said employment fraud is one of the most difficult challenges that institutions in various sectors are facing due to its impact on financial performance and institutional stability.

Al-Jalawi explained that the accounting and auditing profession combats fraud, because accountants manage funds and strengthen financial oversight. He pointed out that tools, such as internal and external auditing, data analysis and systems evaluation contribute to detecting and mitigating manipulation cases.

He said the event will tackle various topics of interest to a wide segment of professionals, including financial fraud, corruption, bribery and kickbacks, in addition to reviewing the latest professional practices in prevention and

detection.

Meanwhile, Al-Safi disclosed that the Knowledge Hour will highlight strategies for preventing workplace fraud, including building a corporate culture based on integrity, enhancing training programs, activating reporting mechanisms, and supporting the principles of corporate governance.

She added that the role of modern technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, in detecting financial fraud and countering emerging methods like identity theft and social engineering will be discussed, asserting that these tools have become a crucial element in enhancing the effectiveness of oversight.

She pointed out that organizing this event reflects the growing interest in shared professional issues among the GCC countries and the pursuit of developing work mechanisms and raising the efficiency of personnel, thereby, supporting the business environment and enhancing transparency.

The Knowledge Hour will focus on the concept of workplace fraud and its effects on institutions, psychological and behavioral factors of perpetrators, various types, such as asset misuse, corruption, bribery and financial statement fraud, fraud indicators, anti-fraud systems and controls, modern detection techniques and prevention strategies.

Submit travel-related complaints via 'Sahel'

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (KUNA): Kuwait's Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) said complaints related to airlines and travel agencies must be submitted electronically via the unified government e-services app Sahel.

The authority's spokesperson Abdullah Al-Rajhi on Wednesday stressed the need to attach required documents and follow the app's steps to ensure quality service and proper review by the competent team.

He added that development proposals, delayed responses to complaints on Sahel, or other issues can be submitted through Towasal platform in Sahel app, where feedback will be handled with impartiality.

The measure comes as part of efforts to boost transparency, safeguard passengers' rights, and enhance regulatory services in line with efficiency goals, the authority said.

Gov't sector can increase staff level beyond 30%: CSC

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has confirmed that government entities have the right to increase their staffing levels beyond the standard 30 percent threshold with formal approval during the current exceptional circumstances, reports Al-Anba daily.

Narjis Yahya Abdulsoul, Assistant Undersecretary at CSC, explained that this measure allows each government entity to adjust its workforce according to its work requirements and its vision for achieving the public interest.

Any increase must be formally requested and

approved by CSC in line with the established procedures, ensuring that the process is organized and transparent. This move comes as part of the government's efforts to maintain operational efficiency and public service continuity amid ongoing challenges.

Trading in 'real estate' market dips sharply in March 3rd week

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The escalating regional tensions have cast a shadow over the local real estate market's performance, with trading activity declining remarkably in third week of March.

Only 65 transactions were recorded, valued at KD36.1 million, compared to 98 transactions worth KD52.56 million in the second week of the same month. This is 33.67 percent decrease in the number of transactions and 31.5 percent decrease in value, influenced by the prevailing caution among investors in light of the geopolitical developments in the region.

The weekly statistical report from the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Departments at the Ministry of Justice revealed that the residential sector accounted for the largest share of transactions, with

80 percent of the total deals. This translates to 52 transactions valued at KD23.6 million, compared to 76 transactions worth KD30 million in the previous week -- 31.5 percent decrease in the number of transactions and 21.3 percent decrease in value.

It indicates slowdown in demand despite the continuous dominance of private residential properties in the market.

In the investment sector, trading activity declined as well, with the number of transactions dropping to 12, valued at KD10.5 million, compared to 22 transactions worth KD22.54 million in the previous week. It is a manifestation of decrease in investor appetite due to market uncertainty.

In the commercial real estate sector, trading resumed after a two-week hiatus, with a single transaction valued at about KD2 million -- a limited indication of continuous caution in this sector.



Ibn Tashfin's response to Alfonso's message – 'You shall see'

HAVE you ever heard of a king who believed he could battle jinn, men, and even the angels of heaven?

This king sent a lengthy, threatening letter, only to receive a reply of three words that shook the very foundations of his throne.

He was King Alfonso VI of Castile, who vowed to crush Andalusia and drink the blood of its rulers. However, he faced a fearless man from the heart of the Moroccan desert.

That man was Yusuf ibn Tashfin, leader of the Almoravids, a man who was never swayed by the allure of a throne or the prestige of command.

King Alfonso VI considered himself as the emperor of all Spain. His arrogance knew no bounds when, addressing Yusuf ibn Tashfin, he told Ibn Tashfin's army commanders, "This army of mine can fight jinn, humans, and even the angels of heaven. If I had ships, I would cross the Mediterranean Sea to uproot you from Africa."

Accustomed to humiliating the Taifa kings of Andalusia and demanding tribute from them, King Alfonso VI sent Yusuf ibn Tashfin a long, insulting letter in which he threatened to cross the Mediterranean and invade his lands.

Yusuf ibn Tashfin's response, though simple, was devastating. On the back of Alfonso's letter, he wrote a three-word reply, "You shall see."

Only three words was enough to declare war. Yusuf ibn Tashfin crossed into the Mediterranean with an army of fearless, masked warriors, and the two forces met at the Battle of Zallaqa.

Alfonso attempted to deceive Yusuf ibn Tashfin by sending a message, "Tomorrow, Friday, is the Muslims' day, Saturday is the Jews' day, and Sunday is our day. Let us cease fighting and resume it on Monday."

But Yusuf ibn Tashfin, the cunning desert fox, saw through the ruse and put his army on full alert.

As Ibn Tashfin had predicted, Alfonso attacked at dawn on Friday with his full force, only to be met by an impenetrable wall of steel.

As the armies clashed, Ibn Tashfin executed a brilliant plan by flanking Alfonso's forces and setting their encampments ablaze. The terrifying drums of the Almoravids, unknown to the European soldiers, began to sound.

● The King of Castile vowed to crush Andalusia but was defeated there.

● He faced a fearless man from the heart of the desert.

● Alfonso boasted, "My army can fight jinn, humans, and even the angels of heaven."

● He tried to deceive Ibn Tashfin but failed and was defeated.

● The Emperor of Europe fled under cover of night with only a hundred soldiers.

● The "conquering commander" died poor and unknown in a Damascus alleyway.

● Tariq ibn Ziyad, who famously burned his own ships behind him, was betrayed by his commander.

● He defeated the Visigothic army, which was much bigger than his own army, and conquered Andalusia.

● The conqueror of Andalusia was swallowed by oblivion, and no one knows where he is buried.

Alfonso's army began to crumble under the relentless assault of the Black Guard. The king himself suffered a severe wound to his thigh, leaving him with a limp for the rest of his life.

The Emperor of Europe fled under the cover of darkness, escaping with only one hundred soldiers

out of his 60,000-strong army.

Alfonso VI left behind all his treasures and armor, returning to his palace, now certain that Andalusia would not be an easy target as long as the Almoravid lions stood guard.

Meanwhile, Yusuf ibn Tashfin proved that true strength lies not in empty words, but in action. "You shall see" - a simple phrase that would shape the course of Andalusian history for the next four hundred years.

The Conqueror of Spain died poor

The commander who conquered all of Spain died poor and unknown, in one of Damascus's narrow alleyways.

Tariq ibn Ziyad, the man who famously burned his own ships behind him, told his soldiers, "The sea is behind you, and the enemy is before you."

With only 12,000 fighters, Tariq ibn Ziyad managed to defeat the vastly larger Visigoth army and conquer Andalusia.

Within months, he controlled most of the Iberian Peninsula.

Yet what many do not know is that this legendary hero suddenly vanished.

After the great conquest, the Umayyad Caliph, Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik, summoned Tariq ibn Ziyad and his commander, Musa ibn Nusayr, to Damascus.

The official reason was to honor them for their success in conquering Andalusia, but the reality was far different.

Behind the scenes, the Umayyad Caliph feared this Berber commander, who commanded a vast army and enjoyed immense popularity on the fringes of an Umayyad state already plagued by unrest and internal conflicts.

Some sources suggest that Musa ibn Nusayr grew jealous of Tariq, accusing him of disobeying orders and claiming all the glory for himself. He dismissed Tariq, confiscated his wealth, and publicly humiliated him.

Herein lies the mystery. Historical sources are completely silent. The exact fate of Tariq ibn Ziyad remains unknown. Some accounts suggest he spent the rest of his life poor and forgotten in the alleys of Damascus, while another narrative claims he was seen in his final days begging for bread in front of mosques.

The great conqueror of Andalusia was swallowed by oblivion. To this day, no one knows where he was buried or how he died. Can this truly be the end of such an extraordinary hero?

Ancient Arabs used to say jesting reveals one's faults. Be discerning and listen carefully in moments of humor; perhaps the truth will be revealed.



Love and kindness are virtues for all times and places, but they are not suited for everyone. Friendship is like water - easy to lose, difficult to preserve.



Life teaches that concealing information in times of need can damage friendship. While speaking out in anger is unwise, admitting a mistake is said to bring peace of mind.

Al-Faris to lead 'Nazaha' board in four-year term



Dr. Al-Faris

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (KUNA): Amiri Decree No. 40 of 2026 was issued appointing the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority, better known as Nazaha, for a four-year term, renewable once.

The decree was issued after reviewing the Constitution and relevant laws, including the 2016 law establishing the authority and its amendments.

Under the decree, Dr. Rana Al-Faris was named as Authority Chairperson and Dr. Majed Al-Deihani as Deputy Chairperson.

Rania Al-Fulaij, Dr. Abdullah Al-Dabbous and Dhay Al-Otaibi were appointed as Nazaha's board members.

Return cash: court

Savings group head convicted of 'fraud'

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The Court of First Instance obligated the manager of a savings group to return the full amount of KD4,800 to one of the members, in addition to compensating the latter, as she was found guilty of fraud and collecting funds without a license.

Case files indicate that the victim subscribed to a monthly savings group of KD200 for two years, hoping to receive her share once due. However, a month before her turn, she was surprised to find that the manager disappeared and all communication with her stopped.

The plaintiff revealed that she consistently paid her share throughout the subscription period despite her financial circumstances, as she is supporting her children and striving to provide for their needs, but the defendant reneged on her commitments.

During the court proceedings, the defendant changed her story several times. Initially, she denied knowing the victim, then later claimed that the group "failed" and that she is the victim of the other members' negligence, and finally admitted that the money is a personal loan and not part of a savings group.

In contrast, the plaintiff presented pieces of evidence consisting of WhatsApp conversations proving the agreement, regular bank transfer statements for two years, and messages and acknowledgments confirming the defendant's receipt of the funds.

In its reasoning, the court affirmed that the presented evidence is sufficient to prove the fraud, indicating that the changing and contradictory statements of the defendant strengthened the case against her, leading to her conviction and the instruction for her to return the full amount plus compensation.

Energy drinks sold 'illegally'

Service launched for deaf, mute

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The Al-Siddiq Emergency Team, which is part of the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Sector at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, carried out an inspection tour in Hawally Governorate, targeting several juice and refreshment shops to ensure compliance with regulations governing the sale and distribution of energy drinks, reports Al-Anba daily.

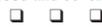
The inspection tour resulted in the issuance of 10 warnings to shops found non-compliant with the approved requirements. These shops were instructed to rectify their violations in accordance with the regulations.

According to informed sources, the ministry will continue monitoring the compliance of these shops in the coming period. Inspection teams will intensify their field visits to detect any violations.

Failure to comply with the regulations after receiving warnings will subject violators to the prescribed legal measures, which may include issuing violation reports and taking administrative actions in accordance with

applicable laws.

These inspection tours are part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to monitor markets and ensure that establishments comply with health and regulatory requirements related to the sale of food and beverage products.



Service for deaf, mute: Colonel Faisal Al-Mutairi, Director of Public Relations at the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media in the Ministry of Interior, announced that the Ministry, through the Security Media Department and the Central Operations Department, has launched a new service for the deaf and mute, providing a dedicated number that allows them to contact the ministry's operations room and report any incident using sign language, reports Al-Jarida daily.

Colonel Al-Mutairi explained that the service comes in response to the current circumstances facing the country due to Iranian aggression. The ministry has introduced a special service related to siren alerts for the deaf and mute, along with a special code that can be added to smartphones to receive notifications about siren alerts, instructions, and other updates from the Ministry of Interior.

In addition, he urged citizens and residents to take advantage of the exceptional grace period announced by the ministry for surrendering unlicensed firearms, ammunition, and explosives. The grace period is from March 23 to the end of official working hours on Wednesday, April 1.

Detention extended for seven in agricultural land allocation

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The detention renewal judge has extended the detention of seven defendants - former employees and officials of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) - for one month pending investigation into the case of agricultural land allocation manipulation.

The Public Prosecution continues its extensive investigations through a specialized team, as per the directive of Attorney General Saad Al-Safaran to uncover all circumstances surrounding the case and identify

everyone involved in the illegal distribution of agricultural land.

The prosecution has been taking precautionary measures since the start of the investigations. These measures include freezing the bank accounts of the defendants, as well as the financial and real estate transactions related to the case, and expanding the scope of charges to include harming national food security.

The charges against the defendants are bribery, forgery, intentional damage and money laundering in the case described as 'trading in public office', in addition to illegally obtaining hundreds of agricultural plots, reselling them and laundering the proceeds.

War puts tenants eviction on hold

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Approximately 1,000 housing applications have been processed and distributed over the past four months, while efforts are ongoing to address an additional 10,000 pending applications as soon as conditions improve, reports Al-Rai daily.

Sheikha Bibi Al-Yousef, Head of the Women's Housing Committee at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, announced that the planned eviction of residents from rented government housing - originally scheduled to begin in early April - has been postponed. The decision was approved by the Minister of Mu-

nicipality and Minister of State for Housing Affairs, Eng. Abdul Latif Al-Mashari, in response to the current exceptional circumstances affecting both the country and the wider region. The move aims to support families and strengthen their sense of stability and security.

In a telephone interview with Kuwait TV, Al-Yousef explained that she had recommended delaying the evictions, emphasizing that families are deeply attached to their homes, particularly during challenging times, and should not be burdened with additional uncertainty.

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LOCAL

Kuwait enhances higher education readiness amid current conditions

Al-Jalal reviews university performance, remote exam plans

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal chaired an extensive coordination meeting with senior officials from higher education institutions on Tuesday morning.

The meeting was attended by the following officials:

■ Dr. Mona Al-Ahmad, Director of Abdullah Al-Salem University

■ Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam, Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET)

■ Dr. Jassim Al-Ali, Secretary General of the Council of Private Sector Universities

■ Dr. Thaqal Al-Ajmi, Secretary General of Kuwait University (KU)

■ Dr. Abdullah Al-Mutawa, Deputy Director of KU for Academic Support Services

■ Dr. Fadhel Aziz, acting Dean of Admissions and Registration at KU

■ Dr. Ahmed Al-Mutawa, Dean of Admissions and Registration at



MoHE photo
Kuwaiti Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research chairs a meeting with higher education institutions' leaders.

Abdullah Al-Salem University
■ Dr. Mohammed Al-Kandari, Dean of Admissions and Registration at PAAET.

The meeting focused on coordinating and monitoring the efficiency of educational institutions' performance during this period in light of the current circumstances.

Minister Al-Jalal explained that the meeting was held to ensure the continuity of the educational process through high-quality and efficient online education, and to

enhance institutional readiness, particularly in preparation for conducting remote exams according to the highest technical standards while maintaining the quality of educational outcomes.

During the meeting, the work mechanisms of each institution were reviewed, and compliance with the online education system was monitored, including student and faculty attendance rates.

The importance of strengthening information security and data

protection through regular implementation of backup systems was emphasized.

They also discussed the procedure for receiving visitors through the appointment booking systems adopted by each institution, ensuring the continued provision of services efficiently and in an organized manner.

The aptitude test (national test) at Kuwait University was discussed, with an emphasis on ensuring that students have access to all available opportunities without any disruption.

The efficiency of employee performance under the 30-percent staffing system, in accordance with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) circular, was discussed to ensure business continuity and enhance institutional performance.

The minister highlighted the importance of integrated roles among the various educational institutions to guarantee the smooth and effective implementation of procedures, thereby achieving the highest levels of safety for students, faculty, training staff, and administrative personnel.

He also directed that detailed reports be provided on any obstacles or challenges encountered during previous phases of work, with the aim of addressing them promptly.

PAAET begins distribution of graduation certificates

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The Deanship of Admissions and Registration at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) announced the start of distribution of graduation certificates for the first semester of

the 2025/2026 academic year, from March 29 to 31.

The Deanship affirmed that the distribution schedule, including collection dates and locations, covers the Colleges of Education, Nursing, Technology, and the PAAET Business Institute.

It urged graduates to follow the announce-

ments and adhere to the specified times to ensure an organized and smooth collection process.

The Deanship emphasized its commitment to keeping graduates informed of any updates on this matter through official channels, and wished them continued success in their future endeavors.



Sheikh Jarrah

Abdelatty

Safadi

'Catastrophic consequences'

Kuwait, Egypt and Jordan FMs push to ease Mideast tensions

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (Agencies): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received a phone call from his Egyptian counterpart Badr Abdelatty on Tuesday.

During the phone conversation, both ministers addressed the growing regional military escalation due to the atrocious Iranian aggression on the region's countries, along with its serious reflections and worrying impacts on regional and international security and stability, said the Foreign Ministry in a press release.

They also touched upon firm fraternal relations between both sisterly countries and their people, according to the release.

Abdelatty discussed efforts to de-escalate regional tensions during separate phone call with his Jordanian counterparts, as conflict continues across the Middle East.

Abdelatty and Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah emphasized the need to prioritize diplomacy and intensify efforts to contain current tensions, according to a statement from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

The Egyptian minister warned of the "catastrophic consequences" of continued violence, saying it threatens to plunge the region into chaos and jeopardize international peace and security.

In a separate call with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, the two officials underscored the importance of diplomacy as the primary path to restoring regional security and stability. They also discussed preparations for the upcoming Arab League Council ministerial session later this month, stressing the need for a unified Arab position on shared security and political challenges.

On Lebanon, Abdelatty and Sa-

fadi reaffirmed their support for Lebanon's security, stability, and sovereignty. They backed the Lebanese government's commitment to ensuring arms remain exclusively under state control and condemned Israel's aggression against Lebanon and its "expansionist policies in the region."

On Feb. 28, Israel and the United States carried out joint attacks on Tehran and several other Iranian cities, killing Iran's then-Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, senior military commanders, and civilians. Iran responded with waves of missile and drone strikes targeting Israel and U.S. bases and assets across the Middle East.

Lebanese group Hezbollah entered the confrontation on March 2 by firing rockets from southern Lebanon toward Israel for the first time since a Nov. 27, 2024, ceasefire, prompting intensified Israeli strikes across the country.

Kuwait condoles with UAE over martyrdom of armed forces' contractor

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed on Tuesday condolences of Kuwait to the United Arab Emirates over the martyrdom of a Moroccan civilian contractor with the UAE Armed Forces while carrying out a routine mission in Bahrain, following a brutal Iranian attack that targeted the Kingdom.

In a statement, the ministry said that the aggression led to the injury of some members of UAE's Armed Forces and Bahrain soldiers.

The statement affirmed Kuwait's full solidarity with the UAE and Bahrain in all measures they take to preserve their security and sovereignty, offering sincere sympathy to the martyr's relatives and a speedy recovery to those wounded.

Municipality steps up inspection campaigns in construction sites

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (KUNA): The Kuwait Municipality announced Wednesday that it has intensified its field inspection campaigns in construction sites in residential and investment areas to ensure compliance with occupational safety and health standards.

In a press statement on the sidelines of the inspection tour, head of the Ahmadi Municipality inspection team Mohammad Al-Azmi revealed that the team uncovered several violations at construction and renovation sites in Ahmadi Governorate over the past few days.

Al-Azmi added that the team assigned in Mangaf issued a violation notice to a construction site that did not properly fence the site, which could damage public facilities or obstruct traffic, indicating the violation was not rectified.

He stated that the inspection team issued four warnings for non-compliance with safety and security regulations, un-



KUNA photo
Municipality employees issue warnings to violators.

derscoring the importance of securing the necessary building permits to avoid violations and warnings.

He added that companies must comply with the safety regulations, affirming that the inspection team will not hesitate to take legal measures against violators.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait raises

Al-Duqbasi disclosed that the heavy rainfall is expected to begin Thursday morning in the northern area, specifically on Bubiyan Island, and then in the southern part by midday. He said the Meteorological Department predicted heavy rainfall, hence, the need for caution. He urged the public to comply with official instructions and guidelines to guarantee the safety of everyone.

In a related development, Al-Duqbasi revealed that the amount of rainfall the country experienced on Wednesday ranged from 10 to 12 millimeters in some areas.

He said the emergency teams responded with the support of the technical personnel, enabling them to address complaints immediately upon receipt.

He affirmed that traffic flow was normal and there was no major disruption due to the continuous coordination between the operation units of the ministry and the Civil Defense General Directorate, adding that the number of reported incidents remained within the normal limits.

Earlier, the Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) urged citizens and residents to exercise caution due to the unstable weather conditions currently affecting Kuwait.

It emphasized the importance of staying indoors when the rain begins and avoiding low-lying areas and floodplains where water may accumulate.

In this regard, a member of KEPS Meteorologist Issa Ramadan explained that

the current weather pattern is caused by a deepening low-pressure system, creating instability from the collision of two air masses. The first is a warm, highly humid air mass originating from the Arabian Sea and the Arabian Gulf, moving northwest across the Arabian Peninsula. The second is a cold air mass moving from the southeast. The interaction of these two air masses has formed a warm front, bringing heavy rain on Tuesday evening.

Ramadan predicted that the rain would continue until Wednesday evening and then resume on Thursday, particularly in the afternoon and evening.

He noted that Kuwait will be affected by a relatively cold air front, bringing moderate to heavy thunderstorms.

Ramadan urged caution, especially in open areas and low valleys (dry riverbeds) that could be swept away by flash floods.

He reiterated his advice for desert travelers and those using remote roads to avoid valleys and low-lying areas and to refrain from taking unnecessary risks.

Ramadan predicted a gradual improvement in weather conditions starting Friday, March 27.

He indicated that the effects of the weather system would not be limited to Kuwait but would also extend to eastern Saudi Arabia, reaching as far as the United Arab Emirates and Oman, with chances of moderate to heavy rainfall, possibly accompanied by hail.

Ramadan concluded by wishing safety to everyone in Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council states.

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Continued from Page 1

Other Voices

Fuel tank

He said the Kuwait Armed Forces continue to carry out their duties with the highest level of readiness, emphasizing that the personnel remain united, with strong morale and always ready to maintain national security and stability.

Meanwhile, Interior Ministry spokesperson Brigadier Nasser Bousalaib disclosed that the explosive ordnance disposal teams dealt with 43 reports about falling debris from defensive interception operations over the past 24 hours, increasing the total number of such reports to 550.

Bousalaib added that sirens were activated eight times in the last 24 hours, raising the total number of activations since the beginning of the attacks to 139.

He also presented video footage of several incidents of falling debris or objects outside the threat range. He urged the public to act responsibly, follow official instructions, and adhere to guidance issued by the authorities to maintain security and stability.

He pointed out that 26 days into the aggression, Kuwait remains steadfast, thanks to the determination of its personnel in defending the country. He then stressed the importance of supporting them.

Furthermore, Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) said the firefighting teams are still dealing with the fire caused by a drone attack on a fuel tank at the airport, indicating the fire-out operation is a collective effort with other State bodies.

KFF spokesman Brigadier Mohammad Al-Ghareeb stated that the firefighters, along with the teams from the Armed Forces and KNG, are dealing with four fires, which erupted at different locations in the airport as a result of falling debris from air defense interceptions.

He indicated that firefighters have responded to 82 calls related to the ongoing Iranian aggression against Kuwait, including reports of falling debris and direct drone attacks.

He called for "maximum alert" and to steer clear of any potential blazes that could arise from falling debris, given the extreme danger it poses on human lives, adding that hot-line number 112 is available round the clock for immediate assistance.

Earlier, the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) said drones targeted a fuel tank at the airport, causing fire.

PACA spokesperson Abdullah Al-Rajhi disclosed that the initial reports indicate only material damage and no casualties were reported.

On the other hand, the Environment Public Authority (EPA) confirmed that air pollutant levels remain within approved health and environmental standards and no violations were recorded.

EPA spokesperson Sheikha Al-Ibrahim said readings from national monitoring systems, including those of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), show no violations.

She added that EPA started monitoring the air pollutant levels immediately after reports on the fire at fuel tanks in the airport, tracking smoke dispersion through field teams.

She pointed out that in coordination with the Meteorology Department, the authorities assessed the smoke plume's trajectory and identified the potentially affected areas throughout the country.

She stressed that monitoring continues round the clock in cooperation with the relevant bodies to ensure public safety.

Also, in a press statement Wednesday, EPA denied rumors on air quality ratings, affirming its commitment to reveal the facts and reassure the public. It explained that the ratings issued by some commercial websites are not based on approved scientific principles and cannot be considered a reliable reference for assessing air quality or ranking countries.

EPA said this is due to differences in the measurement methodologies and standards used. It stressed that each country has its own national standards, adopted according to its environmental conditions and geographical location, and implemented through official regulations and decisions aimed at protecting public health and preserving the environ-

ment. Regarding the nature of the circulated sources and the accuracy of the measuring devices, EPA pointed out that the website issuing the rating is a commercial company, not an official environmental body authorized to classify countries worldwide. It added the company bases its data on measuring fine particulate matter (dust) using sensors it manufactures and distributes privately. It elaborated that these sensors differ in their operation and accuracy from the officially approved measuring devices (analyzers) used by government agencies to monitor air pollutants.

It indicated that this website is based on American air quality assessment standards, which differ from the national standards adopted in Kuwait, as well as the Gulf standards issued by the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), particularly regarding exposure limits for fine particulate matter with a size of 2.5 microns (dust particles).

It asserted that this difference leads to Gulf countries ranking among the worst in the classification at certain periods, especially during the summer months, which are characterized by frequent sand and dust storms.

The authority affirmed its commitment to full transparency in publishing air quality data on its website (beatona.net).

The indicators are updated hourly and include measurements of both 2.5 and 10-micron particulate matter, in addition to the main pollutants recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) for measurement in cities and capitals.

MoFA summons Iran ambassador

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday summoned Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Totonji for the third time since Iran launched its attacks on the Kuwaiti territory on February 28.

In a press release, the ministry said that Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Al-Daihani handed the Iranian ambassador a memo of protest over the continued Iranian aggressions on the State of Kuwait.

It added that this came in the aftermath of the heinous aggression on fuel depots at Kuwait International Airport in a blatant breach of international humanitarian law on the basis that the airport is a civilian facility.

The official restated Kuwait's strong condemnation and rejection of this aggression as a blatant violation of Kuwait's sovereignty, territorial integrity and airspace and an obvious breach of international law, the UN Charter and good neighborliness principles, and as a serious escalation that undermines global and regional peace and security.

He also called on Iran to halt these aggressions, holding it fully responsible for the impacts of this aggression, underlining Kuwait's absolute, complete, and inherent right to defend itself as per Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

UN Council condemns Iranian attacks

The United Nations Human Rights Council Wednesday adopted a resolution strongly condemning egregious Iranian attacks against Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Jordan and calling on Iran to provide full adequate effective and prompt reparation to all victims.

The resolution addressing the human rights implications of the unprovoked attacks by Iran against a number of countries in the region was presented by the Gulf Group and the Arab Group was adopted during a special session held in Geneva at the request of Gulf States and Jordan.

The UN Rights Council stressed that these attacks constitute a breach of international law and a serious threat to international peace and security as well as flagrant violations of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It reaffirmed the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in response to the unlawful armed attacks by Iran as recognized in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Resolution deplored the unprovoked and deliberate missile and unmanned aerial vehicle attacks targeting civilians and critical civilian infrastructure and expressed concern over attacks on energy infrastructure and their implications for the environment and human rights.

The Council called on Iran to comply fully with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law as well as Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026) and demanded the immediate and unconditional cessation of all attacks and threats, and called for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

It further noted the impact of military escalation on international navigation particularly in the Strait of Hormuz and its repercussions on global trade, energy security and supply chains, stressing the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation in accordance with international law.

The Human Rights Council also requested the High Commissioner to provide an oral update at its next session on developments and their human rights implications and decided to remain actively seized of the matter.

Iran dismisses US ceasefire plan

Iran on Wednesday dismissed an American plan to pause the war in the Middle East and launched more attacks on Israel and Gulf Arab countries, including an assault that sparked a huge fire at Kuwait International Airport.

Iran's defiance came as Israel launched airstrikes on Tehran and as the United States deployed paratroopers and more Marines to the region.

Iranian state television's English-language broadcaster, Press TV, quoted an anonymous official as saying Iran rejected America's ceasefire proposal. Press TV's report came after Pakistan transmitted the proposal to Iran.

"Iran will end the war when it decides to do so and when its own conditions are met," Press TV quoted the official as saying. The official added Tehran will continue its "heavy blows" across the Mideast.

Iran's attacks on regional energy infrastructure along with its restrictions on the strait have sent oil prices skyrocketing and sparked fears of a global energy crisis, in turn putting pressure on the U.S. to find a way to end the chokehold and calm markets.

At least 1,000 troops from the 82nd Airborne Division will be sent to the Mideast in the coming days, three people with knowledge of the plans told The Associated Press. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military plans.

The paratroopers are trained to jump into hostile or contested areas to secure key territory and airfields.

The Pentagon is also in the process of sending about 5,000 more Marines, trained in amphibious assaults, and thousands of sailors to the region.

Mediators are pushing for possible in-person talks between the Iranians and the Americans, perhaps as soon as Friday in Pakistan, the Egyptian and Pakistani officials said.

Tomato shortage

He added that some exporting countries temporarily halted exports, but there are indications that exports will resume soon, which will contribute to market stability in the coming period.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Farmers Union announced the availability of all agricultural supplies for farmers and those interested in the agricultural sector at its exhibitions in Wafra and Abdali, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The union noted that it provides free delivery for all supplies purchased from the exhibitions and will deliver them directly to farms as part of its support for farmers and to facilitate access to their agricultural needs without the burden of transportation.

Unmasking reality

By Nasser Al-Hajeri

In times of crisis, words matter, but timing matters just as much. Over the past weeks, Kuwait and the wider Gulf have lived through a difficult and deeply unsettling period. In such moments, official statements are not a formality. They are a measure of seriousness, a sign of political clarity, and a reflection of how states view the security and sovereignty of others.

Kuwait, like its Gulf partners, has treated this moment with the gravity it deserves.

What has also become clear, however, is that reactions were far from equal. Some countries moved quickly to express concern and solidarity. Others were slow, cautious, or silent. In some cases, even basic expressions of concern appeared only around the 25th



Al-Hajeri

day of the conflict.

This is not a call for emotional diplomacy, nor is it an argument that every country must respond in the same language or on the same timetable. But difficult moments often reveal what routine diplomacy hides. They show which partnerships carry real political meaning and which become less visible when principles are tested.

Kuwait has every right to reflect on that reality. For decades, Kuwait has played a generous and constructive role far beyond its borders. Through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, it has supported development projects, infrastructure, and financing in many countries. Through the Kuwait Investment Authority, it manages the nation's reserves, including the Future Generations Fund, with a long-term responsibility to protect Kuwait's financial future. These institutions are not symbolic. They are among the most important tools through which Kuwait expresses both its values and its national presence in the world.

That is why this moment calls for a calm and serious reassessment of the mechanism, criteria, and broader framework through which aid, investment, and external partnerships are considered. Such a review should not be understood as retaliation, punishment, or a retreat from Kuwait's humanitarian role. Rather, it should be seen as a natural and legitimate act of responsible governance. Every state has the right to ensure that its resources are directed with strategic awareness, institutional discipline, and a clear understanding of national interest.

Kuwait's reputation as a country of generosity, responsibility, and principle should remain intact. But generosity should never require political blindness. Crises have a way of unmasking reality. They expose priorities, reveal silences, and clarify where states truly stand. In that sense, reviewing procedures is not an act of anger. It is a natural and responsible step that reflects Kuwait's careful approach and its duty to protect its national interests.



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Trump pushes Congress to limit voting option

US president casts Florida mail ballot

WASHINGTON, March 25, (AP): US President Donald Trump has cast another mail ballot in Florida as he continues to publicly bash the voting method as a source of fraud and push Congress to curtail the practice.

Palm Beach County voter records show the president voted by mail in a Tuesday special election for state legislative seats and that his ballot has been counted. Early in-person voting in the contest ran through Sunday, when Trump was still at his south Florida estate.

The White House said Tuesday that Trump's ire is at states using universal mail-in voting, not individual instances of voters needing accommodations to vote by mail. A spokeswoman pushed back specifically at the idea that his voting practice contradicts his push for new federal voting rules.

"As President Trump has said, the SAVE America Act has commonsense exceptions for Americans to use mail-in ballots for illness, disability, military, or travel - but universal mail-in voting should not be allowed because it's highly susceptible to fraud," said White House spokeswoman Olivia Wales in a statement.

A report by the Brookings Institution published in 2025 found that cases of mail voting fraud occurred in only 0.000043% of total mail bal-



US President Donald Trump arrives on Air Force One on March 23, at Joint Base Andrews, Md. (AP)

lots cast, or about four cases out of every 10 million mail votes.

Wales added: "As everyone knows, the President is a resident of Palm Beach and participates in Florida elections, but he obviously primarily lives at the White House in Washington, D.C. This is a non-story."

Nonetheless, Trump has in the last week called mail-in voting "cheating" and "corrupt as hell." He is urging Congress to pass the SAVE Act. The sweeping bill would bar universal mail ballots and, as Wales noted, limit the op-

tions to a select few voters such as those with disabilities, military commitments or who are traveling on Election Day. The measure faces steep odds in the closely divided Senate even with the president's pressure.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer tried to capitalize on the president's voting choice.

"According to Donald Trump, vote by mail is cheating when other people use it, but perfectly fine when he does it himself," Schumer, D-N.Y., said on the Senate floor.

US conservatives gather for CPAC with right openly divided over Iran war

GRAPEVINE, Texas, March 25, (AP): Conservatives are holding one of their largest annual gatherings at a perilous political moment for President Donald Trump and with open division on the right over the war he launched in Iran.

While Trump maintains broad support among conservatives, the war in Iran is more than a wrinkle for activists drawn to his "America First" campaign pledge against getting involved in foreign conflicts.

The debate will be a subplot - and likely flare publicly - as thousands of activists, influencers and Republican lawmakers gather at the Conservative Political Action Conference that begins Wednesday outside Dallas.

The gathering will be a contrast to the celebratory meeting one year ago where Trump, newly returned to office, vowed to "forge a new and lasting political majority" and Elon Musk wielded a chainsaw to symbolize how the administration was slashing the government workforce and red tape.

This year, neither Trump nor Vice President JD Vance has been publicly announced as speaking to the gathering. But among those who are slated to speak are big names in the MAGA movement who have voiced conflicting views on the Iran war.

"This is obviously going to be a hot topic," said John Gizzi, a CPAC veteran and columnist for the conservative media outlet Newsmax, who noted the possibility of greater U.S. involvement over an uncertain length



Steve Bannon speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference, CPAC, at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center on Feb 20, 2025, in Oxon Hill, Md. (AP)

of time.

Among the featured speakers scheduled at the four-day event is longtime Trump ally Steve Bannon. Bannon said during his War Room podcast this month that should the war become "a hard slog," it could cost the GOP conservative voters ahead of the midterms.

"We are going to bleed support," Bannon said. Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who supports

the war, also is on the agenda at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center.

"I think President Trump was exactly right to act to protect Americans," Cruz said last week in a CBS News interview.

Former Florida Rep Matt Gaetz's scheduled speaking slot is a reminder of the disagreement among some conservatives about the US military alliance with Israel against Iran.

Policy created a humanitarian crisis: advocates

Supreme Court considers letting WH revive restrictive immigration asylum policy

WASHINGTON, March 25, (AP): The Supreme Court grappled Tuesday with whether the Trump administration should be able to revive an immigration policy that has been used to turn back migrants seeking asylum at the US-Mexico border.

Some conservative justices seemed receptive to the Justice Department's push to overturn a lower-court ruling against the practice known as metering. Immigration authorities limited the number of people who could apply for asylum, saying it was necessary to handle an increase at the border.

Advocates say the policy created a humanitarian crisis during President Donald Trump's first term as people who were turned away settled in makeshift camps in Mexico as they waited for a chance to seek asylum.

The policy isn't in place now, and Trump ordered a wider suspension of the asylum system at the start of his second term.

The administration, though, argues that metering remains a "critical tool" used under administrations from both parties, and should be available if necessary in the future.

Some justices seemed open to that

argument, though others raised questions about whether the policy would allow people who entered the country illegally to apply for asylum while new arrivals seeking legal entry at the border could be blocked.

"Why would Congress privilege someone who illegally enters the United States?" Justice Brett Kavanaugh asked.

An attorney for the Trump administration maintained that people turned away one day could potentially come back later. "It's saying our port is at capacity today, try again some other day," said Vivek Suri, assistant to the solicitor general.

The Associated Press found thousands of immigrants on waiting lists when the policy was in place in 2019.

Under the Immigration and Nationality Act, migrants who arrive in the US must be able to apply for asylum if they fear persecution in their home countries. The legal dispute at the heart of the metering case centers around the meaning of the words "arrive in."

The Justice Department argues it means anyone who is in the United States already, so it doesn't apply to



An asylum seeker from Ecuador hugs her father as he is detained by federal agents on July 31, 2025, in New York. (AP)

people authorities stop on the Mexico side of the border. But immigration attorneys say the law has long meant anyone who comes to a port of entry must be able to apply, and it should stay that way.

"This life saving protection and more importantly, access to it is enshrined in our laws and has been for

decades now," said Rebecca Cassler, an attorney for the American Immigration Council, after arguments.

Chief Justice John Roberts peppered an attorney for the migrants with questions on exactly where someone must be to claim asylum. But Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson suggested that those questions are

hard to answer when the policy isn't being used.

"It just seems to me that we have a lot of hypotheticals regarding how this policy may have worked in the past, how it's possibly going to work in the future, but we don't have a policy in effect right now that we can actually rule on," she said.

Metering was first used during President Barack Obama's administration when large numbers of Haitians appeared at the main crossing to San Diego from Tijuana, Mexico. It was expanded to all border crossings from Mexico during Trump's first term in the White House.

The practice ended in 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic led the government to greater restrictions on asylum-seekers. President Joe Biden formally rescinded the use of metering in 2021.

Also that year, US District Judge Cynthia Bashant, an Obama nominee, ruled that metering violated the migrants' constitutional rights and a federal law requiring officials to screen anyone who arrives at the border seeking asylum.

A divided 9th US Circuit Court of

Appeals affirmed her ruling, but nearly half of the judges on the full San Francisco-based appeals court voted to rehear the case, a strong signal that may have caught the justices' attention.

People seeking refuge in the US are able to apply for asylum once they are on American soil, regardless of whether they came legally. To qualify, they have to show a fear of persecution in their own country because of specific reasons, such as their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.

Once people are granted asylum, they can't be deported. They can work legally, bring immediate family into the country, apply for legal residency and eventually seek U.S. citizenship.

The metering case is one of several immigration suits the court is considering this term, including Trump's push to end birthright citizenship for babies born to people in the U.S. illegally and the administration's effort to strip legal protections for migrants fleeing from instability and armed conflict.

Poland faced surge in cyberattacks in 2025, says government official

WARSAW, Poland, March 25, (AP): Poland experienced 2½ times more cyberattacks in 2025 compared to the previous year, and the numbers are constantly rising, a government official said Tuesday.

The attacks included a destructive infiltration of the country's energy system in December that was believed to be unprecedented among NATO and European Union members, and was suspected of originating in Russia.

Over the last year, Poland was the target of 270,000 cyberattacks, Deputy Minister of Digital Affairs Pawel Olszewski said Tuesday.

"We've been waging a war in cyberspace for many years now," the official said. "The number of incidents and attacks has been increasing significantly and radically year after year."

The government, led by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, has beefed up its cyber defenses since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, in response to what it believes to be a rising threat from Russia.

During the morning and afternoon of Dec. 29, coordinated cyberattacks hit a combined heat and power plant supplying heat to almost 500,000 customers, as well as multiple wind and solar farms in Poland.

Polish authorities suspected the cyberattacks were done by a single "threat actor," with multiple experts pointing to culprits linked to Russian secret ser-



Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk speaks with the media as he arrives for the EU summit in Brussels on Jan 22. (AP)

vices.

The electricity supply wasn't disrupted, but the nature of the sabotage alarmed Polish authorities so much that the agency CERT Polska, or Computer Emergency Response Team Poland, issued a public report in late January on technical details of the incident and asked the cyber community for any input on what happened.

"The attack was a significant escalation," CERT head Marcin Dudek told

The Associated Press.

"We've had such incidents in the past, but they were of the ransomware type, where the motivation of the attacker is financial," Dudek said. "In this case, there was no financial motivation - the motivation was just destruction."

He said that Poland has seen only a few destructive incidents in the past and none of them were in the energy sector.

Dudek said that he wasn't aware of any other destructive cyberattacks on the energy sector in either NATO or EU countries. There have been espionage incidents and activist groups causing marginal damage, but "advanced attacks" like the December one in Poland are likely unprecedented, he said.

Had it targeted even larger energy units, it could have substantially impacted the stability of Poland's energy grid, Dudek said.

The Polish secret services haven't yet publicly identified an alleged culprit.

Dudek's team is authorized only to describe the modus operandi and point to a likely "threat actor" - cyber jargon for an individual or group engaging in malicious activity.

The CERT analysis looked at the Internet infrastructure used in the Polish attack, including domains and IP addresses, and found that they had been used previously by a Russian threat actor known as "Dragonfly," and also called "Static Tundra" or "Berserk Bear."



Firefighters put out the fire in the city center following Russia's drone attack in Lviv, Ukraine on March 24. (AP)

Russia shoots down 389 Ukraine drones

Moscow and Kyiv escalate aerial barrages

MOSCOW, March 25, (AP): Russian air defenses downed 389 incoming Ukrainian drones, Russia's Defense Ministry said Wednesday, in what was the largest reported overnight attack on Russian regions and Crimea since Moscow's forces invaded Ukraine more than four years ago.

The drones were stopped over 13 Russian regions as well as the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

The attack underlined the growing capability of Ukraine's domestically developed and manufactured long-range drones.

It came a day after Russia fired almost 1,000 drones and 34 missiles at civilian areas of Ukraine in the space of 24 hours, extending its usual nighttime barrage into daylight hours in one of its biggest aerial attacks of the war.

At least six people were killed and around 50 people were injured, Ukrainian authorities said.

The United Nations cultural organization UNESCO on Wednesday said it was "deeply alarmed" by Russia hitting a World Heritage site in the western Ukraine city of Lviv during that bombardment.

The escalation in aerial attacks



A power station stands on the outskirts of Chisinau on Oct 31, 2022. (AP)

comes amid a pause in US-mediated talks between delegations from Moscow and Kyiv, as Washington's attention is diverted by the Iran war and as Ukraine anticipates a spring offensive by Russia's bigger army.

Alexander Drozdenko, governor of the Leningrad region north of Moscow, said 56 drones were shot down there, and a fire broke out in the Baltic Sea port of Ust-Luga as the result of

Ukraine's attack.

Ukrainian forces also carried out a missile strike on the Belgorod region on the border with Ukraine overnight, damaging energy infrastructure, its Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said. Power, water and heating supplies were disrupted, he said.

Also:

CHISINAU, Moldova: Moldova's Parliament voted on Tuesday to impose a state of emergency in the country's energy sector after Russian strikes on neighboring Ukraine's energy grid disconnected a key power line linking Moldova to Romania.

The overnight strikes triggered the disconnection of the high-voltage Isaccea-Vulcanesti power line, which links southern Moldova to EU member Romania, after which Moldovan authorities urged citizens to conserve electricity "rationally" during peak hours while repairs were underway.

Seventy-two lawmakers in the 101-seat legislature approved the measure that will last for 60 days. No one voted against and 18 abstained.

"What is happening in the energy sector today is not an accident," said Moldovan Prime Minister **Alexandru Munteanu**.

Europe

Inconclusive result in Danish election: Denmark's election Tuesday ended in an inconclusive result that left the prime minister's future unclear, after a campaign that focused on bread-and-butter issues rather than her handling of the crisis over US President Donald Trump's ambitions toward Greenland.

Official results showed that Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's center-left Social Democrats lost ground compared with the last election in 2022, as did her two partners in the outgoing government.

Neither left-leaning nor right-leaning blocs won a majority in parliament. That left experienced Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, a former prime minister, in the role of kingmaker. (AP)

UK police arrest 2 over arson attack: British police arrested two men on Wednesday in connection with an arson attack on four ambulances belonging to a charity, an assault that authorities are investigating as an antisemitic hate crime.

The Metropolitan Police said the two men, aged 45 and 47, were arrested in London on suspicion of arson with intent to endanger life and that both men have been taken to a



Chairman of the Socialist People's Party Pia Olsen Dyhr, chairman of the Social Democrats Mette Frederiksen, and political leader of the Social Liberal Party Martin Lidegaard look on, during a party leader debate the day after the parliamentary election at the Confederation of Danish Industry, in Copenhagen on March 25. (AP)

police station in the city for questioning.

Officers are searching two properties in north London, a few kilometers (miles) from the scene of the attack in Golders Green. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

Belarusian President Lukashenko arrives in North Korea for talks with Kim Jong Un

SEOUL, South Korea, March 25, (Agencies): Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko arrived in North Korea's capital on Wednesday, where he is expected to hold talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Lukashenko was greeted at Pyongyang's airport by senior North Korean official Kim Tok Hun, who was appointed vice premier this week, according to Belarusian state news agency Belta. North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency earlier reported that Lukashenko would make an official visit at Kim's invitation, but did not immediately confirm his arrival.

Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus for over three decades with an iron fist, is a close ally of the Kremlin. He allowed Russia to use Belarusian territory as a staging ground for Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and later authorized the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus.

Kim has also prioritized Russia in recent years, sending thousands of troops and large quantities of weapons to support President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, while pursuing a more assertive

foreign policy aimed at expanding ties with countries that oppose Washington.

During a speech at North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament on Monday, Kim accused the United States of global "state terrorism and aggression," in an apparent reference to the war in the Middle East, and called for Pyongyang to play a stronger role in a united front against Washington amid rising anti-American sentiment.

According to Belta, bilateral ties between North Korea and Belarus are on the agenda of the talks of the two leaders. Lukashenko last met Kim in September 2025 in Beijing and was invited to visit North Korea, the agency reported. In 2024, Belarusian Foreign Minister Maxim Ryzhenkov visited North Korea. Ryzhenkov said the countries will sign a friendship and cooperation treaty during the visit.

Also:

SEOUL: South Korea's presidential office on Tuesday criticized the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s designation of South Korea as "the most hostile state," saying

such hostile rhetoric does nothing to promote peaceful coexistence on the Korean Peninsula.

□ □ □

SEOUL: South Korean President Lee Jae Myung said Tuesday that the country will activate the government-wide emergency response system amid escalating Middle East tensions.

Lee told a cabinet meeting that the expansion and prolongation of the Middle East conflict were escalating instability in the supply and demand of crude oil and natural gas, saying the International Energy Agency was warning of the impact on the global economy while labeling the crisis the most significant threat to energy security in history.

He warned that it was made difficult to predict when and where problems may arise as petrochemical products are indispensable to daily lives, saying the country will preemptively activate the government-wide emergency response system to address the grave crisis, which can affect people's livelihood and the overall economy.



In this photo released by Belarus' Presidential Press Service, North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, (right), and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, (center), walk during official meeting ceremony in Pyongyang, North Korea on March 25. (AP)

Li congratulates Thai PM on re-election

Chinese VP calls for stronger relations with Kenya

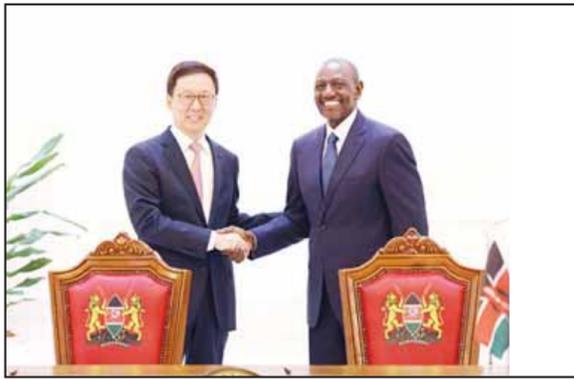
NAIROBI, March 25, (Xinhua): Chinese Vice President Han Zheng visited Kenya from Sunday to Wednesday at the invitation of Kenyan Deputy President Kithure Kindiki, pledging to enhance trade with the East African country and accelerate the joint pursuit of modernization.

During his stay in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, Han met with Kenyan President William Ruto, held talks with Kindiki and attended the China-Kenya Business Forum, where he delivered a speech.

Han conveyed Chinese President Xi Jinping's cordial greetings and best wishes to Ruto. He noted that over the past six decades since the establishment of diplomatic ties, the two countries have consistently adhered to mutual respect, equality, and mutual benefit, promoting bilateral relations to new heights.

Last April, President Xi and President Ruto jointly decided to build a China-Kenya community with a shared future for the new era, which has drawn a new blueprint for the development of bilateral ties, he said.

Han voiced China's readiness to work with Kenya to implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state and the outcomes of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Summit. This will inject new impetus into bilateral cooperation and play a leading and exemplary role in building



Chinese Vice President Han Zheng meets with Kenyan President William Ruto in Nairobi, Kenya, on March 24. (Xinhua)

an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era, he said.

Noting that this year marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan, Han said China will further expand high-level opening-up and share high-quality development opportunities with Kenya and other African countries. The two sides should cement high-level mutual political trust and the foundation of the China-Kenya community with a shared future for the new era.

He expressed gratitude for Kenya's

strong support on issues concerning China's core interests, such as the Taiwan question, and reaffirmed China's firm support for Kenya in safeguarding its national sovereignty, security and development interests.

Both sides should expand high-quality practical cooperation and make good use of the dividends of China's comprehensive zero-tariff treatment for 53 African countries having diplomatic ties with China, which takes effect on May 1, to accelerate their joint steps toward modernization, Han said.

China appreciates Kenya's active support for major initiatives proposed by China and stands ready to enhance high-level strategic coordination to promote a more just and equitable international order, Han said.

Also:

BEIJING: Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Tuesday sent a congratulatory message to Anutin Charnvirakorn on his re-election as Thailand's prime minister.

In his message, Li said that China and Thailand are close, friendly neighbors and a community with a shared future, enjoying a lasting friendship characterized as "China and Thailand are as close as one family."

As 2025 marked the 50th anniversary of the two countries' diplomatic ties, Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochayuhua paid a state visit to China, during which Chinese President Xi Jinping and the king reached important consensus on advancing the China-Thailand comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, Li noted.

Li added that he is willing to work with Anutin to jointly implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state, and to coordinate the advancement of practical cooperation across all fields, in order to push for greater progress in building the China-Thailand community with a shared future in the next 50 years.

Philippine president declares national energy emergency amid ME conflict

MANILA, Philippines, March 25, (Agencies): Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr on Tuesday declared a state of national energy emergency to respond to the impact of the Middle East war, which his administration said posed "an imminent danger of a critically low energy supply."

Under the declaration, which will initially last for a year, Marcos will lead a contingency committee that will ensure the availability and orderly distribution of fuel, food, medicines, agricultural products and other basic goods.

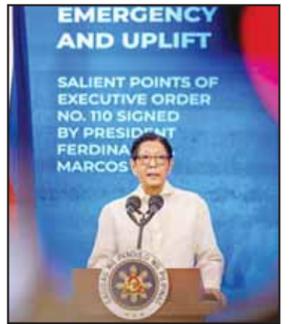
Authorities were ordered to take action against the hoarding, profiteering and manipulation of the supply of petroleum products. The Department of Migrant Workers, meanwhile, was asked to brace for the possible rescue and evacuation of Filipinos in the Middle East.

The government has started to provide 5,000 pesos (\$83) each to large numbers of motorcycle taxi drivers and other public transport workers nationwide to help them cope with soaring gasoline and diesel prices. Free bus rides have also been provided to students and workers in selected cities.

Also:

MANILA: The Philippines is pushing for concrete measures to strengthen financial resilience and deepen cooperation among ASEAN Plus Three countries, the Philippines' Department of Finance (DOF) said on Monday.

The DOF said that closer collabora-



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr speaks during a press conference at Malacanang Palace on March 25, in Manila, Philippines. (AP)

tion among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea is increasingly critical amid global uncertainty.

The finance authorities said while each country faces its own domestic pressures, a coordinated regional approach is essential to safeguarding stability and building resilience against external shocks.

As part of this effort, the Philippines is pushing for stronger regional disaster risk financing mechanisms to address climate-related threats, according to DOF.

Kenya floods worsen as two rivers burst banks, with death toll hitting 88

NAIROBI, Kenya, March 25, (AP): The Kenyan government said Tuesday that two rivers have burst their banks, flooding farms and displacing families as the death toll in flooding in the east African nation this month rose to 88.

At least 21 counties have been affected by the floods, raising concerns over public safety, infrastructure damage and growing humanitarian needs. The number of people displaced from their homes in flooding that started earlier in March has now reached over 34,000, the Interior Ministry said.

The latest flooding incident occurred in western Kenya, where the Nyando River overflowed on Monday, submerging sections of the Ahero Bridge along the Kericho-Awasi-Kisumu road and disrupting transport in the region.

The government issued a statement cautioning motorists against using the flooded route and advising them to seek alternative roads, particularly at night when visibility is low.

"This advisory is especially critical during the hours of darkness, when it may be difficult to accurately determine the depth and strength of the flowing water," the statement said.

Emergency response efforts have intensified in the worst-affected areas, led by the Kenya Red Cross Society, which has been rescuing stranded residents and relocating families to safer



People walk through flood waters following heavy rains in Ahero, Western Kenya on March 24. (AP)

ground.

In the Nyando area, rescue teams have evacuated more than 200 people and over 200 livestock, while at least two families were pulled from immediate danger. Authorities are also working to evacuate more than 900 students from the Ahero Girls National School as floodwaters continue to rise.

The Ministry of Interior and National Administration on Tuesday said at least 265 households have been affected in the area. Displaced residents are being sheltered in public facilities, including government offices, churches

and health centers. Six unaccompanied children were among those rescued and are currently under care.

Flooding has also been reported in other regions.

In Tana River County, the River Tana burst its banks, flooding farms in Mbalambala and surrounding areas, including Asako village, and threatening food production. In Uasin Gishu County, a multi-agency team is assessing the impact of rising water levels along Sosiani River in Lower Elgon View, where residential and hospital facilities have been affected.



People carry a banner of people who disappeared during Argentina's military dictatorship (1976-1983) during a rally on the anniversary of the coup that brought the military regime to power, in Buenos Aires, Argentina on March 24. (AP)

Thousands march in Argentina to mark 50 years since bloody coup

Thousands marched through Buenos Aires on Tuesday to mark 50 years since the 1976 military coup that ushered in one of Latin America's bloodiest dictatorships.

An estimated 30,000 people were disappeared by the regime in its campaign against dissidents, including a left-wing guerrilla movement, labor activists and students, according to human rights organi-

zations. Official figures place the number at around 8,000.

A truth commission and human rights groups attribute the majority of violence during that period to state security forces.

Human rights organizations, labor unions, student groups, social movements and political organizations called Tuesday for demonstrations across the country under

the slogan "Memory, Truth and Justice," in reference to crimes against humanity committed during the military regime.

Manuela Casares, a 36-year-old psychologist, told The Associated Press she attends the march every year, but this time decided to bring her nearly 6-year-old daughter "to teach her and pass on our history and the meaning of this day." (AP)

'M23 used containers to hold journos in brutal conditions'

DAKAR, Senegal, March 25, (AP): A rebel group in eastern Congo has detained civilians, including two journalists, in metal shipping containers without light or ventilation, an advocacy group said Tuesday.

Reporters Without Borders, or RSF, said the Rwanda-backed M23, which controls parts of eastern Congo, used the containers in the city of Goma as makeshift detention cells under "inhuman" and "degrading" conditions.

Using witness accounts, satellite imagery and photos collected in 2025, RSF said at least two journalists were among those detained in the containers, which were installed at the compound of the provincial legislative assembly in Goma. Witnesses' identities have been withheld for security reasons.

As many as 80 detainees at a time were placed inside a container, without light or ventilation and allowed out only once a day. Witnesses said they received minimal food, while some reported routine beatings. According to the testimonies, conditions were extreme - suffocating heat by day and cold at night - with deaths reported. Survivors were often held for weeks before being transferred to other locations.

M23 spokesperson Lawrence Kanyuka accused RSF in a post on X Tuesday of "spreading unfounded reports" and "disinformation." The rebels' takeover of Goma last year has worsened conditions for journalists operating in eastern Congo, where threats and attacks were already widespread. Reporters Without Borders said the M23 has tightened control over media coverage, including imposing restrictions on the language used to describe its presence.



Kanyuka

Lat/Am

Petro questions use of secondhand planes:

Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Tuesday questioned the use of secondhand planes by the country's armed forces, as officials investigate the crash of a military transport plane that killed dozens of soldiers in southwestern Colombia.

"An army cannot defend its own people with crappy gifts," Petro wrote on X in reference to the Hercules CJ-130, which was donated to Colombia by the United States. "They give away whatever is useless to them - and the 'gift' ends up costing more than buying it new."

On Monday a military transport plane crashed shortly after taking off in Colombia's Putumayo province, with the Defense Ministry reporting Tuesday that 67 members of the armed forces and two policemen were killed in the accident. (AP)

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Bolsonaro to serve sentence at home: Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro will continue to serve his 27-year sentence for a coup attempt at home instead of in prison due to failing health, a judge ruled Tuesday.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes allowed the 71-year-old to return to his residence in capital Brasilia after he is discharged from the hospital, but he argued in his decision that he will review the case within 90 days.

Bolsonaro will wear an ankle monitor and is not allowed to use cellphones, the judge ruled. Local police will surveil his house in a gated community, where protesters are not allowed to gather. Bolsonaro is not allowed any visitors except for doctors and family members. (AP)

As US pressure grows for leadership change in Cuba, a Castro could be next president

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, March 25, (AP): As US President Donald Trump pushes for change in Cuba's leadership, speculation is mounting about who, if anyone, might replace Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel.

As Raúl Castro's handpicked largely figurehead successor in 2018, Diaz-Canel has been the only leader without the last name Castro to govern since the 1959 revolution. He still has two years left in his term -- but some experts and a growing number of Cubans doubt he'll make it. Two Castro cousins have come into focus as potential replacements, experts said.

Oscar Pérez-Oliva Fraga - Raúl Castro's 55-year-old great nephew - has shot to power since emerging from obscurity several years ago. He became minister of Cuba's influential Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment in May 2024 and was appointed the island's deputy prime minister in October.

By contrast, Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro - Raúl Castro's grandson - has never occupied a government post,



Cuba's President Miguel Diaz-Canel holds up a Cuban flag as he watches the May Day parade next to Raul Castro, second from right, and Raul Castro's grandson, Raul Guillermo Rodriguez Castro, at Revolution Square in Havana, May 1, 2025. (AP)

having served as his grandfather's bodyguard and later as head of Cuba's equivalent of the U.S. Secret Service. He has

long been known as "Raulito," or "Little Raúl" and is new to the spotlight cast on high-ranking government officials.

Kuwait crude plunges \$16 to \$146.42 pb

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (KUNA): The price of the Kuwaiti oil barrel went down USD 16.66 to reach USD 146.42 per barrel on Tuesday, compared with USD 163.08 pb the previous day, according to the Kuwait

Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Wednesday.

In international markets, Brent crude oil price went up USD 4.31 to USD 100.23 pb, while West Texas crude rose USD 4.02 to USD 88.83 pb.

Business

Launching dual-base operations in KSA

Jazeera Airways expands network to 20+ destinations during regional disruption

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Jazeera Airways as part of its continued operational evolution, today announced that it will operate from two bases in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, adding King Fahd International Airport in Dammam (DMM) to its existing operations at Qaisumah Airport (AQI).

Effective from 26 March 2026 at 00:00 hours, the addition of Dammam will further boost seat and cargo capacity, supporting efforts to keep Kuwait and the communities in Kuwait connected.

Operating from two airports will enable a significant scale-up of Jazeera Airways' operations, with more than 20 destinations, 1,000 flights, 200,000 seats and 2 million tons of cargo capacity offered across its network through 30 April.

This will support Kuwait as a whole, addressing the overwhelming need of the community as well as supply logistics during the ongoing regional situation.

Jazeera Airways has led an unprecedented effort in building connectivity for Kuwait and its people, by establishing an integrated air-to-land model via Qaisumah, enabling thousands of passengers to continue their journeys and stay connected with families and loved ones and their work despite widespread disruption.

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

"Our priority from day one is to establish the connectivity bridge to keep Kuwait moving safely and reliably, despite the extraordinary challenges facing the region and Kuwait. By swiftly expanding our operational footprint in Saudi Arabia to include King Fahd International Airport in Dammam alongside Qaisumah, we are strengthening this connectivity bridge, supporting both the movement of people and the flow of essential goods.

This expansion has enabled us to scale up to more than 20 destinations, 1,000 flights, 200,000 seats and 2 million tons of cargo capacity.

This reflects both the resilience of our operations and the strong ability to serve Kuwait. We are especially thankful for the ongoing support from the Saudi General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) and our partners in the Kingdom for enabling this development.



Jazeera Airways Qaisumah and Dammam ops.

The entire Jazeera family has been tirelessly working round the clock to keep Kuwait and its community connected and will always be there especially when it matters the most."

Jazeera Airways continues to operate as the only airline connecting Kuwait to a growing network of destinations across Egypt, India, Jordan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Türkiye and the UAE, while remaining focused on ensuring safe, reliable, and continuous connectivity as it adapts its operations in real time to evolving circumstances.

All departure and arrivals for both Qaisumah and Dammam will continue at Jazeera's temporary Terminal in Mishref at the Kuwait International Fairgrounds, Hall No. 8. Bookings for flights from Dammam will open from 18:00 pm on 25 March 2026. To book your flights, visit jazeeraairways.com or the Jazeera app.

Jazeera Airways also remains available to serve the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry as well as cargo operators in Kuwait to facilitate supply chains into the country.

KPC awards \$5.6 mln LPG cylinder supply contract

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: The Higher Purchasing Committee at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries announced the awarding of an international limited tender to a private firm.

This is in response to the request of Kuwait Oil Tanker

Company (KOTC). The contract covers the supply of 40,000 iron liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders -- 25 kilograms each and 5,000 iron LPG cylinders (five kilograms each), all equipped with valves.

These units are the Umm Al-Aish and Al-Shuaiba LPG filling stations and were secured at a bid price of \$5.6 million.

The Conversation

Jones Act waived: Will it lower US pump prices?

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

By Christopher Niezrecki
UMass Lowell

The Trump administration temporarily suspended the Jones Act on March 18, 2026, as part of its efforts to bring down soaring U.S. gasoline prices.

But what does this more-than-century-old law, which originally was designed to support the shipping industry, have to do with the price of gas?

As the director of the Center for Energy Innovation at UMass Lowell, I've learned that the impact of the Jones Act ripples beyond shipping and can have a profound effect on the price of many things, including consumer goods, electricity and what you pay at the pump.

The Jones Act is more formally known as Section 27 of the Merchant Marine Act of 1920.

One of the act's most impactful features is its ability to limit domestic maritime shipping and coastal trade.

Under the act, a foreign-designated ship is not allowed to transport goods between two U.S. ports or territories without either leaving U.S. waters first or transporting those goods to a U.S.-flagged vessel - which must be staffed primarily by U.S. sailors.

The federal law was originally intended to bolster and protect the American maritime industry by ensuring that the U.S. has the infrastructure and personnel to support shipping, commerce, defense and naval operations needed during war or national emergencies.

Since then, the act has been revised and updated numerous times.

This rule helps to protect the U.S. shipbuilding industry from foreign competition and the jobs of American sailors; however, it also limits free trade.

Proponents of the Jones Act claim that it supports the transport of goods between states and territories, enhances national security and helps to sustain hundreds of thousands of American jobs as well as the shipbuilding industry, while contributing billions of dollars to the U.S. economy.

However, critics of the Jones Act claim that it increases the cost of goods between U.S. ports and especially in regions that rely heavily on marine transport, such as Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

And despite the ostensible intent to protect the shipbuilding industry, the act has also hurt it because it has made U.S. ships up to five times more expensive to build than those manufactured abroad.

These factors have resulted in a smaller supply of American ships that are available to transport goods.

And when there is limited

competition, costs of ship construction and transportation increase.

The average price of a gallon of gas has soared nearly a third since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, 2026 - from \$2.98 to \$3.84 as of March 18, according to data compiled by AAA.

Suspending the Jones Act allows foreign ships to transport oil and gas between ports within the U.S., which should lead to lower transportation costs and increased supply.

This should ease gas costs over time - but we're talking months, not days or weeks.

In 2022, analysts at JPMorgan estimated that a temporary suspension of the Jones Act could save East Coast motorists about 10 cents a gallon.

However, if the duration of the suspension is short - the government said it would waive the act for only 60 days - the impact on gas prices will be minimal because of the time required for the marine industry to respond and the fact that domestic shipping costs are not the primary factor that influences fuel cost.

Should the Jones Act be permanently repealed, fuel prices would fall more steeply.

The Jones Act has been temporarily suspended in the past, primarily for urgent economic or supply chain issues, such as to aid Puerto Rico after it was hit by a hurricane in 2022 and following a cyberattack on a fuel pipeline in 2021.

Another very important cost impact of the Jones Act involves offshore wind energy.

It has been shown that the energy generated by offshore wind farms provides additional energy close to load centers - cities or industrial sites that consume significant power - helping to reduce costs by providing additional supply.

This is especially important now and will become more important over the next few years, as electricity demands are expected to increase due to rapid growth in artificial intelligence data centers.

The numerous approved wind farms currently being constructed off the U.S. coast are constrained by the Jones Act because there aren't enough U.S.-flagged ships available to install and service all the offshore wind turbines that are needed.

Many wind farm developers are skirting the issue by leveraging U.S. barges to transport equipment prior to installation by foreign vessels.

But even so, the Jones Act raises the cost of offshore wind farm installations, making energy less affordable for Americans.

Suspending the Jones Act for a couple of months, however, will have minimal impact on the U.S. offshore wind and other energy industries. (AP)

Boursa Kuwait edges higher

Main 50 leads gains

KUWAIT CITY, March 25, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Wednesday's session on a positive note, with the general market index edging up 14.01 points, or 0.17 percent, to 8,448.84 points.

A total of 202.5 million shares changed hands in 15,399 cash transactions, with a trading value of KD 58.31 million (around USD 178.4 million).

The main market index slipped 11.58 points, or 0.15 percent, to

7,765.29 points, as 91.7 million shares were traded through 7,162 transactions worth KD 13.9 million (USD 42.5 million).

In contrast, the premier market index gained 20.26 points, or 0.22 percent, to close at 9,032.58 points, with 110.8 million shares traded via 8,237 transactions, valued at KD 44.3 million (about USD 135.5 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index advanced 61.82 points, or 0.78 percent, to 8,028.89 points, with 84.18 million shares exchanged across 5,982 cash transactions totaling KD 12.17 million (approximately USD 37.2 million).

In collaboration with 'Saaad' app

Warba concludes 4th Ramadan Quran competition

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: As part of its commitment to supporting initiatives that promote Islamic values and strengthen the presence of the Holy Quran in the hearts of Muslims, Warba Bank announced the conclusion of the fourth edition of its Ramadan Quran Reading competition which saw over 3,500 individuals participating.

The competition was held in collaboration with the "Saaad" app, a Kuwaiti digital platform specialized in Quran recitation and learning, and featured a dedicated activation booth at Al Asimah Mall.

This initiative comes as part of the Bank's ongoing efforts to collaborate with local malls and digital platforms that serve the community, aiming to promote Islamic values and encourage a culture of Quran recitation and reflection.

Through this competition, Warba Bank seeks to motivate individuals across all age groups to recite the Holy Quran and enhance their tajweed and proper recitation skills, utilizing innovative digital solutions that enable participation from anywhere, as well as by engaging directly with Warba Bank at its booth during its presence at Al Asimah Mall from March 1 to 7.

A Commitment to Doing Good and Strengthening Islamic Identity In this context, Mr. Abdullah Fakhrou, Executive Manager of the Sharia'h Department at Warba Bank, stated: "Adherence to Islamic values lies at the core of our identity at Warba Bank.

Our Ramadan initiatives reflect our commitment to supporting the community and enhancing religious awareness.

At Warba Bank, we strive to be more than just a financial institution; we aim to be a partner in building a cohesive society grounded in the principles of doing good and giving.

The Ramadan Quran Reading competition is not merely a recitation contest, it is an invitation to all members of society, young and old, male and female, citizens and residents alike, to connect with the Holy Quran in a modern and accessible way that blends advanced technology with the



Abdullah Fakhrou

spirituality of the holy month."

Fakhrou added: "We aim for this initiative to serve as an opportunity for everyone to recite the Quran and draw closer to Allah, while ensuring accessibility for all through the 'Saaad' app, which allows easy participation without the need for physical attendance.

"This initiative reflects our belief in the importance of providing an environment that encourages individuals to make the most of the holy month by developing their Quranic skills and embracing the profound values of Islam."

Proficient Recitation and Valuable Prizes

The competition enabled participants to recite selected verses from the Holy Quran regardless of their proficiency level, whether highly skilled or beginners, through their smart devices via the "Saaad" app. This digital experience reflects the Bank's vision of leveraging technology to serve the community and promote religious values, particularly in learning and reciting the Quran during the holy month.

Recitations were evaluated and reviewed by specialists in Quran education based on precise criteria, including tajweed rules and linguistic accuracy.

This provided participants with a valuable learning opportunity to improve their recitation skills, while also entering a draw for valuable prizes upon completing the required recitation. Both advanced participants and beginners had equal chances of winning, reinforcing inclusivity and encouragement.

Participation categories included males and females aged 15 and above, who were assigned Surah An-Nur; participants aged 11 to 14, assigned Surahs Al-Haqqah and Al-Ma'arij; those aged 8 to 10, assigned Surah Al-Qalam; and the youngest category, aged 4 to 7, assigned Juz' 60.

A Community Partnership in a Sustainable Vision

This initiative reflects the shared commitment of Warba Bank, Al Asimah Mall, and the "Saaad" app to social responsibility and the promotion of Islamic values.

Together, they aim to deliver initiatives that serve all segments of society and contribute to the development of individuals' religious and cultural skills, embodying a vision that integrates financial innovation with social and spiritual engagement.

A Vision that Preserves Cultural and Religious Heritage

Warba Bank continues to invest in programs and initiatives that preserve cultural heritage, foster pride in authenticity, and reinforce cultural identity. This reflects the values that unite the community and aligns with the Bank's commitment to offering innovative, Sharia-compliant banking services that meet the evolving needs and aspirations of its customers.

Oil touches highest in 3.5 years on Middle East crisis

By KAMCO Invest

CRUDE oil traded at post pandemic highs last week as the ongoing Middle East war threatened close to 20% of crude oil supplies that originates from the Gulf region. The market was jolted with the possibility of the war being stretched that could push prices even higher in the coming months. As a result of the supply woes, a number of countries announced restrictions on the sale of oil, refined products and natural gas and even announced rationing of fuel in the domestic markets. Another fallout from the crisis and the elevated oil prices was the possibility of inflation-led rate hikes this year by global central banks instead of the earlier prediction of either flat rates or rate cuts. Higher rates could also suppress demand for oil in the near-term.

On the other hand, to control prices, the IEA announced the release of a record amount of crude oil from its emergency reserves. The agency announced the release of 400 million barrels of crude oil terming the middle east crisis as the biggest oil market disruption in the history. The US said it would release 172 million barrels of oil from its strategic reserve. The replenishment of these strategic reserves as well as cautious piling up of inventories by global oil importers post the crisis could also result in elevated crude oil prices for years to come.

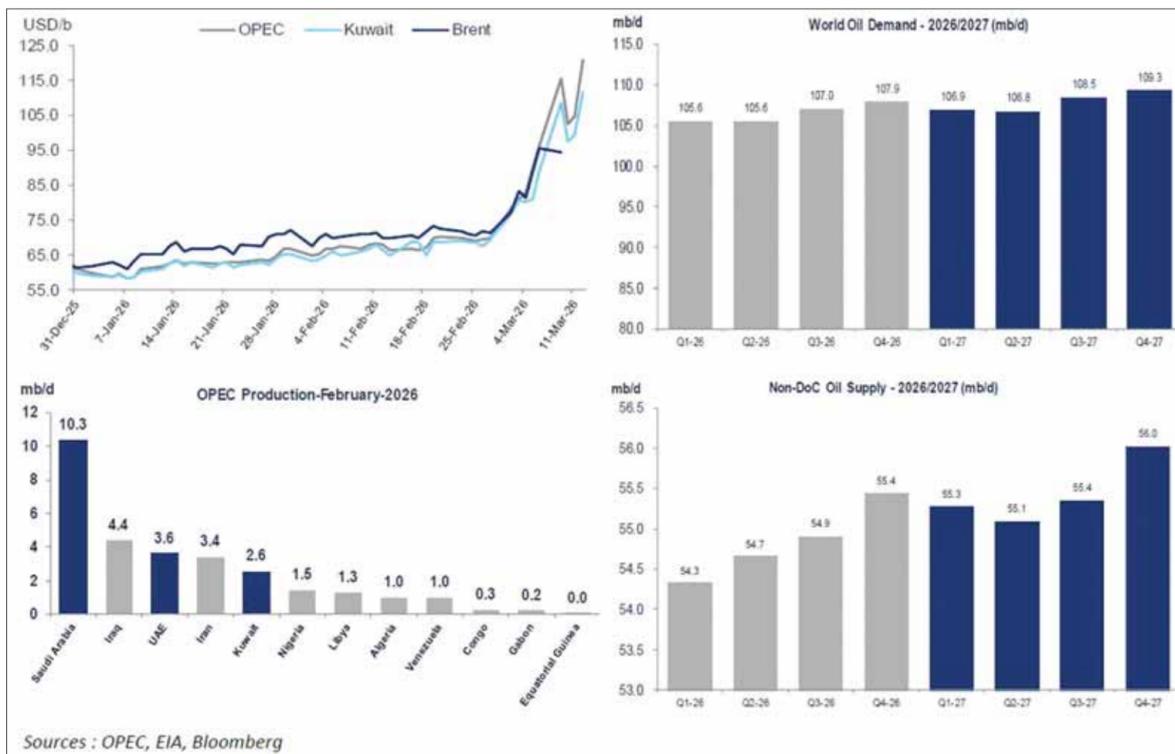
The attacks on Iran initially added limited gains to crude oil prices, but the threat to the Strait of Hormuz and its virtual closure to non-Iran linked vessels pushed prices to over USD 120/b. However, as per reports, Iran continued to export crude oil, especially to its key allies, including China. On the other hand, exports from Saudi Arabia and the UAE were partially diverted to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Oman and various calculations suggesting close to 7-8 mb/d in rerouted supplies, partially blunting the overall impact from the closure of the route. However, there were reports of drone attacks on the port of Fujairah that suspended operations from the terminal which is just outside the Strait of Hormuz. The port resumed operation on Sunday, but the drone attacks followed US attacks on the Kharg Island which is key to crude oil exports from Iran and processes close to 90% of crude oil exports from the country, although the attacks spared oil infrastructure. Other producers from the region, that rely solely on the Persian Gulf for exports, remained severely affected. The recent attacks on oil facilities and storage points have raised stakes as until recently the attacks had largely spared oil facilities.

On the supply front, OPEC oil production reached the highest level in almost 3.5 years after the group raised output at the biggest rate in eight months. Average production from the group reached 29.6 mb/d during February-2026, as per Bloomberg data, led by a broad-based growth in output by most producers in the group. Saudi Arabia and Venezuela recorded the biggest monthly growth in output during the month. On the other hand, oil output in the US dropped marginally for three consecutive weeks to reach 13.7 mb/d.

Oil Prices

Crude oil prices witnessed extremely volatility since the start of March-2026 led by the war in the Middle East region. The initial surge that saw prices reaching over USD 80/b came after oil facilities in the region were largely spared from attacks. But recent attacks coupled with the virtual closure of the Strait of Hormuz resulted in prices spiking to nearly USD 120/b. This disruption threatened roughly 20% of the world's daily oil supply, prompting major Gulf producers to cut production as shipping lanes became impassable. In addition, the announcement by the IEA to release 400 million barrels of oil as well as rerouting of crude oil shipments by Saudi Arabia and the UAE led to temporary cooling of prices only to regain the USD 120/b mark following recent drone attacks on oil terminals and the Kharg Island. High-frequency data shows that while supply is being bolstered by these reserves, global demand is simultaneously being eroded by the high price environment and widespread regional flight cancellations, keeping the 2026 outlook deeply uncertain.

In terms of monthly price trend, average crude oil prices saw gains for the second consecutive month during February-2026 led by fears of geopolitical issues. Average spot Brent crude oil price witnessed a healthy gain of 6.5% and breached the USD 70/b mark for the first time since July-2025 to reach USD 71.1/b during February-2026, as compared to an average of USD 66.7/b during January-2026. On the other hand, average OPEC reference basket price witnessed a much larger increase of 9.0% to reach USD 67.9/b as compared to USD 62.3/b during the previous month. Kuwait export grade crude prices, meanwhile, witnessed a growth of 9.7% to average at USD 66.6/b during



Brent Crude Oil Price Forecast

Firm	As Of	Q1-26	Q2-26	Q3-26	Q4-26
Landesbank Baden-Wuerttemberg	12/Mar/26	75.0	75.0	75.0	70.0
Goldman Sachs Group Inc	11/Mar/26	81.0	80.0	74.0	71.0
Rabobank	11/Mar/26	80.0	90.0	86.0	82.0
HSBC Holdings PLC	10/Mar/26	81.0	88.0	78.0	73.0
Standard Chartered	10/Mar/26	74.0	67.0	68.0	70.0
JYSKE BANK AS	9/Mar/26	65.0	75.0	70.0	65.0
JPMorgan Chase & Co	6/Mar/26	60.0	59.0	56.0	55.0
UBS Group	6/Mar/26	62.0	65.0	65.0	67.0
ING Groep NV	5/Mar/26	72.0	71.0	68.0	62.0
Intesa Sanpaolo SpA	4/Mar/26	71.0	75.0	67.0	63.0
BMI, a Fitch Solutions company	2/Mar/26	62.0	66.0	69.0	71.0
Citigroup Inc	2/Mar/26	67.0	62.0	62.0	62.0
Morgan Stanley	2/Mar/26	62.5	80.0	70.0	65.0
BloombergNEF	26/Feb/26	67.0	63.0	60.5	56.5
Julius Baer Group Ltd	20/Feb/26	65.1	58.3	57.5	60.0
Bank of America Merrill Lynch	17/Feb/26	59.0	60.0	61.0	60.0
MPS Capital Services Banca per le Imprese SpA	16/Feb/26	67.0	60.0	58.0	58.0
Westpac Banking Corp	16/Feb/26	67.3	68.0	65.7	63.0
Kshiti Consultancy Services Pvt Ltd	5/Feb/26	75.0	74.0	75.0	82.0
Deutsche Bank AG	26/Jan/26	60.0	60.0	63.0	63.0
Commerzbank AG	16/Jan/26	60.0	60.0	60.0	60.0
Panmure Gordon & Co PLC	13/Jan/26	65.0	65.0	66.0	66.0
Natixis SA	5/Jan/26	57.0	60.0	64.0	66.0
Market Risk Advisory Co Ltd	23/Dec/25	59.9	61.0	62.3	
Australia & New Zealand Banking Group Ltd	19/Dec/25	65.0	65.0	68.0	70.0
Tradingeconomics.com	15/Dec/25	64.0	65.5	67.0	
United States Department of Energy	9/Dec/25	54.9	54.0	55.3	56.0
Macquarie Group Ltd	4/Dec/25	57.0	59.0	60.0	67.0
BNP Paribas SA	1/Dec/25	54.6	57.3	62.6	63.0
OCBC Bank	13/Nov/25	64.0	62.5	61.1	58.5
Emirates NBD PJSC	6/Nov/25	65.0	65.0	65.0	65.0
Median		65.0	65.0	65.0	65.0
Mean		65.8	66.8	65.8	65.2
High		81.0	90.0	86.0	82.0
Low		54.6	54.0	55.3	55.0
Current Fwd		82.0	93.0	84.5	79.3
Difference (Median - Current)		-17.0	-28.0	-19.5	-14.3

Source: Bloomberg

February-2026 vs. USD 60.7/b during January-2026. In terms of expectations, the consensus estimate for Brent crude underwent a significant upgrade from last month's expectations with median forecasts upgraded for Q1-2026 by USD 4 per barrel to USD 65/b and for Q2-2026 the revision was USD 5/b to an average of USD 65/b. The forecast upgrade reflected higher prices led by the middle east war with some recent forecasts showing prices of over USD 85/b during the year.

World Oil Demand

Global oil demand growth forecast for 2026 was kept unchanged in the latest monthly report from OPEC at a growth of 1.38 mb/d with demand expected to reach 106.53 mb/d during the year. However, there were minor adjustments to estimates at the regional level with demand growth forecast for OECD countries raised that was fully offset by a downward adjustment to the forecast for non-OECD countries. Within the OECD region, the OECD Americas region witnessed an upward revision in demand although demand forecast for the US was lowered for 2H-2026. The OECD Asia Pacific region also witnessed an upward revision to demand forecast that was partially offset by a downward revision to data for the OECD Europe also mainly during the second half of the year. On the other hand, demand forecast for China, India and the Middle East regions were raised but the downward revision to demand growth forecast for the rest of the non-OECD countries more than offset these upward revisions. As per reports, China has boosted oil imports during the first two months of the year, increasing it by 15.8% y-o-y to 11.99 mb/d, as per Reuters, led by higher refinery runs as well as stockpiling.

Forecasts from the IEA, however, once again showed lowered demand expectation for 2026. The agency lowered its forecast for the year by 210 tb/d as compared to last month and now expects demand to grow by 640 tb/d this year. The lowered forecast reflects demand disruption due to the war mainly due to the numerous flight cancellations in the Middle East that could impact the demand for jet fuel and large-scale disruptions to LPG supplies. The agency added that higher oil prices and the impact on global economy from the war could result in further risks to forecast. As per the IEA, global oil demand is expected to fall by 1 mb/d during March-2026 and April-2026 as compared to its previous forecasts.

Oil demand growth forecast for 2027 was also kept unchanged by the OPEC at a growth of 1.34 mb/d reaching 107.87 mb/d during the year. However, at the regional level, the forecast showed an upward revision to forecast for the OECD region that was offset by a downward revision to the forecast for the non-OECD countries.

World Oil Supply

The monthly report from OPEC showed no change in the supply forecast for non-DoC liquids production as compared to the previous month's estimates. As per OPEC, supply from non-DoC producers is expected to grow by 0.63 mb/d in 2026 to reach an average output of 54.83 mb/d during the year. At the regional level, there were minor adjustments to supply data of Europe and Other Asia. For 2027, the OPEC also kept its forecast unchanged as compared to last month and expects non-DoC output to increase by 0.61 mb/d during the year to an average of 55.44 mb/d. Once again, there were minor adjustments to supply data for Europe, Other Asia and Africa.

Meanwhile, the IEA, in its monthly report, said that situation in the Middle East region has created the largest supply disruption in the history of global oil market. As per the agency, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and with storage facilities fast filling up, this could lower global oil supply by 8 mb/d during March-2026 as the Strait controls around 20 mb/d of global supplies. Due to the conflict, gulf producers have lowered output by at least 10 mb/d and any failure to resume output could lead to further decline in supplies from the region. Meanwhile, the IEA said that higher output from non-OPEC+ producers, including Kazakhstan and Russia could partially offset the overall decline.

For the full year, the IEA expects average global oil supplies to rise by 1.1 mb/d in 2026, a sharp decline from its previous expectations, and this increase is expected to be led entirely by non-OPEC+ producers. The agency announced to release 400 million barrels of crude oil from its emergency reserves to deal with the spike in prices. As per the IEA, global observed oil inventory stood at 8,210 million barrels as of the end of January-2026, the highest level since February-2026. Out of this, the OECD accounted for 50% of the inventory, China accounted for 15%, oil on floating storage accounted for 25% and the remainder were accounted for by non-OECD countries.

OPEC Oil Production & Spare Capacity

After seeing a steep decline in production last month, OPEC crude oil production increased at the fastest pace in almost 3.5 years mainly led by a broad-based increase in output across the group. Average group output during the month stood at 29.52mb/d, registering an increase of 640 tb/d, according to data from Bloomberg. More than 50% of this increase was led by Saudi Arabia that increased output by 340 tb/d during February-2026 with an average production rate of 10.34 mb/d, the highest since April-2023. Venezuela also registered a sharp increase in output by 160 tb/d and reported an average output rate of 980 tb/d, the highest in five months. Nigeria was the only country that reported a noticeable drop in output with a decline of 40 tb/d to an average production of 1.45 mb/d. However, data from OPEC secondary sources showed a much smaller monthly increase of 164 tb/d during February-2026 to an average 28.63 mb/d. As per the OPEC, the increase was mainly led by an increase in output mainly in Venezuela, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia that was partially offset by fall in output in Libya and Nigeria.

Output from the broader DoC producers group showed a sharper production increase of 445 tb/d, as per OPEC secondary sources, with average output from the broader OPEC+ group reaching 42.72 mb/d during February-2026. The increase was mainly led by a sharp increase in output in Kazakhstan that reported a monthly increase of 293 tb/d and produced at an average rate of 1.49 tb/d. This increase was partially offset by a fall in output in Russia by 56 tb/d and produced at an average rate of 9.2 mb/d during the month.

Recent reports suggest a significant decline in oil exports from the region. In addition, as storage facilities are fast filling up, a number of producers in the Gulf region have announced to lower production rates. The IEA said that the region's oil output was down by 8 mb/d and an additional 2 mb/d related to petroleum products, including condensates, were affected. Another report from Bloomberg showed that Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the UAE and Kuwait have lowered oil output by almost a third collectively by 6.7 mb/d. The crisis in the region has also

shuttered refineries, halted LNG plants in Qatar and has resulted in a sharp increase in tanker rates. As per a report, Saudi Arabia's oil shippers have been booking tankers at high rates to load the rerouted crude oil from the Yanbu port in Red Sea.

\$1 bln deal shifts TotalEnergies to fossil fuels

TotalEnergies agrees to \$1 bln exit from US offshore wind under Trump plan

WASHINGTON, March 25, (AP): The Trump administration's \$1 billion payout to a French energy company to walk away from U.S. offshore wind development is a novel tactic against the industry that supporters see as creative - but opponents see as foolish and extreme.

The Interior Department announced Monday that TotalEnergies agreed to what is essentially a refund of its leases for projects off the coasts of North Carolina and New York, and will invest the money in a liquefied natural gas export terminal in Texas and other fossil fuel projects instead. The department hailed it as an "innovative agreement" with the French energy giant so that the "American people will no longer pay for ideological subsidies that benefited only the unreliable and costly offshore wind industry."

The tactical shift comes after federal courts have thwarted President Donald Trump's efforts to stop offshore wind through executive action.

U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the payment "sets a dangerous precedent and is a shortsighted misuse of taxpayer dollars."

Robin Shaffer, president of the anti-offshore wind group Protect Our Coast New Jersey, applauded what he called "out of the box" thinking. Shaffer said after losing in the courts, the administration needed a way to take back leases that never should have been issued because of the harm offshore wind development causes to the marine environment.

"The Trump administration has been relentlessly creative in its efforts to stop offshore wind development in the U.S.," he said.

While the Republican president has been particularly hostile to offshore wind, he has also blocked dozens of clean energy projects and canceled billions of dollars in grants to promote clean energy, which he derides as the "Green New Scam." This comes at a time when the U.S. is trying to boost power supplies in an artificial intelligence race against China and keep electricity bills from rising even higher.

The Iran war has also dealt a massive energy shock to the global economy by choking off most exports of crude oil and liquefied natural gas through the Strait of Hormuz.

On the campaign trail, Trump vowed to end the offshore wind industry as soon as he returned to the White House. Trump said wind turbines are horrible and expensive and pose a threat to birds and other wildlife.

Connecticut is getting power from Revolution Wind, an offshore wind project, and estimates it will lower wholesale energy costs for the state. The



A sign for French company TotalEnergies is displayed March 21, 2025, in La Defense business district outside Paris. (AP)

National Audubon Society, which is dedicated to the conservation of birds, has said climate change is a greater threat to birds.

Trump has long opposed offshore wind energy. In 2015, he lost his years-long battle to stop an offshore wind farm near Aberdeen in eastern Scotland when Britain's Supreme Court unanimously ruled against him. Trump claimed the 11 turbines would spoil the view from his golf course.

He wants to boost production of oil, natural gas and coal, which cause climate change, because he argues that doing so would give the U.S. the lowest-cost energy and electricity of any nation in the world.

His first day back in office, he acted on his campaign promise, signing an executive order temporarily halting offshore wind lease sales in federal waters and pausing permitting for all wind projects.

U.S. District Judge Patti Saris vacated Trump's executive order blocking wind energy projects on Dec. 8, declaring it unlawful as she sided with state attorneys general from 17 states and Washington, D.C., who challenged the order. The administration is appealing.

Two weeks later, the administration ordered that construction stop on five major East Coast offshore wind projects, citing national security concerns. Developers and states sued, and federal judges allowed all five to resume construction, essentially concluding that the government didn't show that the national security risk was so imminent that construction must halt.

TotalEnergies wasn't one of those; it had already paused its two projects soon after Trump was elected. And the company has now pledged not to develop any new offshore wind projects in the United States. CEO Patrick 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.

Kit Kennedy, who directs the power division at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the proposed payment to TotalEnergies was a "boondoggle" that "transfers nearly \$1 billion from American taxpayers to a foreign corporation and the oil and gas industry."

Why is the U.S. using taxpayer dollars "to not develop power when we need energy?" she asked, calling the Trump administration deal a "scam" and harmful to the U.S. economy and environment.

Carl Tobias, a University of Richmond Law School professor who has been following the lawsuits, called it "unorthodox."

As crude oil and gasoline prices surge, Democrats in Virginia said the U.S. should be strengthening its energy independence and resilience. Virginia started receiving power on Monday from an offshore wind project targeted by Trump.

"Giving an energy company \$1 billion of taxpayer money to pack up its jobs and invest elsewhere - in the middle of an unpopular and unwise war that is spiking energy costs - is beyond idiotic," U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine said in a statement to AP.

U.S. Rep. Chellie Pingree, a Maine Democrat, questioned whether the payout is legal under appropriations law and said she would question Interior Secretary Doug Burgum about it at the upcoming budget hearings.

Dozens of commercial leases issued by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management remain active for wind energy development in the U.S.

Abigail Dillen, president of Earthjustice, said she wouldn't attempt to guess whether the Trump administration will pay to stop any others, but clearly it is willing to go to extreme measures.

"Will they do this again? Maybe," she said.

Oil tumbles 5%, global shares rise over possible de-escalation of war

Nikkei up 2.9%

HONG KONG, March 25, (AP): Oil prices fell more than 5% and world shares gained on Wednesday over the possibility of a de-escalation of the Iran war and negotiations between the United States and Iran. U.S. futures were up 0.9%.

In early European trading, Britain's FTSE 100 rose 1% to 10,072.60. France's CAC 40 was up 1.4% to 7,855.31, while Germany's DAX was 1.6% higher at 22,989.80.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 was up 2.9% to 53,749.62. South Korea's Kospi gained 1.6% to 5,642.21.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 1.1% to 25,335.95, while the Shanghai Composite index was 1.3% higher at 3,931.84. Labubu doll maker Pop Mart's Hong Kong-listed shares fell 22.5%, after it announced annual revenue for last year that was largely in line with analysts' estimates.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 climbed 1.9%. Taiwan's Taix was up 2.5%.

U.S. President Donald Trump's claims of progress being made from talks with Iran this week

and his postponement on Monday of a deadline to "obliterate" Iran's power plants over the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz have also fueled optimism that an end to the Iran war could come soon.

Trump's administration has offered a 15-point ceasefire plan to Iran, but an Iranian military spokesperson mocked the U.S.' attempt at a ceasefire deal Wednesday.

With the Strait of Hormuz being a key waterway for crude oil and liquefied natural gas transport, oil and gas prices have spiked and fluctuated in recent days.

Oil prices fell again on growing hopes for a de-escalation. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 5.2% to \$94.97 per barrel. It was around \$104 on Tuesday.

Benchmark U.S. crude was down 5.3% early Wednesday to \$87.44 a barrel.

While Iran has denied negotiations were taking place, and attacks in the Middle East continued, Pakistan has offered to host talks between Washington and Tehran. And as Trump raised optimism of a de-escalation of the war, at least 1,000

more American troops from the 82nd Airborne Division are said to be deployed to the Middle East in the coming days.

On Tuesday, U.S. stocks closed lower. The S&P 500 lost 0.4% to 6,556.37. The Dow Jones Industrial Average edged down 0.2% to 46,124.06, while the Nasdaq composite was 0.8% lower to 21,761.89.

Shares of Estee Lauder sank more than 9%, following confirmation that the U.S.-listed company is in merger talks with Spanish beauty and perfume group Puig.

In other dealings early Wednesday, gold prices resumed its rise after falling earlier. It dropped in part because of rising U.S. Treasury yields over dimming expectations of a Federal Reserve rate cut after the spike in oil prices threatened to fuel global inflation.

The price of gold was up 3.6% early Wednesday to \$4,561.90 per ounce. It was above \$5,000 earlier this month.

The U.S. dollar was at 158.84 Japanese yen, up from 158.69. The euro was trading at 1.1602, down from \$1.1608.

Oil shock boosts BYD, NEV demand in Asia

BEIJING, March 25, (Xinhua): The sting of expensive petroleum is doing what years of policymakers struggled to achieve: pushing drivers toward electric cars. In countries like the Philippines and Australia, showrooms selling Chinese new energy vehicles (NEVs) are reporting a noticeable rise in curious walk-ins, test drives and conversion to orders as fuel prices soar.

The recent surge in the interest in NEVs comes as geopolitical tensions have sent shockwaves through global energy markets, with Brent crude at one point jumping nearly 50 percent since March.

As high oil prices squeeze household budgets and strengthen the economic case for EVs, Chinese manufacturers, backed by years of strategic and industrial foresight that have given them a global edge, are drawing increasing attention from consumers.

Leading Chinese carmaker BYD's showrooms are bustling across Asia after the oil shock, Bloomberg reported, citing higher demand at new energy car dealerships in cities like Manila.

Over the past two weeks, sales of NEVs by automakers including BYD and GAC Group had risen notably in Australia, with foot traffic at many offline showrooms increasing by more than 30 percent compared with the same period last month, business news network Yicai reported on Monday.

"Oil is the Achilles' heel of the global economy ... Oil volatility means electric vehicles are a common-sense choice for countries wishing to insulate themselves from future shocks," said Daan Walter, a principal at Ember, a think tank on the future of energy.

The shift is already evident in the data. An Ember analysis shows that scaling electrotech -- EVs, renewables and heat pumps -- to replace imported fossil fuels in road transport, heating and power, would enable importers to cut their fossil fuel imports by 70 percent, underscoring the growing role of electrification in cushioning energy shocks.

The latest global turn toward NEVs is playing to the long-term structural strengths of China's automotive industry. While soaring oil prices have undoubtedly acted as a recent "accelerant," the growth in Chinese NEV exports suggests a competitive foundation that was solidified long before the current energy volatility.

Even before the oil shock began, China's overseas shipments of electric cars and plug-in gas-electric hybrids in the first two months of 2026 had already more than doubled from a year

ago, according to data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

Chinese exports of NEVs were already on a strong growth trajectory before the latest oil crisis. Rising fuel prices are acting more as a short-term catalyst than a structural driver, according to Sun Xiaohong, secretary-general of the automotive internationalization committee of the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products.

After years of growth, China's NEV industry has entered a phase of scale, maturity and expanding global reach. Backed by a fully integrated supply chain spanning batteries, components and vehicle assembly, Chinese manufacturers have achieved a combination of cost competitiveness and rapid innovation.

In 2025, domestic production and sales of NEVs both exceeded 16 million units, with NEVs accounting for over 50 percent of new car sales in the domestic market. By the end of February 2026, the total number of NEV charging points reached 21.01 million in the country, up 47.8 percent year on year.

But in many regions elsewhere in the world, the rollout of NEVs remains at an early stage, with infrastructure lagging behind demand. Public charging networks are often sparse, charger density remains low, and standards are fragmented. For many consumers, especially outside major cities, "range anxiety" remains a real concern, while long charging times and inconsistent charging experiences continue to weigh on adoption, explained Lang Xuehong, deputy secretary-general of the China Automobile Dealers Association.

While the current surge in demand across Asia-Pacific markets reflects heightened cost sensitivity among consumers, the long-term growth trajectory of Chinese NEVs overseas remains underpinned by deeper advantages, including cost competitiveness, a fully integrated supply chain, technological progress, and the ability to adapt to diverse energy and infrastructure conditions across global markets, according to analysts.

Sustained global demand for Chinese NEVs will depend less on short-term tailwinds but more on a shift in strategy, which involves moving beyond simple vehicle exports toward exporting entire industrial ecosystems, bringing battery and component suppliers overseas, building local supply chains, and establishing localized production, Lang said.

'Businesses remember 2022, may pass costs rapidly'

European Central Bank chief flags faster inflation response to Iran war oil spike

FRANKFURT, March 25, (AP): The head of the European Central Bank says that businesses may be quicker to raise prices in response to the oil shock from the Iran war due to bitter memories of the inflation spike after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

If oil and gas prices continue to rise, "the response of firms and workers may be faster than last time," ECB President Christine Lagarde said Wednesday in the text of a speech at a conference in Frankfurt, Germany.

"We have a more recent memory of high inflation, which could affect how quickly costs are passed on and compensation is sought," Lagarde said.

Even though the ECB brought the 2022 inflation spike under control with higher interest rates, "that experience has left a mark," she said. "An entire generation has now lived through its first episode

of high inflation - and it may not be as slow to react a second time."

Inflation in the countries that use the euro currency peaked at 10.6% in October 2022 after the invasion led to the cutoff of most Russian natural gas supplies and sent oil prices temporarily higher. Inflation in February was 1.9%, according to EU statistics agency Eurostat.

Lagarde pointed out that monetary policy cannot lower oil prices, and that central banks typically look past transitory energy spikes without raising interest rates. Raising rates only makes sense if higher energy prices start being built into prices for other goods and into workers' wages, producing a price spiral.

"If the energy shock is seen to be limited in size and short-lived, the classical prescription of looking through should apply," she said, because by the time rate hikes take effect with a lag of months,

the inflationary spike is already gone.

Central banks typically raise rates to fight inflation. That cools price increases by raising borrowing costs for things like house mortgages or building new production facilities.

She said there were reasons to think the current jump in oil prices might be less inflationary than feared, because the energy price spike is, so far, smaller than the one Europe experienced in 2021-2022.

But if inflation appears to be heading persistently above the ECB's 2% target, "the response must be appropriately forceful or persistent."

Lagarde said it was "too early to say where in this spectrum we will need to be. ... We will monitor developments closely and set monetary policy as appropriate."

The ECB left its key interest rate unchanged at 2% at its last policy meeting March 19.

OpenAI foundation pledges \$1b in grants to ensure AI 'benefits all of humanity'

OpenAI Foundation, the nonprofit that controls the artificial intelligence company OpenAI and its flagship product ChatGPT, pledged Tuesday to grant out \$1 billion over the next year and to build up its capacity as a philanthropic funder.

The pledge represents a major development in OpenAI's philanthropic activities and offers insight into how the company, which started as a nonprofit, plans to carry out its charitable mission to develop AI to benefit "all of humanity."

"We aim to enable the use of AI to find solutions to humanity's hardest problems, transform what people are capable of, and deliver real benefits in people's lives - while working hard with partners to be ready for new challenges, and to help make society resilient, as AI advances," OpenAI board chair Bret Taylor said in a statement Tuesday.

The new funding will support life science and health research and will seek to mitigate some of the impacts of AI technologies on jobs, the economy and mental health, especially of children, the nonprofit said. It follows a commitment to spend \$25 billion to support similar causes that OpenAI Foundation made in October, though without providing a time frame.

OpenAI Foundation will also recruit a new executive director to oversee its grantmaking, it said.

OpenAI started as a nonprofit research lab in 2015 but has sought to escape that structure over the past several years as it built out its commercial technologies like ChatGPT and its for-profit subsidiary, which is now one of the most highly valued startups in the world.

In October, OpenAI finalized an agreement with regulators that left

the nonprofit's board in charge of its for-profit business but eased the way for investors and the company to profit from its technologies. The deal also clarified the nonprofit's ownership stake in the company, which OpenAI said at the time was valued at \$130 billion, making it one of the best-resourced nonprofits in the country.

Since the incorporation of its for-profit business in 2019, OpenAI's nonprofit significantly scaled back its activities, going from listing \$51 million in expenses in 2018 to \$3.3 million the following year, according to its public tax filings. In 2024, the most recent year that the nonprofit reported its activities to the Internal Revenue Service, OpenAI's nonprofit received \$4,433 in contributions and granted out \$7.6 million.

Brian Mittendorf, a professor of accounting and public affairs at The Ohio State University who specializes in nonprofits, cautioned that the tax forms were not well suited to capture OpenAI's activities and the extent to which they were focused on achieving its charitable mission.

"People tend to focus on the financial part of that," said Mittendorf in an email. "Is the immense value creation being used to further a charitable objective? But an equally important piece is whether the product they are developing is serving humanity as they envisioned."

It's a question that Elon Musk, an early financial backer of OpenAI, has also raised. Musk sued the company, claiming that CEO Sam Altman and others betrayed the nonprofit's mission in pursuit of profit in a case that will go to trial in California.

In 2025, OpenAI made an effort to revitalize the nonprofit. It con-

vened a temporary nonprofit advisory board to offer it nonbinding guidance about how to structure its philanthropic activities while it continued to negotiate with regulators and its investors about the extent to which the nonprofit board would remain in charge of its business.

The advisory board, which included labor leader Dolores Huerta, eventually recommended that OpenAI significantly increase the resources it provided to its nonprofit and to consult extensively with communities about how AI is impacting them as it shapes its grant making.

The nonprofit announced \$40.5 million in grants to community-based nonprofits in December to support AI literacy, strengthen civic life and foster economic opportunity.

OpenAI's new vision for its charitable grantmaking comes at the same time that communities around the country worry about data centers increasing electricity costs, lawsuits accuse AI chatbots of exacerbating mental health crises, and companies and advocates question the fitness of new AI technologies to be used in war.

In addition to hiring a new director, OpenAI Foundation said Wojciech Zaremba, one of a handful of OpenAI co-founders still working for the company, will become the foundation's head of AI resilience, which is focused on the "new challenges that inevitably arise from more capable AI."

Additionally, the nonprofit has brought on Jacob Trefethen to lead its life sciences and health grantmaking. Trefethen led a similar portfolio at the philanthropic organization, Coefficient Giving, which is a major funder of the effective altruism community that has sometimes clashed with OpenAI's vision for artificial intelligence. (AP)

'Engines of Demolition' blends hard rock and soulful ballads

Black Label Society honors Ozzy on riff-filled new album

LOS ANGELES, March 25, (AP) — Black Label Society immediately steps on the gas on "Engines of Demolition" and delivers the hard-rocking riffs, bluesy grooves and soulful ballads that have consistently marked the heavy metal outfit fronted by Zakk Wylde for nearly 30 years.

But the brakes fully come on - and maybe even a few tears - with a highly anticipated tribute to the late Ozzy Osbourne, Wylde's longtime buddy and bandmate, on BLS' 12th studio album, out on Friday.

"Ozzy's Song," the 13th track, starts with a somber piano and gentle acoustic guitar - both played by Wylde - as Black Label Society's founder bares all in a heart-wrenching, but appropriately rock-filled homage to Osbourne, the heavy metal superstar who died last July at 76.

"The skies may cry/But I'll be holding on, holding on," Wylde sings softly without mentioning Osbourne by name,

making it relatable to anyone who has experienced loss. "When all is said and done/I couldn't ask for more."

Midway through, Wylde rips into an electric solo, an emotional compilation of his work over parts of nearly four decades with Osbourne's solo band.

While it might be the most-talked about track on BLS' first album since 2021's "Doom Crew Inc.," it's hardly the only one that shines.

"Engines of Demolition" includes Dario Lorina (guitar), John DeServio (bass) and Jeff Fabb (drums). Wylde spent the last four years writing and recording in between stints playing on Pantera's celebration tours, which honored the metal band's history with its surviving members.

Wylde released four singles over the last 18 months as album appetizers. "The Gallows" is dark and brooding. "Lord Humungus," a nod to the villain in the 1981 film "Mad Max

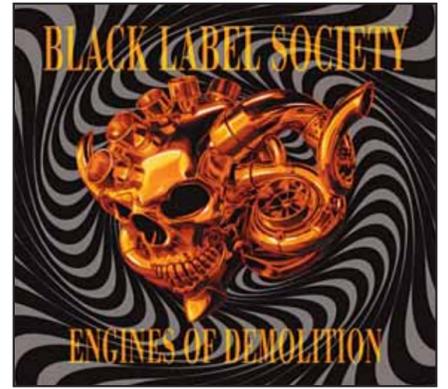
2: The Road Warrior," is an anthemic foot-tapper. Wylde's strong vocals highlight the groove-laced "Broken and Blind."

"Name in Blood," the latest single, is the tone-setting opening track with a signature solo by Wylde and a bold, declarative chorus.

"I give you all I've got," he sings. "I give you my name in blood."

There are few weak spots, even with "Better Days & Wiser Times" and "Back to Me" and their lighter, country-tinged flavors - which appear throughout Black Label Society's catalog.

Chugging guitars make "Gatherer of Souls" instantly catchy. "Above & Below" has haunting melodies and an angelic chorus, almost as if the battle of good and evil plays out on your speakers.



This cover image released by MNRK Records shows 'Engines of Demolition' by Black Label Society. (AP)

Film

Film explores threats and opportunities of AI

Group of Oscar winners set out to make the definitive AI docu

LOS ANGELES, March 25, (AP) — The idea to make the "definitive" AI documentary was, admittedly, ambitious. But the timeline was downright absurd.

The filmmaking teams behind "Everything Everywhere All at Once" and "Navalny" started talking about a collaboration on the Oscars circuit, thinking perhaps they could finish something in a year. In reality, it would take "The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocalypsimist" almost three years for it to reach audiences. The film, co-directed by Daniel Roher and Charlie Tyrell, and co-produced by Daniel Kwan, attempts to zoom out from the daily headlines to give audiences a more evergreen glimpse of what is at stake for humanity as artificial intelligence rapidly evolves.

"The film is a journey of understanding that casts me as sort of a proxy for everyone, as a pea-brain regular person who's trying to understand what the (expletive) is going on in the world," Roher told The Associated Press earlier this year in an interview alongside Tyrell.

Their questions were straightforward: What is it? Why is it good? Why is it bad? And what do we need to know?

"And that simple task," Roher said, "was (expletive) impossible. It was like making a film about outer space or China or the Bible. Like, fit that into 90 minutes."

"Impossible" was a sentiment shared by many who worked on the film, which opens in theaters Friday. Producer Diane Becker said it was the most challenging movie she's ever made, a Sisyphean task where, "literally the minute we started making it, it was out of date."

But they were emboldened by the urgency of the subject and the idea that what they were making might be not just a primer about an elusive subject, but a necessary, nonpartisan call to action. "The AI Doc" is about something bigger than AI Val Kilmer movies. For Center for Humane Technology co-founder Tristan Harris, it's about fighting against an "antihuman future."

"The only thing that would give humanity a shot for not ending in a dystopian or antihuman future would be for us to have collective clarity that we are heading towards that future," Harris said. "My hope is that this film is kind of like 'An Inconvenient Truth' or 'The Social Dilemma' for AI."

Expertise

Harris is just one of many voices in the film alongside the likes of OpenAI's Sam Altman, Anthropic's Daniela and Dario Amodei and Google DeepMind's Demis Hassabis. In the end, more than 40 people encompassing a wide range of views and levels of expertise were interviewed on camera, resulting in some 3,300 pages of transcripts.

And it was a long journey to get those voices. Three weeks after the 2023 Oscar wins, Ted Tremper, a veteran producer who has worked on "The Daily Show," sent over 80 emails asking leaders in the industry to talk. He got six responses. But through time, trust and many off-the-record conversations, those six people helped create a foundation that would eventually lead them to the CEOs. Tremper said the process was not unlike John Nash's paper-and-red-string-covered office in "A Beautiful Mind."

"It turns out, it takes a lot of humans

to talk about AI," Becker added.

And those are just the experts in front of the camera. Behind the scenes, there was also a big operation of people synthesizing the information they were receiving and figuring out a way to translate it cinematically. Tyrell said they decided on an anti-digital visual approach, using handmade things - from Roher's notebook, where he is always drawing - to stop-motion animation.

If you're looking for a film that will convince or reassure you that artificial intelligence is all good or all bad, this is not it. You'll hear bleak stories about generative AI blackmailing its programmers and doomsday scenarios of war and mass unemployment. You'll also hear rose-colored predictions of a utopian future of medical advancements, creativity and freedom, and many things in between - like how there is more regulation over making a sandwich in New York than there is over AI and the development arms race.

The subtitle "or how I became" implies there will be a kind of tidy conclusion by the end of the film. Then you get to that pesky "apocalypsimist," which has not yet been officially recognized by the AP Stylebook or defined by Merriam-Webster. But for Roher, it's the key to the film.

Optimist

"I am not an optimist and I do not believe this will be the apocalypse. I believe it is both at the same time and that's critical," Roher said. "What I take solace in is the idea that we still have agency over steering this thing towards the good and away from the bad. If we can walk this narrow path between the two and be very thoughtful and discerning, I think it will be OK."

The film, Tremper said, assumes "zero knowledge of the subject matter" from audiences going into it. His 78-year-old dad, "who's never owned a laptop in his life, watched it and understood it," he said.

And the producers hope that people will make the choice to see it in a theater, or at least with other people.

"It is entertaining in a theater. It's cinematic in its own way. It's not just 40 talking heads. You have an emotional ride with it," Becker said. "And the best part about it is, the lights go up and you want to have conversation."

Harris also wants people to see the movie "with your friends, with your church group, with your business." But he has no financial stake in whether it succeeds or fails: He just wants people to have the knowledge.

"I honestly think if 99% of people on the planet were just to understand the basics of, like, what's going on here, they would say, 'That doesn't sound good,'" Harris said.

"The film is meant to be a catalyst for a broader conversation, and for a movement that's the size of humanity," Harris added. "This one actually is a risk that we all face in the next single-digit number of years. It's unlike climate change, it's unlike specific political topics. This literally affects everyone, your well-being, your ability to put food on the table, your job, your livelihood, and I think everyone can get behind that."



This image released by Amazon MGM Studios shows Ryan Gosling in a scene from 'Project Hail Mary.' (AP)

'Filmmakers must deliver what AI cannot'

'Project Hail Mary' adds to a winning streak of original films

NEW YORK, March 25, (AP) — Franchise movies have been the dominant currency in Hollywood for years, but, lately, the upside of originality has been hard to miss.

A week after "One Battle After Another," "Sinners" and "KPop Demon Hunters" all triumphed at the Academy Awards, Phil Lord and Chris Miller's "Project Hail Mary" notched the biggest non-franchise opening weekend since "Oppenheimer." In the first three months of 2026, the two biggest hits in theaters are it and the Pixar original "Hoppers."

All of these successes came at considerable expense. "Project Hail Mary," based on the Andy Weir bestseller, cost close to \$200 million to make. But its \$80.5 million debut vindicated Amazon MGM's big bet, and gave the studio its largest box-office hit yet.

"They made a tremendous investment and it's going to pay off," Lord said in an interview alongside Miller last week. "How exciting to reward the people that took a shot." "Project Hail Mary," despite its title, isn't anyone's idea of a long shot. It stars one of the most widely liked actors in Ryan Gosling. Its source material, Weir's novel, is beloved. And it trades on much of the same science-first sci-fi appeal of 2015's best picture-nominated "The Martian," from an earlier book by Weir. Lord and Miller, the filmmakers of the "Spider-Verse" movies and "The Lego Movie," have a long track record of success with both audiences and critics.

But the recent run for originality - at the Oscars and the multiplex - suggests audiences may be more eager for something different from the same old. At the least, the potentially cascading rewards of an original hit are freshly apparent at a time when a lot of big bets - like the \$130 million-plus that Paul Thomas Anderson's best picture winner "One Battle After Another" cost Warner Bros. to make - have paid off so massively.

Experience

"People go to the movies to see a new experience," Miller said. "They don't go to see a thing they've already seen. Originality has value, especially as AI gets into the picture. The value that we can bring as filmmakers is to bring something that can't be AI because it hasn't been thought of before."

"So it's good business." Franchises have hardly been displaced. They will, no doubt, largely control the box office for the rest of year, beginning with Universal's "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie" next month, followed by anticipated releases like "Toy Story 5," "Avengers: Doomsday" and "Dune: Part Three." Last week, the 11th "Spider-Man" movie this century, Sony Pictures' "Spider-Man: Brand New Day," set a new trailer record with 718.6 million views in its first 24 hours.

So, yes, franchises still very much rule the day. But waves upon waves of sequels, reboots and remakes have made the few big-budget originals that manage to get made all the more singular.

"If we don't continue to do originals, we're going to run out of stuff," Pete Docter, Pixar chief creative officer, earlier told The Los Angeles Times.

Since its founding, Pixar has clung to a belief that original movies are part of its mission, though that quest has grown more arduous in recent years. During the pandemic, "Soul," "Luca" and "Turning Red" were diverted to Disney+. "Elemental" seemed like a disappointment at first but it just needed time to catch hold, eventually collecting \$496 million.

"Hoppers," directed by Daniel Chong, is hoping to follow that trajectory. So far, in three weeks of release, it's grossed \$242.6 million worldwide for The Walt Disney Co. - good business, to be sure, but a far cry from the pace of the 2024

blockbuster sequel "Inside Out 2." It grossed \$1.7 billion. Such economics are tough for original movies to compete with, plus non-franchise films take more effort, and money, to market. For a \$200 million movie, marketing costs can come to nearly rival production budgets.

Though some of Timothée Chalamet's showmanship, complete with a blimp and a trip to the Sphere, might have cost him an Oscar, his promotional efforts were surely necessary to help lift "Marty Supreme," A24's most expensive movie ever - with a budget of \$70 million - to \$179.3 million in ticket sales.

An ambitious marketing campaign also accompanied "Project Hail Mary." Gosling was everywhere from hosting "Saturday Night Live" to doing the "La La Land" dance with his alien co-star, Rocky. But the movie always rested on the appeal of the comic sensibilities of its filmmakers, Weir's book and Gosling.

"We're all united by the fact that we've spent the last two decades having people ask us: What genre is this?" says Drew Goddard, who scripted both "The Martian" and "Project Hail Mary." "We're constantly hard to classify because we love existing in those strange places. We like drama, we like comedy. We like heartbreak, we like terror. We like silliness."

Moviemaking

In matching broad-appeal material with the right filmmakers and stars, "Project Hail Mary" relied on not just old-school studio moviemaking but the sometimes overlooked lessons of "Barbenheimer." Both Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer" and Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" showed what can happen when the right filmmakers are given free rein on a big canvas. There is a definite downside, though. Warner Bros. "The Bride!" by Maggie Gyllenhaal seemed like a compelling, filmmaker-driven concept but its losses might approach \$100 million.

Aside from having Gosling in common, "Project Hail Mary" also shared the producer of "Barbie" in Amy Pascal. Before the studio's acquisition by Amazon, it was greenlit by then-MGM chief Mike De Luca and Pam Abdy. They later moved on to Warner Bros., where they made both "One Battle After Another" and Ryan Coogler's much-celebrated "Sinners" (\$370 million in ticket sales against a budget of \$90 million).

As much as Amazon's \$8.5 billion purchase of MGM was motivated by capturing some of the richest IP in movies, James Bond, it's also true that studios can establish themselves with homegrown hits. The opening for "Project Hail Mary" was Amazon MGM's biggest ever.

In fact, three of the biggest original hits of the past year have come from streaming companies: Apple with "F1," Netflix with "KPop Demon Hunters" and Amazon with "Project Hail Mary." For these studios, box-office performance is only part of the win; Netflix didn't even publicly record the chart-topping theatrical weekend of "KPop Demon Hunters."

These companies are sometimes willing to take greater risks because breaking even in theatrical isn't the end-all-be-all goal. Driving attention to their streaming platforms is just as vital. "KPop" was developed and produced by Sony Pictures, but, sensing the potentially perilous road to opening it theatrically, the company sold it to Netflix. There, it became the streamer's most-watched movie ever.

"It shouldn't be lost on anyone that three of the biggest original hits over the past year have come from the biggest streamers: Netflix, Amazon and Apple," says Paul Dergarabedian, head of marketplace trends for Comscore. "What the streamers are finding is that they can parlay their small-screen successes into the big screen, and vice versa."



This image released by Focus Features shows a scene from 'The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocalypsimist.' (Focus Features via AP)



This image released by Focus Features shows co-director Daniel Roher in a scene from 'The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocalypsimist.' (AP)

'Woman charged with attempted murder'

Rihanna shooting suspect to appear in court

LOS ANGELES, March 25, (AP) — A woman charged with trying to murder Rihanna and more than a dozen other felonies is set to appear in court to enter a plea Wednesday.

Prosecutors allege the singing superstar, her hip-hop star partner A\$AP Rocky, their three young children and many others were at their home in the Beverly Hills area when Iyanna Lisette Ortiz, 35, of Orlando, Florida, opened fire on the property on March 8.

Ortiz is charged with 10 counts of assault with a semiautomatic firearm and three counts of shooting at an occupied vehicle or dwelling.

At her first appearance in Los Angeles Superior Court on March 11, Ortiz's lawyer entered a plea of not guilty on her behalf, but then withdrew it in favor of postponing the arraignment.

Public records show Ortiz has been



Rihanna arrives at the premiere of "Smurfs" on July 13, 2025, at Paramount Studios in Los Angeles. (AP)

a licensed speech pathologist for more than a decade. Now jailed on \$1.8 million bail, she could get life in prison if

convicted on all charges.

The Public Defender's Office said only that "we will work to ensure that our client receives the full protections guaranteed under the Constitution."

District Attorney Nathan Hochman said when Ortiz was charged that Rihanna and Rocky were together in an Airstream trailer at the time of the shooting, while her mother, their children and staffers were in the main house.

The three counts of firing at a dwelling were for Rihanna's house, her trailer, and a neighbor's house, prosecutors said. The 10 assault counts were for Rihanna and family, two staffers and two people in the neighboring house.

Hochman would not say where any of the bullets landed, discuss a motive or describe any connection between Ortiz and Rihanna, saying all were under investigation.

Variety

WASHINGTON: The US Defense Department will remove media offices from the Pentagon after a federal judge sided with The New York Times in a lawsuit challenging limits on reporters' access to the building, a department official announced Monday.

An area of the Pentagon known as "Correspondents' Corridor" that reporters have used for decades to cover the US military will close immediately, department spokesperson Sean Parnell said. Journalists will eventually be able to work from an "annex"

outside the building, which he said "will be available when ready." He offered no detail about how long that will take.

The Pentagon Press Association said the announcement "is a clear violation of the letter and spirit of last week's ruling." (AP)

MONTGOMERY, Ala.: Students at the University of Alabama filed a federal lawsuit Monday challenging the suspension of two student-run magazines - one primarily focused on Black students and another on women's issues. The lawsuit accuses university of-

ficials of engaging in censorship and viewpoint-based discrimination.

University officials in December informed the editors of the magazines Nineteen Fifty-Six and Alice that they were immediately stopping the magazines. A university official told editors that the problem was that the magazines had a perceived target audience and cited guidance from President Donald Trump's administration regarding diversity, equity and inclusion programs on college campuses, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit accuses university officials of violating the First Amendment rights of students and asks for the magazines to be reinstated. (AP)



First lady Melania Trump smiles at the podium during a 'Fostering the Future Together Global Coalition Summit,' at the State Department, Tuesday, March 24, in Washington. (AP)

'Unite for children's progress'

First lady hosts world officials to discuss education and tech

WASHINGTON, March 25. (AP): Melania Trump on Tuesday called on nations to work together to improve access to education and technology for children around the world, delivering her plea as she addressed a gathering of her counterparts from more than 40 countries.

The first lady's Fostering the Future Together initiative, which she announced last year, and an inaugural two-day summit that she opened Tuesday are examples of how Melania Trump has expanded her portfolio to embrace global issues.

"As people we dream. As leaders we progress. As nations we will build," she said in opening remarks. "Beginning today, let's accelerate our new global alliance, this bond, to positively impact the progress of our children."

She called on participants to host regional meetings, conduct research studies, begin new partnerships and collaborate with another member country "to cultivate the skills young people need to be successful in this rapidly evolving world."

She said the goal of empowering children will be achieved by creating innovative programs, advocating for supportive education policies, sponsoring tech-focused legislation and building strong public-private partnerships.

Tech firms face scrutiny

Jury rules Meta harms children, fines \$375m

SAN FRANCISCO, March 25. (AP): The first jury verdict in a series of social media child safety trials this year is in - and it's not looking good for Meta. A jury in New Mexico found on Tuesday that the social media giant's platforms are harmful to children's mental health and imposed a \$375 million penalty.

While the fine is a tiny fraction of Meta's \$201 billion revenue in 2025, the verdict illustrates a growing shift in the public's perception of social media companies and their responsibilities in keeping young people safe on their platforms.

For years, social media companies have disputed allegations that they harm children's mental health through deliberate design choices that addict kids to their platforms and fail to protect them from sexual predators and dangerous content. This year, several state and federal court cases are heading to trial, and while the details may vary, they all seek to hold companies responsible for what happens on their platforms.

The lawsuits have come from school districts, local, state and the federal government as well as thousands of families. The courtroom showdowns are the culmination of years of scrutiny of the platforms over child safety, and whether deliberate design choices make them addictive and serve up content that leads to depression, eating disorders or suicide.

The outcomes could challenge the companies' First Amendment shield and Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which protects tech companies from liability for material posted on their platforms. They could also be costly in the form of legal fees and settlements. And they could force the companies to change how they operate, potentially losing users and advertising dollars.

Here's a look at the major social media harms cases in the United States.

A team led by New Mexico Attorney

General Raúl Torrez, who sued Meta in 2023, built their case by posing as children on social media, then documenting sexual solicitations they received as well as Meta's response.

Torrez wants Meta to implement more effective age verification and do more to remove bad actors from its platforms.

On Tuesday, a jury found Meta to be in violation of state consumer protection law. It found thousands of violations, each counting separately toward a penalty of \$375 million.

The landmark decision came after a nearly seven-week trial. Jurors sided with state prosecutors who argued that Meta - which owns Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp - prioritized profits over safety. The jury determined Meta violated parts of the state's Unfair Practices Act on accusations the company hid what it knew about about the dangers of child sexual exploitation on its platforms and impacts on child mental health.

The jury agreed with allegations that Meta made false or misleading statements and also agreed that Meta engaged in "unconscionable" trade practices that unfairly took advantage of the vulnerabilities of and inexperience of children.

Meta said it disagrees with the verdict and will appeal.

"We work hard to keep people safe on our platforms and are clear about the challenges of identifying and removing bad actors or harmful content. We will continue to defend ourselves vigorously, and we remain confident in our record of protecting teens online," the company said in a statement.

The trial kicked off in early February. In his opening statement, prosecuting attorney Donald Migliori said Meta has misrepresented the safety of its platforms, choosing to engineer its algorithms to keep young people online while knowing that children are at risk of sexual exploitation.

'Circle of Life' allegedly misrepresented

'Lion King' iconic chant composer sues comedian

LOS ANGELES, March 25. (AP): A Grammy-award winning South African composer who wrote and performed the iconic opening chant in "Circle of Life" for Disney's "The Lion King" movies is suing a comedian for allegedly damaging his reputation by intentionally misrepresenting the song's meaning on a podcast and in his stand-up routine.

Lebohlang Morake's lawsuit accuses Zimbabwean comedian Learnmore Mwanenyeka, known as Learnmore Jonasi, of intentionally mistranslating the chant, which launches the 1994 Disney movie and is central to staged versions as well as Disney's 2019 remake.

The dispute, which has gone viral as the two men challenge each other on social media, stems from statements Jonasi made in his stand-up routines and in a recent podcast interview, where he translated the song's lyrics from Zulu and Xhosa, two of South Africa's 12 national languages.

The lawsuit was filed this month in federal court in Los Angeles, where Morake, who performs as Lebo M, lives and where Jonasi recently performed. It accuses Jonasi of intentionally mocking "the chant's cultural significance with exaggerated imitations."

Disney's official translation of the opening phrase "Nants'ingonyama bagithi Baba" is "All hail the king, we all bow in the presence of the king."

"Hay! baba, sizongoba," the chant continues. It translates to "Through you we will emerge victoriously," according to Morake.

In the episode of One54 cited in the lawsuit, the podcast's Nigerian hosts initially sing the chant with incoherent and incorrect words. Jonasi corrects them, and says "That's not how you sing it, don't mess up our language like that."

Jonasi then sings the correct lyrics in Zulu. When asked, he says they translate to: "Look, there's a lion. Oh my god." The hosts burst out laughing, saying that they had previously thought the chant was something more "beautiful and majestic."

"Circle of Life," with music by Elton John and English-language lyrics by Tim Rice, came up in the broader context of Jonasi's critique of "The Lion King" franchise as profiting off of simplistic narratives about the African continent for non-African audiences.

"The lions had American accents in Africa, and then you had the monkey with an accent," Jonasi said, and they went on to critique the "Black Panther" movies and other renderings of Africa in popular American culture.

Morake's lawyers acknowledged in the complaint that "ingonyama" can literally translate to "lion," but say it's used in the song as a "royal metaphor" that

invokes kingship, and that Jonasi intentionally misrepresented "an African vocal proclamation grounded in South African tradition."

The lawsuit says Jonasi "received a standing ovation" for a similar joke he made about the song during a March 12 stand-up performance in Los Angeles. Such viral statements, it says, are interfering with Morake's business relationships with Disney and his income from royalties, causing more than \$20 million in actual damages. The lawsuit also seeks \$7 million in punitive damages.

Disney didn't respond to an emailed request for comment on Monday night.

The complaint also argues that Jonasi presented his translation "as authoritative fact, not comedy" so it shouldn't get the First Amendment protections afforded to parody and satire that make fun of other artistic works.

Jonasi doesn't have an attorney publicly listed for the case, and a representative didn't respond to an emailed request for comment on Monday night, but the comedian offered some thoughts in a video posted last week as he continues his U.S. tour.

Jonasi said he's a "big fan" of Morake's work and loves the song. When he learned that Morake was upset, the comedian said, he wanted to create a video with Morake explaining the song's deeper meaning.

Lifestyle



People enjoy a picnic among the blooming peach trees at an event to encourage the public to visit the blossoms near the city of Veria, northern Greece, on Sunday, March 22. (AP)

A pink veil across the fields

Thousands flock to Greece's peach blossoms

VERIA, Greece, March 25. (AP): Each spring, a pink veil unfolds across the plains of Greece's largest peach-producing region. The blossoming peach trees create a spectacular sight that attracts visitors every year, mostly from Greece but increasingly also from the rest of Europe.

"It's something that people must experience and see at least once in their lifetime, because it's a huge area," said Gianna Piliatidou, president of the Veria Tourism Club, based in the northern city of Veria.

The plain, which stretches for 170 square kilometers (about 65 square miles), turns completely pink, she said.

Over the past few years, the Veria Tourism Club has been organizing events in the blossoming peach orchards to mark the occasion: photography activities, cycling tours and the promotion of local farm-

ers' products.

"Every year we welcome spring with celebrations in the fields, inviting people to visit us and experience it," Piliatidou said.

Over two weekends, thousands of visitors wandered among the blooming peach trees around Veria, located 72 kilometers (45 miles) west of Greece's second largest city of Thessaloniki.

"I want the people in Holland and Belgium to know what amazing spots there still are besides all the places that people already know," said Wesley van Eijk, a blogger from the Netherlands who travels around Greece. "For example Veria. I mean more and more people get to know it, but you have to feel it and be here."

The events aim to promote the region and support farmers involved in peach production.

"For all of this to happen, it takes a lot of hard work - a lot of effort from us farmers," said Anastasios Chalkidis, president of the local farmers union. "We're happy that this beautiful event takes place, this great promotion for the wonderful product we have."

The events have been a boon to the region, with hotel workers saying they have visibly increased the number of visitors.

"I came all the way from Germany to this fabulous event to have a look at the peach blossom, which I absolutely adore," said traveler Andrea Lachnit. "You have to come because it's stunning and beautiful and heavenly. I have never seen anything like this before."

The peach trees in the Veria region blossom roughly between mid-March and mid-April.

Memoir to 'get into the reporting process in detail'

Woodward to 'lift the lid' on decades of reporting in 'Secrets'

NEW YORK, March 25. (AP): Bob Woodward's next book will be an inside account of how the bestselling author and award-winning journalist came to write so many inside accounts.

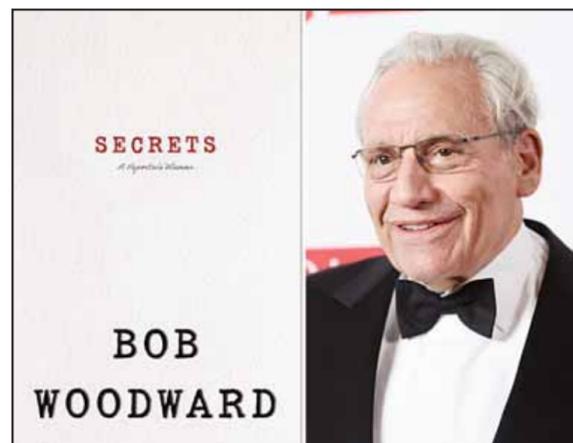
"Secrets: A Reporter's Memoir" will offer Woodward's take on some of the government leaders he has known and the news he has helped break, from Watergate to the inner workings of the Trump administration.

Simon & Schuster announced Tuesday that "Secrets" will come out Sept. 29.

"He has kept notes, transcripts and files of all of his interviews with the most important players in Washington," the publisher's announcement reads in part.

"For the first time in this one-of-a-kind reporting memoir, Woodward lifts the lid on his historic reporting relationships, some spanning several decades."

Woodward, who turns 83 this week, became famous in the 1970s when he and fellow Washington Post journalist Carl Bernstein helped break the Water-



This combination of photos shows the cover image for 'Secrets: A Reporter's Memoir' by Bob Woodward, left, and Woodward at the 2019 PEN America Literary Gala in New York on May 21, 2019. (AP)

gate scandal and other news about the Nixon administration that eventually led to President Richard Nixon's resignation.

Woodward also has written or co-written more than 20 bestsellers, including "All the President's Men," "Bush at War" and the Trump books "Rage" and "Fear."

Woodward told The Associated Press during a recent interview that he saw the new book as a chance to "get into the reporting process in detail," pointing out that he had hourslong conversations with presidents and other leaders. "I've had the benefit of not being in a hurry," he says.

Many of his books are chronicles of current administrations, timed to election years. But shortly after Trump's win in 2024, he told the AP that he was unsure whether he'd write about him again because he had already reported on Trump throughout his first term.

"I think we know who he is," Woodward said this week. "He's so transparent. He's out there talking, two or three hours a day."

Variety

KABUL: Archaeologists from Afghanistan's Ministry of Information and Culture have unearthed and formally registered 17 new artifacts from the Kushan period in northern Baghlan province, the ministry announced on Wednesday.

The discoveries were made during systematic surveys by a specialized archaeological team at the Kafar Qala site, located along Road 4 in Baghlan-Markazi district. The finds include five stone implements dating to the Kushan era, among them a hammering tool, a hand-mill stone head and several fragments of broken and semi-finished stone pieces, said the ministry.

The team also recovered 11 fragments of ceramic vessels from the same site and another from nearby Roads 8 and 9, bringing the total number of newly documented artifacts to 17, it added. (Xinhua)

LOS ANGELES: Rodolfo "Rudy" Acuña, a pioneering political activist, academic and historian who founded one of the first Chicano Studies programs offered by a major U.S. university, has died at 93.

Acuña's landmark 1972 textbook "Occupied America: A History of Chicanos" continues to be taught in schools.

He died Monday, said Carmen Ramos Chandler, a spokesperson for California State University, Northridge, where he taught for nearly half a century. Although Acuña described himself as a teacher, he

was also a prolific writer who authored more than a dozen books, several dozen academic papers and scores of essays and opinion pieces. (AP)

HANOI: Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh has approved a program to strengthen the protection of children online while improving their digital skills during the 2026-2030 period, the Vietnam News Agency reported Tuesday.

Authorities plan to build a comprehensive protection framework based on five pillars, including a stronger legal system, nationwide awareness campaigns, accessible cybersecurity and digital education solutions, enhanced inter-agency coordination and improved self-immunity among children through safety education, said the report. (Xinhua)



Zendaya attends 'The Drama' Premiere, Tuesday, March 24, in Paris, France. (AP)

Authorities call 'cancer vaccine' claim in drug ad false

FDA flags misleading claims for cancer drug by biotech billionaire

WASHINGTON, March 25, (AP): Federal health officials posted a warning Tuesday about misleading statements made by biotech billionaire Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong, who recently told podcast listeners that his company's bladder cancer drug may be able to treat, cure or even prevent other types of cancers.

The warning letter from the Food and Drug Administration takes issue with a TV advertisement and a separate podcast episode promoting Anktiva, the lead product of ImmunityBio Inc. The drugmaker is one of several biotech firms acquired by Soon-Shiong, who also owns the Los Angeles Times.

Company shares fell more than 21% in trading Tuesday to close at \$7.42 after the FDA letter posted online.

Anktiva was approved by the FDA in 2024 for patients with a hard-to-treat form of bladder cancer. ImmunityBio has been working to win FDA approval to expand the drug's use to a number of other conditions, including forms of lung and pancreatic cancer.



Pharmaceuticals billionaire Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong waves as he arrives in the lobby of Trump Tower in New York for a meeting with President-elect Donald Trump on Jan. 10, 2017. (AP)

Soon-Shiong's controversial statements came during a January episode of "The Sean Spicer Show" podcast titled "Is the FDA blocking life-saving cancer treatments?"

At one point during the interview, Soon-Shiong described his company's drug as "the most important molecule that could cure cancer." A few minutes later, Soon-Shiong - who is the company's executive chairman and chief medical officer - said that while the drug is approved for bladder cancer, "it actually can treat all cancers."

Later in the episode he said, "We have the therapy to prevent cancer if you were exposed to radiation, and that's Anktiva."

FDA regulators said the statements violate federal drug marketing rules because they "create a misleading impression" of the drug.

Regulators also noted that the podcast didn't contain any information about risks and side effects of the drug, which can include urinary tract infections, pain, chills and pyrexia. Under FDA law, drug promotions are required to

give a balanced view of a drug's risks and benefits.

The FDA warning, addressed to ImmunityBio CEO Richard Adcock, raises similar concerns with a TV advertisement for Anktiva. Both the ad and the podcast refer to the company's drug as a "cancer vaccine," which the FDA said is false.

The letter gives the company 15 days to correct the problems and respond to the agency in writing about its plans to comply. By Tuesday afternoon, a link to the podcast had been removed from ImmunityBio's website.

Sarah Singleton, spokesperson for Culver City, California-based ImmunityBio, said via email that the company takes the FDA's warning "very seriously," and plans to "work cooperatively with the agency to address the matters raised in the letter."

Under the Trump administration, the FDA has stepped up warnings against drugmakers as well as online pharmacies, including appearances by company executives on TV shows and podcasts.

Advance cancer detection

Blood test detects early cancers using 4 proteins

SYDNEY, March 25, (Xinhua): Researchers in Australia have developed a blood test that may help detect early-stage cancers by identifying four key proteins in tiny particles released by cells into the bloodstream.

The study, conducted by scientists at several Australian institutions, including the University of Queensland and the University of Melbourne, examined extracellular vesicles -- small bubble-like particles that carry proteins and other molecules between cells, according to a summary of the study published on the Australian Science Media Center website on Wednesday.

The researchers compared the proteins in these particles from healthy cells and cancer cells and found a pattern of four proteins linked to cancer. They used this information to develop a test to pick up the same four proteins in cancer samples, it said.

When they checked their test's performance on samples from patients with nine different types of cancer or from healthy people, they found the test could differentiate healthy samples from cancer samples with high accuracy, according to the study published in Cell Reports Medicine.

The test was also evaluated on 68 blood samples from patients suspected of having lung cancer, researchers said, adding it could distinguish between harmless lung changes and early-stage lung cancer, suggesting potential for population screening.

Separately, scientists have developed hair-thin sensors that detect multiple cancer biomarkers simultaneously, potentially revolutionizing the diagnosis and monitoring of diseases like cancer.

Researchers from Australia and Germany worked together to develop the tiny sensors using ultrafast 3D micro-printing technology, said a statement from Australia's Adelaide University on Monday.

The sensors target biomarkers and are printed onto optical fiber tips to measure several biomarkers simultaneously, including temperature and chemical changes, according to the study published in the journal Advanced Optical Materials.

"This breakthrough could lead to next-generation medical tools that track disease, guide treatment and monitor the body in real time," said Associate Professor Shahram Afshar, the project's lead researcher from Adelaide University's Institute for Photonics and Advanced Sensing.

The sensors work by detecting changes in the body brought on by cancer at a molecular level through light, delivering reliable disease detection in a minimally invasive way, enabling smarter healthcare, environmental monitoring and wearable tools, according to the study in collaboration with the University of Stuttgart in Germany.

"Molecules emit light when they come into contact with a by-product of cancer. The amount of light they emit depends on the concentration of the cancer cells. By inserting the sensors into tissue and measuring the amount of light emitted, we believe we can determine the presence of cancer," Afshar said.

Childhood obesity tied to organ growth, cancer threat

Study reveals how obesity raises cancer risk

LOS ANGELES, March 25, (AP): Scientists at City of Hope and TGen (part of City of Hope) are the first to explain a major mechanism for why gaining excess weight increases your risk of cancer. City of Hope is one of the largest and most advanced cancer research and treatment organizations in the United States, with its National Medical Center ranked among the nation's top cancer centers by US News & World Report.

The study, published recently in Cancer Research, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research, reveals a major driving force behind how obesity increases cancer risk across multiple organs. The findings emphasize the importance of maintaining a healthy weight from early childhood and propose a potentially more accurate way than body mass index (BMI) to predict the increase in cancer risk associated with obesity.

"People have long been told that obesity increases cancer risk, but they are rarely told why. Our study reveals that excess weight doesn't just affect metabolism or hormones -- it can physically enlarge organs, creating more opportunities for cancer to take hold. Understanding that process matters because it helps explain how everyday health choices can shape cancer risk years for even decades down the line," said senior author Cristian Tomasetti, Ph.D., director of City of Hope's Center for Cancer Prevention, Early Detection and Monitoring and professor in the Early Detection and Prevention Division at TGen.

In other words, as a person gains weight, their organs also grow in size by accumulating more cells to meet the higher energy needs of a bigger body. Having more cells boosts the odds of more DNA errors as cells divide, increasing the likelihood of



A subject's waist is measured during an obesity-prevention study in Chicago on Jan. 20, 2010. (AP)

cancer. To test this hypothesis, Tomasetti and his collaborators conducted a two-pronged study.

First, the team evaluated 747 adults whose weight in relationship to their height spanned the complete BMI spectrum, from underweight (18.5 BMI) all the way to severely obese (40-plus BMI). Using CT scans, the researchers measured the size of each adult's liver, kidneys and pancreas.

This study is the first to analyze the size of multiple organs in a large cohort of individuals across the full BMI spectrum.

The scientists discovered that the organs grew larger as body weight increased. For every 5-point increase in BMI, the liver grew by 12%, kidneys by 9% and the pancreas by 7%.

Next, the research team counted the cells in samples of kidney tissue taken from autopsies and reanalyzed biopsy data from living patients. The lab showed that more than 60% of

the kidneys' growth resulted from an increase in the number of cells in the organ, a process called hyperplasia. The rest was due to individual cells growing bigger, or hypertrophy.

The City of Hope and TGen finding corrects earlier theories that larger organ size in obese individuals resulted primarily from fatter cells. Rather, obesity mainly increases the number of cells at risk for copying errors, uncontrollable growth and potential malignancy.

This increase in organ size has harmful consequences. "Think of playing the lottery: The more tickets you buy, the greater your chances of winning," Dr. Tomasetti said. "Similarly, the more cells in an organ, the more mutations and the greater the risk of one cell going awry during division and becoming cancerous."

Overall, the study showed a strong link between organ size enlargement and cancer risk across all three organs, confirming the mathematical

predictions. The finding provides evidence for this as a major mechanism of tumorigenesis induced by obesity, in addition to factors like inflammation and hormonal imbalances.

This newly discovered effect of obesity can be large -- with organs even doubling in size.

"When an organ doubles in size, it is expected to roughly double its risk of developing cancer," said first author Sophie Pénisson, Ph.D., associate professor at TGen. She continues, "BMI is a poor proxy for telling us what the size of an organ is, as BMI doesn't distinguish between fat and lean tissue. Our work suggests that, at least for some organs, their dimensions may predict cancer risk better than BMI."

Noting the relationship between diet and cancer, the authors emphasized the importance of maintaining a healthy weight from a young age.

"Organs take time to grow, and it can take decades for cells to turn malignant," said Dr. Tomasetti. "Childhood obesity gives organ cells a longer runway to accumulate mutations and evolve into something worse."

Future studies will explore whether losing weight can reduce organ size and cancer risk, and the potential effect of GLP-1 drugs on lowering cancer risk through weight loss.

"This exciting research deepens our understanding of how obesity may lead to cancer and highlights the role of organ growth in this process, which is also relevant for many individuals with diabetes. It will be important to see if the new anti-obesity drugs can revert this process for cancer prevention," said Debbie C. Thurmond, Ph.D., director of the Arthur Riggs Diabetes & Metabolism Research Institute and Chan Soon-Shiong Shapiro Distinguished Chair in Diabetes at City of Hope.

Historic heat waves

Record-smashing heat spreads across the US

NEW YORK, March 25, (AP): After smashing March heat records in 14 states and the US as a whole, the gigantic heat dome that's baked the Southwest is creeping eastward and may end up being one of the most expansive heat waves in American history, meteorologists and weather historians said.

And it's not going away for awhile, maybe not till the middle of the next week as April starts, said meteorologist Gregg Gallina of the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center.

"Basically the entire US is going to be hot," Gallina said Monday. "The area of record temperatures is extremely large. That's the thing that's really bizarre."

This heat dome - in which high pressure is acting like a pot lid trapping hot air over a region - will leave Flagstaff, Arizona, with 11 or 12 straight days of temperatures higher than the city's previous March record, said meteorologist Jeff Masters of Yale Climate Connections. Gallina said the dome's eastward movement will mean temperatures in the 90s Fahrenheit (mid-30s Celsius) by Wednesday over the southern and central Plains. From one-quarter to one-third of the 48 continental states will be flirting with records for March, Gallina said.

The physical area of this heat wave likely dwarfs two other historic heat waves - one in 2012 in the Upper Midwest and Northeast and another in 2021 in the Pacific Northwest - according to weather historian Chris Burt, author of the book "Extreme Weather." It may not be as large as the Dust Bowl heat waves of 1936, but that was a series of heat waves over two months during summer, not a single big event like now, Burt said.

Both the Dust Bowl and the 2021 heat wave were more intense, with higher temperatures that hurt people more because they fell in June and July, Gallina said. Another saving grace for people in this heat wave is that it's not as humid as it would be if the temperatures rose in the summer, Gallina said.

On Friday, four places in Arizona and California hit 112 degrees (44.4 degrees Celsius), according to the Weather Service. Not only did that smash the record for the hottest March day in the continental United States by 4 degrees (2 degrees Celsius), but it was only 1 degree shy of the hottest day recorded in the Lower 48 in April.

Climatologist and weather historian Maximiliano Herrera, who tracks global weather records, compiled a list of 14 states that have notched their hottest March day on record since this heat dome started: California, Arizona, Nevada, Kansas, New Mexico, Nebraska, Utah, South Dakota, Missouri, Iowa, Colorado, Wyoming, Minnesota and Idaho.

Test training

Greece confirms new FMD cases

ATHENS, March 25, (Xinhua): Greek authorities confirmed on Tuesday three additional cases of foot-and-mouth disease on Lesvos Island, bringing the total number of confirmed infections on Greece's third-largest island to five.

The Ministry of Rural Development and Food reported that the new cases were identified in multiple livestock units involving cattle and sheep, according to the Greek official news agency AMNA. Following laboratory confirmation, authorities ordered the culling of all animals at affected farms and required thorough disinfection of the facilities.

Authorities have established a three-km protection zone around each outbreak site and implemented strict control measures, including bans on livestock transport and slaughter, as well as intensified veterinary inspections. Officials said products from farms within the restricted areas may circulate on the island only under strict conditions and with approval from local authorities.

Following the first confirmed case at a cattle facility last week, the Greek government ordered the suspension of milk sales from the island. The movement of animals, animal products, and feed within and outside Lesvos has also been prohibited, while infected herds are being culled. Veterinary services are working to trace the origin of the outbreak.

Lesvos produces approximately 70 tons of milk daily during this period. Due to the restrictions, farmers have been forced to discard milk, while lamb sales ahead of the April Easter season have largely come to a halt.

Farmers, livestock breeders, and local representatives staged a protest on Monday outside a government office on Lesvos, calling for immediate support to mitigate the economic impact of the containment measures.

The Greek government has pledged assistance to affected farmers. The outbreak comes amid ongoing challenges for the country's livestock sector. Since August 2024, outbreaks of sheep and goat pox have led to the culling of more than 470,000 animals across Greece, according to official data.

Greece last recorded an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in 2001 in the Evros region of northern Greece.

Meanwhile, a training course on diagnosing foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) using molecular and serological techniques, funded by the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund, kicked off in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, on Tuesday. The Mirror reported on Wednesday.

China telescope shares over 30m spectra

China tests flexible arm for space refueling

BEIJING, March 25, (Xinhua): A Chinese aerospace startup has successfully demonstrated the operation of a flexible robotic arm in orbit, marking a milestone for the country's commercial space sector and advancing orbital refueling technology aimed at extending spacecraft lifespan.

The Yuxing-3 06 satellite, launched on March 16 aboard a Kuaizhou-11 rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, has since completed a series of complex in-orbit operations using its flexible manipulator, including autonomous programmed refueling simulation, ground-controlled refueling simulation and vision-guided servo refueling simulation, its designer Sustain Space announced Wednesday.

The robotic arm, developed by a team led by Tsinghua University's Shenzhen International Graduate School, features a flexible continuum hollow arm with rear-mounted cable drive transmission. It achieved precise docking with fueling ports at an altitude of hundreds of thousands of meters.

Unlike rigid robotic arms, the flexible manipulator resembles a nimble elephant trunk, which can curl, twist and coil to adapt to complex, confined spaces.

The test represents a solid step forward for China's commercial space industry in on-orbit servicing, according to the space firm based in the eastern Chinese city of Suzhou.

"When a car breaks down, you can take it to a service center for repair, but what do you do when a spacecraft breaks down in space?" said Wang Xueqian, who led the research team at Tsinghua and spent over a decade ad-

vancing space robotics technology.

"Space robots can perform extravehicular operations, and even refuel and repair spacecraft as well as clear space debris," Wang added.

Meanwhile, China's Large Sky Area Multi-Object Fiber Spectroscopic Telescope (LAMOST) on Tuesday issued its latest dataset, including more than 30 million spectra, to domestic astronomers and international collaborators, cementing its position as the survey project with the highest number of released spectra worldwide.

According to the LAMOST Operation and Development Center of the National Astronomical Observatories under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (NAOC), the dataset, dubbed DR13, covers an observation period from October 2011 to June 2025, encompassing 6,961 low-resolution observation patches and 3,404 medium-resolution observation patches.

The 30.82 million spectra released include roughly 13.47 million low-resolution spectra and 17.35 million medium-resolution spectra. Additionally, it features a stellar spectral parameter catalog containing about 12.94 million entries.

The total number of spectra released by LAMOST and the scale of its stellar parameter catalog continue to lead the world, the NAOC said.

To date, over 1,900 users from 278 institutions across countries and regions including China, the United States, Germany, Belgium and Denmark have conducted research using data generated by LAMOST, resulting in the publication of more than 2,200 high-quality papers.

Also:

TOKYO: The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) aborted the scheduled first flight test of its small reusable rocket experimental vehicle RV-X on Wednesday due to an unexpected issue that arose before launch, local media reported.

According to Kyodo News, the RV-X had completed fueling early Wednesday at the Noshiro Rocket Testing Center in Akita Prefecture. However, JAXA later discovered that a device connecting the rocket body to external equipment had "issues requiring confirmation," and therefore decided to cancel the day's flight test.

LOS ANGELES: NASA on Tuesday announced a set of initiatives to accelerate return to the Moon, including pausing the Gateway lunar orbit station in its current form, and building a sustained lunar surface presence.

NASA said it will incorporate more commercially procured and reusable hardware to enable frequent and affordable crewed missions to the lunar surface, initially targeting landings every six months.

The agency outlined a phased approach to building a lunar base, including robotic missions, technology demonstrations, and infrastructure development focused on surface operations that support sustained human presence.

NASA plans to launch the Space Reactor-1 Freedom, the first nuclear-powered interplanetary spacecraft, to Mars before the end of 2028, demonstrating advanced nuclear electric propulsion in deep space.

Arsenal powers toward semis as Chelsea stumbles

Wolfsburg strikes first to silence Lyon

LONDON, March 25, (AP): Arsenal underlined its credentials for back-to-back Women's Champions League titles by beating English rival Chelsea 3-1 in the first leg of the quarter-finals.

Also, Wolfsburg took a 1-0 lead over record eight-time champion



Wolfsburg's Lineth Beerensteyn, right, dribbles past Lyon's Damaris Egurrola during their Champions League quarter-finals, first leg soccer match in Wolfsburg, Germany. (AP)

Lyonnes in a meeting of two of the competition's most storied names.

Stina Blackstenius - with her first Champions League goal since the winner in the final against Barcelona last season - and Chloe Kelly gave Arsenal a 2-0 halftime lead at Emirates Stadium.

Lauren James curled a brilliant long-range shot into the top corner to reduce the deficit for Chelsea but Arsenal regained its two-goal cushion when Alessia Russo drove home from the edge of the area.

Chelsea finished higher in the league stage - third place, compared to Arsenal in fifth - but has work to do in next week's return leg across London to reach the semifinals for the fourth straight season.

Lineth Beerensteyn scored the only goal for Wolfsburg with a deflected 14th-minute shot against Lyon in the 12th Champions League meeting between the teams, which makes it tied for the most-played fixture in the competition's history.

Four of those matches have been in finals, highlighting their status.

Kadidiatou Diani hit the post late in the game for Lyon, whose most recent of its eight titles came in 2022.



Arsenal's Lotte Wubben-Moy, left, and Chelsea's Lauren James battle for the ball during the Women's Champions League soccer match between Arsenal and Chelsea in London. (AP)

Uriarte announces re-election

Griezmann joining Orlando City

ORLANDO, Fla., March 25, (Agencies): Atletico Madrid forward Antoine Griezmann is moving to Orlando City in Major League Soccer this summer.

The 35-year-old World Cup winner from France signed with Orlando City. The deal lasts from July through the 2027-28 season with an option for an extra year.

"From my first conversations with the club I could feel a strong ambition and a clear vision for the future, and that really spoke to me," Griezmann said in a statement provided by Orlando City.

He helped France win the 2018 World Cup, reach the 2022 World Cup final, and retired from internationals in 2024 with 44 goals in 137 caps.

Griezmann is Atletico's all-time leading scorer with 211 goals but his minutes have been managed by coach Diego Simeone this season. Even so, Griezmann has 13 goals this campaign in all competitions.

Griezmann, who also played for Real Sociedad and Barcelona, has spent 10 seasons at Atletico. His 488 games are the fourth-most in Atletico's history.

He's won three trophies with Atletico: 2014 Spanish Super Cup, 2018 Europa League and 2018 UEFA Super Cup. Atletico has the Copa del Rey final next month and is up against Barcelona in the Champions League quarterfinals.

"Let's leave the future in the future because I'm not leaving yet," Griezmann said in comments provided by Atletico. "I still have months left in this shirt, months to give my life on the pitch, both at our stadium and away, to lift that Copa del Rey and to dream of going as far as possible in the Champions League."



Athletic Bilbao president Jon Uriarte announced that he has called elections for the club presidency on May 8th.

The elections come just before the official end of Uriarte's four-year mandate, with the 48-year-old confirming he will stand for re-election by the club's 44,000 members.

Uriarte's four seasons at the head of the Basque club saw the club end a 40-year wait to win the Copa del Rey in 2024, while last season the team coached by Ernesto Valverde finished fourth in La Liga to qualify for this season's Champions League.

This season has seen a drop in form, partly due to a long injury list, but with nine matches left in the season, Athletic Bilbao is ninth in the classification with a viable option of qualifying for either the Europa League or the Conference League.

"Midway through the season we had a small crisis of results in which we were in the group down below, but now we are only three points off a place in Europa and our aims have changed," said Uriarte in his press conference at the club's San Mames Stadium.

"I think we have done a great job in the past four years," he added.

So far nobody else has announced an opposition candidacy, so there is a chance that on May 8th, Uriarte will be elected unopposed, but whoever is the next club president, will have to find a replacement for Valverde, who announced last Friday that he is stepping down as coach after four years in his third spell at the club.



In this file photo, Atletico Madrid's Antoine Griezmann, celebrates after the Champions League playoff second leg soccer match against Club Brugge. (AP)

Lukaku withdraws from friendlies

BRUSSELS, March 25, (Agencies): Napoli striker Romelu Lukaku has withdrawn from Belgium's friendlies in the United States to get fitter.

Lukaku has been sidelined for months by a hamstring injury and lacks playing time with his club. He preferred to use the international break to work on his fitness, the Belgian federation said.

Belgium already ruled Club Brugge midfielder Hans Vanaken and Arsenal winger Leandro Trossard on Monday because of injuries.

Belgium plays the United States on Saturday in Atlanta and Mexico three days later in Chicago.

The World Cup starts in June.



Sevilla appointed Luis Garcia Plaza as its new first-team coach on a contract running until the end of June 2027.

Garcia Plaza replaces Matias Almeyda, who was sacked by the club on Monday after a 2-0 home defeat to Valencia left Sevilla 15th in La Liga with 31 points from 29 matches, just three points above the relegation zone.

The 53-year-old has extensive experience in La Liga, having previously coached Levante, Getafe, Villarreal, Mallorca and Alaves, which dismissed him last season despite the club not being in the relegation zone.

During his career, he has led Levante, Mallorca and Alaves to promotion. He has also worked with Beijing Renhe in China and Al-Shabab in Saudi Arabia.

His first match as Sevilla coach will be away to Oviedo on April 5, before hosting Atletico Madrid the following week.

Hosts run chase poorly executed in 33-run loss

Esterhuizen the hero as South Africa downs New Zealand in series decider

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, March 25, (AP): Connor Esterhuizen blasted a career-best 75 from 33 balls to propel South Africa to a 33-run win over New Zealand in the fifth Twenty20 on Wednesday and a 3-2 win in the five-match series.

Esterhuizen's second consecutive half century after his previous best of 57 in the fourth match on Sunday saw South Africa make 187-4 after being sent in.

New Zealand managed only 154-8 in reply.

Esterhuizen paced the second half of the South Africa innings after coming to the crease in the 11th over with total 76-2. He was dropped a place in the order Wednesday and batted behind Ruben Hermann who hit 39 from 31 balls to pick up the run-rate after a slow start.

South Africa was only 43-1 after the power play and 76 at the midpoint of its innings. The last 10 overs produced 111 runs, thanks to Esterhuizen and Dian Forrester with whom he added 61 in just over four overs for the fourth wicket.

"I think the nice thing was that I got to come in

and play with some freedom because of the nice platform from the guys up top with wickets in hand," Esterhuizen said. "Early on the openers assessed it and said 160 was competitive. The more myself and (Forrester) was out there we said 170 was a good score and we got 187."

Esterhuizen's innings included five fours and six sixes. He was dropped on 49 by Bevon Jacobs from the bowling of Zak Foulkes and made New Zealand pay, stretching his innings into the last over. In total the South Africa innings contained 15 fours and 10 sixes along with 47 dot balls.

With wickets in hand South Africa added 52 runs from the last five overs, including five sixes. New Zealand's problems were compounded by poor catching, though Nick Kelly held a brilliant one-handed catch, the best of the series, to dismiss Hermann.

The New Zealand run chase was also poorly executed and the home side found itself bogged down by accurate bowling, well supported by the field.

Gerald Coetzee bowled quick at both ends of the

innings and took 2-21 from four overs while Otneil Baartman used variation and took 2-33. The spinner Prenelan Subrayen allowed only 22 runs from his four overs and captain Keshav Maharaj also tested the New Zealand batters.

New Zealand was 46-2 after the power play and 65-3 after 10 overs when the run rate required was 12.3 per over. After 15 overs New Zealand was 116-4 and the required run rate had crept up to 14.4. New Zealand finally needed 47 from the last two overs.

Jacobs was the best of the New Zealand batters, scoring 36 from 19.

The match was the most high-scoring of the series. New Zealand was bowled out for 91 in the first match which South Africa won by seven wickets; South Africa was bowled out for 107 in the second match which New Zealand won by 68 runs and held to 136-9 in the third match which New Zealand won by eight wickets. South Africa restricted New Zealand to 145 in the fourth match which it won by 19 runs.

Grizzlies' Morant shut down for season due to elbow injury

Warriors guard Moody suffers season-ending left knee injury, will have surgery this week

SAN FRANCISCO, March 25, (AP): Golden State Warriors guard Moses Moody will miss the rest of the season after a gruesome left knee injury that will require surgery later this week.

The Warriors said Tuesday that Moody tore his patellar tendon and underwent an MRI exam that revealed the severity of his injury. He went down with 58.5 seconds left in overtime of Golden State's 137-131 victory Monday night while going for an uncontested dunk off a steal against Cooper Flagg.

His knee buckled and Moody went down in agony for several minutes before being carted off the court on a stretcher and giving a wave to the supportive road crowd. The injury left teammates, coaches, the Mavericks and their fans in shock.

The 23-year-old Moody was averaging career-bests of 12.1 points, 3.3 rebounds, 1.6 assists and 1.0 steals in 25.7 minutes for the Warriors this season.

Moody had just returned for the first time after missing 10 games with a sprained right wrist. He led the Warriors with 23 points and had three steals - all three against Flagg and all of those in the fourth quarter or overtime. The first two came during an 11-0 Golden State run that broke a tie at the start of the fourth.

"Mo is such a great human being, great teammate, wonderful guy to coach," coach Steve Kerr said afterward. "Puts in the work every day. And was brilliant, by the way. Played so well defensively, changed

the game for us with his ball pressure and knocked down big shots. So great to finally have him back. And then for that to happen, you're just praying that it's not too serious, but it sure looked serious."

The noise didn't return to the hushed arena over the final 58 seconds, the Warriors scoring the only point in that stretch.

"I saw the looks on the Mavericks' faces," Kerr said. "Everybody on the floor was just horrified. Players care about players. They know how fragile this business is and how short their careers are and how injuries can happen and can be catastrophic. We don't know what it is yet. We're just hoping for the best."

The Warriors are headed to the play-in tournament in the Western Conference, and waiting for word on star guard Stephen Curry's return from a right knee injury after losing Jimmy Butler to a season-ending knee injury that led to ACL surgery.

The Memphis Grizzlies ruled out Ja Morant for the season because of a UCL sprain in his left elbow.

The Grizzlies said that Morant would need a platelet-rich plasma injection to aid with the healing. The Grizzlies expected Morant to make a full recovery in time for next season.

Morant, the 6-foot-2 guard in his seventh season out of Murray State, played in only 20 games this season



Golden State Warriors guard Moses Moody, right, reacts while suffering an injury as Dallas Mavericks forward Cooper Flagg (32) looks on during overtime of an NBA basketball game in Dallas. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Construction on stadium to start in June: Construction of Brisbane's 63,000-seat stadium for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games will begin in June, the government of Queensland announced.

Jarrod Bleijie, Queensland's deputy premier, said the state government has finalized a site for the 3.8 billion Australian dollar (2.7 billion U.S. dollar) stadium in a central location in Victoria Park, 2 km north of Brisbane's central business district.

Bleijie said preparatory works would begin once the land is transferred to the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA) on June 1. Early design images released to local media on Tuesday night showed the three-tiered stadium featuring openings at either end to allow breezes through.

Addressing the Queensland Media Club, Bleijie said the Olympic and Paralympic venues would deliver "city-shaping infrastructure and economic benefits." "History shows that the true value of the Games is not measured in the weeks of competition. It's in the decades of prosperity that follow," he said.

"Cities around the world have used the Games as a catalyst to unlock urban renewal, accelerate infrastructure investment and reshape entire precincts." The

Victoria Park stadium will host track and field events at the 2032 Games, as well as the opening and closing ceremonies.

After the Games, it will replace the existing 37,000-seat Brisbane Cricket Ground, which will be demolished. (Xinhua)



Kenya to host leg of Series: Kenya is set to host a leg of the inaugural FIFA Women's Series in a four-team tournament from April 11 to 15 in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, a government official said.

Cabinet Secretary for Youth Affairs, Creative Economy and Sports Salim Mvurya said the competition will feature host Kenya's Harambee Starlets alongside Australia, India and Malawi.

"Being able to host a tournament of this nature reflects the progress Kenya is making in sports development. It shows that we are moving in the right direction," he told journalists in Nairobi.

Australia and Malawi will open the tournament before the hosts take on India on the first day of competition.

On April 15, the third-place playoff between the losers of the opening matches will be followed by the final between the two winners.

Football Kenya Federation President Hussein Mohammed welcomed the development. (Xinhua)

Delivers exhilarating driving experience that strengthens dialogue between driver and car

ALSAYER and Lexus debut the new IS350 with refined performance and design



The new Lexus IS350 glides through the city.



The interior of the new Lexus IS350



The exterior of the new Lexus IS350

KUWAIT CITY, March 25: Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Est. Co. W.L.L and Lexus announce the arrival of the new IS in Kuwait, marking the latest evolution of the compact front-engine, rear-wheel-drive (FR) sports sedan that has pursued the joy of driving since the first-generation model debuted in 1999. Widely regarded as a cornerstone of the Lexus driving experience, the IS continues to earn praise for its excellent performance and sporty design, while extensive worldwide testing, including at the Technical Center Shimoyama, continues to refine the unique "Lexus Driving Signature."

In this update with the launch of the new IS350, the key development theme is "maturation." Building on the strengths the IS has pursued to date, Lexus further polishes a pleasant driving experience where the driver can effortlessly communicate with the car, while evolving the model's aggressive and sporty design into an even sharper, more purposeful expression. The result is a more focused sports sedan that brings driver confidence and comfort into closer harmony, whether navigating daily city routes or enjoying winding roads.

Commenting on the launch of the latest evolution of the IS, Lexus International Chief Engineer, Yasushi Muto, said: "In refining the IS, our unwavering focus was on achieving true dialogue between car and driver, where the driver's intentions are faithfully conveyed to the vehicle, and the car's responses are clearly felt in return. With that ideal in mind, we've pursued development without compromise, always aiming for the next level."

■ Delivers exhilarating driving experience that strengthens dialogue between driver and car

■ Evolves aggressive and sporty interior and exterior design with a sharper, more focused character

■ Advanced Lexus Safety System + and renewed multimedia system deliver greater safety, peace of mind, and everyday convenience

Muto added that "building on the IS's distinctive ride comfort and outstanding vehicle control, the model has evolved to deliver an even more engaging experience from within the cabin. This evolution is driven by careful attention to detail in the redesigned interior, advancements in preventive safety technologies through Lexus Safety System +, and the integration of the latest multimedia system. We invite you to experience the pure joy of driving in the newly reimagined IS."

With refinement in both performance and design as the guiding direction, development of the IS350 focuses on elevating steering feel, vehicle stability, ride comfort, and cockpit usability, all key elements for a compact FR sports sedan intended to keep the driver

fully engaged with the road.

To further enhance driving performance, the Electric Power Steering system is revamped with the adoption of a variable gear rack. This supports more precise path tracing with minimal steering input at intersections and through successive corners, while maintaining stability during straight-line driving. In parallel, the Adaptive Variable Suspension system is improved to deliver a high-level balance between vehicle stability and reduced road-surface shock, helping to achieve a more comfortable and composed driving feel without compromising the direct connection that defines the Lexus Driving Signature.

Supporting safe and secure driving, the new IS350 advances the Lexus Safety System + and introduces additional features designed to make long-distance travel more relaxed and comfortable. Expanded safety and driver assistance functions are complemented by Lexus Teammate Advanced Drive, an enhanced driver assistance system that supports highway driving.

On the exterior, the new IS350 introduces a redesigned front face that emphasizes a low center of gravity and wide stance, reinforcing a powerful and sharp styling identity. The F SPORT model further enhances this dynamic appeal with a newly designed rear spoiler that improves aerodynamic performance, as well as newly styled 19-inch lightweight aluminum wheels that reflect the IS's sharp, responsive driving character. The exterior color lineup expands to a total of eight options, including the addition of Neutrino Gray, a new hue that

expresses a dynamic sense of motion through its hard-toned light gray base infused with metallic highlights, offering more choice to suit diverse lifestyles and preferences.

Inside, Lexus places particular focus on the cockpit, an essential priority in a compact FR sports sedan, to ensure an environment that helps to concentrate on driving. The center display is enlarged to 12.3 inches, delivering high visibility and intuitive operation while aligning with the driver's natural line of sight. The TFT LCD meter in front of the driver has also been increased to 12.3 inches, providing clear, easy-to-read graphics that communicate information directly and intuitively, supporting confident decision-making in real time.

The interior design further evolves with newly developed "Forged Bamboo" ornamentation applied to the upper console and start switch bezel. The natural bamboo fibers create a distinctive "In-ei" shading effect, adding an expressive sense of depth that complements the IS350's dynamic energy and enhances the sporty feel of the cabin. Additionally, a new interior color, Prominence, inspired by the vivid glow of solar flares, is introduced to create an aggressive and sporty cabin atmosphere.

The launch of the new IS350 reflects Lexus' continued commitment to delivering vehicles that combine refined craftsmanship, driver-focused performance, and advanced technologies that enhance everyday confidence and peace of mind.

Shiffrin holds off Aicher to win record-tying 6th overall WC title

Grenier claims third career World Cup victory

HAFJELL, Norway, March 25, (AP): Mikaela Shiffrin secured a record-tying sixth women's overall World Cup skiing title by holding off a challenge from emerging German rival Emma Aicher in the final race of the season.

Shiffrin needed only to finish in the top 15 of a giant slalom and the American standout secured that before Aicher even began her second run.

Shiffrin finished 11th and Aicher - who needed to win the race and hope that Shiffrin finished 16th or worse to clinch her first title - finished 12th.

Shiffrin was only 17th after the first run but came down in first position in the second and then clinched it when the next two starters placed behind her.

After being told it was over, Shiffrin dropped to her knees, put her right hand to her face and appeared to be in tears as she asked her team, "Are you sure?"

Aleksander Aamodt Kilde, Shiffrin's fiancée and the 2020 overall champion, was with her.



United States' Mikaela Shiffrin competes in an alpine ski, women's giant slalom race, at the Lillehammer World Cup Finals, in Hafjell, Norway. (AP)

The 31-year-old Shiffrin matched Austrian downhill great Annemarie Moser-Pröll, who won her six titles in the 1970s.

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.

Lindsey Vonn is third on the wom-

en's list with four overall titles.

Marcel Hirscher leads the men's list with eight overall titles.

Valerie Grenier of Canada added to her first-run advantage to claim her third career World Cup victory. Mina Fuerst Holtmann of Norway finished second on home snow, 0.43 behind, and discipline champion Julia Scheib was third, 0.57 behind.

Shiffrin was 2.02 behind and Aicher was 2.04 behind after a major mistake early in her second run dropped her down from third after the opening leg.

Shiffrin finished 87 points ahead of Aicher - 1,410 points to 1,323 points.

It's been another stellar season for Shiffrin, who claimed the third Olympic gold of her career by dominating the slalom at last month's Milan Cortina Games.

Meanwhile, Norwegian skier Atle Lie McGrath secured the World Cup slalom title on home snow Wednesday to conclude the season on a positive note after losing his temper at the Olympics when he squandered a big first-run lead.

McGrath broke down in tears during a long, emotional embrace with childhood friend and Olympic giant slalom champion Lucas Pinheiro Braathen of Brazil, who straddled the gate early in his second run to pave the way for McGrath's title.

McGrath, who won three slaloms this season, earned his first discipline title.

Timon Haugan, another Norwegian, won the race by finishing 0.44 seconds ahead of Olympic champion Loic Meillard and 1.03 ahead of Eduard Hallberg of Finland.

Woods returns at TGL and can't stop LA from winning SoFi Cup

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla., March 25, (AP): Tiger Woods competed for the first time in more than a year and that wasn't nearly enough to stop Los Angeles Golf Club, which made three straight eagles to close out a 9-2 victory in the TGL final to capture the SoFi Cup.

Woods had been captain and cheerleader for Jupiter Links as he recovered from back surgery in October. He decided Monday evening after Los Angeles rallied to win the first match in the best-of-3 series that he was ready to play, replacing Kevin Kisner.

His biggest moment was missing a 3-foot putt on the seventh hole, slamming his putter to the turf in disgust. That gave LA momentum, and it turned so quickly the 15-hole match ended in 10 holes.

"We got our (butts) kicked at the end," Woods said. "Three eagles in a row. I missed a short one to give them momentum and we never got it back."

Woods had said earlier playing TGL was just a step. He gave no indication when it was over whether he would play in the Masters on April 9-12.

"This body ... it doesn't recover like it did when it was 24, 25. It doesn't mean I'm not trying," Woods said. "I've had a couple bad injuries here over the past years that I've had to fight through and it's taken some time. But I keep trying."

"I want to play. I love the tournament," he said. "I'm going to be there either way with The Loop that's going up there, as well as the Champions Dinner. ... We'll see how it goes. I'll be practicing, playing at home this week and keep trying to make progress."

His short miss gave LA its first lead at 3-2, and Tommy Fleetwood followed by making a 12-foot eagle putt on the reachable par-4 eighth.

Max Homa had suggested earlier throw-

ing a hammer - that makes the hole worth two points - if Jupiter took advantage on a par 5 during alternate shot. That backfired.

Fleetwood drove into a bunker, and Woods hit 3-wood to keep it short of the bunker. Homa hit the approach to 15 feet for an eagle chance, but Justin Rose hit a beauty out of the bunker to just inside 15 feet. Tom Kim missed Jupiter's eagle putt, and Sahith Theegala swirled in his eagle putt for a 6-2 lead going into singles.

That lasted one hole. Homa missed the fairway on a reachable par 5 and had to lay up. Rose hit the fairway and his second shot rolled out to 4 feet. LA threw the hammer (making the hole worth three points) and Homa had to make it to have any chance. He missed the putt, the eagle was conceded and LA walked off with the \$9 million team prize.

"It sucked," Homa told ESPN. "Not going to give you a whole lot more than that."

Homa said later he thought Jupiter had to win the hole to extend the matches.

"It was just a really dumb move on my part," he said.

Jupiter Links won \$4.5 million. For Woods, it was about playing again, even in an indoor golf league. He last played in early March 2025 before rupturing his Achilles tendon, and then he had a seventh back surgery in October.

His first full swing was 3-wood from 279 yards just off the green that set up birdie for a 1-0 lead. Jupiter went ahead 2-0 when Woods lagged a 45-foot putt to a foot for a conceded birdie. That was the extent of his highlights.

Still uncertain is whether Woods decides to be the U.S. Ryder Cup captain for the 2027 matches in Ireland. The PGA of America is hopeful of an answer by the end of the month.

Kosovo two games away from World Cup

Italy on edge, Sweden shorn of stars and another chance for Lewandowski

MILAN, March 25, (AP): When Fabio Cannavaro raised aloft the golden World Cup trophy inside Berlin's Olympic Stadium in 2006, few could have imagined the pain soccer's biggest event would inflict on Italy over the next two decades.

In 2010, the Azzurri put up a woeful title defense, not even winning a game in an embarrassing group-stage exit. In 2014, they again didn't reach the knockout stage, dumped out by a Uruguay goal scored soon after Luis Suarez bit Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini.

As for the 2018 and 2022 tournaments, the Italians didn't even get there, eliminated in the European playoffs in an utter humiliation for a soccer-mad nation. No wonder the country is on edge this week.

Italy is back in the World Cup playoffs, one of 16 European teams competing for the four remaining spots for the continent for this summer's tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico. The World Cup has never been bigger, enlarged to 48 countries including 16 from Europe. And still Italy needs to get in via the back door, a bad look for a four-time world champion and a traditional hotbed for the sport.

Standing in Italy's way in the playoff semifinals taking place across Europe on Thursday will be Northern Ireland in Bergamo. Win that - and the Azzurri are big favorites - and they'll need to beat either Wales or Bosnia and Herzegovina to advance to the World Cup.

Italy is undoubtedly the big story from the playoff. Here are some more things to watch out for:

It's crunch time for Graham Potter.

The former Chelsea and West Ham coach was hired by Sweden last year, initially on a short-term deal and

with one task - get the team to the World Cup. That is still to be determined but Potter has clearly done enough in the meantime to impress the federation, which handed him a contract to 2030 last week.

It's quite the show of support for Potter ahead of the playoffs, where Sweden faces war-torn Ukraine on neutral territory in Valencia, Spain. The winner will host Poland or Albania next week.

Unfortunately for Potter, he hasn't got all of his big names available, with Premier League stars Alexander Isak and Dejan Kulusevski injured.

Exactly four years ago, Ukraine could not play a scheduled World Cup qualifying playoff semifinal in Scotland in the turmoil just weeks after the full Russian military invasion.

Ukraine eventually won 3-1 in Glasgow in June 2022 then lost the playoff final four days later in Wales to a goal by Gareth Bale.

Ukraine is back in the playoffs after four years of being unable to host any games on its own ter-



Wales goalkeeper Danny Ward during a training session, in Hensol, England. (AP)

ritory still being bombed by Russia, which remains banned from international soccer.

It's always dangerous to write off the careers of soccer's top players - Portugal star Cristiano Ronaldo is likely headed to the World Cup at age 41, for example - but this might be Robert Lewandowski's final shot at a World Cup.

The 37-year-old Barcelona striker had a brief spell away from Poland's national team last year, making himself unavailable after he was stripped of the captaincy by then-coach Michal Probiez. Probiez resigned after Poland lost to Finland without Lewandowski, who promptly returned to the squad in August under new coach Jan Urban.

Poland's all-time top scorer regained the captain's armband, too.

Lewandowski has recently been wearing a protective mask on his face during games after suffering fractured left eye socket.

Kosovo is two games away from the World Cup, fewer than 10 years since the national team was out of the international soccer family.

It was in May 2016 that Kosovo and Gibraltar were voted into FIFA as its 210th and 211th member federations. That was eight years after Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in a move still not recognized by dozens of United Nations member states.

It also let players with family ties to Kosovo declare for the team. Valon Berisha still plays for Kosovo a decade after ending his 20-game career with Norway.

Now, at just its third try to qualify for the men's World Cup, Kosovo has been guided by German coach Franco Foda to a European qualifying playoff semifinal Thursday at Slovakia.



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Norway's Atle Lie McGrath celebrates winning the globe trophy for the alpine ski, men's slalom discipline, at the Lillehammer World Cup Finals, in Hafjell, Norway. (AP)
— See Page 15

Sports

'Unfortunately the day has come'

Salah to leave Liverpool at end of season after 9 years with club

LONDON, March 25, (AP) — Liverpool star Mohamed Salah announced he will leave the English club at the end of the season, marking an earlier-than-planned departure for one of the club's greatest-ever scorers and soccer's biggest names.

The 33-year-old Egypt forward, who has scored 255 goals in 435 appearances for Liverpool, "reached an agreement" to quit the team a year before his contract was due to expire, the Premier League champions said.

Salah's form has dipped in his ninth year at Anfield, to such an extent that he was dropped for a stretch of games late last year - leading to the winger telling reporters in an impromptu interview that the club "has thrown me under the bus."

"Unfortunately the day has come," Salah said in a post on Instagram that was released around the same time as Liverpool published a six-paragraph statement announcing the imminent departure of a club great.

"I never imagined," he added, "how deeply this club, this city, these people would become part of my life. Liverpool is not just a football club. It's a passion, it's a history, it's a spirit. I can't explain in words to anyone not part of this club."

It's a slightly acrimonious exit for Salah, who has been the superstar name in Liverpool's greatest team in a generation. He has won two Premier Leagues and a Champions League in a total of eight titles since joining from Roma in 2017, initially forming a dev-

astating front three with Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino under manager Jurgen Klopp.

Salah is third in Liverpool's all-time scorers' list, behind Ian Rush and Roger Hunt, and has won the Golden Boot - as the Premier League's top scorer - four times.

Liverpool described Salah as "one of the greatest players in Liverpool's history" and said his time at Anfield had been "remarkable."

"Salah expressed his wish to make this announcement to the supporters at the earliest possible opportunity," Liverpool said, "to provide transparency about his future due to his respect and gratitude for them."

There was no immediate word from Salah on his next club. Leaving as a free agent would mean Liverpool wouldn't collect a transfer fee. Salah was previously the subject of a bid from a Saudi team, reportedly Al-Ittihad, that was turned down in 2023.

Salah signed a two-year extension to his contract at Liverpool at the end of last season, tying him to the club until 2027, after being the star player in the team's march to a record-tying 20th English league title.

However, his public clash with the club and manager Arne Slot this season might have tarnished his legacy in the eyes of some fans.

"I think it is very clear that someone wanted me to get all of the blame," he said during an explosive interview af-



In this file photo, Liverpool's Mohamed Salah poses with the winner's trophy after the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Crystal Palace at the Anfield stadium in Liverpool, England. (AP)

ter he was an unused substitute against Leeds in December. Since returning from the Africa Cup

of Nations, Salah returned to favor with Slot but has struggled to recapture his best form.

"To the fans, I don't have enough words," Salah said in his farewell message. "The support you showed me

through the best time of my career and you stood by me in the toughest times. It's something I will never forget and something I will take with me always.

"Leaving is never easy. You gave me the best time of my life. I will be always one of you."

Salah is currently out with a muscle injury sustained against Galatasaray in the Champions League last week.

"With plenty still left to play for this season, Salah is firmly focused on trying to achieve the best possible finish to the campaign for Liverpool," the club said, "and, therefore, the time to fully celebrate his legacy and achievements will follow later in the year when he bids farewell to Anfield."

Liverpool's final Premier League game of the season is against Brentford at Anfield on May 24. The Champions League final is the following weekend in Budapest, but Liverpool is the underdog heading into a quarterfinals matchup with Paris Saint-Germain.

Liverpool defender Andrew Robertson hailed Salah in his own post on Instagram, saying his teammate's "mentality is second to none and a lot of people could take note."

"You have pushed yourself every single day and always demanded more from yourself and others," Robertson wrote.

"A pleasure sharing the pitch with you for so long but even more so being able to call you a friend. You deserve a send off that reflects your status at LFC - the greatest. Second to none."

IPL champion Bengaluru to be bought by consortium

BENGALURU, India, March 25, (AP) — Royal Challengers Bengaluru, the current Indian Premier League cricket champion, has agreed to be bought by a conglomerate of investors from India and the United States in a deal valuing the franchise at nearly \$1.8 billion.

RCB's new owners will be a consortium comprising Aditya Birla Group, The Times of India Group, Bolt Ventures founded by sports investor David Blitzer, and American asset management firm Blackstone.

They're buying RCB and the franchise's Women's Premier League team from United Spirits Limited in a transaction valued at approximately \$1.78 billion.

The deal was announced Tuesday, four days before RCB begins the defense of its IPL title.

It is subject to approval from the Board of Control for Cricket in India and other regulatory authorities. RCB is one of the original eight IPL teams and counts India star Virat Kohli among its current players.

Transparency of the process criticized

Fans launch complaint over World Cup ticket prices to European Commission

BRUSSELS, March 25, (AP) — Soccer fans have launched a formal complaint with the European Commission against FIFA over World Cup ticket prices.

Football Supporters Europe (FSE) said it joined with consumer group Euroconsumers to allege soccer's world governing body had abused its position to impose excessive prices.

FSE accused FIFA of a "monumental betrayal" in December when tickets were put on general sale ranging from \$140 for the cheapest group games to \$8,680 for the final.

The cheapest tickets for the final were \$4,185 but all prices are subject to change as FIFA is employing dynamic pricing for the first time at the World Cup co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

"FIFA holds a monopoly over ticket sales for the 2026 World Cup and has used that power to impose conditions on fans that would never be acceptable in a competitive market," FSE and Euroconsumers

said in a joint statement.

Following a backlash from fans in December, FIFA slashed some ticket prices to \$60 for every round through to the final, which teams could distribute to their most loyal fans.

Beside the exorbitant prices, FSE also claimed FIFA deployed pressure selling tactics and criticized the transparency of the process.

It has called for prices to be frozen during the next round of sales in April and for dynamic pricing to be stopped when selling to fans in Europe.

"Dynamic pricing turns fans' loyalty into a bidding war, inflates costs without added value, and locks out many supporters," said Els Bruggeman, head of policy and enforcement at Euroconsumers.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino said in January that the demand for tickets was the equivalent of "1,000 years of World Cups at once."

He said all 104 matches at the World Cup would be sold out, meaning "tickets will probably be resold at even higher prices."

FSE was also critical of FIFA's official resale platform, which has seen tickets listed well in excess of their face value and from which the governing body takes a 30% cut from any sale.

"FIFA point to their unconfirmed sales figures as validation of their unfair ticket practices, while the reality is they leave loyal fans with no other choice - pay up or lose out," said Ronan Evain, executive director for FSE.

FIFA told the Associated Press that it had not formally received the complaint. It added that as a not-for-profit organization, revenue from the World Cup was reinvested to grow soccer.



FIFA World Cup trophy

Nuggets hold firm behind Jokic brilliance as Phoenix slips again



Charlotte Hornets forward Brandon Miller (24) battles Sacramento Kings center Maxime Raynaud (42) for the ball during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Charlotte, N.C. (AP)

Hornets tie franchise record with 26 3s, rout Kings

PHOENIX, March 25, (AP) — Nikola Jokic had 23 points, 17 rebounds and tied a season high with 17 assists to lead the Denver Nuggets over the Phoenix Suns 125-123.

Jokic made the go-ahead basket, knocking down a 12-foot jumper with 11.5 seconds left. Phoenix's Devin Booker got a good look at a potential winning 3-pointer, but it bounced off the rim.

The Suns trailed 117-109 with 3:19 left, but methodically worked their way back. Booker made a tough jumper in the lane to tie the game at 123 with 30.2 seconds remaining. He had 22 points and eight assists.

Jokic had his NBA-leading 29th triple-double of the season by early in the third quarter. The three-time MVP shot 9 of 16 from the field and delivered several pinpoint passes, including one that went the full length of the court for a layup by Christian Braun.

The Nuggets have fought injuries for most of the season, but are now close to full strength. Jamal Murray had 21 points and Tim Hardaway Jr. added 18 off the bench.

Denver had a 10-point lead at halftime, but Jordan Goodwin and Grayson Allen made back-to-back 3s late in the third to help Phoenix cut the deficit to 97-95 heading into the fourth. Allen and Jalen Green both had 21 points.

The Nuggets have won six of their last eight games and are 1 1/2 games behind the Lakers for the No. 3

spot in the Western Conference playoff race.

The sliding Suns have dropped six of seven and face an uphill battle to avoid the play-in tournament. They're currently the No. 7 team in the West.

Hornets 134, Kings 90

In Charlotte, Coby White made six of Charlotte's franchise-tying 26 3-pointers and finished with 27 points as the Hornets routed the Sacramento Kings 134-90 for their fourth straight win.

LaMelo Ball had 20 points on six 3s and Moussa Diabate added 17 points and 11 rebounds for the Hornets (38-34), who pulled within two games of the Atlanta Hawks for sixth place in the Eastern Conference.

Daeqwon Plowden had 22 points and ex-Hornet Malik Monk had a career-high 14 assists for the Kings (19-54).

Kon Knueppel added four 3s for the Hornets as the rookie from Duke moved into second place in franchise history for 3s made in a season with 247. He needs 14 to pass Kemba Walker, now a player enhancement coach with the Hornets.

The 26 3-pointers matched the franchise record set on March 14, 2025, at San Antonio.

Charlotte raced to a 72-47 lead at halftime, shooting 13 of 29 from beyond the arc with Ball and White leading the way with four each at the midway point.

Cavaliers 136, Magic 131
In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell scored 42 points, James Harden added 26 and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Orlando Magic to extend their winning streak to four games.

It is Mitchell's sixth game with at least 40 points this season, tied for fourth-most in the league.

The All-Star guard also continued his mastery of the Magic. It was his third 40-point game in 23 regular-season meetings against Orlando. He is averaging 27.2 against the Magic, the sixth-highest scoring average of any player in NBA history against Orlando.

Harden, who was scoreless in the first half of Saturday's game at New Orleans, had 22 points and three 3-pointers in the first half as the Cavaliers had a 72-68 lead at halftime. It was his most points in the first two quarters since being acquired by the Cavaliers.

Evan Mobley had 19 points for Cleveland, making all eight of his shots from the field, along with nine rebounds and six assists.

Paolo Banchero had 36 points for Orlando (38-34), which has dropped six straight and dropped into a three-way tie with Charlotte and Miami for eighth place in the Eastern Conference.

Tristan da Silva had 18 points, while Desmond Bane and Jamal Cain scored 17 apiece for the Magic.

Knicks 121, Pelicans 116

In New York, Jalen Brunson scored 32 points, including 15 in the fourth quarter, and the New York Knicks beat the New Orleans Pelicans for their seventh straight victory.

Karl-Anthony Towns and OG Anunoby each added 21 points for the Knicks (48-25), who pulled within percentage points of the Boston Celtics (47-24) for second place in the Eastern Conference. Towns also grabbed 14 rebounds.