



PM, ministers meet, weigh steps to tackle emergencies Page 2



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Downpour disrupts Kuwait

Streets to streams

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Severe weather conditions continue to grip Kuwait, as heavy rainfall triggers widespread flooding, forces major road closures, and prompts urgent safety directives from multiple government agencies.

Large parts of the country have been inundated following intense downpours, with waterlogging reported in low-lying areas and key traffic routes. Emergency teams remain on high alert as authorities race to manage the fallout and ensure public safety.

The Ministry of Interior urged citizens and residents to exercise caution, confirming the closure of several major roads and access points due to dangerous water accumulation.

According to the ministry, King Abdul-

lazz Al-Saud Road (Fahaheel) from Kuwait City has been shut, with traffic diverted to the Sixth Ring Road toward Jahra. Vehicles heading toward Kuwait City are being re-routed via Al-Taawon Street toward Al-Bidda Roundabout.

Additional traffic measures include directing motorists from Al-Taawon Street toward the Musayel intersection to turn right onto King Abdulaziz Road, while the right-side branches of the Sixth Ring Road from Jahra toward King Abdulaziz Road (Fahaheel) have also been closed.

Authorities stressed that residents should remain at home unless necessary, adhere strictly to traffic regulations, and follow instructions from security personnel. The emergency hotline (112) remains fully operational to handle reports and emergencies.

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Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Ominous clouds hang over Kuwait as rain pounds a waterlogged highway, creating a surreal, storm-tossed scene on Thursday.



Opinion

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

Iran dreams of a lost Persian empire

HITLER built his Nazi project on the idea of the purity and superiority of the Aryan race, and treated other nations according to that ideology.

The Persians consider themselves part of the Aryan race, and it is no exaggeration to say that the current Iranian regime applies a similar mindset in its dealings with neighbors and the world.

It is therefore unsurprising that the leaders of the Iranian regime view the Arabian Gulf, and Arabs in general, as inferior, perpetuating the racial attitudes inherited from the Nazis.

Unfortunately, this way of thinking governs the current relations between Iran and the Gulf states. A clear example is the Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran treats as its private waterway, disregarding the fact that it is both an international and Gulf waterway, governed by international maritime law.

Consequently, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have more right than Iran to determine the fate of the Strait of Hormuz.

When Tehran announces the imposition of transit fees through this waterway, it is primarily violating the rights of the Gulf states and escalating the war, turning it into an international dispute.

In short, wars always end with settlements. Regarding negotiations, whether direct or indirect, between Washington and Tehran, the Gulf states must be the primary stakeholders, as they have suffered the most in this war and continue to face Iranian aggression. They hence cannot be excluded from the negotiating table.

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'ZERO TOLERANCE FOR TERROR ORGANIZATIONS IN KUWAIT'

— Details Page 2 —

String of arrests continues as Kuwait foils assassination bid

16 added to terrorism list

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Ministry of Interior has had remarkable security accomplishments amid the heinous Iranian aggression that has been targeting the country for 29 days since Feb 28 and the rapidly escalating security challenges.

Through its field performance and proactive operations, it affirmed that Kuwait's security is a red line that cannot be crossed and that the security authorities work round the clock to protect the homeland and maintain its stability.

With their loyal personnel, the security units struck and dismantled three terrorist cells affiliated with the banned Hezbollah organization.

Recently, the security authorities dismantled a dangerous terrorist network planning assassination operations targeting State symbols and leaders. Five Kuwaiti citizens and one non-Kuwaiti whose citizenship was revoked were arrested, while 14 fugitives are being monitored, including five Kuwaiti citizens, five non-Kuwaitis whose citizenship was revoked, two Iranians and two Lebanese nationals.

Their connection to the banned terrorist group Hezbollah was established, as the network planned the assassination of State figures and leaders and recruited individuals to carry out these missions.

The defendants confessed to espionage, joining the terrorist organization and their readiness to carry out assigned tasks – to assassinate State figures and leaders and harm the higher interests of the country. They also admitted to undergoing advanced military training abroad conducted by members and leaders of the terrorist organization, which included using weapons and explosives, surveillance techniques and assassination skills. This is a grave act of treason and a blatant violation of the requirements of loyalty and sense of belongingness.

The defendants were referred to the Public Prosecution. The ministry affirmed that security forces are continuing their investigation to pursue anyone proven to be linked or cooperating with this cell or any other terrorist organizations.

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Photos of accused who were arrested.



Ministry of Interior photos
Photos of accused who were identified and fled the country.

Gov't reviews attack fallout as Kuwait beefs up security

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): The Ministry of Defense announced Thursday that the Kuwait Armed Forces detected six ballistic missiles over the past 24 hours – all of which fell outside the threat zone, in addition to the destruction of one hostile drone.

Spokesman of the ministry Colonel Saud Al-Atwan made the announcement in a media briefing about the current developments amid the Iranian aggression on Kuwait.

He stressed that the Armed Forces is always ready to maintain national security and stability, indicating that "they are do-

ing their best to protect the country from all threats."

Meanwhile, the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) revealed that its forces have downed 46 drones and six unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) since the onset of the Iranian attacks.

KNG spokesperson Brigadier General Dr. Jadaan Fadhel Jadaan stated that the explosive ordnance disposal teams have dealt with 42 reports about falling debris from defensive interception operations since the start of the Iranian aggression.

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Gulf hotels, airports reeling amid prolonged conflict in Middle East

By Najeh Bilal
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The negative impact of the ongoing war continues to weigh heavily on all economic sectors, as it enters the fourth week.

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) revealed that losses in the tourism and aviation sectors in the Middle East from Feb 28 and March 20 reached \$12 billion, while pre-war projections indicated that tourism revenues in the Middle East could reach \$207 billion in 2026.

In its report, WTTC said the American-Israeli war on Iran is causing daily losses of \$600 million in the regional tourism sector, considering the severe disruption at airports in most Gulf countries.

Regarding the hotel sector in Kuwait, which has been affected by the war, the newspaper obtained a copy of the latest statistics issued by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), stating that the number of hotels in the country reached 136 at the beginning of 2026. It showed that the Capital Governorate has 60 hotels, Hawally has 47, Ahmadi has 19, Farwaniya has seven, Mubarak Al-Kabeer has two and Jahra has only one.

This is despite Kuwait ranking seventh among the top 10 Arab countries in terms of tourism in 2025, according to data from CEO World Magazine, and even if its travel and tourism revenues reached \$973.9 million last year -- an annual growth rate of about three per-

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Other Voices

Why Arab consensus cannot be demanded

By Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

Iran's attack on the Gulf states deserves unequivocal condemnation. There should be no hesitation in rejecting it, no attempt to soften its brutality, and no ambiguity about what it represents. It's a direct assault on regional security and stability. But condemning the attack is one thing. Expressing surprise at the uneven Arab reaction to it is another.

Not every difference in Arab rhetoric, priorities, or degree of engagement reflects a lack of fairness or belonging, as some would suggest. In many cases, it is the product of a political and media memory that has never been seriously examined, and of years of rhetoric and policy choices that weakened confidence in the consistency of the Gulf position in the Middle East.

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Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri

MoH calls employees abroad 'back to duty'

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Ministry of Health has advised its employees, who are currently abroad, to take the necessary steps to resume work due to the exceptional circumstances in the country, in order to make sure that operations are smooth and the provision of healthcare services remains uninterrupted.

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Ministry of Defense photo

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah inspects Kuwait International Airport on Thursday following a drone attack targeting fuel storage facilities.



8 India, LuLu Group coordinate to maintain GCC food supply chains

8 Jazeera Airways reviews operational developments over the past 2 weeks

Prayer Timings

Fajr 04:26 Asr 15:23
 Sunrise .. 05:46 Maghrib .. 18:03
 Zohr 11:54 Isha 19:20



Sheikh Sabah Khaled



Edgars Rinkevics

Latvia Pres. calls Kuwait Crown Prince, condemns Iran attacks

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received a phone call from Latvian President Edgars Rinkevics, who strongly condemned the Iranian attacks on Kuwait territory, describing them as a blatant violation of sovereignty and international law.

During the call, President Rinkevics affirmed his country's full support for Kuwait and its backing of all measures taken to safeguard its sovereignty and security.

He also stressed the importance of prioritizing wisdom, dialogue, and de-escalation among all parties in the region to preserve the stability and security of states and civilians.

His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Latvian President, expressing his sincere appreciation and gratitude for the call and for Latvia's supportive stance toward Kuwait's security and stability.



PM Diwan photo

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the meeting.

PM, ministers meet, weigh steps to tackle emergencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired a meeting on Thursday to weigh emergency plans and promote institutional coordination among state bodies in order to ensure the highest preparedness levels amid the current extraordinary circumstances.

The meeting was by Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, Minister of State for Communication

Affairs and Information Technology, and Acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Meshari, Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sa-beeh Al-Mukhaizeem, Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Affairs Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij and Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Basal Al-Haroun.

No to political parties

'Zero tolerance for terror organizations in Kuwait'

By Saud Al-Farhan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef has said that "the security personnel are on high alert, maintaining the highest level of vigilance and readiness to safeguard the country and prevent any attempt to undermine it."

In a statement to the newspaper following the State Security system's preemptive strike against traitors and the arrest of a third cell affiliated with the terrorist group Hez-bollah two days ago, he asserted that "Kuwait's security and stability are red lines, and any attempt to compromise them will not be tolerated. Security agencies are fully prepared and vigilant to maintain national security and stability. Anyone who dares to tamper with security will be dealt with firmly."

He stressed that the Ministry of Interior is closely monitoring all those who attempt to destabilize security and stability, indicating "Kuwait remains an oasis of safety and security, impervious to traitors and terrorists."

He stated that the law is applied fairly and firmly on everyone, and the strictest legal measures are taken against anyone proven to be involved in any crime that threatens national security and stability. He warned that "there is no tolerance for terrorism and terrorists. The partnership with the public, private, military and civilian executive and oversight sectors of the State is firmly established."

He then pointed out that no law permits the formation of political parties or organizations. He explained that "political parties are dangerous for Kuwait and we will not allow them. Any such organization or party that is discovered will be subject to the law, its existence will not be permitted, and its members will be held accountable as per the law."

It is worth noting that the Supreme Judicial Council expressed its opinion on the proposed Regulating Political Bodies Law, concluding that "the establishment of political parties in Kuwait has no basis in the Constitution. It is prohibited and political parties are considered a threat to the country and the government."

In a related development, the minister urged the citizens to take advantage of the amnesty period for surrendering unlicensed weapons, whether remnants of the invasion or personal possessions, to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands or exposing individuals to legal repercussions.

Last Monday, the ministry announced an exceptional and final grace period for surrendering unlicensed firearms, ammunition and explosives -- until the end of official working hours on April 1.

In a press statement, the ministry stated that during this period, no punitive measures are taken against those who voluntarily surrender their weapons, ammunition or explosives in accordance with applicable legal provisions and as a means of encouraging cooperation with the relevant authorities.

It clarified that once the deadline ends, the law will be strictly enforced, and all the necessary legal measures will be taken, including search and seizure operations, within the established legal framework. It added that the surrender of weapons, ammunition and explosives can be done at any police station.



Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef

Kuwait praises UN resolution condemning Iran aggression

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Kuwait welcomed the adoption by consensus of a United Nations Human Rights Council resolution addressing the human rights implications of what it described as "unjustified Iranian attacks" targeting the GCC states and Jordan.

In a statement on Thursday, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the resolution, introduced through a joint diplomatic initiative by GCC countries and Jordan, reflects a unified international stance rejecting such attacks and condemning the targeting of sovereign states not party to the conflict.

The resolution highlights the serious violations of fundamental rights and the direct threat posed to regional and international peace and security, it added.

The ministry praised the resolution's firm condemnation of attacks on civilians and vital infrastructure, which resulted in casualties and significant material damage.

It also commended the international consensus underscoring the need for the Islamic Republic of Iran to comply with its legal obligations, foremost among them

respecting state sovereignty and territorial integrity, immediately ceasing hostilities, ensuring non-recurrence, and assuming responsibility for compensation for the resulting damages.

The statement further noted that the strong international support for the resolution demonstrates firm solidarity with GCC states and Jordan, and complements broader diplomatic efforts that led to the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026).

Kuwait stressed the importance of establishing effective international follow-up mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the resolution's provisions, in a manner that upholds the rule of law and reinforces the principles of the UN Charter.

The ministry reiterated Kuwait's commitment, in its capacity as a member of the Human Rights Council for the 2024-2026 term, to continue playing an active role in safeguarding the international human rights system and working with global partners to ensure the implementation of council resolutions, thereby strengthening global stability.

Iran attacks on Gulf and Arab countries rights breach: MWL

JEDDAH, March 26, (KUNA): The Muslim World League (MWL) expressed on Thursday appreciation for the unanimous adoption by the United Nations Human Rights Council of a resolution addressing the consequences of the blatant criminal Iranian aggression and its serious repercussions on human rights.

The Iranian aggression targeted Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan.

In a statement issued on behalf of the League's councils, academies, and global bodies, Secretary-General and Chairman of the Organization of Muslim Scholars, Mohammad Al-Issa commended what he described as the just stance taken by the Council, its unequivocal condemnation of the Iranian aggression, and its call for an immediate halt to the attacks and ensuring accountability.

Al-Issa highlighted the grave violations and unprecedented dangerous repercussions on human rights resulting from the aggression, not only across the region but worldwide. He also recalled a warning by the World Food Programme that around 45 million additional people could fall into acute hunger as a consequence of what he termed this brutal criminal aggression.

He reiterated that the unanimous adoption of the resolution sends a clear message to the Iranian regime reflecting a unified international stance rejecting and condemning its attacks.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Travel and Tourism Agencies affirmed that Kuwait's aviation sector continues to operate with high efficiency through the integration of roles among all carriers, led by Kuwait Airways as the national carrier. Federation Chairman Mohammad Al-Mutairi told KUNA Thursday that booking and travel procedures remain available and accessible through various airlines operating in the market.

Al-Mutairi noted that the aviation sector's high efficiency in meeting passenger needs comes despite the exceptional circumstances facing the region and the direct challenges affecting travel movement. He affirmed that the current phase requires a higher level of coordination and integration among all components of the sector to enhance market stability and maintain service continuity.

Al-Mutairi expressed sincere appreciation to Saudi Arabia for its cooperation and for opening its airports to support travel movement, noting that this has helped ensure continuity of transportation.

No respite for traders violating price tag list

Report if any shopkeeper overcharging: MoCI

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The inspection teams at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) continued their inspection of shops and markets to apprehend violators, ensure market stability and protect consumers.

The ministry revealed in a press statement that the violations uncovered in the gold market include refusing to sell, selling at prices other than those advertised, and demanding large quantities. Five violation reports were recorded at the gold market in the Capital Governorate.

The ministry explained that the field campaign is part of its ongoing efforts to monitor commercial establishments'

compliance with applicable regulations and laws, ensure consumer rights are protected, and identify illegal practices that affect market transparency.

It added that these measures were taken in response to complaints about some shops refusing to sell gold except in large quantities.

It affirmed that the inspection teams took legal action against violators in accordance with applicable laws, contributing to market regulation and preventing illegal practices.

It urged consumers to report violations or observations related to sales through official channels, confirming the continuation of its monitoring campaigns in various markets to guarantee consumer protection and proper conduct of commercial transactions.

Official data revealed that the inspection teams from the ministry recorded 322 violations since the outbreak of war in Iran. These violations were found in multiple sectors, including gold shops, supermarkets, juice

and refreshment shops, meat markets and water tanker services.

The violations included artificially inflated prices, commercial fraud, underweight products and non-compliance with regulations, while 10 warnings were issued to several violating establishments.

The campaigns led to the discovery of violations in various governorates, with Farwaniya and Ahmadi Governorates recording the highest number of violations, followed by Jahra, the Capital, Hawally and Mubarak Al-Kabeer.

The ministry also implemented 10 closure orders, including central markets and shops, in addition to the immediate closure of an unlicensed warehouse and discovery of violations related to improper storage.

These campaigns are in coordination with the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN), particularly in the Capital, where a number of violations related to food safety were recorded.

6 days remain to hand over illegal arms: MoI

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Kuwait's Interior Ministry on Thursday reminded the public that six days remain until the deadline for the surrender of unlicensed firearms, ammunition and fireworks, which elapses on Wednesday April 1.

Underlining the simplicity of the process, ministry spokesman Brigadier

General Nasser Bouslaib told a news briefing that failure to surrender these unlicensed arms before the deadline passes would result in firm legal action.

The spokesman went on to say that Kuwaiti explosive ordnance disposal teams dealt with 15 reports related to falling debris resulting from defensive

interception operations over the past 24 hours, bringing the total to 565, while air raid sirens were activated some 142 times since the start of the Iranian aggression.

Interior ministry personnel are working round the clock in a bid to safeguard the nation's security and stability, added the spokesman.

'100pc staff working round the clock'

MoH says no letup in services provided

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Ministry of Health (MoH) has reaffirmed that all healthcare facilities, at every level, will continue operating at 100 percent staffing capacity around the clock under the current circumstances, ensuring the uninterrupted provision of medical services.

The ministry explained that this measure stems from its national re-

sponsibility and the unique nature of the healthcare sector, which is directly linked to saving lives.

General hospitals, primary healthcare centers, and specialized medical facilities are continuing their regular operating hours and are fully ready to meet patients' needs. This reflects its commitment to providing continuous healthcare with high efficiency and quality, enhancing the system's ability to respond to various devel-

opments, and contributing to public health protection and patient safety.

The ministry also commended the huge efforts exerted by the medical, nursing, technical, administrative, pharmaceutical, and engineering staff, as well as emergency medical teams, recognizing their pivotal role during this period and affirming its commitment to providing a safe and supportive work environment in acknowledgment of their frontline efforts.

Other Voices

Identity ... and the betrayal of nations

By Ahmad alsarraf

AS the Algerian writer Jihan Bahlouli aptly puts it, "From birth, we are given names and acquire identities, religions, sects, and languages, but a person is not limited to these labels."

Beneath them lies a complex mosaic of roots, origins, and experiences that stretch across time and space. Human identity is shaped by multiple factors such as hereditary, cultural, and experiential, interacting with society, time, and individual experiences."

Identity, therefore, is not fixed but a continuous process of formation, combining past and present as well as inheritance and personal experience. How can a person truly define themselves when their identity is fluid and complex?

How can a society understand its members when each personality is a mosaic of origins and experiences? A name is merely a label that prevents anonymity.

One might bear a purely Islamic name yet discover, by chance or research, that their parents belonged to different languages or religions.

The same applies to lineage and family memory, which provide a sense of connection to the past but are not always accurate. There is, for example, no definitive evidence to support claims of religious affiliation or belonging to specific civilizations.

Even physical appearance alone does not determine identity.

A person may carry blood from multiple cultures yet feel a strong sense of belonging to their local community and daily life, living according to the customs and traditions in which they were raised.

This demonstrates that identity is not the direct result of biological inheritance, but rather the outcome of a continuous interaction between the body, personal experience, and social and cultural belonging.

In any society, people experience multiple identities through their languages. They may speak their ancestral language at home, a national language at school, and a foreign language at work or elsewhere.

This movement between languages allows them to explore different facets of their personalities, engage with diverse communities, and experience varied ways of communicating with the world.



alsarraf

This makes identity more fluid, richer, and inherently more complex.

Culture is not merely a collection of traditions inherited from our ancestors, but it is a living space where individual and collective experiences converge, shaping how we live our daily lives through customs, cuisine, music, and more.

Wars, trade, migration, and colonialism have all shaped human history, making individuals a continuous product of cultural and ethnic blending.

Every person carries within them the traces of a long history of movement and integration. Migration was not merely a spatial shift but a process of cultural and social exchange that intertwined identities over the centuries.

In any Gulf state, an individual may embody Arab, Indian, Persian, Turkish, and even Western European heritage, reflecting successive migrations and colonial history. This is evidence of the absence of ethnic or cultural purity. Human identity is always a mosaic of diverse roots and experiences.

However, this diversity and mixing can sometimes create feelings of alienation or internal division. An individual may at times feel detached from any single culture or struggle to balance multiple affiliations.

In this context, identity becomes an ongoing process of adaptation and adjustment, as the individual seeks to reconcile their roots and personal history with the surrounding social and cultural reality.

The journey of self-discovery, therefore, is dynamic and constantly evolving. Identity is shaped by a complex web of personal experiences and collective backgrounds. It is never fixed or defined solely by belonging to a particular culture or language.

Individuals live their daily lives in diverse environments where cultures intersect, customs overlap, and personal experiences interact. In this way, a person's identity emerges as a living blend of multiple affiliations.

Identity is not merely a registration on an identity card or belonging to a specific community; it is an ongoing process of adaptation and reconstruction. Individuals seek to reconcile their varied experiences with their sense of self, discovering who they are through a continuous dialogue between past and present, between their roots and openness to the new.

For this reason, labeling those accused of betraying their homelands as "ungrateful" may be misleading. The reality is far more complex.



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Kuwait has a 'Protector', spare us your animosity

"I SET aside some time, and I wouldn't say I 'stole' it, because for us older people, time stretches to accommodate everything. Our free moments are longer than the Burj Khalifa in beloved Dubai. The purpose of this 'fuss' was to find the smallest countries on the planet, and surprisingly, not all the Arabian Gulf countries, which fall under the banner of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), are considered small according to the international classification of countries," Kuwaiti journalist Hassan Ali Karam wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.



"Even more surprising are independent countries whose territories cover only a few square kilometers. Some of these nations are members of the United Nations with thriving economies and happy populations. They face no widespread poverty, no external aggression, and no attempts at annexation by neighboring countries. Take Liechtenstein, for example, situated in the heart of Europe, it is a wealthy country whose people live happily, free from poverty and the threat of occupation by the larger countries that surround it. How fortunate they are to have such wonderful neighbors.

"There are more than 40 countries considered small yet fully independent and full members of the United Nations, in addition to even smaller nations that are outside the UN. What is remarkable, and almost extraordinary, is that all these countries enjoy safety and security. They face no external ambitions or aggression, no theft of land or water, no threats of annexation, and no condescending remarks from larger neighbors about their size.

"All these countries live in peace and security, with full respect for their sovereignty. These small nations have no appetite for aggression or territorial expansion, unlike in the Arab world, my homeland, where ambitions seem to come from every direction, day and night.

"Perhaps the Arabs still carry the legacy of raiding and attacking their neighbors, as the poet said, 'Sometimes we attack our brother if we find no one but our brother.' The brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait would not have occurred if not for this deep-rooted recklessness. Unfortunately, despite the devastation of the invasion, the wars, the sanctions, and Iraq's subjection under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, there are still those who eagerly anticipate another unlawful attack on Kuwait, based on false pretenses and devoid of any legal or factual justification.

"In the ongoing war between US-Israel on one side, and Iran on the other, missiles and drones have struck the rooftops of Gulf citizens, who have no stake in this war. All that matters is that these countries serve as mediators between Iran and Israel. Yet missiles from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard continue to fall on the Gulf, while no attacks reach America thousands of kilometers away.

"Despite the aggression and damage inflicted upon them, the Gulf states carefully assessed the situation. Still, the Iraqis persisted in their attacks, disregarding neighborly relations and the strong ties that bind the two sides of the Gulf and the region. Some in the Arab world viewed the Iranian strikes as an opportunity for gloating, offering excuses, and shedding crocodile tears. Others rushed to revive outdated and ineffective proposals, claiming that the Gulf states are incapable of defending themselves.

"To these people, I say - Spare us your malice. The Gulf is safe, protected by a Merciful Lord. It has no need for failed experiments that appear merciful on the surface but are truly destructive. The Gulf will remain secure as long as the Arabs remain secure."

Also:

"The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states represent a shining example of Arab unity and solidarity, with positions that reflect the authenticity of Arab identity and the deep fraternal bonds uniting their peoples and leaders," Kuwaiti lawyer Abdul-Fallah Al-Hajri wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Throughout various challenges, GCC countries have shown that joint action is not a temporary choice, but a firm approach based on cooperation, integration, and the continuous pursuit of the common good without discrimination.

"Since their establishment, GCC has recognized that the region's challenges require unity and coordinated efforts. They have therefore worked to strengthen the foundations of cooperation in various political, economic, and security fields.

"As a result, the GCC states have become a cohesive entity capable of confronting crises with wisdom and resilience, guided by the vision of

their leaders who place the interests of their nations above all else.

"What distinguishes the GCC system is the wisdom of its leaders, who guide its course with a spirit of responsibility and balance, placing the region's security and stability and the well-being of its people at the forefront.

"The leaders of the GCC countries have played a pivotal role in unifying ranks and strengthening solidarity, thus contributing to the building of a strong Gulf system founded on trust, integration, and joint action.

"In times of crisis, the reality of this unity becomes even clearer, as the Gulf states stand together with one voice, combining their efforts to confront every brutal aggression that targets religion and homeland and threatens the security of innocent people and the stability of societies.

"This unified stance reflects a deep awareness of the seriousness of the challenges and a firm belief that the strength of the Gulf lies in its unity and cohesion.

"This solidarity is not limited to security aspects alone, but extends to economic, developmental, and humanitarian fields.

"The GCC countries work as one team to achieve sustainable development, enhance stability, and provide a dignified life for their people.

"The Gulf states contribute to supporting humanitarian causes, providing aid, and strengthening the values of cooperation and mutual support among nations.

"The unity of the GCC countries represents a strong fortress against challenges and a true reflection of authentic Arab values. This unity, under wise leadership and with united peoples, will remain a guarantee for a more secure, stable, and prosperous future, no matter how difficult the circumstances or how great the challenges. May God protect our leaders and the peoples of the Gulf from all harm."



"Why should I trust Arabs? This question may seem strange but it is one that many Kuwaitis and citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ask," columnist Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"So why should I trust the Arabs, even though some of them supported Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait? After Kuwait's liberation, these same people became our friends. Indeed, some Arabs supported Kuwait and paid the price. Others supported Kuwait without expecting anything in return.

"For decades, the Gulf states as a whole have been targeted by numerous campaigns from Arab countries whose governments maintained diplomatic relations while allowing their media to vilify the Gulf Arabs. We endured much from them, yet in times of need, some of those same countries turned against us, even expressing joy when Iran launched missiles at us. We fully understand that Arab solidarity is a strategic necessity. But when have the Arabs truly shown solidarity with one another and worked to present a unified stance? Was it over the Palestinian cause, the invasion of Kuwait, or the invasion of Lebanon? There are many questions in this context.

"Aren't Arabs often guided by national interests when taking a stance on any issue? If supporting another Arab state conflicts with those interests, they may choose to oppose it instead. Let's be frank... In 1990, only the Gulf states stood with Kuwait because they understood that their shared destiny was non-negotiable. They opened their hearts and homes to the Kuwaitis and shed their blood in defense of Kuwait. On the other hand, some countries haggled over the price of their aid to Kuwait.

"Frankly, had it not been for the Gulf states and their unwavering stance, the world might have forgotten the Kuwait crisis altogether. I feel deep bitterness as I write these words, yet the truth, painful though it may be, must be spoken if we, as Arabs, hope to identify the root of the problem. Perhaps solutions exist that could shift this perspective. Today, the Arab League has become little more than a public relations body, failing to take the necessary steps to activate the joint Arab defense agreements.

"For eight decades, we have dreamed of achieving the Arab unity we used to hear about in our national songs and poems. Unfortunately, these slogans have never endured a crisis; they quickly collapsed, revealing themselves as words without action. Indeed, this war was a great test. It represented the straw that broke the camel's back. I end my article by returning to the question once more - Why should I trust Arabs?"

– Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

Trio denied bail for 'producing' misleading clip

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: A judicial ruling denied bail for two citizens and a Colombian accused of producing a video, which disseminated wrong information, disparaged current affairs and compromised national interests, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These individuals will be in detention as the investigation proceeds.

This came after the Cybercrime Department and State Security Service at the Interior Ministry jointly apprehended the suspects.

The arrests followed the discovery of a vi-

ral social media video featuring provocative content and inaccurate data intended to spark public disturbance.

The legal charges filed against them include propagating false news, detrimentally impacting public welfare, and improperly using communication technology.

Pledge to run transport, logistics sector 'on schedule' despite war

Food, medicines lifeline of Gulf states: Al-Budaiwi

RIYADH, March 26, (KUNA): The GCC Secretary-General, Jassem Al-Budaiwi, emphasized that the transport and logistics sector represents a cornerstone of the Gulf countries' economic security and a key driver in enhancing the resilience of their economies under all circumstances.

Al-Budaiwi made the remarks during the extraordinary meeting of GCC Ministers of Transport and Communications, held via video conference under the chairmanship of Bahraini Minister of Transport and Communications Sheikh Abdullah Al Khalifa, the current session's chair.

The meeting addressed the current situation, its impact on supply chains, the readiness of land border crossings, and operational chal-

lenges, including activating the Green Lanes Protocol, utilizing alternative ports, and ensuring safe transport routes.

The GCC Chief highlighted that the transport sector is the vital artery ensuring the continuous flow of strategic goods, including food, medicine, and fuel, across land, air, and sea entry points, maintaining market stability and uninterrupted supply chains even in the face of the toughest challenges.

Al-Budaiwi noted that the escalating Iranian military aggression against GCC countries represents not a temporary circumstance but a real test of the member states' ability to protect their assets and maintain the continuity of critical sectors efficiently and

steadily.

He underscored that more than 35 intensive coordination meetings have been held since the onset of the crisis, reflecting advanced institutional readiness and shared awareness of the situation's requirements.

The current stage requires enhanced field-level coordination and rapid implementation of measures to achieve a more efficient and flexible collective response, he added.

Furthermore, he stressed that maintaining smooth land, sea, and air transport is no longer optional but a strategic necessity, requiring proactive measures to enhance border readiness and mitigate any potential impact on trade and supply chains.

Al-Budaiwi shed light on the need for clarity in vision, swift decision-making, and execution, expressing confidence that joint efforts will produce tangible results that enhance transport sector readiness.

Judiciary reforms key

Lawyers back setting up of special 'terror' courts

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The development of criminal justice mechanisms is now necessary to improve the way of dealing with security-related cases in light of the escalating regional tensions and the announcements made by the security authorities on the arrest of groups involved in activities that threaten State security.

Legal practitioners have expressed full support for the decision to establish specialized criminal courts to handle State security crimes and acts of terrorism. It is considered an organizational step toward enhancing the efficiency of the judiciary and expediting the resolution of sensitive cases without compromising the guarantees of justice.

Attorney Fadhil Al-Basman pointed out that the current situation necessitates adopting more specialized and flexible judicial procedures due to escalating security challenges. He said the developments in the region and the discovery of the abovementioned groups require specialized courts with the ability to handle State security cases in a speedy and highly efficient manner.

He confirmed that the decision boosts the capability of the judiciary to keep pace with security developments without compromising the legal guarantees that ensure the fairness and integrity of procedures.

Moreover, Attorney Mohammad Ahmad Al-Rifai asserted that the decision is a realistic response to the current situation. He stated that expediting the adjudication of State security cases is an urgent necessity in light of the regional developments, indicating this is achieved through judicial specialization.

Al-Rifai pointed out that the new system instills procedural discipline and provides a clear and decisive path for dealing with sensitive cases.

He added that the arrest of terrorist cells proves the high level of vigilance on the part of the security authorities, hence, the need for the same level of judicial readiness.

He explained that allocating specialized courts to handle State security cases will reduce the litigation period and guarantee deterrence of serious crimes.

He stressed that the current situation requires striking a delicate balance between firmness in confronting crimes that affect State security and preserving judicial guarantees. He indicated that this approach is translated practically through expediting proceedings, while maintaining the foundations of justice.

He went on to say that assigning these cases to specialized courts will improve the quality of judgments and keep pace with the nature of crimes that affect the security of society. He asserted that this approach embodies a legislative vision aimed at raising the efficiency of the judicial system in dealing with serious crimes in order to achieve prompt justice and guarantee stability of the State and the safety of society.



Al-Rifai



Dr. Al-Basman

Kuwaiti woman, Indian jailed long-term in jewelry theft case

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Court of Appeals concluded the theft and money laundering case in a well-known jewelry company, sentencing an Indian salesman to 10 years in prison and a Kuwaiti woman to five years, and fined them KD809,000 – the value of the stolen items.

The court acquitted the woman's daughter, overturning the ruling of a lower court that sentenced the daughter to three years in prison due to insufficient evidence.

Case files indicate that the Indian defendant, a salesman at the jewelry store, stole gold jewelry worth more than KD800,000 for about two years, in collusion with the Kuwaiti woman and her daughter.

The investigation revealed that the defendant sold the stolen goods below market value to a Pakistani who is a fugitive and was sentenced to 10 years in prison in absentia.

During the interrogation, the Indian defendant said there was an agreement between him, the citizen and her daughter to steal jewelry. He claimed that the citizen made him believe she would marry him to push him to continue the crime, as he transferred the money he obtained to them.



Officer jailed 4 years: The Court of Cassation on Thursday upheld the ruling of a lower court that sentenced a security officer to four years in prison with hard labor and fined him

KD5,000 for attempting to smuggle narcotics to an inmate at the Central Prison.

The court also imposed a similar four-year prison term on the intermediary (the bribe-giver) and fined him KD10,000, while the prisoner was acquitted.

Case files indicate that the narcotics were found in the possession of the security officer during a search conducted by Special Forces inside the prison.

Investigations conducted by the Drug Control General Department revealed that the officer obtained the narcotics from the intermediary to deliver them to the prisoner. The intermediary was found to be involved in drug trafficking.



Are you going to work?: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) is closely monitoring employee attendance during the current circumstances while taking into account any exceptional conditions that employees may be experiencing in their work, reports Al-Rai daily quoting informed sources.

They explained that attendance is monitored in all government entities through the fingerprint system, which employees are required to use to ensure the continuity of work and service delivery. In cases where the fingerprint system malfunctions, preventing an employee from verifying their attendance, the employee's direct supervisor will submit a report to the Administrative Affairs Department of the workplace. The report is then forwarded to CSC to verify the employee's presence during the designated hours.

Other Voices

Legal boundaries of market conduct in Kuwait amid recent gold price volatility

When gold shops stop selling: Risk management or legal breach?

By Dr. Fawaz Khaled Alkhateeb

As gold prices recently declined with notable volatility, a visible market reaction has emerged: some gold retailers have temporarily suspended sales.

This has raised a critical question - is this a legitimate business decision, or does it cross into unlawful market behavior?

From a commercial perspective, the explanation is straightforward. Gold traders often acquire inventory at higher prices. Selling during a sudden downturn may result in immediate losses. In such cases, pausing sales reflects a risk management decision driven by market uncertainty, price instability, and the need to reassess inventory

valuation.

In principle, this falls within the scope of lawful commercial discretion.

However, the legal framework in Kuwait introduces a crucial distinction.

The suspension of sales is not illegal per se.

But it becomes a violation when accompanied by conduct that undermines market fairness.

This includes:

- Concealing goods to restrict supply
- Refusing to sell without legitimate justification



Dr. Al-Khateeb

■ Creating artificial scarcity to influence prices

■ Providing misleading information to consumers

Such practices may fall under the Law on the Supervision of Trade and the Commercial Fraud Law both designed to protect consumers and preserve market integrity.

Where violations occur, the consequences can be serious, including fines, closure of the business, confiscation of goods, and, in certain cases, imprisonment.

It is equally important to address a widespread misconception: that a retailer who stops selling possesses privileged insight into future price movements.

In reality, these decisions are typically defensive, not predictive. They reflect an attempt to manage exposure not an indication of hidden knowledge.

For consumers and investors, the takeaway is clear. A refusal to sell does not necessarily signal opportunity or shortage. It requires informed judgment, price comparison, and an understanding of broader market dynamics.

At the same time, any suspicion of manipulation should be reported through official channels, that is to MOC as market transparency is a shared responsibility.

Ultimately, the issue is not whether traders manage risk but how they do so. Because the line between a commercial decision and a legal violation is defined not by intent alone but by its impact on market fairness.



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Gulf states, Jordan stand for self-defense, stability

Kuwait-led GCC hails UN resolution condemning Iran's regional attacks

GENEVA, March 26, (KUNA): The GCC Group in Geneva on Wednesday welcomed the adoption by the United Nations Human Rights Council of a draft resolution condemning Iranian attacks targeting countries in the region.



Al-Hayen

This came in a statement delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen on behalf of the Gulf Group before the UN Human Rights Council following the latter's adoption of a draft resolution concerning "the human rights implications of the attacks carried out by Iran against a number of countries in the region."

Ambassador Al-Hayen stressed that the consensus adoption of this resolution "reflects the spirit of cooperation that characterizes the Council when addressing issues with direct and serious implications for human rights and reflects a

shared recognition of the importance of addressing the consequences of these attacks particularly with regard to the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and ensuring respect for relevant international obligations.

He pointed out that this context that the resolution addresses the condemnation of Iranian aggression against the Gulf Cooperation Council states and Jordan and the serious repercussions resulting from it on individuals' enjoyment of their fundamental rights.

He also reaffirmed the importance of the Council's continued engagement in following up on this issue within its mandate.

Ambassador Al-Hayen expressed the appreciation of the Gulf Arab states for more than one hundred countries that co-sponsored the draft resolution reflecting the breadth of international support it received and the wide joint sponsorship it enjoyed.

He also conveyed the GCC will to build on this consensus and to continue working with all delegations to strengthen the Council's role in addressing human rights issues in a spirit of shared responsibility and constructive cooperation.

The State of Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi

Arabia, Qatar and Jordan Wednesday echoed their emphatic condemnation of the blatant Iranian attacks as a flagrant breach of their sovereignty, territorial integrity, international law, international humanitarian law and the UN Charter.

In a joint statement, they said that these attacks, whether directly or through Iran's proxies and the armed factions it supports in the region, mainly the attacks launched by Iran-linked armed factions from Iraq against the region's countries and their infrastructure facilities, mark a breach of international laws and conventions.

They also described these attacks as a flagrant violation of Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026), which explicitly demands Iran to immediately and unconditionally halt any aggression or threat to neighboring countries, including the use of proxies.

The countries appreciated their fraternal relations with Iraq, calling on the Iraqi government to adopt the necessary measures to immediately cease the attacks launched by factions, militias and armed groups from its territory towards neighboring countries, so as to maintain fraternal relations and stave off further escalation.

MoE begins home textbook delivery

Step boosts distance learning

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: In accordance with the directives of Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei to guarantee the continuity of the educational process and provide all the necessary school supplies for students under all circumstances, the Ministry of Education has started implementing a comprehensive plan to deliver the second batch of the second semester textbooks to the homes of students, reports Al-Seyassah daily.



Al-Tabtabaei

addresses and coordinating transportation and distribution as per the well-defined schedules in order to guarantee equitable distribution and swift completion.

On the other hand, Ahmed Al-Damkhi, acting Director of the General Guidance for Scouting Education, revealed that volunteer teams of Scouts, Brownies and Guides started distributing books in the Capital Educational District, after organizing and verifying student data.

He said the distribution process will be gradually extended to the remaining educational districts according to the organizational mechanisms and comprehensive field plans.

He added that around 500 service points have been allocated for transporting textbooks via school buses, which have been equipped to support the distribution process.

He emphasized that this effort reflects the high level of coordination and integration between various sectors in the ministry and the field teams involved in the implementation.

He stated that the ministry is keen on activating the role of its youth volunteer teams and leverage their national capabilities to support field efforts.

He pointed out this supplements the use of available human and logistical resources, fostering teamwork and national responsibility, while underscoring the ministry's commitment to provide the students with a safe and stable learning environment.

He affirmed that the distribution process is proceeding according to organized procedures that guarantee safety and smooth operation, with continuous field monitoring to ensure the plan is implemented at the highest level of efficiency.

He asserted that the teams are working together with a unified spirit to achieve the common goal of serving students and supporting their educational journey.

The ministry appreciated the efforts of all those working in the educational field, volunteers and supporting entities that contribute to the success of this initiative, stressing that "the education of our students will remain a national priority that will not stop and that the challenges, no matter what they are, will not hinder the progress of education, but will rather constitute an incentive to redouble efforts and enhance innovation in providing educational services in a way that fulfills the aspirations of the State and serves the interest of the nation and its children."



MoE staff distribute second semester textbooks to students' homes, ensuring safe and uninterrupted learning. Ministry of Education photo

Combined deficit hits KD 421m

PADA, KFF 2026/27 budgets show major revenue-expenditure gaps

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Public Authority for the Disabled Affairs (PADA) has estimated its expenditures at KD 213.792 million and revenues at KD 1.147 million for the fiscal year 2026-2027, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The excess of expenditures over revenues, according to Decree Law No. 48/2026, which approved PADA's budget for the fiscal year 2026/2027 and was published in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm" on Sunday, amounts to KD 212.645 million.

Payroll compensation at PADA

was recorded at KD 37.09 million, a decrease of KD 1.008 million compared to the previous year's budget.

The budget for goods and services increased by KD 707,000, while social allowances decreased by approximately KD 2 million.

Meanwhile, the expenditures of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), according to Decree Law No. 49/2026, were estimated at KD 216.834 million, with revenues estimated at KD 7.916 million.

Expenditures are projected to exceed revenues by approximately KD 208.918 million.



Book for One-night (Inclusive of breakfast)	Queen Cabana (2 persons), 2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons).	BHD 76.230 net BHD 170.247 net
Book for Two nights (Inclusive of breakfast) (Non-refundable/Non-Cancellable)	Queen Cabana (2 persons) per night, 2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons) per night.	BHD 65.000 net BHD 145.000 net
Book for Three nights (Inclusive of breakfast) (Non-refundable/Non-Cancellable)	Queen Cabana (2 persons) per night, 2 Bedroom Chalet (4 persons) per night.	BHD 57.173 net BHD 128.000 net

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

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LOCAL



Residents brave heavy rains in Kuwait City, holding umbrellas to navigate waterlogged streets.



A vehicle splashes through a flooded street as heavy rainfall disrupts traffic across Kuwait.

Kuwait, Spain FMs discuss growing regional tensions

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, held a phone call with Spain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, José Manuel Albares, to discuss the rapid military escalation in the region.

According to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs press release, the talks focused on the serious repercussions of recent Iranian aggression against regional countries.

Both ministers expressed deep concern over the "alarming consequences" these developments pose to international security and stability.

Photos by Samer Shaqair

Al-Mashaan urges swift action and full coordination

Public Works Minister inspects rain situation

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan on Thursday inspected the Sabah Al-Ahmad residential area to weigh the latest rainfall developments and to monitor emergency teams' response.

In a press statement while touring the area, the minister underlined her commitment to directly overseeing the work being done and lauded the efforts of the teams trying to manage water accumulations and ensure smooth traffic flow.

She directed that maximum efforts be exerted and all potential utilized to immediately deal with any rain impacts, stressing the significance of continued coordination among relevant bodies to ensure the safety of citizens and residents.



Ministry of Public Works photo

Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan inspects Sabah Al-Ahmad area to monitor developments in the rainy weather situation.

Kuwait Red Crescent upholds aid mission amid difficult conditions

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Director General of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Fawaz Al-Mazroui affirmed that KRCS will continue providing aid to needy families despite the challenges and current circumstances facing Kuwait and the region, through ongoing coordination and cooperation with government agencies and relevant institutions both inside and outside the country, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a statement to Kuwait TV, Al-Mazroui explained that KRCS continues to receive those in need and provide support based on available resources. The current circumstances will not hinder its humanitarian role or diminish its commitment to vulnerable and needy groups.



Al-Mazroui

Meanwhile, the official spokesperson of KRCS and Head of Media, Ghanem Al-Dama, explained that since the onset of events on February 28, KRCS has activated its emergency plan to unify efforts.

This was carried out under the direct guidance of the Board Chairman of KRCS, Ambassador Khaled Al-Mughamis, with continuous monitoring to develop plans,

improve work mechanisms, and enhance coordination with various government efforts.

Coordination with government agencies has included preparing accommodation facilities, providing logistical services, organizing workshops for volunteers, and holding First Aid courses for both volunteers and the public, with the aim of raising the level of preparedness and enhancing the response to emergency situations.

Continued from Page 1

Iran dreams

In this regard, we are not only talking about compensation for damages, but it also involves determining the fate of the entire region, including Iranian influence in some Arab countries, confronting the military capabilities of the Iranian regime, and dismantling the network of Iranian-backed terrorist groups.

On several occasions, I have spoken extensively about the suffering the Gulf region has endured, and continues to endure, due to Iranian interference since 1979.

Consequently, returning to square one after the end of this war would mean the region can never be truly secure, especially given that the Persians' political and historical doctrine is based on a sense of superiority over their neighbors. From this perspective, there is no distinction between Iran and Israel.

Therefore, to break the deadlock, both Iran and Israel must be compelled to cease their attacks, and any engagement with the Gulf states in particular, and the Arab world in general, must be based on a simultaneous shift in the political and historical doctrines of both countries.

On this basis, the Gulf states cannot accept the principle of exporting the revolution, enshrined in the Iranian constitution, which the countries and peoples of the region have long opposed and which has inflicted heavy costs over the past 47 years.

The ongoing threats from Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon, posed by Iranian-backed terrorist groups, cannot be tolerated.

Similarly, Tel Aviv must abandon its Greater Israel project to allow the region to live free from wars and anxieties caused by expansionist ambitions rooted in flawed political and historical ideologies.

Thus, the Gulf states, with their economic power, are fully capable of changing the regional equation. It is inconceivable that they should not be the primary actors in any settlement, so that this war becomes the last in the region.

Iranian arrogance over the past five decades has brought widespread devastation to the region, and this cannot go unanswered at both regional and international levels.

If Iran fails to recognize that international maritime corridors in the region are governed by international law and uphold freedom of navigation, the international community must act to restrain and discipline it, while preserving the Gulf states' rightful priority in determining the future of the region as a whole.

Why Arab

Arab public memory is not a blank page. From the 2017 blockade of Qatar, and the criminalization of sympathy toward it, to the economic and diplomatic punishment of Lebanon in 2021, to normalization agreements that many Arabs saw as a break from long-standing Gulf consensus, a pattern accumulated. For many across the Arab world, the message was clear; solidarity is demanded when the Gulf needs it, but not always extended.

That history matters. Political disputes were too often allowed to spill into media incitement, sweeping judgments against entire societies, and rhetoric marked less by fairness than by scolding and vindication. Such messages do not disappear when a crisis ends. They linger in public memory and resurface when a new crisis erupts and collective solidarity is suddenly expected.

None of this excuses Iran, nor does it blur the line between aggressor and victim. Responsibility for the crime lies first with the one who committed it. But anyone seeking broader Arab solidarity against Iran must also confront the ugly realistic

political and media environments that helped erode trust long before this moment.

Consensus cannot be summoned by outrage alone. It must be rebuilt through credibility, consistency, and an honest reckoning with the reflection of past doings.

String of

It emphasized that the security, sovereignty and national stability of the State of Kuwait are inviolable and non-negotiable.

It stressed that this cell's actions are highly dangerous and a grave betrayal of the nation, as they directly targeted Kuwait's security, symbols and leaders, and attempted to undermine its stability.

These successive security operations demonstrate that the security forces rely on proactive measures like meticulous monitoring and analysis, thereby, thwarting dangerous plots and protecting the country from their repercussions.

These operations also reflect a high level of professionalism and readiness, reinforcing public confidence in the security establishment's ability to confront challenges.

On March 16, the ministry announced that the State Security system, following meticulous and intensive surveillance operations, uncovered a terrorist cell comprising 14 Kuwaiti citizens and two Lebanese nationals. This cell was operating within an organized sabotage plot aimed at spreading chaos and disrupting public order.

The raids, conducted after obtaining warrants, resulted in the seizure of firearms and ammunition, a weapon intended for assassinations, encrypted communication devices, drones, flags, images of terrorist organizations, and other materials confirming the dangerous nature and hostile intentions of the group.

The second operation is another preemptive strike against sleeper cells. The State Security system thwarted a terrorist plot targeting vital installations. Investigations revealed that the cell members -- 10 Kuwaiti citizens -- underwent training abroad, in camps affiliated with the terrorist organization.

This training included weapons use and drone operation, all in preparation for carrying out sabotage operations designed to sow fear and terror in society. The defendants gave detailed confessions confirming the scale and severity of the plot.

Meanwhile, social media platforms were abuzz with pride and appreciation for the role played by the ministry, clarifying the full picture through daily media briefings, the State Security system's successful operations in apprehending terrorist cells affiliated with the Hezbollah terrorist group, and the swift and highly efficient handling of reports.

Citizens expressed their gratitude to the personnel of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, Kuwait National Guard, Kuwait Fire Force and all State agencies for their role in protecting the country from the treacherous Iranian aggression.

Amid these developments, the Kuwaiti Cabinet on Wednesday approved a draft decree-law to establish specialized criminal courts for state security and terrorism cases. The meeting, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace, referred the decree to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for final ratification.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on the recent counterterrorism successes, noting that the arrested suspects had attempted to share coordinates of vital national sites with foreign parties. The

Cabinet condemned the cell's activities as "a severe act of treason" and praised the "vigilance and professionalism" of the security services in safeguarding national stability—particularly in light of regional hostilities since February 28.

Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait described the Cabinet-approved draft decree-law as a "qualitative leap" aimed at expediting the adjudication of sensitive security cases.

The proposed law establishes a two-tier judicial framework—specialized circuits within the Court of First Instance and the Court of Appeals—with final rulings issued at the appellate level. Only Kuwaiti judges will preside over these courts, reinforcing national confidence in judicial sovereignty.

Al-Sumait added that all pending state security cases will be transferred to these new courts once the law is enacted. Appeals filed prior to its enforcement will continue under existing judicial procedures to maintain legal continuity.

Regional and International Solidarity

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemned the foiled plot, with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan expressing "full solidarity" with Kuwait. In a statement, Sheikh Abdullah commended Kuwaiti authorities for their "efficiency and vigilance" and reaffirmed that Kuwait's security is "an integral part" of the UAE's own.

Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also denounced the attempted attacks, calling them "an unacceptable attempt to threaten Kuwait's sovereignty and stability" and reaffirmed Amman's steadfast support for Kuwait's security efforts.

In other development, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a circular adding 16 individuals—eight Kuwaiti citizens, four non-Kuwaitis, two Iranians, and two Lebanese nationals—to the national terrorism list, in line with Ministerial Resolution No. 176/2025 and UN Security Council measures under Chapter VII.

The directive mandates the immediate freezing of listed individuals' assets and prohibits providing them with any financial or economic resources, directly or indirectly. Institutions must notify the competent committee within 24 hours of enforcing the sanctions and provide detailed information on the assets and actions taken.

Streets to

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Works continues to raise its level of preparedness to the maximum in view of the ongoing heavy rains by deploying emergency teams in different parts of the country to monitor the situation and promptly deal with water accumulations.

In an interview with Kuwait TV, Undersecretary of the ministry Eid Al-Rashidi affirmed that the Central Operations Unit closely monitored water accumulation sites in all governorates throughout the day. He said the emergency teams were deployed with the necessary machinery and equipment to guarantee immediate response to any incident, thereby, supporting efforts to maintain smooth traffic flow and reduce the adverse impacts of the weather conditions.

Al-Rashidi stated that the ministry is currently coordinating with other concerned government entities to address problems, particularly in areas witnessing rising water levels. He indicated that efforts have been concentrated on unclogging water drainage and preventing road closures.

Additionally, Director of the Operations Unit at the ministry Fares Al-Duqbasi described the rainfall as "exceptional", compared to the usual levels, citing the heavy downpours over a short period, compounded by challenges in accurately forecasting the amount of rain.

Earlier, the Ministry of Public Works confirmed that emergency teams have been deployed around the clock at critical locations to deal with the impact of the heavy rain.

Official spokesperson Ahmed Al-Saleh said inspection tours were conducted across multiple areas to ensure roads remain clear of water accumulation. He urged motorists to exercise caution and vigilance while driving under unstable weather conditions.

Al-Saleh also highlighted the importance of proper disposal of construction debris and regular pruning of trees in designated areas, warning that neglected waste and loose branches could block drainage systems and reduce their efficiency.

He called on the public to ignore rumors and rely only on official sources for updates, confirming ongoing coordination with the General Directorate for Civil Defense. Residents were advised to report water accumulation through the ministry's Hotline (150) or official communication channels.

The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) also urged the public to fully abide by the preventive and safety guidelines during the rainy season and flash floods to protect lives and properties in view of the unstable weather conditions.

In a press statement, KFF underscored the need for everyone to stay indoors unless it is absolutely necessary to go out, as well as the need to avoid sea and land travel during this period due to the danger posed by heavy rains.

It emphasized the importance of maintaining the safety and proper insulation of electrical wiring to prevent accidents caused by water leaks.

Regular maintenance and cleaning of rainwater drainage systems were also highlighted to prevent water accumulation.

In parallel, the Public Authority for Manpower urged companies to temporarily suspend outdoor work due to the unstable weather. Businesses engaged in delivery, construction, and other outdoor operations were instructed to halt activities to safeguard workers, with operations to resume once conditions improve.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry also called on delivery companies to postpone receiving orders during the adverse weather, emphasizing the need to protect delivery personnel. The ministry noted that normal operations can resume once the situation stabilizes.

Authorities across the board reiterated that public safety remains the top priority, urging full cooperation from residents and businesses as Kuwait continues to deal with the effects of the severe weather system.

On Thursday, the Meteorological Department has forecast that the country will experience unstable weather with scattered thunderstorms and heavy winds until Friday morning, with a chance of fog forming in the evening towards the end of the week.

The acting Director of the department, Dhirar Al-Ali, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that rainfall will range from moderate to heavy in some areas, sometimes accompanied by hail, with strong and active winds at times causing high sea waves.

He explained that the weather during the day on Friday will be warm with moderate winds and some high clouds appearing. At night, it will be slightly cool with scattered clouds and a chance for fog formation in some areas.

On Saturday, it will be warm during the day with moderate winds and some scattered clouds, while at night it will be slightly cool with scattered clouds and a chance of light fog forming in some areas.

Gov't reviews

He reassured the nation that air and pollutant levels remain within the approved health and environmental standards without any violations recorded. He said the national monitoring systems remain alert round the clock, in coordination with the concerned bodies to ensure public safety.

He reiterated that KNG forces stand ready to safeguard the nation, in coordination with other State bodies.

In a related development, the Cabinet on Wednesday reiterated its vehement condemnation of the recurrent Iranian attacks on the vital infrastructure and civilian installations of the country.

During a session chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mousherji revealed that the ministers reviewed technical reports from the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) and Kuwait Fire Force (KFF). These reports are about the fire that erupted early Wednesday at a fuel depot at the Kuwait International Airport following an attack by Iranian UAVs.

Al-Mousherji affirmed that the concerned authorities immediately implemented emergency protocols, indicating the firefighting units and specialized teams are currently engaged in containment and mitigation operations at the site.

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on the latest developments and the prevailing military position in response to the ongoing aggression. He updated the Cabinet on the outcomes of his inspection of several military bases and frontline sites last Friday, where he evaluated combat readiness and operational efficiency. He lauded the vigilance and steadfastness of the Armed Forces, praising their high morale and dedication to their national mandate in safeguarding the territorial integrity, airspace and sovereign resources of the country.

The ministers emphasized that all government agencies have shifted to the highest state of alert to ensure the continuity of basic services, the safety of citizens and residents, and the fortification of internal security in view of the evolving regional situation.

The Cabinet also touched on the high-level diplomatic communications received by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

It was informed about the telephone call between His Highness the Amir, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. These leaders strongly denounced the heinous acts, which they described as a flagrant violation of national sovereignty, international law, and the United Nations Charter. They affirmed a shared commitment to utilize all their resources and capabilities to preserve the security and stability of the region, and stressed the necessity of an immediate cessation of escalatory actions and a return to dialogue and diplomatic solutions.

In addition, His Highness the Crown Prince received calls from British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck of Bhutan, Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif, and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi. These leaders reiterated their categorical rejection of the assaults on the State of Kuwait, confirming their full support for all sovereign measures taken by Kuwait to preserve its security and territorial integrity.

The Cabinet talked about the extensive political and diplomatic efforts led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to counter persistent Iranian aggression against the State of Kuwait and the region. Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presented the outcomes of a consultative ministerial meeting held in Riyadh last Wednesday. The foreign ministers of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Pakistan talked about the need to focus on restoring regional stability.

It reviewed the meeting's communique, which emphasized that Iranian aggression against the countries in the region cannot be justified under any pretext or in any way.

The meeting also underscored the right of states to defend themselves in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter and called on Iran to immediately cease its aggression, and respect international law, international humanitarian law and the principles of good neighborliness as the first steps toward ending the escalation and achieving security and stability in the region.

It stressed the importance of activating diplomacy as a means to resolve crises and emphasized that the future of relations with Iran depends on its respect for the sovereignty of states, non-interference in their internal affairs, non-aggression against their sovereignty and territories in any way, and refraining from using its military capabilities.

Gulf hotels,

Moreover, Oxford Economics developed two models for the impact of the Middle East conflict on tourism. The first model projects an 11 percent annual decline in tourist arrivals to the region in 2026, a loss of about 23 million international visitors compared to baseline figures in December 2025, equivalent to \$34 billion in tourism spending.

The second scenario, which assumes the war will continue for several months, anticipates even greater losses, about 38 million international visitors in 2026. This translates to 27 percent year-on-year decrease and an estimated loss of \$56 billion in terms of tourism spending.

MoH calls

In a circular on this matter, the ministry stated that the returning employees must submit a letter confirming their return to work or a notice of return from leave, which must be approved by their immediate supervisor and the next level of the hierarchy, along with the required supporting documents.

The ministry stressed the need to attach a copy of the leave approval granted prior to the current circumstances in case of annual leave, along with the entry and exit records generated through the Border Security Services section under the Interior Ministry on the Sabel application.

It added that the concerned employees should send the return-to-work confirmation letter to the Administrative Affairs Sector - Leave Department, indicating these employees must submit all the required documents to guarantee proper and swift completion of the administrative procedures.

Democrat Gregory wins special election for Florida legislative seat

Trump promises 'bigger majorities' for GOP even as midterm warning signs flash for party

WASHINGTON, March 26, (AP) — US President Donald Trump predicted Wednesday that his party will have larger congressional majorities after November's midterm elections, even as political warning signs that have privately worried some Republicans for months are starting to flash red.

While Trump said the US "is winning so big" in the war in Iran, it is keeping gas prices high, travelers are facing unprecedented airport security wait times and Americans remain concerned about steep costs of living.

The latest sign of trouble came this week from Trump's own backyard as Democrat Emily Gregory won a Florida special election to flip a state legislative district that encompasses his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach.

Against that backdrop, Trump worked to rally the GOP on Wednesday night when he addressed the National Republican Congressional Committee's annual fundraising dinner at Washington's Union Station.

Before Trump even began speaking, House Speaker Mike Johnson signaled that the party is going to rise or fall with Trump in November, even presenting him with what he called "the very first America First award."

Trump acknowledged the long odds, repeatedly noting that incumbent presidents almost always lose seats in Congress during the midterms, "even if it's a successful presidency." Still, he brushed off concerns, saying he would campaign for every Republican candidate.

"From now until November, we're going to fight," he said. "We'll have bigger majorities in the House and Senate than we do today."

The gathering comes as polling shows most Americans believe the U.S. military action against Iran has gone too far and voters are more and more worried about Trump's failure to address affordability issues. That, coupled with a weakening labor market and worries about renewed inflation, means Republicans could face a string of glaring liabilities as they try to maintain control of both the House and Senate.

Sen Lisa Murkowski, a moderate Republican from Alaska, said her constituents are asking about the path forward in Iran and whether Trump will deploy troops there.

"There's a lot that people want to know, so whether it's how it's being communicated in the media, or how it's being communicated here in the Congress, I think it's lacking right now," Murkowski said.

Trump has so far mostly responded by continuing to point to record-high stock markets and low gas prices that evaporated after the U.S. and Israel struck Iran on Feb. 28. He's also insisted that the current economic jolt will be temporary, and that he can bring the conflict to a close quickly - all of which defy the more complicated and nuanced political and economic realities.

Gas prices were \$3.12 a gallon when Democratic President Joe Biden left office and were just under \$3 before the U.S. and Israel launched the war in Iran. Today's average is \$3.98, according to motorist group AAA.

Higher prices at the pump tend to cascade through the economy, raising costs at the grocery store, in the service sector and in most other areas - meaning the worst



US President Donald Trump waves after speaking at the National Republican Congressional Committee's (NRCC) annual fundraising dinner on March 25, at Union Station in Washington. (AP)

of the political fallout might come in the months closer to Election Day.

Trump has suggested the war is worth some short-term political jitters.

"I can't say that 'Gee, I don't want to have any impact on oil prices for three or four weeks, or two months, and we're going to let Iran have a nuclear weapon.'"

During his speech to Republicans Wednesday night, he acknowledged the impact on the U.S. economy but said he felt the attack was necessary. "We had to cut out the cancer," he said. "The cancer was Iran with a nuclear weapon, and we've cut it out."

In the meantime, about 59% of Americans say the U.S. military strikes in Iran have been excessive, while 45% are "extremely" or "very" concerned about being able to afford gas in the next few months. That's according to a poll released Wednesday by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

That is up from 30% in an AP-NORC poll conducted shortly after Trump won reelection with promises that he would improve the economy and lower the cost of living.

Inflation is expected to rise with the jump in gas prices and longer-term interest rates have risen, pushing up the cost of mortgage loans, auto loans and business borrowing. That comes as employers cut 92,000 jobs last month.

Trump blamed Americans' sour opinion of the war on media coverage that

doesn't echo his claim that Iran has been militarily destroyed. Iran has maintained its ability to strike targets in the region and effectively shut down the Strait of Hormuz, snarling the global oil trade. Meanwhile, some of Trump's own war objectives remain undefined or unfulfilled.

"You know, if you listen to the news, you think we're losing a war in Iran where we're decimating the other side," Trump said.

In another political headache, the partial government shutdown has dragged on for five weeks, lately sparking chaos at some of the nation's top airports.

The White House blames congressional Democrats who have blocked funding for the Department of Homeland Security as they press for restrictions on enhanced immigration enforcement operations. But efforts to broker a deal have stalled, and his administration insists it won't back down on immigration.

"The American people are tired of the chaos. They're tired of the excuses. And they're tired of watching Washington fail," said Rep. Mark Alford, a Missouri Republican who was among the party's lawmakers who held a news conference Tuesday at Washington's Ronald Reagan National Airport to blame Democrats for the shutdown.

Trump didn't directly address the status of negotiations to fund the department but also laid the blame on Democrats for an impasse that has forced airport security and other employees to work without paychecks: "They don't want to settle. They want chaos."

Rep. Nick LaLota, R-N.Y., said voters in his Long Island-based district are concerned about affordability and safety. But he also said the war in Iran means "the president is right to think about America's long-term security."

On whether Iran policy will be an anchor for Republicans, LaLota encouraged taking a wait-and-see approach leading up to November, and said any fallout could depend whether the U.S. has stopped Iran's nuclear ambitions and reopened the Strait of Hormuz.

"I think this could be a thing that bolster conservatives' approach to national security," he said.

Richard Hudson, chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee, similarly said it was too early to jump to political conclusions.

"If we're still at this stage in the war in the fall, then I'll talk to you about that," Hudson said. "But the president says it's going to be short, so I believe him. I think he did the right thing by doing what he did."

As for higher gas prices, Hudson said, "Voters are smart enough to know this is a temporary increase."

Speaker Johnson he said he trusts Trump's assurances that Iran-related economic disruptions won't last. He said Wednesday's dinner raised \$37 million, bolstering record fundraising for the House Republican campaign committee. Trump echoed that theme, shouting out some of the GOP's top House candidates and boasting about the money raised. He said Republicans have a "hot party."

America

Mangled plane towed from runway: All but four of the passengers injured in Sunday's deadly collision between an Air Canada plane and a fire truck have been released from the hospital, the airline said Wednesday, as crews began moving the mangled aircraft off the runway at New York's LaGuardia Airport.

The crash, which remains under investigation, killed two pilots. Roughly 40 people were treated at area hospitals for a range of injuries, some serious. Further details on the four people who remained hospitalized were not immediately available.

The plane, which originated in Montreal, was carrying 76 people, including the crew, when it slammed into the fire truck that had driven out onto the runway. Seconds before the collision, an air traffic controller had cleared the truck to cross the runway.

Since Monday, much of the wreckage had remained on the tarmac, blocking access to one of two runways at one of the country's busiest airports.

Just before 5 p.m. on Wednesday, airport workers began towing the remnants away. Two big tow trucks working in tandem also righted the badly damaged fire truck, which had been laying on its side since the crash.

The jet's tail end was lifted onto a large dolly, which was then towed via long tethers by two vehicles driving side by side. Earlier in the day, much of the wreckage of the nose, which was obliterated in the collision, was cut away by work crews. As it was towed, the middle of the plane was supported by its own landing gear, which appeared to be intact.

In a statement, Air Canada said the plane would be taken to a hangar. The airline said it would soon begin the process of reuniting people with baggage and personal belongings.

After the collision, many onboard managed to escape the damaged aircraft, including a flight attendant who survived after being thrown onto the tarmac while still strapped in her seat. (AP)

US appeals court sides with WH: The US can con-



Airport maintenance crews lower the nose of the wreckage of an Air Canada Express jet onto temporary support on March 25, as they prepare to move the plane from runway where it had collided with a Port Authority fire truck Sunday night at LaGuardia Airport in New York. (AP)

tinue to detain immigrants without bond, an appeals court ruled on Wednesday, handing a victory to the Trump administration's crackdown on immigration.

The opinion from a panel of the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis overturned a lower court ruling that required that a native of Mexico arrested for lacking legal documents be given a bond hearing before an immigration judge.

It's the second appeals court to rule in favor of the administration on this issue. The 5th Circuit in New Orleans ruled last month that the Department of Homeland Security's decision to deny bond hearings to immigrants arrested during the country was consistent with the Constitution and federal immigration law. Both appeals court opinions counter recent lower court decisions across the country that argued the practice is illegal.

In November, a district court decision in California granted detained immigrants with no criminal history the opportunity to request a bond hearing and had implications for noncitizens held in detention nationwide. (AP)

US president to visit China in May after delay due to Iran war, says WH

WASHINGTON, March 26, (AP) — US President Donald Trump will travel to Beijing for a rescheduled summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping on May 14 and 15, the White House announced on Wednesday.

Trump had been scheduled to travel to China later this month but previously announced he was delaying the trip so he could be in Washington to help steward the US and Israeli war against Iran. The Republican president had announced a rescheduled trip even though the war in Iran continues and the US is pressing Tehran to accept a ceasefire proposal.

The president and first lady Melania Trump also plan to host Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, for a White House visit later this year, press secretary Karoline Leavitt said.

Leavitt, when asked if the new dates for Trump's trip could suggest he believes the Iran war could end soon, offered an optimistic tone that the conflict could reach an endgame before he travels.

"We've always estimated four to six weeks," Leavitt responded. "So you could do the math on that."

The United States and Israel launched the attacks against Iran on Feb. 28.

The China trip had been planned for months but began to unravel as Trump



White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt speaks with reporters in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House on March 25, in Washington. (AP)

pressured Beijing and other world powers to use their military might to protect the Strait of Hormuz, a critical waterway for the flow of oil. The strait has been effectively closed as Iran targets energy infrastructure and traffic through it.

Trump said last week while meeting with Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin in the Oval Office that he would

be going to China in five or six weeks' time instead of at the end of the month. He said he would be "resetting" his visit with Xi.

"We're working with China - they were fine with it," Trump said then. "I look forward to seeing President Xi. He looks forward to seeing me, I think."

Iran war deflects attention from Ukraine as emboldened Russia starts spring offensive

KYIV, March 26, (AP) — The Iran war has deflected global attention from Russia's all-out invasion of its neighbor Ukraine as Europe's biggest conflict since World War II enters its fifth year and an emboldened Kremlin undertakes a spring offensive.

The past week showed that neither side is easing up. Russia on Tuesday fired almost 1,000 drones and 34 missiles at Ukraine in one of the war's biggest bombardments. The following day Ukraine launched almost 400 drones in the largest reported overnight attack on Russian regions and Crimea.

Ukraine's fate is still Europe's top foreign policy issue, fueled by fears that Moscow has wider ambitions. Meanwhile, the Trump administration has wound down talks with Russian and Ukrainian delegations as the Iran war grips its attention. The administration has warned it could turn its back on the conflict if peace efforts come to nothing.

Only weeks ago, the Russian economy was starting to feel the pinch of sanctions. But Russia is now raking in billions of dollars from a temporary US waiver on oil sanctions against Moscow. The measure taken earlier this month aims to free up Russian oil cargo stranded at sea and ease supply shortages caused by the Middle East conflict.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the US move was "not the right decision" because it will further enable Russia's military campaign.

American Patriot air-defense missiles have been moved from Europe toward the Middle East as Washington redirects resources to its war on Iran. Zelenskyy warned that Kyiv will "definitely" face shortages of Patriot systems because of the war against Iran.

The U.S. produces 60 to 65 missiles per month, or about 700 to 800 missiles per year, Zelenskyy said. "And on the first day in the Middle East war, 803 missiles were used," he said.

Aiming to secure some geopolitical leverage, Ukraine offered its battle-tested technology to help Gulf states fend off Iranian drones. In return, Ukraine wants more of the high-end air-defense missiles that Gulf countries possess and which Kyiv needs to stop Russia's missiles. Zelenskyy also made Ukrainian drone interceptors available to the US.

Ukraine desperately needs money, too.



In this image made from video provided by Russian Defense Ministry Press Service on March 23, a Russian Pion self-propelled 203 mm cannon fires towards a Ukrainian position. (AP)



Police officers examine the fragments of a war drone that hit a private house during air attack in Kharkiv, Ukraine on March 25. (AP)

A promised 90-billion-euro (\$104-billion) loan from the European Union to fund Ukraine's armed forces and its war-shattered economy for the next two years is being held up by Hungary.

After a winter of relative calm on the front line, Russia is gearing up for the summer fighting season as fields dry out.

Russian forces are in an early phase of a spring offensive, assaulting Ukraine's eastern so-called Fortress

Belt of cities, said Elina Bektova of the Center for European Policy Analysis, a Washington-based think tank.

"Over the past weeks, the Russians have intensified pressure on the battlefield and in the air," she told The Associated Press. In Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, Ukraine's industrial heartland long coveted by Russian President Vladimir Putin, the situation is "critical," she said, though Ukrainian troops say they are holding firm.

Europe

Italy's tourism minister resigns: Italy's legally troubled tourism minister resigned on Wednesday in the fallout of Premier Giorgia Meloni's failed referendum on judicial reforms.

The departure of Daniela Santanchè is a sign that Italy's 3 1/2-year-old right-wing government has been weakened by Monday's ballot box defeat of a key measure.

Meloni had demanded Santanchè's resignation after two justice ministry officials stepped down in the wake of voters' resounding rejection of judicial reforms in a vote that was widely seen as a de facto confidence test on Meloni's leadership. In a statement on Tuesday, Meloni said she hoped Santanchè would make a similar decision "in the same spirit of institutional sensitivity."

Santanchè, who was seen as a key member of Meloni's Brothers of Italy party, has been politically damaged by multiple long-term trials and investigations, including alleged false accounting and alleged fraud. She has consistently denied any wrongdoing. (AP)

400 evacuated after Paris hotel fire: A fire broke out Wednesday at a hotel in downtown Paris, causing some 400

people to be evacuated, according to local media reports. (Xinhua)

Georgia hosts Interpol confab: Georgia is hosting the annual conference of the Interpol General Secretariat Project Millennium on Wednesday and Thursday, the country's Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) said Wednesday.

Organized by the Interpol General Secretariat with the support of the MIA, the event will address current challenges in combating transnational organized crime and explore ways to strengthen international collaboration, the ministry said.

First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Roni Meskhi opened the event before about 60 delegates from 25 Interpol members, reaffirming Georgia's commitment to international cooperation against transnational crime and underscoring Georgia's longstanding partnership with Interpol. (Xinhua)

2 killed in Germany truck accident: A mother and her child were killed on Wednesday morning in Schramberg, in the southern German state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, after they were struck by a truck, local police said.

Police further said the accident occurred shortly before 9:00 a.m. local time (0800 GMT). The truck driver reportedly lost control of the vehicle, apparently due to a medical emergency. The truck then crashed into several parked cars, mounted the sidewalk, and slammed into the wall of a house.

The young mother and her child were struck on the sidewalk. Despite immediate resuscitation efforts, both died at the scene from their severe injuries. (Xinhua)

Denmark's 'kingmaker' could decide who will lead its next government

COPENHAGEN, Denmark, March 26, (AP) — Denmark's foreign minister and his centrist party are expected to decide who will lead the Scandinavian country's next government after Tuesday's parliamentary elections ended without a clear majority for any party or bloc.

Center-left Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen could survive for a third term, despite a disappointing result. But she will need to negotiate a deal with the kingmaker, Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, if she is to lead a new coalition.

"The Danes have spoken. They have given us a playing field that, to put it mildly, is a bit tricky to handle when it comes to forming a government," Frederiksen said Wednesday. "But a government must be formed. The world out there doesn't wait for us, and it has only become even more unsettled than when the election was called."

The campaign focused on bread-and-butter issues rather than the crisis over U.S. President Donald Trump's ambitions toward Greenland.



Chairman of the Moderates party Lars Løkke Rasmussen leaves after a party leaders debate the day after the parliamentary election at the Confederation of Danish Industry's building in Copenhagen on March 25. (AP)

The outgoing government resigned Wednesday. Leaders from each party debated their positions in a roundtable

setting and met with Danish King Frederik X to discuss the country's future.

INTERNATIONAL

Asia

North Korea, Belarus sign friendship treaty: Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko and North Korean leader **Kim Jong Un** held talks in North Korea's capital on Thursday and signed a friendship and cooperation treaty.

Lukashenko, who was in Pyongyang on a two-day official visit, hailed the document as "fundamental," and said that relations between the two countries are "entering a new stage," according to his press service.

"Yes, we didn't have close cooperation, largely due to our own fault. But I am sincerely pleased to note that cooperation has now significantly intensified," Lukashenko said.

"In today's reality of a global transformation, when the global powers openly ignore and violate international law, independent countries need to cooperate more closely, consolidate efforts aimed at protecting their sovereignty and improving the well-being of our citizens," he said.

Lukashenko's press service quoted Kim expressing "solidarity and full support" for Belarus and speaking out "against unlawful pressure on Belarus from the West."

Belarus is a close ally of Russia. Lukashenko allowed Moscow to use Belarusian territory as a staging ground for the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and later authorized the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. (AP)

Wang meets outgoing Indian ambassador to China: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Pradeep Kumar Rawat, the outgoing Indian ambassador to China, in Beijing on Thursday.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said under the strategic guidance of the leaders of the two countries, China-India relations have embarked on the right track of improvement and development.

Facing the volatile international situation, China is willing to work with India to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, expand mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields, safeguard the common interests of the Global South, strengthen multilateral collaboration in mechanisms

such as BRICS, and consolidate the hard-won positive momentum of China-India relations, Wang added.

Wang also commended Rawat's efforts and contributions to the development of China-India relations. (Xinhua)

Australia, Germany to boost defense cooperation: Australia and Germany will increase cooperation on defense and space capabilities under agreements announced in Canberra on Thursday.

Australia's Minister for Defense Richard Marles and his German counterpart Boris Pistorius said after meeting at Parliament House in Canberra that the two nations will pursue a status of forces agreement that will make it easier for their defense forces to operate from each other's countries.

Additionally, they announced that Australia and Germany have signed a letter of intent regarding space cooperation and that the Australian government will sign a letter of cooperation with German missile manufacturer TDW. (Xinhua)

New Zealand declares state of emergency in Northland: Authorities in New Zealand's Northland region declared a state of emergency on Thursday as heavy rainfall cut off several communities and closed key highways across the upper North Island.

Nearly 2,000 homes and businesses in Northland were without power, and almost 4,000 students were affected by school closures, local authorities said.

Local councils of the country's northernmost region said the declarations, effective for seven days, would give Civil Defense access to emergency powers to protect lives and property.

A red heavy rain warning remains in place for parts of Northland, with the worst downpours expected later Thursday.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand urged people in low-lying or flood-prone areas to be ready to evacuate. (Xinhua)

Two killed after truck overturns in Vietnam: Two people were killed after a truck carrying soil overturned onto vehicles traveling in the opposite direction in Vietnam's northern province of Phu Tho on Thursday, the Vietnam News Agency reported.

The accident occurred at 7:45 a.m. in Lac Son commune when the truck flipped over onto a car and a motorbike, killing their drivers, according to the report.

Rescue workers and traffic police were deployed to the scene to carry out procedures in line with regulations. (Xinhua)



Balendra Shah, (center with sun glasses), leaves after a swearing-in ceremony of newly elected members of the House of Representatives at the Federal Parliament in Kathmandu, Nepal on March 26. (AP)

Nepal's newly elected parliament sworn in

Nepal's newly elected members of parliament were sworn in Thursday with nearly two-thirds of them from a political party that is less than four years old.

The 275 members of the House of Representatives, the powerful lower chamber of parliament, will be in their positions for the next five years.

The election - the country's first

since last year's youth-led revolt - was won by the Rastriya Swatantra Party, or RSP, led by rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah.

Shah is expected to be chosen as the leader by the elected members from his party later on Thursday and formally inform President Ram Chandra Poudel. The president will then appoint Shah as the prime minister of Nepal. (AP)

Passenger plane skids off runway during landing in Kabul

Fighting resumes between Pakistan and Afghanistan after ceasefire ends; 2 dead

KABUL, Afghanistan, March 26, (Agencies): Renewed fighting erupted along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan on Wednesday after a temporary ceasefire expired, killing at least two civilians and wounding others in eastern Afghanistan, Afghan Taliban officials said.

The brief truce had been announced by the two sides ahead of the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr. Ziaur Rahman Speenghar, a director at the information and culture department in Afghanistan's Kunar province, said Pakistani forces fired dozens of artillery shells into the Narai and Sarkano districts, killing two civilians and wounding eight others after the ceasefire expired.

Afghan border forces returned fire, he said, claiming they destroyed three Pakistani military posts and killed one person. His claims could not be independently verified. There was no immediate comment from Pakistan's military. However, a local Pakistani official in the northwest accused Afghan forces of initiating the exchange of fire in multiple areas.

The latest violence comes about a week after both sides agreed to halt hostilities following Pakistani airstrikes in Afghanistan at the request of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar. The pause followed Pakistani strikes that the Afghan Taliban government said hit a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, killing more than 400 people. That toll could not be independently confirmed.

Pakistan has denied targeting civilians, saying it struck an ammunition depot. Separately, the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taleban Pakistan, or TTP, said it had resumed attacks inside Pakistan after observing its own three-day Eid ceasefire.

The TTP, which is separate from but allied to the Afghan Taliban, has stepped up attacks inside Pakistan since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in 2021. The TTP has been designated as a terrorist organization by the United States and the United Nations. Pakistan accuses Kabul of sheltering TTP leaders and thousands of members who carry out cross-border attacks.



This satellite image provided by Vantor shows a destroyed hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan on March 20, 2026, after a Monday Pakistani airstrike. (AP)

Kabul denies the charge, but Pakistan has vowed to continue targeting TTP and its supporters inside Afghanistan until Afghanistan's Taliban government assures that it will not allow TTP and other militants to use the Afghan soil for attacks.

Meanwhile, one person has been killed and three others injured after a mortar

shell struck a house in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province, the official Bakhtar news agency reported on Wednesday.

According to the report, the incident took place on Tuesday evening in Nari district when a mortar shell hit a building. The injured were rushed to nearby medical facilities for treatment.

Also:

KABUL: Torrential rains have triggered severe flash floods across parts of southern Afghanistan's Kandahar province, killing at least two people and causing widespread destruction, local media outlet Ariana News reported Thursday.

The floods affected the provincial capital, Kandahar city, as well as several districts, destroying at least 85 residential houses and causing significant damage to local infrastructure and agriculture, according to the report.

Rescue and relief teams have been dispatched to affected areas to assist victims, with emergency aid distribution underway as damage assessments continue, it added.

Afghanistan's meteorological department has issued fresh warnings for additional rainfall in the coming days, raising concerns about further flooding in mountainous and flood-prone regions.

KABUL: A passenger plane skidded off the runway while landing at Kabul International Airport on Wednesday afternoon due to technical problems, with no casualties reported, local Afghan media reported.

Sources said the aircraft belongs to the country's only state-owned carrier Ariana Afghan Airlines. The flight had departed from the western Afghan city of Herat.

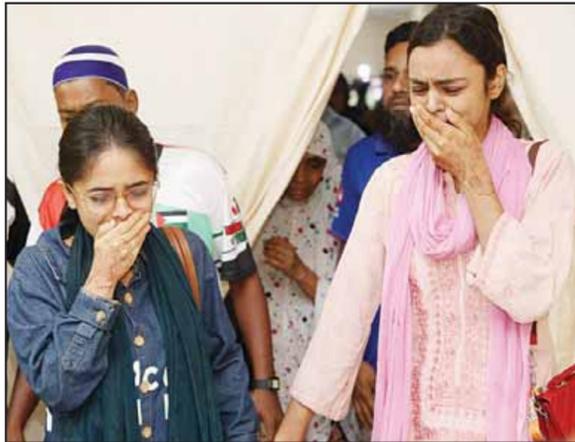
Neither Ariana Afghan Airlines nor Afghanistan's civil aviation authorities have released additional details about the incident.

Bangladesh bus accident kills 18

DHAKA, March 26, (Xinhua): At least eighteen bodies were retrieved after a bus carrying dozens of passengers plunged into the Padma River from a pontoon at a terminal in Bangladesh's Rajbari district, some 125 km south of Dhaka, on Wednesday.

The accident occurred at around 5:15 pm local time on Wednesday when the Dhaka-bound passenger bus lost control, overturned, and sank to an estimated depth of 80 feet, according to the Fire Service.

Sultana Akhtar, Rajbari's deputy commissioner and district magistrate, told Xinhua that there were around 40 passengers on board the bus.



Relatives of victims break down at Rajbari Government Hospital, the day after a passenger bus plunged into the Padma river while boarding a ferry in Rajbari district, about 84 kilometers (52 miles) from the capital Dhaka, Bangladesh on March 26. (AP)

Venezuela moves on without ex-president

Maduro heads back to US court, fighting charges

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): Former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro returns to a New York courtroom Thursday as he seeks to have his drug trafficking indictment thrown out over a geopolitical dispute over legal fees.

Maduro's lawyer contends that the US is violating the deposed leader's constitutional rights by blocking Venezuelan government funds from being used to pay his legal costs.

It's the first time that Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, will be in court since a January arraignment at which he protested their capture by US military forces and declared: "I am not guilty. I am a decent man, the constitutional president of my country." Flores has also pleaded not guilty.

Both remain jailed at a detention center in Brooklyn, and neither has asked to be released on bail. Judge Alvin Hellerstein has yet to set a trial date, though that could happen at the hearing.

Maduro, 63, and Flores, 69, continue to enjoy some support in Venezuela, with murals and billboards across the capital, Caracas, demanding their return. But while Maduro's ruling party remains in power, he has slowly been erased from the government of Delcy Rodríguez, Venezuela's acting president.

Rodríguez has replaced senior officials including Maduro's faithful defense minister and attorney general, reorganized agencies, appointed ambassadors and eliminated tenets of the self-proclaimed socialist movement that has ruled Venezuela for more than two decades.

She has even shaken up state television, which had been dominated by Maduro's hours-long evening appearances. Rodríguez favors much shorter appearances without the musical acts to which her predecessor often danced.



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro speaks to supporters during an event at the Miraflores Presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela on Feb 4, 2024. (AP)

Venezuela has also reestablished diplomatic relations with the US, which in 2019 cut ties with Maduro's government and recognized the then-head of the National Assembly, a member of the opposition, as the country's legitimate leader. The US has eased economic sanctions on Venezuela's crucial oil industry and also dispatched a chargé d'affaires to Caracas.

But even that may not be enough to spare Maduro and Flores from having to foot their own legal bills.

In a court filing last month, Maduro lawyer Barry Pollack said the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, which administers sanctions, flip-flopped on a decision to let Venezuela pay for his legal fees.

The office approved the arrangements. Jan. 9, he said, but then rescinded it without explanation less than three hours later.

In a written declaration filed with the court, Maduro argued that he is "entitled to have the government of Venezuela pay for my legal defense."

Prosecutors responded that the US government had authorized Maduro and Flores to use personal funds to pay their legal fees but would let them do so from a fund controlled by a sanctioned government.

Maduro said in his declaration that he is unable to afford his defense. To qualify for a lawyer at US taxpayer expense, he would have to show he is too poor to pay for it.

Maduro and Flores were seized Jan. 3 in a middle-of-the-night raid on their Caracas home.

A 25-page indictment accused him and others of working with drug cartels and members of the military to facilitate the shipment of thousands of tons of cocaine into the U.S.

Militants in northern Nigeria kill ten security forces and 1 resident: officials

ABUJA, Nigeria, March 26, (AP): Armed militants ambushed Nigerian security forces who were responding to a distress call in the northwestern state of Kebbi, fatally shooting nine soldiers, a police officer and one resident, authorities said Wednesday.

The militants targeted the security forces in Kebbi's Shanga council area late Tuesday when they were being deployed to respond to warnings about a pending attack, according to Yahaya Sarki, a spokesman for Kebbi state government.

Several soldiers also were injured in the attack in the village of Giron Masa, said Sarki, who shared photos of burned vehicles along a dusty road surrounded by forests.

Kebbi Governor Nasir Idris visited the injured soldiers at the hospital and said the attack had caused great loss. "Those that lost their lives, the government of Kebbi state will do everything to assist the families," he said.

The attack is the latest in a cycle of violence in Nigeria's conflict-battered region where armed groups often target security forces and remote com-



In this photo released by the Kebbi State Government, Governor Nasir Idris, center, inspects a burned military vehicle following a late Tuesday ambush by armed militants in Shanga, Kebbi, northern Nigeria on March 25. (AP)

munities in areas with limited state and security presence.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for Tuesday's attack, but some residents suspected the Islamic

State Sahel Province (ISSP), known locally as Lakurawa, which recently has become more lethal in states like Kebbi and Sokoto along the porous border with Niger Republic.

Mexican president urges diplomatic path

Castro involved in US talks: Cuba prez

HAVANA, March 26, (Agencies): Former Cuban president Raúl Castro is involved in talks between the island and the United States, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said Wednesday.

The talks, which Díaz-Canel said are in the early stages, come at a time of increasing tensions between the two nations, with Cuba plagued by nationwide blackouts resulting from a crumbling power grid and an ongoing oil blockade implemented by US President Donald Trump, who has threatened tariffs on any country that provides oil to Cuba. Trump recently said he'd have "the honor of taking Cuba" soon.

The talks overall are being handled collectively by the Cuban government, Díaz-Canel told Spanish leftist leader Pablo Iglesias in a videotaped interview that lasted more than an hour and was shared by state media. Though Díaz-Canel became president in 2018, 94-year-old revolutionary leader, brother of Fidel Castro, is still considered the most powerful person in the nation.

Iglesias was in Cuba as part of a delegation of some 600 activists from 33 countries who arrived last week to deliver humanitarian aid.

"A process of conversations that leads to an agreement is a long process," Díaz-Canel told Iglesias, who produced the interview for his crowd-



Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum gives her the daily, morning news conference at the National Palace in Mexico City on Feb 23. (AP)

funded TV channel, Canal RED.

Also:

MEXICO CITY: Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum told a press briefing on Monday her government supports a peaceful resolution to tensions between the United States and Cuba, advocating the use of diplomatic and multilateral channels over violence or invasion.

Multilateral institutions, like the United Nations, should be utilized to

resolve conflicts, and the United Nations "should also send humanitarian aid," said Sheinbaum.

She noted that Mexico will continue to support the Cuban people through humanitarian aid, adding that a new ship loaded with supplies departed on Monday.

The president also reiterated the Mexican government's opposition to the commercial blockade imposed on Cuba, which restricts the flow of fuel and other essential resources.

Oil barrel price down \$22.27 to \$124.15

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): The price of the Kuwaiti oil barrel went down USD 22.27 to reach USD 124.15 per barrel on Wednesday, compared with USD 146.42 pb the previous day, according to the Kuwait

Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday. In international markets, Brent crude oil price went down USD 2.27 to USD 102.22 pb, while West Texas crude decreased USD 2.03 to USD 90.32 pb.

Gulf refinery shutdowns ripple through global energy markets

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Oil refining and marketing expert Abdul Hamid Al-Awadhi said the shutdown or reduced production at some Gulf oil refineries due to the ongoing war resulted in the increase in the price of gasoline, the most in demand fuel in the global market.

In an exclusive statement to the newspaper, Al-Awadhi disclosed that the war also led to the rise in the prices of all petroleum derivatives, especially since Gulf refineries constitute seven percent of the global refining capacity.

He stated that Gulf refineries, including local Kuwaiti refineries, produce the highest quality petroleum derivatives, particularly gasoline, which is the most in-demand and profitable fuel for refineries globally, in addition to diesel, jet fuel and marine fuel.

He confirmed the crucial role played by Gulf refineries in producing primary and secondary materials for the petrochemical industry, which entails that the price hikes will affect the petrochemical sector.

He asserted that the shutdown of local Kuwaiti refineries will lead to a decline in the profits of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) in the new budget despite the price hikes.

He added the refineries will start operating in April, with annual revenues from these refineries constituting around 53 percent of total annual domestic oil revenues, considering their refining capacity of 1.4 million barrels per day.

He said the Kuwaiti refineries export about 84.5 percent of their production, while the remaining percentage is consumed in the local market as fuel for cars, aircraft, power and water plants and ships.

He indicated that the repeated Iranian attacks are a more sophisticated version of what the Kuwaiti oil sector witnessed during the brutal Iraqi invasion in 1990, when oil wells were set ablaze and refineries were sabotaged.

He is surprised that Iran is targeting Kuwaiti and Gulf oil sectors, although Kuwait and some other Gulf

states cited force majeure and halted oil production due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. "It seems Iran is attempting to use oil as a powerful tool in the war, so it repeatedly targets Gulf refineries and oil facilities with justifications that defy logic and fail to explain the meaning of good neighborly relations. This brings to mind its previous targeting of Saudi oil facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais in 2019," he added.

He asserted that the current damage to the Gulf oil sector will not only affect the Gulf oil-exporting countries, but the global economy as well.

Regarding the statement made by the CEO of KPC two days ago that resuming Kuwaiti oil production will take three to four months, Al-Awadhi said "when making such a statement, KPC is certainly best positioned to assess the condition of the oil fields and their readiness to resume production. They are also best positioned to determine how to gradually increase production to reach the previous normal level or to maximize compensation for the export disruption after reaching an agreement with OPEC+ members and considering market demand one the crisis ends."

Meanwhile, international reports indicate that rising fuel prices for cars, trucks and all other modes of transportation, including marine fuel, indirectly affected the prices of essential commodities such as food.

Due to the disruption of Gulf oil supplies, reports from the American Automobile Association (AAA) indicate that gasoline prices in the United States of America have risen by 32.2 percent since the start of the war. It affirmed that this war will have economic repercussions on the American economy and that this will continue in the next few months.

German Automobile Club (ADAC) reported that fuel prices in Germany have jumped by more than five percent, while gasoline prices in Britain have recorded their largest increase in four years, reaching three percent two days ago. Prices in France have risen by four percent and in Belgium by 2.5 percent.

Non-oil sectors drive recovery

Kuwait strengthens fiscal and structural resilience, says OBG

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: As escalating regional tensions and conflict reshape the Middle East's economic outlook, Kuwait is pushing ahead with its programme of economic reform and structural diversification, positioning itself to navigate a more uncertain regional environment. The Report: Kuwait, the latest research publication by global research and advisory firm Oxford Business Group (OBG), examines how the country is advancing structural transformation at a critical moment for the wider region.

The report assesses how Kuwait is advancing the goals of its New Kuwait 2035 national transformation strategy, combining fiscal reform, infrastructure expansion and private-sector participation to build a more resilient economic base. Key developments assessed include the landmark 2025 public debt law, which restores Kuwait's access to international capital markets and strengthens fiscal flexibility.

While hydrocarbons remain central to the economy, accounting for approximately 44% of GDP and close to 88% of government revenue, non-oil sectors including financial services, transport, real estate and manufacturing are expanding steadily. Following a contraction in 2024 linked to OPEC+ production cuts, economic growth is forecast to return to approximately 2.6% in 2025, supported by higher oil output and continued non-oil sector expansion. Inflation has moderated to approximately 2.2%, and investor confidence has strengthened amid regulatory reforms, growing capital markets activity and rising foreign investment interest. These indicators reflect a degree of economic stability that stands in contrast to the broader uncertainty generated by ongoing regional conflict and its potential implications for trade, energy markets and investor sentiment across the Gulf.

The latest report provides a detailed sector-by-sector assessment for investors and policymakers, covering the implementation of the New Kuwait 2035 development strategy and its role in accelerating economic diversification and infrastructure investment; financial sector resilience and the evolution of Kuwait's banking system amid regulatory reform and digital innovation; efforts to strengthen Kuwait's investment environment and expand non-oil revenue sources.

It also examines the expansion of Kuwait's hydrocarbons sector

alongside sustainability and industrial diversification strategies; and major infrastructure projects in transport, logistics and urban development supporting Kuwait's development as a regional trade hub.

Jana Trecek, OBG's Managing Director for the Middle East, said the report arrives at a significant moment in Kuwait's economic development, as structural reforms begin to translate into tangible progress across key sectors.

"Kuwait is entering a new phase of reform-driven growth, underpinned by a clear national strategy and a strengthening regulatory environment. The latest report offers investors, policymakers and analysts a rigorous and timely assessment of the opportunities and challenges shaping one of the Gulf's most strategically positioned economies," Trecek said.

Oliver Cornock, OBG's Editor-in-Chief, noted that the breadth of reform activity documented in the report reflects a sustained policy commitment to long-term economic transformation.

"The data and analysis contained in the report illustrate how Kuwait is building the foundations for a more diversified and resilient economy. From fiscal reform and capital markets development to infrastructure investment and digital transformation, the policy direction is consistent and the momentum is growing. The non-oil sector's steady expansion, alongside continued efforts to attract foreign investment, points to a broadening of Kuwait's economic base that will be of considerable interest to the international investment community," Cornock said.

The Report: Kuwait features key interviews with Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait; Basel Al Haroon, Governor, Central Bank of Kuwait; Sheikh Meshal Jaber Al Sabah, Director General, Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority; Tareq Al Roumi, Minister of Oil and Chairman, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation; and Abdulatif Hamed Hamad Al Mishari, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Housing Affairs.

The report has been produced in partnership with Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) and the Union of Investment Companies, following in-country research by OBG's team of analysts. The publication is available in print and online at: <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/reports/kuwait/2025-report/>

Business

India, LuLu Group coordinate to maintain GCC food supply chains

Chartered flights, cargo ships keep Gulf food stocks steady

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: India continues to play a crucial role in ensuring stable and uninterrupted supply of food products to GCC countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was briefed by Yusuffali M.A., Chairman of LuLu Group, on a series of initiatives being undertaken to maintain supply continuity during the current challenging times.

The meeting held at PM's official residence in New Delhi, focused on ongoing efforts to maintain the availability of essential food items across the Gulf region, which is home to a large Indian diaspora and has strong consumption of Indian-origin food products. Discussions also covered the importance of strengthening supply chain continuity and ensuring price stability during the current global challenges.

LuLu Group, which operates more than 280 hypermarkets across the GCC, is among the major players contributing to food distribution in the region. Its recent supply chain interventions are seen as part of broader efforts by retailers and governments to ensure there is no disruption in availability of essential goods, while also helping maintain market confidence and prevent panic buying.

During the interaction, Yusuffali briefed the Prime Minister on LuLu Group's recent initiatives aimed at supporting food security across its GCC markets. The group has been facilitating large-scale imports of both perishable and non-perishable food products *(15,000 tons till date)* through a combination of exclusive chartered flights, cargo vessels, and regular shipping services from multiple locations in India.



Modi, Yusuffali discuss ensuring food supply to Gulf nations.

According to LuLu Group, *34 dedicated chartered flights* have come in so far and similar numbers are expected to continue in days to come. These efforts are supported by the group's own sourcing and export infrastructure across various Indian states, where production and logistics hubs are operating at enhanced capacity to meet international demand.

India continues to be a key trade partner for GCC countries, with Indian agricultural and food products widely consumed by both expatriates and local populations. The ongoing supply initiatives are also providing timely support to India's food

and agriculture sector, enabling farmers, producers, and exporters to efficiently move their produce to international markets during a challenging period.

Yusuffali also outlined plans to continue these supply initiatives in the coming weeks, with additional chartered flights and cargo shipments being scheduled to support ongoing demand.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledged the importance of such initiatives and assured full support from the Government of India to facilitate the smooth export of food products to GCC countries.

General index down 0.51%

Boursa Kuwait closes session lower

KUWAIT CITY, March 26, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Thursday's trading session in the red, with the general market index dropping 42.88 points, or 0.51 percent, to close at 8,405.96 points.

Trading activity saw a total of 159.5 million shares exchanged across 16,463 cash transactions, with a total market value of KD 53.4 million (around USD 163.4 million).

The Main Market Index recorded a decline of 49.11 points, or 0.63 percent, settling at 7,716.18 points. Trading on this segment reached 76.9 million

shares through 5,976 deals, valued at KD 11.3 million (approximately USD 34.5 million).

The Premier Market Index also lost ground, dropping 43.76 points, or 0.48 percent, to end the day at 8,988.82 points. It saw 82.6 million shares traded via 10,487 transactions worth KD 42.1 million (around USD 128.8 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index slipped 59.35 points, or 0.74 percent, to finish at 7,969.54 points. Trading volume stood at 70.6 million shares executed through 4,861 deals, totaling KD 10 million (about USD 30.6 million).

Praising exceptional support from Kuwaiti & Saudi authorities

Jazeera Airways reviews operational developments over the past 2 weeks

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: Jazeera Airways held a virtual press conference today during which it outlined the latest developments in its operational activities over the past two weeks and responded to media questions regarding its plans to navigate the current challenges. The airline's Chief Executive Officer highlighted the extraordinary efforts undertaken by its teams to ensure continued air connectivity and commended the strong support received from regulatory authorities particularly in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

At the outset of the conference the CEO emphasized that the airline's top priority since the onset of the crisis has been the safety of all passengers. He said:

"A broad segment of travelers has been affected nearly four million people in Kuwait including individuals visiting family students studying abroad and others. Since operations were suspended on February 28 our first objective was to ensure everyone's safety. We evacuated the entire terminal and we had stranded passengers whom we took care of individually ensuring their safe return via Bahrain and onward overland through Saudi Arabia."

Exceptional Support from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

On March 11 Jazeera Airways operated its first flight from Qaisumah Airport to Cairo carrying 145 passengers.

The CEO stressed that the operational achievements realized within such a short time frame would not have been possible without the extensive support of regulatory authorities in both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as well as the cooperation of countries that enabled Jazeera Airways flights departing from Saudi Arabia to be recognized as Kuwaiti flights. He expressed his deep appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

He added: "I would like to place on record our sincere gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We are truly fortunate for the tremendous support extended not only to Jazeera Airways but to Kuwait as a whole. This support has enabled us to continue serving our community without interruption. Saudi government entities have been proactively reaching out to ask how they can assist. This would not have been possible without the generosity and goodwill of the Saudi people. I would also like to extend special thanks to Mr. Ali Rajab Executive Vice



Barathan Pasupathi, Jazeera Airways CEO

President for Air Transport and International Cooperation at the General Authority of Civil Aviation for his continuous support around the clock."

He explained that establishing operations of such scale and complexity referred to as Project Baraka reflects an exceptional level of cooperation.

"The scale of this operation is highly complex. It involves establishing connectivity in a sister country that has allowed an airline from another country to operate from its airports. Every flight departing from Saudi Arabia carries the Jazeera Airways J9 code and is treated as a Kuwaiti flight. This reflects the trust placed in us by Saudi authorities. This level of support is not uncommon from the Kingdom and without it we would not have reached where we are today. Thanks to this support we are now operating from two airports."

Exceptional Efforts and Seamless Operational Transition

Addressing operational challenges and transitions the CEO underscored the efforts of Jazeera Airways' teams stating:

"Our teams have delivered tremendous efforts working day by day to execute these operations. We began with Qaisumah which required intensive preparation leading up to

our first flight on March 11. Given the limited capacity of Qaisumah Airport which can only accommodate a certain number of aircraft at a time and in response to growing demand we expanded our operations by launching additional flights from Dammam."

He added: "Our teams have demonstrated exceptional agility. We were able to establish operations at Hall 8 of the Kuwait International Fairgrounds within just 20 hours in line with security requirements. Currently 300 Jazeera Airways team members are based in Saudi Arabia working tirelessly to support operations and transport passengers from destinations including India Egypt Istanbul Sri Lanka Pakistan and Amman."

He emphasized that Jazeera Airways' primary initial focus is supporting people. "The current conditions have impacted trade and this is why we have also deployed our cargo operations to serve the trade of food, medical products and essential products coming into Kuwait," he added.

Outlook and Continuity of Operations

On future plans the CEO noted that the airline is adopting a flexible approach in response to ongoing developments.

"We are planning our operations on a rolling basis of four to six weeks. We have scheduled flights and optimized capacity through April 30 covering more than 20 destinations over 1,000 flights and more than 200,000 seats. We are managing the situation day by day."

He also extended appreciation to Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation for prioritizing safety noting that the airline remains in continuous coordination with relevant authorities and ministries.

In this context the CEO also commended airlines across the Middle East stating:

"Airlines in the Middle East play a critical role in connecting the world and what they are doing under these exceptional circumstances deserves recognition. We stand alongside our peers in the region and highly value their efforts."

In closing the CEO expressed his gratitude to all regulatory authorities emphasizing:

"Jazeera Airways would not have been able to execute such a complex operation without the dedication and commitment of our teams. They successfully launched operations in Qaisumah and in the past 24 hours have also successfully initiated operations from Dammam."



A person fuels their vehicle at a gas station March 19, 2026, in Baltimore. (AP)

Critics warn of smog, crop price

EPA's E15 waiver aims to cut fuel prices but sparks debate

WASHINGTON, March 26, (AP): The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Wednesday that it would temporarily allow widespread sales of a higher ethanol gas blend in a move that they hope will tamp down consumer prices that have soared since the Iran war began.

The higher blend has been prohibited in warm weather because of concerns it could worsen smog. "President Trump is unleashing American Energy Dominance, and today's action will directly lower prices at the pump and gives a clear demand signal to our domestic bio-fuels producers," U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said in a statement.

The summer waiver for E15 has become commonplace in recent years, and both Republicans and Democrats have called for it to become year-round and permanent to lower prices at the pump. It's already allowed in some states: Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska, Missouri, Wisconsin and most of South Dakota, according to the Renewable Fuels Association, an ethanol trade group. The association said it's also legal in cities that require reformulated gasoline, or gasoline blended with the intent to burn more cleanly.

In Kansas, Democratic Rep. Sharice Davids has requested and been granted emergency waivers for E15 for several years, from EPA administrations under presidents of both parties. This week U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a Democrat from Minnesota, urged the Trump administration to take "a no-cost, immediate step" to curb rising domestic fuel costs amid the Iran war.

But not all are convinced the move will substantially lower gas prices. E15 isn't available in all states and some places don't have the necessary infrastructure or enough of a supply of ethanol to ramp up use, said Kenneth Gilling-

ham, a professor at the Yale School of the Environment who studies the impacts of transportation regulations on prices, emissions and consumer welfare.

Gillingham also said the higher levels of corrosive ethanol in E15 can be a risk especially to older cars, boats and all-terrain vehicles. More corn used for ethanol also means less can be used for animal feed, said Jason Hill, a professor at the University of Minnesota who studies food, energy markets and environmental consequences. That means consumers could be trading lower costs at the pump for higher costs at the grocery store.

"I think it's difficult to see when the ledger's settled, how this is a benefit for U.S. consumers," Hill said.

Hill said he thought the announcement was targeted more at farmers hit hard by higher prices for the diesel they use to run their equipment and by fertilizer price hikes caused by the Iran war. He said similar announcements have been made before as a way to express support for "agriculture and those who drive."

Gillingham also said the move comes at a cost beyond economics.

"There's more likely to be ozone issues in the summer and some people will die," he said. "It will lead to some earlier heart attacks and it will lead to some earlier respiratory issues that wouldn't have been the case otherwise."

The oil industry has generally opposed expansion of E15, arguing that biofuel blending is costly and raises gasoline prices. But a vice president at the American Petroleum Institute wrote in a statement that they supported this move. "By temporarily easing summer fuel requirements, this action helps ensure American consumers continue to have access to affordable, reliable energy," Will Hupman said.

Venezuela pitches newly opened oil sector to investors at Miami summit

CARACAS, March 26, (AP): Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez preached of lucrative long-term opportunities in her resource-rich country at a Saudi-backed investment summit on Wednesday, offering a window into how Venezuela's government is trying to lure investors to its oil sector.

Addressing the Miami summit from Venezuela, Rodríguez presented a reformed industry - one that has opened up to private capital, international arbitration and scrutiny in the less than three months since the U.S. military captured her predecessor, Nicolás Maduro, and the White House began implementing a phased plan to turn the troubled country around. She didn't mention Maduro, and instead focused on reassuring potential investors that Venezuela represents a safe investment in part thanks to the recent overhaul of its oil industry.

She projected the country will see double-digit economic growth this year and the following two years, creating conditions "where investors know that, regardless of political changes or restrictive circumstances, there is security, that Venezuela has laws that allow for the safe return of their investments."

"We are in a process of stabilization, implementing the reforms needed for a productive environment and to attract investments that will diversify the engines of the Venezuelan economy," she said during a presentation delivered entirely in Spanish.

Venezuela sits atop the world's largest oil reserves and used them to power what was once Latin America's strongest economy. But corruption, mismanagement and U.S. economic sanctions saw production steadily decline from the 3.5 million barrels per day pumped in 1999, when Maduro's mentor, Hugo Chávez, took power, to less than 400,000 barrels per day in 2020.

In 2019, the U.S. Treasury Department under the first Trump administration locked Venezuela out

of world oil markets when it sanctioned the state-owned Petróleos de Venezuela S.A., or PDVSA, as part of a policy punishing Maduro's government for corruption. That forced the government to sell its remaining oil output at a discount - about 40% below market prices - to buyers such as China. Venezuela even started accepting payments in Russian rubles, bartered goods or cryptocurrency.

The country currently produces about a million barrels a day.

On Wednesday, Rodríguez touted Venezuela's low production costs and willingness to negotiate.

"When we consider a barrel of oil, its production cost, 64% of that barrel has room for negotiation with the investor regarding royalty reductions, income tax reductions, and most importantly, the dividends the investor receives," she said. "If there is a large investment, obviously the return will be higher on that 64%."

Rodríguez was sworn in after Maduro and his wife were captured on Jan. 3 in Venezuela's capital, Caracas, and taken to New York to face drug trafficking charges. Both have pleaded not guilty and are expected to appear in court Thursday.

After taking office, Rodríguez, under pressure from the Trump administration, moved quickly to overhaul oil industry regulations. A new law now grants private companies control over oil production and sales, ending PDVSA's monopoly over those activities as well as pricing. It also allows for independent arbitration of disputes, removing a mandate for disagreements to be settled only in Venezuelan courts, which are controlled by the ruling party.

The U.S. Treasury Department, in return, has eased sanctions. Last week, it issued a broad authorization allowing PDVSA to directly sell Venezuelan oil to U.S. companies and on global markets, a massive shift after largely blocking dealings with Venezuela's government and its oil sector for years.

Gold, silver drop as energy prices climb

World shares slide as oil nears \$100 on Iran war jitters

HONG KONG, March 26, (AP): World shares traded lower and oil prices rose back to around \$100 per barrel on Thursday as a de-escalation of the Iran war remained uncertain.

U.S. futures were down 0.6%. In early European trading, Britain's FTSE 100 lost 1.3% to 9,977.65. France's CAC 40 fell 1.1% to 7,762.41, and Germany's DAX dropped 1.6% to 22,583.07.

In Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 closed 0.3% lower at 53,603.65. South Korea's Kospi lost 3.2% to 5,460.46.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 1.9% to 24,856.43, while the Shanghai Composite index was down 1.1% to 3,889.08.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged down 0.1%, while Taiwan's Taixex was trading 0.3% lower.

Oil prices were up again on Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, rose 3.2% to \$100.39 per barrel. It was below \$95 on Wednesday. Benchmark U.S. crude was 3.5% higher at \$93.44 a barrel.

The rise in oil prices came as Tehran on Wednesday dismissed a ceasefire plan by the U.S., after the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump offered a 15-point proposal to Iran and Trump this week delayed a self-imposed deadline to "obliterate" its power plants in order to force Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump insisted late Wednesday that Iran is still negotiating following its rejection of the U.S.'s ceasefire proposal.

Iran also launched more attacks on Israel and Gulf Arab countries as Israel launched airstrikes on Tehran and the U.S. prepared to deploy more American troops to the region.

With the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway between Iran and Oman where roughly a fifth of the world's oil typically passes through, remaining largely closed after the Iran war began, oil prices have fluctuated, climbing around 40% since the beginning of the war, which is now in its fourth week.



Currency traders watch monitors near a screen showing the Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI), right, and the foreign exchange rate between U.S. dollar and South Korean won at the foreign exchange dealing room of the Hana Bank headquarters in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, March 26, 2026. (AP)

On Wednesday, Wall Street stocks closed higher. The S&P 500 gained 0.5% to 6,591.90. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 0.7% to 46,429.49, and the Nasdaq composite rose 0.8% to 21,929.83.

U.S.-listed shares of Arm Holdings jumped 16.4%, following an announcement by the U.K. company that it would be launching and selling its own chips which is expected to drive future revenue.

On Holding, the Swiss sportswear company sell-

ing On running shoes, fell 11.2% in the U.S. Its CEO Martin Hoffmann is stepping down and the company has named two co-founders as co-CEOs.

In other dealings early Thursday, gold and silver prices fell. Gold prices dropped 2.9% to \$4,420.80 per ounce. Silver prices lost 6.6% to \$67.85 an ounce.

The U.S. dollar rose to 159.52 Japanese yen from 159.47 yen. The euro was at \$1.1557, down from \$1.1559.

European Parliament greenlights US-EU trade deal with safeguards

World Trade Organization talks to advance revised deal

BRUSSELS, March 26, (AP): The European Parliament voted Thursday to approve a trade deal between Washington and Brussels but with amendments added to protect European interests should the United States fail to hold up its end of the bargain.

The deal was negotiated last July in Turnberry, Scotland, by U.S. President Donald Trump and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. It set a 15% tariff on most goods in an effort to stave off far higher import duties on both sides that might have sent shock waves through economies around the globe.

New language now says that the deal can be suspended if Washington "undermined the objectives of the deal, discriminated against EU economic operators, threatened member states' territorial integrity, foreign and defence policies, or engaged in economic coercion."

That clause was forged because of the tensions over Greenland, said Bernd Lange, a German lawmaker and head of the EU's parliamentary trade committee.

Trump drew widespread condemnation across the 27-nation bloc by threatening to take control of Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark. He has backed away from the threat, at least for now.

"If this would happen again, then immediately the tariffs would be installed," he said at a press conference after lawmakers voted. He said the protective modifications were "weatherproofing" the Turnberry deal.

The deal will now be further negotiated by EU trade representatives Maroš Šefcovic and his U.S. counterpart Jamieson Greer, who are meeting Friday on the sidelines of the World Trade Organization meeting Yaoundé, Cameroon.

"We need the EU-US deal in force on both sides - delivering real certainty for EU businesses and showing that genuine partnership gets results," Šefcovic said after the vote in Brussels.

There were formally two votes to introduce clauses to the deal. One passed 417-154 and the other 437-144 with dozens of abstentions each.

The U.S. Ambassador to the EU Andrew Puzder said the vote would provide "stability and predictability" for U.S. and EU businesses and drive economic growth. "We encourage all parties to think to the future and the importance of unleashing opportunities for businesses on both sides of the Atlantic," he said.

Malte Lohan, CEO, American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union, said the vote is "the right signal for businesses that have been stuck in limbo over the past year" and "a necessary step towards a more predictable transatlantic marketplace."

Croatian lawmaker Željana Zovko said despite the trade spat between Brussels and Washington, trade across the Atlantic had grown over the past year. "This resilience proves the trans-Atlantic trade works, and if it works, we should strengthen it, not hold it back."

The Conversation

Supreme Court's tariff decision still leaves a 'mess' for companies trying to grab refunds

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



U.S. companies stung by President Donald Trump's emergency tariffs had hoped for relief when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in February 2026 in their favor. But settling on a remedy - namely, rebate checks from the government - may be an even bigger headache.

Fresh wrinkles are prompting businesses to take different routes as they try to recoup money, with many opting to sue to improve their odds. These lawsuits are also underscoring the complex ways that tariffs worked their way through corporate accounting. In some cases, their cost was a clear line item; in others, the impact was muddier - say, through changed supply lines or selective increases in retail pricing. And some have backed off from a legal fight altogether and sold their refund rights to investment firms, often at a deep discount, figuring that getting something is better than risk getting nothing.

These technicalities didn't seem to concern most members of the high court. In fact, only one Justice, Brett Kavanaugh, raised the question of the decision's practical complications in his dissent. But his warning of "substantial" repercussions now looks more prescient by the day.

"The United States may be required to refund billions of dollars to importers who have paid the ... tariffs, even though some importers may have already passed down costs to consumers or others," he wrote. "As was acknowledged at oral argument, the refund process is likely to be a 'mess.'"

We are professors of finance and law who have been following these cases closely. To begin untangling the "mess" this ruling created, it's helpful to focus on the different ways companies processed these tariffs - and why this means that a quick and clean remedy is unlikely.

In its 6-3 decision, the high court concluded that a broad category of Trump's tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act exceeded the president's legal authority. Many companies that had sued for relief in the form of rebate checks cheered the ruling.

Judge Richard Eaton at the Court of International Trade, tasked with overseeing the refund distribution, then ordered the Trump administration to immediately start the process by asking Customs and Border Protection to recalculate its revenues without the tariffs to determine the rebate total - a tally that the agency estimates at about US\$166 billion. But no one is sure how long it will take or whether it will work. And that uncertainty is sparking a fresh round of litigation.

Consider the different approaches taken by two businesses that paid the tariffs: logistics giant FedEx and the retail chain Costco. Costco filed suit against the Trump administration before the Supreme Court decision, while FedEx was among the many businesses that sued after the ruling.

Fedex, which saw some of its cross-border business plummet by 25% to 35%, collected tariffs from both U.S. companies importing goods and from U.S. customers ordering from abroad. In this function as broker, it was able to separate out the tariffs as a line item. That means it can more easily calculate what it would pay back to its customers. If Fedex gets the rebates, it has said it will refund all clients who bore the cost.

The accounting for Costco, by contrast, is less straightforward. It paid the duties but reallocated much of the cost internally. For some goods, it shuffled its extensive global supply chains to mitigate the tariffs' bite or

covered the cost by selectively hiking prices on items where demand would be less affected. It has not made as explicit a commitment of repaying its customers, although it has said it will try to honor it.

In both cases, executive pledges of refunds weren't enough to prevent class action lawsuits by skeptical consumers since the Supreme Court's decision, arguing they needed a more ironclad guarantee.

Other companies, meanwhile, are waiving a legal fight altogether and selling their refund rights to investment firms, often at only a fraction of what they had paid in levies, in the expectation that full repayment is unlikely.

These companies typically are too small to finance a legal battle but big enough to have sufficient money at stake for Wall Street to take interest. For example, Atlanta-based Kids2, which sources almost all of its toy and infant products in China, sold its rights before the high court's ruling for about a quarter of what it paid out in the emergency tariffs.

Legal complications aside, logistical snags are also emerging. In response to Eaton's order, Customs and Border Protection chief Brandon Lord stated in a filing on March 6, 2026, that the government was "not able to comply" due to the "unprecedented volume of refunds" overwhelming the agency's technology. It's working on an online system to "streamline and consolidate refunds and interest payments," to be operational in 45 days of that filing, he wrote.

In response, Eaton paused his order requiring immediate refunds, but he has demanded regular updates on CBP's progress. On March 19, Lord reported that the four components of the new online system were between 45% and 80% functional.

While some companies may get relief for levies they already paid, there's the risk Trump could still make good on his threat to use other federal statutes to impose tariffs. Those laws aren't an easy workaround for the administration, but they still provide some options for Trump to apply tariffs on imports, including those that had been affected under the emergency levies.

Further uncertainty, in short, is likely. As the stock market volatility in 2025 after Trump's "Liberation Day" announcement showed, this uncertainty can be costly. And the Supreme Court's decision hasn't allayed those fears. Companies have delayed investment, stockpiled inventory and diverted resources into compliance and legal review since the tariff wars kicked off.

Such actions can tie up capital that could otherwise fund new employment, higher wages or product innovation. Trump's trade policy is, in fact, underscoring the basic economic lesson that tariffs don't eliminate trade but simply make it more expensive, research shows.

Businesses have to decide to either pass these import taxes along to consumers via higher prices or absorb higher input costs themselves. Trump's experiment is no different. According to fresh research from the New York Federal Reserve, as the average tariff rate jumped from 2.6% to 13% from January through November 2025, almost 90% of the burden hit consumers and businesses.

That's why tariffs are a rare point of consensus among economists: They harm economic growth and are more costly today than ever before, given how interconnected global supply chains have become. And as the aftermath of the Supreme Court's ruling shows, undoing their effect is a lot messier than tariff boosters would admit. (AP)

India Union Minister Piyush Goyal unveils Malabar Gold & Diamonds' \$24 million CSR initiative for FY 2026-2027

NEW DELHI, March 26: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the world's fifth-largest retail jewellery group and a responsible jewellery brand has announced their CSR initiatives worth USD 24 Million for the financial year 2026-27 held at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi in the presence of Shri Piyush Goyal, India Union Minister for Commerce and Industry.

At the CSR initiative, the Union Minister inaugurated the distribution of educational scholarships for 33,000 female students across India. The event was attended by Malabar Group Chairman Mr. M.P. Ahammad, Malabar Gold & Diamonds Managing Director - India Operations Mr. O. Asher, Malabar Group Executive Directors Mr. Nishad A.K. and Mr. Abdulla Ibrahim, Kerala House Resident Commissioner Mr. Puneet Kumar, IAS, Pratham CEO Ms. Rukmini Banerji, and Thalnal Chairman Dr. Idris, among others.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal stated that the initiatives of the Malabar Charitable Trust align closely with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of empowering India's daughters through programs like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.

He added that "Malabar Gold & Diamonds' decision to allocate USD 24 Million towards CSR will further strengthen the nation's progress," emphasizing that India's growth is rooted in the empowerment of its people - especially women and girls and appreciating the company's efforts in driving meaningful change through education.

He also encouraged students and young citizens to dream big, aspire beyond limitations, and seize the vast opportunities India offers, urging them to contribute actively to the nation's growth story.

Malabar Group, Chairman, Mr. M.P. Ahammad highlighted "Human resource development is the backbone of national growth. He noted that nurturing talent through quality education is essential, and that the scholarship programme enables students to achieve academic success and contribute to the country's development. He added that the group remains committed to creating sustainable, long-term societal impact through significant CSR investments.

During 2026-27, CSR projects worth USD 24 Million will be implemented across more than 3,000 locations in 19 states in India, covering 15 major initiatives. These programmes are expected to benefit over 200,000 people.



Group photo during the event.

A significant focus is on education with USD 14 Million allocated to initiatives such as micro-learning centres for street children and national scholarship programmes for girls. USD 3.6 Million has been earmarked for food distribution under the Hunger Free World project, and USD 1.7 Million for healthcare initiatives. Housing projects, including the 'Grandma Home' initiative for destitute mothers, will receive 3 Million. Additionally, 0.82 Million will be allocated for other humanitarian activities and USD 1.2 Million for environmental protection.

As part of the Malabar Group's 33rd anniversary, scholarships will be awarded this year to 33,000 girl students from 284 districts across 18 states in India. Since its inception, the programme has benefited over 115,000 girls. All CSR initiatives are implemented through the Malabar Charitable Trust.

For the rehabilitation of street children, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has established 1,543 micro-learning centres across 17 states in partnership with Pratham Education Foundation, one of India's largest NGOs. The number of centres will be increased to 2,500 this year, with student enrolment expected to grow from over 64,000 to 100,000.

Under the Hunger Free World project, nutritious meals are provided daily to 115,000 people across India, Zambia, and Ethiopia. Other CSR initiatives include the 'Grandma Home' project, which provides free accommodation and care for destitute women, and Malabar-Thalnal pharmacies that offer

medicines at subsidized rates to the underprivileged. Malabar Gold & Diamonds' operations are guided by ESG principles. Since its inception, the company has allocated 5% of its net trading profit towards CSR activities. These initiatives focus on women empowerment, healthcare, education, housing, hunger eradication and environmental protection, in collaboration with NGOs such as Pratham and Thanal.

These efforts have already brought positive change to the lives of over 1.8 million people across India.

About Malabar Gold & Diamonds
Malabar Gold & Diamonds was established in 1993 and is the flagship company of Malabar Group, a leading diversified Indian business conglomerate.

With an annual turnover of \$7.36 billion, the company currently ranks as the 5th largest jewellery retailer globally and today has a strong retail network of over 430 showrooms spread across 14 countries in addition to multiple offices, design centers, wholesale units, and factories spread across India, Middle East, Far East, the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia & New Zealand. The group, owned by 3,500 shareholders, has more than 30,000 professionals from over 26 countries working towards its continued success. Malabar Gold & Diamonds also features an online store www.malabargoldanddiamonds.com providing customers the opportunity to purchase their favorite jewelry at any time and on any day from the comfort of their homes.

The group also operates MGD - Lifestyle Jewellery, a retail concept offering trendy and light weight jewellery that represents the independent and the modern woman through its designs and collections.

Mojawhraty by Malabar is the latest retail concept from the brand, exclusively catering to Arabic audience globally. Mojawhraty blends Arabic tradition with modern elegance.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) has been the primary commitment of the group since its inception. The key ESG focus area of Malabar Group are Health, Housing, Hunger Free World, Education, Environment and Women empowerment. Integrating the principles of responsibility and sustainability into its core business, Malabar Group periodically strengthens its ESG goals to remain a socially conscious and responsible organization. The group contributes 5% of its profit to such initiatives in the same country of operation.

Unemployment rate stays at 4.4%

US jobless claims edge up to 210K amid weak labor market

WASHINGTON, March 26, (AP): The number of Americans applying for jobless aid inched up last week as employers continue to retain workers despite a labor market that has weakened considerably in the past year.

U.S. applications for jobless aid for the week ending March 21 rose by 5,000 to 210,000 from the previous week's 205,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's right in line with the 210,000 new filings analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet were expecting.

Filings for unemployment benefits are considered representative of U.S. layoffs and are close to a real-time indicator of the health of the job market.

While weekly layoffs have remained in a healthy range mostly between 200,000 and 250,000 for the past few years, a number of high-profile companies have announced job cuts recently, including Morgan Stanley, Block, UPS and Amazon.

Earlier this month, the Labor Department reported that U.S. employers unexpectedly cut 92,000 jobs in February, a sign that the labor market remains under strain. Revisions also slashed 69,000 jobs from December and January payrolls, nudging the unemployment rate up to 4.4%.

The surprisingly weak employment picture in February adds to the economic uncertainty over the war with Iran, which has caused oil prices to surge more than 40% and saddled business and consumers with higher costs.

This comes at a time when inflation was already relatively high in the U.S.

The Commerce Department recently reported that the Fed's preferred inflation gauge rose 2.8% in January compared with a year earlier. That's above the Fed's 2% target and the latest sign that prices were persistently elevated even before the Iran war caused spikes in oil and gas costs.

That persistent inflation, combined with the uncertainties brought on by the conflict in the Middle East, led the Fed to leave its benchmark lending rate alone at its last meeting. Central bank officials voted to raise the rate three times to close 2025 out of concern for a weakening job market.

The U.S. job market appears stuck in what economists call a "low-hire, low-fire" state that has kept the unemployment rate historically low, but has left those out of work struggling to find a new job.

Data over the past year has broadly revealed a labor market in which hiring has clearly slowed, hobbled by uncertainty stoked by President Donald Trump's tariffs and the lingering effects of the high interest rates the Federal Reserve engineered in 2022 and 2023 to tamp down a spike of pandemic-induced inflation.

The Labor Department's report Thursday showed that the four-week moving average of jobless claims, which evened out some of the weekly swings, dipped by 250 to 210,500.

The total number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits for the previous week ending March 14 fell by 32,000 to 1.82 million, the government said. That's the lowest number of continuing claims since May 25, 2024 when it was 1,804,000.

Nuclear targets set across five ASEAN nations for clean energy

Southeast Asia revisits nuclear power plans for AI data centers as Iran war disrupts energy supplies

BANGKOK, March 26, (AP): Nuclear power is getting a second look in Southeast Asia as countries prepare to meet surging energy demand as they vie for artificial intelligence-focused data centers.

Several Southeast Asian nations are reviving mothballed nuclear plans and setting ambitious targets and nearly half of the region could, if they pursue those goals, have nuclear energy in the 2030s. Even countries without current plans have signaled their interest.

Southeast Asia has never produced a single watt of nuclear energy, despite long-held atomic ambitions. But that may soon change as pressure mounts to reduce emissions that contribute to climate change, while meeting growing power needs.

The Iran war is underscoring the vulnerability of Asia's energy supplies, raising the sense of urgency about finding alternatives to oil and gas in Southeast Asia, analysts say.

The surge in crude oil prices caused by the escalating conflict has raised the motivation for countries to speed up their nuclear efforts, said Alvie Asuncion-Astronomo of the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute.

Vietnam and Russia advanced a nuclear power deal this week as the region's energy security concerns worsened. In South Asia, Bangladesh is racing to power up its new nuclear power plant, also backed by Russia, to address the country's energy shortfalls.

Southeast Asia will account for a quarter of growth in global energy demand by 2035, according to the International Energy Agency, or IEA. That partly is because of the more than 2,000 data centers in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines, according to the think tank Ember.

Many more data centers are in the pipeline. That's most obvious in Malaysia, which aspires to be Southeast Asia's AI computing hub and has drawn investments and interest from tech giants like Microsoft, Google and Nvidia.

The revival of Southeast Asia's nuclear interest mirrors a global trend.

Nearly 40 nations - including the United States, Japan, South Korea and China - have joined a global push to triple installed nuclear energy capacity by 2050. Southeast Asia will account for nearly a fourth of the 157 gigawatts expected from "newcomer nuclear nations" by mid-century, according to the industry-backed World Nuclear Association.

"There is a more serious, new and growing momentum for the development of nuclear energy in Southeast Asia," said King Lee, with the association.

Five of the 11 members of the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations - Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines - are chasing nuclear.

Vietnam is building two nuclear plants, backed by the Russian state corporation Rosatom. These are "nationally significant, strategic projects," according to Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh. Vietnam's revised atomic energy law took effect in January.

Indonesia added nuclear to its new energy plan last year, aiming to build two small modular reactors by 2034. Officials there say Canada and Russia have issued formal cooperation proposals and others will soon follow.

Thailand set a target last year of adding 600 megawatts of nuclear generating capacity by 2037. Nuclear is a "promising solution" to supplying enough affordable, clean electricity to meet rising demand, officials with Thailand's Electricity Generating Authority told a conference in Bangkok.

No Southeast Asian nation has engaged with atomic energy more than the Philippines, which built a nuclear power plant in the 1970s that it never turned on.

A new atomic energy regulatory authority launched last year will "usher in the integration of nuclear power," according to Philippine officials. The country set a 2032 target and approved a roadmap for potential investors in February.

"We are not anticipating that nuclear electricity will be cheap at the onset," said Asuncion-Astronomo. But in the long term, she said it will improve the Philippines' energy reliability, security, independence and eventually costs.

"The ongoing conflict in the Middle East definitely demonstrates how volatile fossil fuel costs are and the instability of the supply," she said. "Nuclear is an alternative solution that can give us more self-reliance in terms of energy."

Southeast Asian nations without firm plans are also showing interest.

Cambodia's latest national strategy signaled an openness to nuclear and Singapore outlined plans last year to study its own atomic potential.

Even the tiny oil and gas sultanate of Brunei told the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, that it is "carefully exploring nuclear energy."

The AI-focused data centers contributing to Southeast Asia's growing energy demand are large windowless buildings filled with rows of computers.

A standard AI data center consumes as much electricity as 100,000 households, the IEA says.

Malaysia has more than 500 operational data centers. Another 300 or so are under construction and around 1,140 are planned, according to

Ember. Malaysia revived its nuclear program last year and set a 2031 target for bringing atomic energy online.

"A lot more industries are expanding in Malaysia," said Zayana Zaikariah, with the Kuala Lumpur-based Institute of Strategic & International Studies, listing growing interest in data centers, semiconductors and mining. "Everything requires energy."

The U.S. is helping. Secretary of State Marco Rubio signed an agreement with Malaysia last year. He called it "a signal to the world of how civil nuclear cooperation is something that is available." President Donald Trump also sees nuclear as a way to meet data center demands. In 2025, he ordered the quadrupling of U.S. nuclear power within the next 25 years.

"There's more incentive to follow through compared to previous flirtations with nuclear energy," said Amalina Anuar, with the ISEAS-Yusof Institute, a Singapore-based think tank. The fact that Malaysia's oil and gas reserves are finite is driving a search for new energy sources.

Fossil fuels generate 81% of Malaysia's electricity, Ember found, while solar and wind provide just 2%.

"Malaysia's decarbonization is both urgent and critical as rising demand from AI and data centers is anticipated," said Dinita Setyawati with Ember. "But the nuclear option should be approached cautiously."

Global nuclear capacity will more than triple - to about 1,446 gigawatts - by 2050 if existing reactors continue operations and governments meet their stated targets, according to the World Nuclear Association.

More than 400 nuclear reactors, in about 30 countries, generate around 380 gigawatts of energy, according to the IAEA's Power Reactor Information System. This is makes up between 4.5% to 10% of the world's energy, the IEA and nuclear association estimate.

Concerns over nuclear safety, waste and supply remain. Public resistance flared after the catastrophic 1986 Chernobyl and 2011 Fukushima nuclear meltdowns. But even Japan, which idled all its plants after that disaster, is restarting its nuclear plants.

Bridget Woodman, with the research group Zero Carbon Analytics, said that as the world strays farther off track from its climate goals, nuclear can look deceptively more enticing than other less risky alternatives, like renewable energy.

Southeast Asian countries "considering starting a nuclear industry from scratch" need to consider "the possibility of accidents," she said.

Average bonus jumps \$15,000 as Wall Street profits surge 30%

Wall Street bonuses hit record \$246,900 average in 2025

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): The average Wall Street bonus rose to a record \$246,900 in 2025 amid a surge in profits, New York state's comptroller reported Thursday.

The average bonus rose 6% - or almost \$15,000 higher - from the previous year. Wall Street's bonus pool reached a record \$49.2 billion in 2025, up 9%, according to Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli's annual estimate of bonuses paid to securities industry employees who work in New York City.

DiNapoli, a Democrat, said the increases reflect a rise of more than 30% in Wall Street's profits last year, to \$65.1 billion.

"Wall Street saw strong performance for much of last year, despite all of the ongoing domestic and international upheavals," DiNapoli said in a prepared release.

While there were several historic drops on Wall Street over worries about everything from President Donald Trump's tariffs to interest rates to a possible bubble in artificial-intelligence technology, it was a good year for anyone with the stomach to stick through the swings.

S&P 500 index funds, which sit at the heart of many savers' 401(k) accounts, returned nearly 18% in 2025 and set a record high on Dec. 24. It was their third straight year of big returns.

Chris Connors, a managing director at the compensation consulting firm Johnson Associates, said the bonus estimates were no surprise, given the trends on Wall Street.

"I think 2025 was a great year, probably the best year since 2021 for many firms on Wall Street. Trading, in particular, had an exceptional year," Connors

said. Connors noted that bonuses make up a significant portion of pay for many professionals in the financial services industry, which relies heavily on incentives.

Wall Street is a major driver of New York City's economy and a major source of tax revenue for both the city and the state. DiNapoli estimated the 2025 bonuses should generate \$199 million more in state income tax revenue and \$91 million more for the city, when compared with the previous year.

"However, we are seeing slower job growth, and geopolitical conflicts have global repercussions that pose extraordinary risks for the short- and long-term outlook on the financial sector and for broader economic markets."

Known for turning unlikely subjects into bestsellers

Tracy Kidder, Pulitzer-winning author, dies

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): Tracy Kidder, an award-winning narrative nonfiction writer who turned everything from computer engineering to life in a nursing home into unexpected bestsellers, has died. He was 80.

His son, Nat Kidder, confirmed to The Associated Press that Kidder died from lung cancer Tuesday at his daughter's home in Boston.

Kidder won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for his 1981 work "The Soul of a New Machine," which delved into the work of a fledgling computer company long before most people cared about the inner workings of Silicon Valley.

"It was like going into another country," Kidder told the AP at the time. "At first, I didn't understand what anybody was saying."

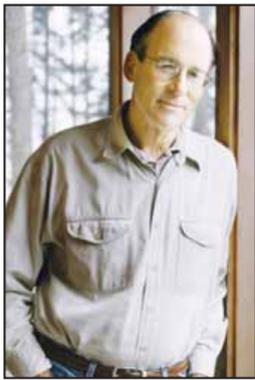
Over the ensuing decades, Kidder immersed himself in worlds he was previously unfamiliar with, producing richly researched books about topics that may not sound like light reading.

For 1989's "Among Schoolchildren," he spent a year in a fifth-grade classroom, highlighting the dedication of an inner-city teacher in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Later, for 1993's "Old Friends," he observed the dark side of growing old in America while also chronicling how two friends maintained their dignity in a nursing home despite their infirmities.

Turning these events at a Northampton, Massachusetts, nursing home into a cohesive narrative was one of his major challenges, Kidder told the AP.

"Not a lot happens, and yet I think when you read it, you feel that a lot does. Small things have to count for a great deal," he said.

In 2003, Kidder wrote "Mountains Beyond Mountains," about a doctor's effort to bring health care to Haiti. The work introduced Kidder's work to a new generation of readers as numerous uni-



Author Tracy Kidder stands in his cottage, in South Bristol, Maine, on Sept. 26, 2005. (AP)

versities added it to their reading lists.

"Mountains Beyond Mountains changed my life—and the lives of so many others around the world," John Green, author of "The Fault in Our Stars," wrote on social media Wednesday.

The book even inspired the indie rock band Arcade Fire's 2010 hit "Sprawl II (Mountains Beyond Mountains)."

"Tracy's gifts for storytelling and tireless reporting are an enduring reflection of the empathy, integrity, and endless curiosity he brought to everything he did," Kidder's longtime publisher Random House said in a statement Wednesday.

All the while, Kidder was careful to eschew focusing on his longtime loves like fishing or baseball, afraid that if he spent too much time in one of those realms, it might cause him to "feel sick of it."

Kidder was born in New York City in 1945 and attended Harvard University, where he signed up for ROTC to avoid the Vietnam War draft.

After graduation, despite thinking he would be assigned a Washington communications intelligence role, Kidder was instead sent off to Vietnam, where the 22-year-old was placed in charge of an eight-man rear-echelon radio research detachment that monitored the communications of enemy units to try to pinpoint their locations.

Kidder documented the con-founding experience in 2005's "My Detachment," an often humorous memoir that offered insights into the lives of the support troops who made up most of the 500,000-plus U.S. military personnel who were in Vietnam at the height of the buildup when the author served there in 1968-1969. The war became an abstraction for Kidder, who never saw combat and knew the enemy only as "dots on a map."

After the war, Kidder and his new wife, Frances Gray Toland, moved to the Midwest so Kidder could enroll in the University of Iowa's prestigious creative writing program, where he latched onto the New Journalism wave pioneered by writers like Tom Wolfe and Truman Capote.

Kidder hated the title "literary journalist," telling the Dallas Morning News in 2010 that he found the description "pretentious."

The term creative nonfiction irked him too: "It suggests we make things up."

Instead, he saw himself as a storyteller.

"I don't think of fiction and nonfiction as all that different, except that nonfiction is not invented," he told the AP. "But I take exception to those people who think nonfiction should not appropriate the techniques of fiction ... They belong to storytelling."

Kidder is survived by his wife, Fran, their two children, Nat Kidder and Alice Kidder Bukhman, and four grandchildren.



Cast members Will Wheaton, from left, Corey Feldman, and Jerry O'Connell pose for a portrait to promote the 40th anniversary of the film 'Stand by Me' in Pittsburgh, Friday, March 13. (AP)

'An epic film with little boys'

'Stand by Me' stars reflect on Reiner, film's return to theaters after 40 yrs

LOS ANGELES, March 26, (AP): Jerry O'Connell, Corey Feldman and Wil Wheaton were already thinking about "Stand by Me" when Rob Reiner died in December. Just a week prior, the trio spent a weekend together attending some screenings of Reiner's beloved coming-of-age film, which was about to turn 40.

The memories from that formative 1985 summer in Oregon were flooding back and they were having fun being together again. As Feldman told The Associated Press in a group Zoom with Wheaton and O'Connell, he was "very grateful to be back with my bros."

"We've stayed in touch loosely through the years and we've gotten together here and there," Feldman said. "But there's never been a time that the three of us just hung out ... it was like a high school reunion, but only for three people that really got it."

It was just the start of a multi-city tour that had been long in the works. Then the Reiner news broke, and they knew they had each other.

Anniversary

"My first thought was, 'I am so glad that I have a place to land with my grief,'" Wheaton said. "There's not a lot of other people in the world who really know what this feels like."

For better or worse, in some ways they'd been here before with their co-star River Phoenix, who died in 1993. At a 25th anniversary screening, they remembered Reiner saying to no one in particular that it "feels like there should be a chair here for River."

And in that spirit, O'Connell, Feldman and Wheaton started figuring out what they could do to honor and remember the filmmaker who not only changed their lives but who gave them an experience they've all been chasing ever since.

"We know how much Rob loved 'Stand by Me.' We know what it meant to him," Wheaton said. "It never occurred to me to just shelve it all. I thought, well, now we really have to get out there."

Wheaton and O'Connell were also among those who stood on the Oscars stage for the Reiner tribute. Feldman was not there, because he was not invited, he said on social media. The show's representatives did not respond to the AP's request for comment.

But the trio will continue on together. The tour still has a handful of stops left, in Anaheim, California; Seattle; Portland, Oregon; Indianapolis and Chicago. And for broader audiences, a 4K restoration of the



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Corey Feldman, from left, Jerry O'Connell, River Phoenix, Wil Wheaton in a scene from 'Stand by Me.' (AP)

film is coming back to select theaters in the US and Canada for one week starting Friday.

People like to say that Hollywood doesn't make movies like "Stand by Me" anymore, but, in 1985, they weren't exactly clamoring to make it either. Yes, it was based on a Stephen King novella, but it was also a small hangout movie with no stars. Just four 12-year-old boys on a quest to find a dead body.

Though Reiner had hits under his belt as a filmmaker, everyone passed. And even he had modest expectations for its reach: As Reiner told his screenwriters, according to a New York Times article in 1986, "There's no way this picture is going to do business, because no one who went to 'Rambo' will go to see our film."

Somewhat ironically, O'Connell told the AP, "Rambo: First Blood Part II" was the movie he saw the night before he boarded the plane to Oregon to film "Stand by Me" and that, "as an 11-year-old, I thought it was the greatest film I had seen in my life."

"Stand by Me" was definitely not "Rambo." And the only reason it did get made was Norman Lear, who saved it after his company's new owner, Coca-Cola, refused to put up the money. Lear funded it himself, to the tune of "\$8 million and change," as he told the Times in 1986. It would end up earning over \$52 million in its initial run in the late summer of 1986.

The film tapped into something universal about youthful friendships, lazy summer days, bullies, dark home lives and adventure. Perhaps most im-

portantly, the boys were relatable and true, their friendship forged through off-screen games that Reiner played with them.

"Rob took the time to really reach us and help us make authentic emotional connections to what our characters were experiencing," Wheaton said. "We were kids. I don't think I've even turned 13 yet. River hasn't turned 15 yet. And Rob is talking to us the way you talk to seasoned professionals and bringing these incredible performances out of us."

Though it was set in 1959, it's also become a kind of nostalgic catch-all for any generation who lived through a time before cellphones.

"I think it's what's so special about 'Stand by Me' is that it's not like any epic adventure movie," O'Connell said.

"There are no, like, stunt sequences with cars rolling over and explosions. It's a simple movie."

O'Connell has seen the film many times over the years, but usually at home, flipping through channels with his dog or cat as a companion. But watching in a movie theater again was transporative.

"Getting to see it on the big screen, it's a different experience," O'Connell said. "I think it's because it is such an epic film with little boys."

At the screenings, they've all noticed a wide range of ages in the audience, from young kids to grandparents. Wheaton said it seems to be resonating in particular with the "Stranger Things" generation, referencing a show that was heavily inspired by "Stand by Me."

Film



This image released by 20th Century Studios shows, from left, Eiza González, James Marsden, Vince Vaughn and Vince Vaughn in a scene from 'Mike & Nick & Nick & Alice.' (AP)

Vaughn and Marsden bring depth to the film

'Mike & Nick & Nick & Alice' delivers quirky action-comedy

LOS ANGELES, March 26, (AP): "Mike & Nick & Nick & Alice" might look like a somewhat generic, glossy action-comedy on the surface. It's got two (well, kind of three, but we'll get to that later) men north of 50 (Vince Vaughn and James Marsden), one woman south of 40 (Eiza González) and the promise of some violence (you know, the fun kind). That's not necessarily a bad thing - sometimes you get a "This Means War" or a "Mr. & Mrs. Smith." But in the streaming era, more often than not you get, I don't know, "Red One?"

"Fountain of Youth"? Something else we've already all forgotten?

This might also be a streaming-era production, debuting on Hulu and Disney+ on Friday, but it's clear from the very first moments that "Mike & Nick & Nick & Alice" isn't just a generic facsimile of a "fun" movie designed for more for the algorithm than anyone's amusement. No, this is a movie that begins, for no particular reason other than probably the delight of the filmmakers, with Ben Schwartz singing "Why Should I Worry?" a song that was written and sung by Billy Joel for the 1988 animated Disney movie "Oliver & Company," a modern, New York City-set take on Charles Dickens starring dogs. Is it related to anything? No. Is it a fun song to set the tone that also made this elder millennial critic smile? Yes.

There are choices like this throughout the film, mostly through precise, lighthearted banter that sounds real. There's even a spirited debate about the best and worst boyfriends on "Gilmore Girls" - Rory's, not Lorelai's, which falls a little flat in execution. I'm not sure the actors' hearts are really invested in Logan and Jess the way, say, Liam Neeson was able to act genuinely distraught over his "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" episodes being deleted off his DVR in "The Naked Gun." But it's an amusing idea nonetheless. They're all hyperspecific references that feel al-

most reassuring that yes, a human, in this case writer-director BenDavid Grabinski, made this thing and not a computer. Like Rory Gilmore, Grabinski's interests are "teasingly diverse" (cats! Time travel logistics! Symon spelled with a "y"!) and they do also include elaborate, stabby, shoot-'em-up action sequences that could very well have fit into a Doug Liman or McG studio pic from 20 years ago, with grenades, blood and a fair amount of butt-kicking.

The loose construct is that a hit man named Nick (Vaughn) time travels back to a certain night to save his friend and colleague Mike (Marsden), who is in love with Nick's wife Alice (González). For a fair amount of the movie there are two Nicks, present Nick and future Nick (it's not a spoiler if it's in the trailer! And the movie's title!). Vaughn manages to give his character some unexpected depth too. That there's some real acting going on is pleasantly surprising.

Everyone in the big ensemble, which includes Keith David as the mob boss, Jimmy Tatro as his dim son, Emily Hampshire as a crooked and horny police officer, as well as Arturo Castro and Stephen Root, is game for a good, silly, violent time. Are any of them remotely believable as humans? Not exactly, but that's also not the point of this kind of movie, which also overstates its welcome by a little bit. There's just not enough there to warrant its runtime.

But ultimately "Mike & Nick & Nick & Alice" has a few good laughs, some inspired needle drops, quirky references and a go-for-broke energy that should make it an enjoyable, low-stakes click.

"Mike & Nick & Nick & Alice," a 20th Century Studios release streaming on Hulu and Disney+ on Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "strong/bloody violence, pervasive language, sexual material, and drug use." Running time: 107 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Variety

NEW YORK: Dagenham & Redbridge rarely gets more than 2,000 fans attending its home matches in English soccer's sixth tier.

On Saturday, there will be eyeballs from all around the world on the little-known team.

Three weeks after becoming a minority shareholder of the east London club, social media star KSI will begin his quest to get Dagenham some global recognition by streaming its match to his 17.6 million subscribers on YouTube.

Dagenham hosts Hampton & Richmond in National League South, and it will mark the first time a match at that level will be broadcast live on YouTube. The initiative has been backed by both the National League and broadcaster DAZN, which shows selected games from

the English sixth tier. (AP)

WASHINGTON: The Supreme Court on Wednesday sided with internet service provider Cox Communications in its copyright fight with record labels over illegal music downloads by Cox customers.

The justices ruled unanimously that Cox bears no liability for the copyright violations of its customers, reversing a jury verdict and lower-court rulings.

"Cox neither induced its users' infringement nor provided a service tailored to infringement," Justice Clarence Thomas wrote for the court in an opinion that acknowledged that the record labels "have struggled to protect their copyrights in the age of online music sharing."

The company, in a statement, praised the court for affirming that internet service providers "are not copyright police." (AP)



Singer Celine Dion poses for a portrait on Saturday, Dec. 14, 2013 in Los Angeles. (AP)

Dion set to perform in Paris

PARIS, March 26, (AP): Near, far, wherever she is ... Celine Dion is heading back to Paris.

Confirming clues that have been popping up, tantalizingly, on posters around the French capital, a person involved in the planning told The Associated Press that Dion will play autumn concerts at the La Defense Arena.

The person spoke on condition anonymity to discuss the closely guarded preparations, and did not give details.

Representatives for Dion in the United States did not immediately respond to questions.

The concerts in the City of Light will come after Dion electrified the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games where she performed Edith Piaf's "Hymne à L'Amour" ("Hymn to

Love") from the Eiffel Tower - beside a rain-soaked piano.

Mysterious posters recently affixed to lampposts around the city were emblazoned with the titles of some of her iconic songs: "Pour Que Tu M'aimes Encore" ("So That You Love Me Again"), and, in English, "Power of Love." And the French-Canadian pop star posted a series of photos on Instagram of her in Paris at various times in her life - as a youngster and more recent high-fashion shots.

The La Defense Arena has a capacity of 40,000 spectators and was one of the venues used for the Olympics.

In 2022, Dion was diagnosed with stiff person syndrome, a rare disorder that causes muscle rigidity and spasms, affecting her ability to walk and sing.



From left to right: Visitors view dresses; visitors take pictures and a visitor takes a picture of a gown worn by Ariana Grande at the 2025 Oscars, during the press preview for Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art Exhibition at the V&A museum in London, Wednesday, March 25. (AP)

Art and fashion merge at London museum

A new V&A show celebrates Schiaparelli's surrealist fashion

LONDON, March 26, (AP) — London's Victoria & Albert Museum is opening a new exhibition celebrating the bold and surrealist designs of Italian fashion house Schiaparelli, from dresses created in collaboration with Salvador Dalí to show-stopping red carpet gowns worn by Ariana Grande.

The exhibition traces a century of art and innovation at the couture house, charting the way founder Elsa Schiaparelli worked with leading artists in Paris in the 1930s to current creative director Daniel Roseberry, who continues to capture global attention by dressing stars like Margot Robbie in sculptural designs.

"Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art" will celebrate one of the most ingenious and daring designers in fashion history," museum director Tristram Hunt said Wednesday.

Highlights among the 400 objects on show include Dalí's famous Lobster Telephone, from 1938, displayed along with the "Lobster Dress," a white silk gown embellished with a red lobster that Schiaparelli created with the surrealist artist. The dress was famously worn by Wallis Simpson, the American socialite whom King Edward VIII abdicated to marry. Another collaboration with Dalí is the "Skeleton dress," a black dress with 3D quilting resembling the contours of human bones.

"You cannot imagine how shocking this would have been in 1938 when it was first shown. It is a kind of punk look," Rosalind McKeever, one of the show's curators, told The Associated Press.

Also on show is an evening coat with pink silk roses

created by Schiaparelli and French artist Jean Cocteau, who died in 1963.

Coco Chanel, one of Schiaparelli's contemporaries, famously described her as "that Italian artist who's making clothes," McKeever said. "But Schiaparelli would have taken that as a compliment because she was so integrated in this artistic community," she said. "She even said, 'For me, dress designing is not a profession, but an art.'"

Schiaparelli opened her first Paris business in 1927, designing practical daywear like trouser suits, an unusual choice for women at the time, as well as more imaginative and whimsical items such as shoes with leopard fur.

She went on to design clothes and costumes for famous fans like Mae West and Marlene Dietrich, who favored the

designer's sharply tailored trouser suits.

While the designer retired in the 1950s and died in 1973, current designer Roseberry has taken on the mantle and brought Schiaparelli's creative legacy and haute couture drama to a modern audience.

One of the most eye-catching displays is a red jewel-encrusted dress worn by Grande to last year's Oscars for a medley performance from "Wicked." The sumptuous ball gown features a ruby slipper protruding from the back of the dress in tribute to "The Wizard of Oz."

There are also sparkling cabinets filled with jewelry, buttons and perfume bottles, each created like a work of art.

The exhibition opens on Saturday and runs until Nov. 8.

Variety

LONDON: Two books about hotels as places of risk and refuge in wartime are among finalists announced Wednesday for the Women's Prize for Nonfiction, set up to help rectify a gender imbalance in publishing.



Roy

"The Finest Hotel in Kabul: A People's History of Afghanistan" by Canadian journalist Lyse Doucet and UK author Jane Rogoyska's "Hotel Exile: Paris in the Shadow of

War" are on a six-book shortlist announced Wednesday for the 30,000 pound (\$40,000) prize.

Also in the running are Indian author Arundhati Roy's memoir "Mother Mary Comes to Me" and Turkish writer Ece Temelkuran's exploration of migration "Nation of Strangers: Rebuilding Home in the 21st Century" (AP)

HONG KONG: Art Basel Hong Kong 2026 held its preview on Wednesday at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center, bringing together 240 galleries from 41 countries and regions.

The fair will open to the public from Friday to Sunday.

The event features six themed sectors and programs. Its Kabinett sector presents 35 thematic exhibitions, spotlighting artistic creations from various historical periods and contemporary art practices across the Asia-Pacific. A new sector, Echoes, showcases works created in the past five years across 10 booths, offering visitors insight into the latest developments in artistic practice.

Rosanna Law, secretary for culture, sports and tourism of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government, announced at the opening that an agreement has been sealed with the organizer, confirming Hong Kong as Art Basel's exclusive host city in Asia for the next five years. (Xinhua)

PARIS: The number of children and young people out of school worldwide has risen for the seventh consecutive year, reaching 273 million, according to UNESCO's 2026 Global Education Monitoring Report released on Wednesday.

Since 2015, progress in keeping children in school has slowed in nearly every region of the world. The slowdown has been particularly pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa, mainly as a result of population growth.

The report cited population growth, crises and budget constraints as the main reasons.

Crises, especially conflicts, have also hampered progress. More than one in six children lives in conflict-affected areas, representing millions of additional out-of-school children beyond those already counted in the statistics. (Xinhua)

KUALA LUMPUR: The Oxford English Dictionary has added several Malaysian English terms in its latest update, with words originating from the Malay language and dialect of the Minnan (Hokkien) language.

The update contains 11 new words from Singaporean or Malaysian English, highlighting the region's linguistic influence on global English, the dictionary publisher Oxford Languages said in a statement on Tuesday.

Among the new additions are "agak-agak," which appears as both a noun and a verb and refers to an approximation or estimation, most frequently used in the context of a particular way of cooking, as well as the word "boleh," an intransitive verb meaning to have the power, ability, or capacity to do or deal with something successfully. (Xinhua)

Fashion



A model presents a creation of HPLY during the 2026 Autumn/Winter Shanghai Fashion Week in east China's Shanghai, March 25, 2026. The fashion week opened here on Wednesday. (Xinhua)

Singer channels past experience to create 'Creature of Habit'

Courtney Barnett overcomes writer's block for new album

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP) — Courtney Barnett is proud of the new music she's releasing to the world this spring. Getting there, however, wasn't easy. It was a journey through writer's block that she overcame in part by writing about it.

The 38-year-old Australian makes melodic rock with a slight slacker's vibe that is memorable because of her sharply observant writing - witness songs like the stream-of-consciousness ambulance visit of "Avant Gardener," the poignant house-hunting trip of "Depreston" and the ode to keeping perspective during an argument in "Before You Gotta Go."

Work that feels effortless rarely is, of course. Barnett experienced some of that during the three-year process of making her new album, "Creature of Habit." It's been released Friday.

"I'd come away from a day of writing with one word that I had changed that I was happy with. People in my life who had witnessed it would say, 'I don't understand how you can write all day and come up with nothing,'" she said.

"I was like, 'yeah, me too.'"

Most creative people have to fight through mental blocks sometime, and all have their strategies. The late Tom Petty once told journalist Paul Zollo: "You have to remind yourself that it's a lack of confidence. If you start doubting yourself, you can get in that frame of mind. But you've got to remind yourself, 'this is what I do, and I've done it a lot. And there's no reason I shouldn't be able to do it again.'"

Prior experience helped Barnett. After all, this is a woman who wrote a song called "Crippling Self-Doubt and a General Lack of Confidence."

"Each time it happens, it can be very catastrophic," she said. "You think, 'this is it. This is the last one. I can't write any more songs.' Very dramatic. I think this time, I recognized those feelings and thought, 'well, you've felt this way before, multiple times now, so maybe, just maybe, if you keep working and showing up and editing and writing, you'll get past it.'"

Her new song "Stay in Your Lane" is like a conversation with herself about what was happening. "Rip this

thing right out of my head," she sings, as the background chorus implores: "Please be patient."

"Great Advice" is a sarcastic take from someone for whom songwriting is almost always a solitary, personal activity. "Appreciate your great advice," she sings. "And I need your opinion like a needle in the eye."

The album's cover is a close-up picture of a praying mantis because, well, the little bugger was an inspiration when she spotted one at the Joshua Tree home in California where she was doing much of her writing. She watched him go about his day. The song "Mantis" is her favorite song on the album.

"It felt like this guiding message, and it helped me finish the song," she said. "A lot of that song feels to be about the process of writing. It wasn't the intention, but when I hear the album I hear a lot of those struggles."

Despite what she went through, the music does not feel labored. If there's a central theme, it's about navigating changes in your life. That came from personal experience, too. In recent

'Uniquely British asset'

BBC taps ex-Google exec to lead it amid uncertain future

LONDON, March 26, (AP) — Former Google executive Matt Brittin was named as the BBC's new director-general on Wednesday, taking the helm at the UK's national broadcaster as it faces an uncertain future and a \$10 billion lawsuit from US President Donald Trump.

Brittin, 57, who has a background in tech, rather than traditional broadcasting, spent almost two decades at Google, becoming the company's president in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. He is also a former consultant at management consultancy McKinsey.

BBC Chairman Samir Shah said Brittin brings a "deep experience of leading a high-profile and highly complex organization through transformation" and arrives as the BBC faces "radical reform."

Brittin said the 104-year-old BBC is "an extraordinary, uniquely British asset."

"Now, more than ever, we need a thriving BBC that works for everyone in a complex, uncertain and fast-changing world," he said in a statement.

Brittin, who will start his new role on May 18, succeeds Tim Davie, who resigned in November over criticism of how the broadcaster edited a speech Trump made on Jan. 6, 2021, before some of the president's supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol.

A BBC documentary aired days before the 2024 presidential election spliced together three quotes from the speech into what appeared to be one quote in which Trump urged supporters to march with him and "fight like hell."

Trump is suing the broadcaster for defamation in a Florida court, accus-

ing the BBC of broadcasting a "false, defamatory, deceptive, disparaging, inflammatory, and malicious depiction" of him, and of "a brazen attempt to interfere in and influence" the 2024 presidential election.

Shah has apologized to Trump over the edited speech, admitting that it

gave "the impression of a direct call for violent action." But the BBC rejects claims it defamed the president and has asked the federal court in the Southern District of Florida to dismiss the suit, arguing that

the case could have a "chilling effect" on robust reporting on public figures and events. It also says the case should be thrown out because the documentary was never aired in Florida or the US.

The broadcaster is also facing a once-a-decade process of renewing its governing charter, which sets out how much public money it will receive. The BBC is funded by an annual license fee - currently set at 174.50 pounds (\$230) - which is paid by all U.K. households who watch live TV or any BBC content.

The license fee has long had opponents, not least rival commercial broadcasters, and they have grown louder in an era of digital streaming when many people no longer have television sets or follow traditional TV schedules.



Brittin

Stephen Colbert, son co-write new 'Lord of the Rings' movie

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP) — Stephen Colbert, famous devotee to J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth, is co-writing a "Lord of the Rings" movie with his son.

Warner Bros. announced early Wednesday that Colbert will script "The Lord of the Rings: Shadow of the Past" along with series veteran Philippa Boyens and Peter McGee, Colbert's son. Producer Peter Jackson revealed Colbert's involvement in a social media video that introduced a "very special partner" on the film.

"It took me a few years to scrape my courage into a pile to give you a call, but about two years ago I did," Colbert told Jackson. "You liked it enough to talk to me about it, and ever since then, the two of us have been working with the brilliant Philippa Boyens on how to develop this story."

"Shadow of the Past" will come after Andy Serkis' upcoming "The Hunt of Golum," which is set to arrive in theaters next year.

Colbert said that a few years ago, while talking with his son, he thought of a potential framing device for the film, which follows a new adventure for Sam, Merry and Pippin 14 years after the passing of Frodo.



Courtney Barnett poses for a portrait on Tuesday, March 3, in New York. (AP)

years, Barnett moved to California and shut down the record label that she had been running back in Australia.

The word "change," in fact, appears in four of the album's 10 songs. The

declaration "I'm ready for a change" is spoken defiantly in "One Thing at a Time," where Barnett stretches out for what feels like a cathartic guitar solo.

"It's one of those things that I didn't really notice until I finished the album and was listening back," she said. "I realized the word kept popping up. It wasn't an intentional thing that I was writing about, but it was always in the back of my mind. Now that I've finished the album, that seems to be the main direction of all the songs."

Moving to the United States seems one of those decisions intertwined with the COVID era, a time that was depressing yet gave her a new appreciation for music. "It's like when you get an idea in your head and I was like, now it's in there and if I don't do it, I'll forever be thinking about that time I thought about moving someplace else and I didn't do it," she said.

Barnett's new home makes it easier to bring her music to the United States, where she's touring extensively with her band in May and August.

And she's happy to have writer's block behind her.

Award acknowledges Lelieveld's six decades of safe food innovation

World Food Prize goes to food safety scientist for reducing illness

DES MOINES, Iowa, March 26, (AP): A scientist who pioneered the modern food processing safety standards used around the world was awarded this year's World Food Prize, the organization announced Wednesday, crediting his work for averting millions of cases of foodborne illness and reducing food waste.

Huib Lelieveld of the Netherlands earned the award after six decades spent advancing ways to improve food safety and advocating for trade regulations that allow safe food to get around the world more easily.

"I just did what I thought was right," Lelieveld said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I want everybody to have enough food but ... it should also be safe."

Lelieveld began his career as a food researcher at Unilever at a time when mechanisms for manufacturing safe food products were, to him, "illogical," he said.

Food was often sterilized or chemi-

cally preserved after production, and equipment needed to be shut off once or twice each day to be cleaned, which was both difficult and time consuming. The processed food also required heavy use of preservatives, salt, sugar and acids to reduce the risk of contamination, which detracted from flavor and nutrition.

"I realized very soon that they did things in the wrong way, in my view," Lelieveld said. "From the beginning, I've been working on ... convincing people that you should do it in a different way."

Lelieveld worked with colleagues to develop hygienic production methods and equipment, making food manufacturing more efficient and less reliant on chemicals.

Having scaled the processes at Unilever and shown that they worked, Lelieveld said the company gave him permission to publish the research for dissemination and use globally.

"My philosophy was: You should not



Huib Lelieveld speaks at the National Chung Hsing University in Taichung, Taiwan, in 2019. (AP)

compete on food safety," Lelieveld said. "Spreading the technology, the hygienic technology, was very important." Unsafe food causes 600 million

foodborne illnesses and 420,000 deaths each year, according to the World Health Organization.

"Lelieveld was selected for translating food safety science into global regulations, legislation and practice, a movement spanning dozens of countries," Gebisa Ejeta, chair of the Laureate selection committee, said in a statement. "His initiatives are estimated to have benefited millions of consumers worldwide."

The Iowa-based World Food Prize was founded by Norman Borlaug, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for his work to dramatically increase crop yields and reduce the threat of starvation in many countries. The agricultural science honor includes a \$500,000 award.

"Lelieveld lives by his conviction that access to safe food is a universal right—a philosophy shared by the late Dr. Norman Borlaug," Mashal Husain, World Food Prize Foundation president, said in a statement.

After four decades at Unilever, Lelieveld founded the Global Harmonization Initiative in 2004 to promote consensus in food and trade regulations around the world. Drawing on a network of a few thousand scientists around the world, the nonprofit organization also works to address critical food security challenges and to facilitate food safety education.

GHI "is extremely useful because it has this enormous pool of knowledge about food safety and food protection," Lelieveld said.

Lelieveld said challenges for broad access to safe food and water persist, and he hopes to see a system where people can produce safe food and water locally even if the movement of goods across borders is restricted.

"You can't stop the transport of water through the air, with the clouds," he said. "You can produce safe water everywhere, but we need to distribute this knowledge to the people that need it and that is the biggest challenge."

Research shows no evidence

Workplace radio waves not linked to brain cancer: study

MELBOURNE, March 26, (Xinhua): A new study has found no evidence that occupational exposure to radiofrequency (RF) electromagnetic energy (EME) increases the risk of brain cancer.

The research, led by Australian and European researchers, looked at 467 brain cancer cases and their exposure to RF EME through their work, particularly manufacturing, transport, medical, construction and communications industries, a statement from the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) said Wednesday.

Researchers estimated participants' exposure levels during their work history based on data provided by two exposure assessment databases, covering up to 468 occu-

pations, said the study, published in the BMJ Open journal.

"When examining participants' entire work histories, including some who had elevated exposures from frequently using handheld radios or doing plastic welding, we found that there was no increased risk of brain cancer from RF EME exposure," said Rohan Mate, a PhD student at Australia's Monash University and the ARPANSA, who led the study.

Associate Professor Ken Karipidis from ARPANSA, who co-authored and supervised the study, said the findings should reassure workers with higher levels of occupational RF EME exposure than the general population that they are safe.



A researcher holds a 14,300 year-old dog jawbone found at Gough's Cave in the United Kingdom, on Tuesday, March 24, in London. (AP)

Millennia of dog-human bond

New studies of old dogs help experts explore their origins

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): Using the oldest dog genes studied so far, scientists are finding more evidence that our furry friends have been our companions for thousands of years.

Scientists think dogs descended from an ancient population of gray wolves somewhere in Europe or Asia. Tens of thousands of years ago, those wolves got used to living with people and became less aggressive. As they became domesticated, their genes shifted along with their behavior, giving rise to the pups we know today.

But exactly when and where this happened remains a mystery. Scientists are studying bits of DNA found in ancient dog and wolf remains to figure out what the earliest dogs may have looked like and where they came from.

In two separate studies published Wednesday in the journal Nature, researchers pushed the timeline back. They established a new way to study ancient canine DNA - which is often contaminated and tough to extract - by isolating just the doggy bits.

They examined ancient genes from the remains of over 200 dogs and wolves. The oldest dated back to about 15,800 years ago, moving the origin of dogs back by at least 5,000 years.

"This unique relationship between people and dogs has existed for such a long time and is continuing on today," said University of Michigan

dog genomics expert Jeffrey Kidd, who was not involved with the new research.

The genes showed that dogs were already spread out across Western Europe and Asia 14,200 years ago, at a time before agriculture and farming. These dogs lived with hunter-gatherer humans who were constantly on the move.

The dawn of agriculture - a major shift in human history - brought new people to Europe from southwest Asia. They mixed and mingled with Europeans, leaving a lasting and varied imprint on their genes.

But the dog genes studied by the scientists, stretching from the United Kingdom all the way to Turkey, stayed more consistent. They were less impacted by the arrival of new humans during the development of agriculture, and more by interactions between different hunter-gatherer groups and their dogs thousands of years before.

That's different from dogs in Asia and the Americas, whose genes more closely reflect the movement patterns of their owners.

Scientists don't know exactly what the first dogs looked like, but they have some ideas.

"We're suspecting they would have resembled smaller wolves," said study co-author Lachie Scarsbrook with the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

Human-made chemicals now widespread in oceans: study

CAPE TOWN, March 26, (Xinhua): Human-made chemicals have become a pervasive component of the world's oceans, embedded within marine dissolved organic matter (DOM) on a global scale, according to a new study.

Led by Jarmo-Charles Kalinski of South Africa's Rhodes University and Daniel Petras of the University of California, Riverside, the study highlights the extent of industrial pollution in marine ecosystems.

According to a statement by Rhodes University, the findings stem from a

major international collaboration involving 30 researchers from 19 institutions worldwide and were published in Nature Geoscience on March 16.

The study represents the largest meta-analysis of marine non-targeted mass spectrometry data to date, analyzing 2,315 seawater samples from the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans. By utilizing high-resolution mass spectrometry and scalable computational tools, the team mapped the presence of human-made organic chemicals, known as xenobiotics, within the ocean's DOM pool.

FDA approves new treatment for ovarian cancer

New combination therapy extends survival in resistant ovarian cancer

REDWOOD CITY, Calif., March 26, (AP): Concept Therapeutics Incorporated, a commercial-stage company engaged in the discovery and development of medications to treat severe endocrinologic, oncologic, metabolic and neurologic disorders by modulating the effects of the hormone cortisol, has announced that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved Lifyorli (relacorilant) in combination with nab-paclitaxel for the treatment of adults with platinum-resistant epithelial ovarian, fallopian tube, or primary peritoneal cancer who have received one to three prior systemic treatment regimens, at least one of which included bevacizumab. Lifyorli is the first FDA-approved selective glucocorticoid receptor antagonist (SGRA).

Approval was based on the positive outcomes of Lifyorli's pivotal Rosella trial, which enrolled 381 patients with platinum-resistant ovarian cancer who had received one to three prior lines of therapy, at least one of which included bevacizumab. Patients were randomized 1:1 to receive either Lifyorli plus nab-paclitaxel or nab-paclitaxel monotherapy. No biomarker selection was required.

Rosella met its dual primary endpoints of progression-free and overall survival. Patients treated with Lifyorli in addition to nab-paclitaxel experienced a 35 percent reduction in the risk of death compared to patients treated with nab-paclitaxel alone (hazard ratio: 0.65; p-value: 0.0004), with a median overall survival (OS) of 16.0 months, compared to 11.9 months for patients receiving nab-paclitaxel alone, a difference of 4.1 months. Patients who received Lifyorli in addition to nab-paclitaxel also experienced a 30 percent reduction in the risk of disease progression (hazard ratio: 0.70; p-value: 0.008), as assessed by blinded independent central review (PFS-BICR), compared to patients treated with nab-paclitaxel alone.

The combination of Lifyorli with nab-paclitaxel was well-tolerated and manageable. The safety of Lifyorli was assessed in a pooled analysis of patients from ROSELLA and Lifyorli's Phase 2 trial. The prescribing information for Lifyorli includes warnings and precautions for neutropenia and severe infections, adrenal insufficiency, exacerbation of conditions treated with glucocorticoids and embryo-fetal toxicity. The most common adverse reactions experienced by more than 20 percent of patients (including laboratory abnormalities) were decreased hemo-

globin, decreased neutrophils, fatigue, nausea, diarrhea, decreased platelets, rash and decreased appetite.

Data from Rosella were first presented at ASCO 2025 (American Society of Clinical Oncology) with simultaneous publication in The Lancet. Complete results from ROSELLA will be presented at the Society of Gynecologic Oncology (SGO) meeting in April.

"Data demonstrate that Lifyorli plus nab-paclitaxel provides a clinically meaningful benefit in overall survival for patients with platinum-resistant ovarian cancer and is well tolerated. Lifyorli is positioned to become a new standard-of-care treatment," said Rob Coleman, M.D., Texas Oncology and special advisor to the president of the GOG Foundation. "Having a new treatment for this advanced, recurrent disease will provide clinicians with a compelling option to help patients with this extremely difficult-to-treat cancer."

"The FDA's approval of Lifyorli in combination with nab-paclitaxel is welcome news to all of us in the ovarian cancer community," said Sarah DeFeo, Chief Program Officer at Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance (OCRA). "We are grateful to everyone who participated in the clinical trials, their families and the physicians who helped advance this urgently needed treatment option for patients with platinum-resistant ovarian cancer."

"It is a privilege to bring forward a new treatment for patients who historically have had few options," said Joseph Belanoff, M.D., Concept's Chief Executive Officer. "We have worked

for years to demonstrate the potential of cortisol modulation in oncology. Today's approval of Lifyorli is an important first step, but there is much more to explore with this new mode of treatment. We extend our deep appreciation to the patients and healthcare providers who participated in the clinical trials that made this approval possible."

Ovarian cancer is the fifth most common cause of cancer death in women. Patients whose disease returns less than six months after receiving platinum-containing therapy have "platinum-resistant" disease. There are few treatment options for these women. Approximately 20,000 women with platinum-resistant disease are candidates to start a new therapy each year in the United States, with at least an equal number in Europe.

Cortisol plays a role in tumor growth through several mechanisms. It helps solid tumors resist chemotherapy by inhibiting cellular apoptosis — the tumor-killing effect chemotherapy is meant to stimulate. In some cancers, cortisol promotes tumor growth by activating oncogenic signaling in the cells to which it binds. Cortisol also suppresses the body's immune response, which weakens its ability to fight all diseases, including cancer.

Concept is developing relacorilant in ovarian, endometrial, cervical, pancreatic and prostate cancers. Relacorilant is proprietary to Concept and is protected by composition of matter, method of use and other patents. It has been designated an orphan drug by the European Commission (EC) for the treatment of ovarian cancer.

Birds culled

Bird flu hits central India

NEW DELHI, March 26, (Xinhua): Authorities in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh on Wednesday culled over 22,000 poultry birds following the outbreak of avian influenza (commonly called bird flu), officials said.

The outbreak has hit the Koni area of Bilaspur district, about 128 km north of Raipur, the capital city of Chhattisgarh.

According to officials, around 4,744 chickens out of 5,037 died at a state-run poultry farm, triggering panic in the district and adjoining areas, prompting authorities to undertake measures to prevent the further spread of the virus in the state.

The samples of the chicken carcasses have confirmed the presence of strains of avian influenza (H5N1) in them.

The health department has been asked to monitor the health of local residents and conduct necessary check-ups. According to officials, samples of all workers inside the government-owned poultry farm have been tested and found negative.

Bird flu is a highly infectious and severe respiratory disease in birds caused by the H5N1 influenza virus, which can occasionally infect humans as well.

Food poisoning: More than 600 students and staff members at multiple schools in Kumatori Town, Osaka have reported symptoms of food poisoning, public broadcaster NHK reported Thursday.

Students and staff members at eight elementary and junior high schools in the town have successively developed symptoms, including diarrhea and vomiting, since last Thursday. As of Tuesday, the total number of those affected reached 633, according to the report.

The local health center detected norovirus in some of the affected students. The same virus was also found in employees of a company that supplied bread for school lunches to all elementary and junior high schools in the town.

Based on these findings, the public health center determined that the outbreak was caused by food poisoning from bread served in school lunches and imposed a five-day business suspension on the related manufacturer.

Muscle, dental changes impact how seniors eat

Aging can change chewing and swallowing

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

By Sundeep Venkatesan

Binghamton University, State University of New York

Last Easter my children were sorting through their baskets of chocolate eggs and jelly beans, my son looked up from the table and asked a simple question:

"Why don't Grandma and Grandpa eat candy like we do?"

It was the kind of question children ask without really thinking. To him, it seemed obvious: Candy is delicious, so why wouldn't everyone want it?

From a child's perspective, it can look like older adults simply lose their taste for sweets. But as a speech-language pathologist who studies swallowing disorders, I know the explanation is often more complicated. In many cases, the issue has less to do with liking candy and more to do with something most people rarely have to think about: swallowing.

You hardly notice the act of swallowing. It happens automatically every time we eat or drink. But swallowing is actually a remarkably complex process. More than 30 muscles and several nerves coordinate to move food from the mouth through the throat and into the esophagus while briefly protecting the airway.

One way to think about swallowing is like a carefully timed relay race. Each group of muscles passes food along to the next step at exactly the right moment, while the airway briefly closes to keep food from entering the lungs.

When everything works smoothly, it takes only a second or two.

As people age, some parts of this process can

change. Chewing muscles may lose a bit of strength. Saliva production can decrease, which makes dry or sticky foods harder to manage. Taste can also shift over time, and the timing of swallowing movements may become slightly slower.

Dental changes or missing teeth can make certain foods harder to chew. These shifts don't necessarily mean something is wrong, but they can make certain textures more difficult to manage.

Candy is a good example. Many Easter treats - caramels, gummies and sticky chocolate - require strong chewing and precise coordination to swallow comfortably.

For someone whose swallowing has become slightly less efficient, those foods can suddenly feel like more effort than they used to.

Sometimes, swallowing changes go beyond normal aging. The medical term for difficulty swallowing is dysphagia, and it is a condition that can occur for many reasons. Researchers estimate that about 1 in 25 adults experience dysphagia, making it a relatively common but often overlooked health condition.

Stroke, Parkinson's disease, dementia and other neurological conditions can affect the muscles and nerves that control swallowing. In health care settings, speech-language pathologists frequently see swallowing problems among older adults recovering from illness or managing chronic conditions.

When swallowing becomes difficult, eating can feel tiring or uncomfortable. Some people cough while eating. Others feel like food is getting stuck in their throat or notice that meals take longer than they used to.

To avoid discomfort, many people quietly begin adjusting what they eat. They may choose softer foods, take smaller bites or skip foods that feel harder to swallow.

Sometimes that includes sticky or chewy candies. To others at the table, it may appear that Grandma

or Grandpa no longer enjoys sweets. But these changes are often subtle adaptations that make eating safer and more manageable.

Eating is not just about getting calories or nutrients. Food is tied to memory, tradition and connection.

Think about how many family traditions revolve around meals. Holiday dinners, birthday cakes and seasonal treats bring people together. Sharing food is one of the most universal ways in which families celebrate and connect across generations.

When swallowing becomes difficult, the effects go beyond the physical challenge of eating. People may start avoiding certain foods or feel self-conscious eating around others. Over time, they may even withdraw from shared meals.

That's one reason many clinicians now emphasize quality of life alongside safety when treating swallowing disorders.

Speech-language pathologists are the health care professionals who evaluate and treat swallowing disorders. Through specialized assessments and therapy, they help people find strategies that make eating safer and more comfortable. Sometimes the changes needed are surprisingly small.

Family members are often the first to notice when someone's eating habits begin to change. Signs that may suggest swallowing difficulty include coughing or throat clearing during meals, needing extra time to chew food, or avoiding certain textures - especially dry or sticky foods.

If these patterns appear regularly, a medical evaluation can help identify whether swallowing changes are involved.

The goal is rarely to eliminate someone's favorite foods entirely. Instead, clinicians often help people find ways to continue enjoying meals safely - whether that means modifying food textures, adjusting eating strategies or addressing the underlying condition affecting swallowing. (AP)

Sakamoto edges ahead in quest for fourth world crown

Strong US challenge for medals

PRAGUE, March 26, (AP): It's time to say goodbye for Kaori Sakamoto, and she's aiming to go out on a high with the world figure skating title.

Sakamoto's short-program music, "Time to Say Goodbye," was charged with emotion as she targets a fourth world title before retirement.

Sakamoto shouted with joy and clapped as she learned her score of 79.31, a season-best which put her into first place by less than a point from her fellow Japanese skater Mone Chiba on a personal-best 78.45 in her disco-themed program.

There was extra nostalgia for Sakamoto because her last world championships are in the Czech Republic, where she started her Junior Grand Prix career 13 years ago.

"It was a good feeling to have," she said of the full-circle moment.

There's a strong U.S. challenge for the medals ahead of Friday's free skate with Amber Glenn third and Isabeau Levito fourth.

Without Olympic gold medalist Alysa Liu, who withdrew from the world championships amid a hectic media schedule, the focus was on whether Sakamoto could regain the title she won three times in a row from 2022 through 2024, and whether three-time U.S. champion Glenn could claim a first world medal.

Glenn came to the world championships with an Olympic team gold but missed the individual medals after a short-program error. She was back on form, starting with a big triple axel on her way to scoring 72.65. Levito was just behind her with 72.16 for fourth in her return to form after 12th at the Olympics.

Ami Nakai's triple axel propelled her into the Olympic short-program lead - she ended up with bronze - but went missing Wednesday. The 17-year-old Japanese skater could only manage an awkward double as her opening jump and has a tough task to recover from eighth.

Olympic pairs bronze medalists Minerva Fabienne Hase and Nikita Volodin of Germany are narrowly ahead in the latest installment of a long-running rivalry.

Skating last, the Germans took the lead by 79.78 to 79.45 against Anastasiia Metelkina and Luka Berulava of Georgia, who beat them to the European title and Olympic silver this season. Canadians Lia Pereira and Trennt Michaud are in third on 75.52 ahead of Thursday's free skate.

Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara are skipping the world championships after winning Japan's first Olympic pairs title last month.

U.S. champions Alisa Efimova and Misha Mitrofanov couldn't compete at the Olympics because Efimova wasn't yet a U.S. citizen. A slip by Efimova on a triple toe loop and a heavy landing on a throw left them seventh.



Kaori Sakamoto from Japan skates during the women's short program at the Figure Skating World Championships in Prague, Czech Republic. (AP)

'I've not lost what I had'

Hamilton 'signals' return to form in Championship battle



Ferrari driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain steers his car during the Chinese Formula One Grand Prix race at the Shanghai International Circuit, in Shanghai, China. (AP)

SUZUKA, Japan, March 26, (AP): Lewis Hamilton said he finished a recent morning training run and returned to his hotel sweating after his workout to find a few fellow Formula 1 drivers just getting up.

"I know that none of the drivers I'm racing against have trained as hard as I have and given it what I have, especially at my age as well," the 41-year-old Hamilton said Thursday at the Suzuka Formula 1 circuit in central Japan, site of Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix.

"I love that - that I still have that drive to push myself," he added.

Not that he needed a boost. Hamilton is Formula 1's most decorated driver. He's won the most races (105), claimed the most poles (104) and has been on the podium 207 times.

And the British driver is tied at seven with Michael Schumacher for season championships.

But if he needed extra motivation he found it last year in his first season racing with F1's most storied team - Ferrari - after record-setting seasons with Mercedes.

By Hamilton's standards, it was abysmal. He didn't win a single race and didn't make a single podium. He finished four times in fourth place.

Hamilton was suddenly an also-ran, an uncomfortable spot for the sport's most high-profile driver and its most familiar face for two decades.

It's early in the season, but Hamilton seems to have found a remedy. He has a competitive car, finished third two weeks ago in the Chinese Grand Prix and he's tuned out critics.

"Just not letting all the (words) coming out of people's mouths get in the way of knowing actually who I am and what I'm able to do," he said. "I've not lost what I had."

Mercedes has won the first two races - one each for George Russell and Kimi Antonelli - with Ferrari the other team that has fared well under this season's sweeping new rules.

F1 cars are using hybrid power units that are divided 50-50 between electric power and internal combustion power. Adding to the changes are lighter, more nimble chassis.

Some drivers have chafed under the new rules, and the most outspoken has been four-time champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull. He and others have called the racing "yo-yo racing" with cars pulling ahead, only to be overtaken as power seems to ebb and flow.

"It's making the racing better, but at times it's artificial," Verstappen's teammate Isack Hadjar said Thursday. Added Hamilton: "I think a lot of the drivers are not enjoying it, I'm just personally enjoying it."

For Hamilton, that comes down to having a car this season "that can fight for wins," he said. He also said being battered last season by bad results has increased his drive, though he repeated several times he'd never lost his confidence.

"It's a natural part of a process as an athlete," he said. "You'll go through seasons like that and (in) some of the most trying times - one of the most important things is getting back up and that's what I've done this year."

Man gets suspended jail sentence

Benfica fined for fans' racism at CL game against Real Madrid



Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior celebrates after scoring his side's first goal at the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

NYON, Switzerland, March 26, (AP): Benfica was fined by UEFA for racist abuse by fans at a Champions League game against Real Madrid, whose forward Vinicius Junior was allegedly racially abused by Gianluca Prestianni.

UEFA's investigation of Prestianni is ongoing, and the verdict on a separate charge against Benfica for misconduct by fans at the Feb. 17 game in Lisbon was published.

Benfica was fined 40,000 euros (\$46,000) for "illicit chants and gestures by two supporters," UEFA said. The club must serve a one-year probation period to avoid closing part of the Stadium of Light at a future European competition game.

Benfica previously suspended five fans who were under investigation for "inappropriate behavior in the stands of a racist nature."

Television images showed some fans making monkey gestures after Madrid's 1-0 win in the first leg of the Champions League knockout playoffs round.

The game was stopped for nearly 10 minutes when Vinicius told the referee that Prestianni called him "monkey" after he scored and celebrated in front of Benfica fans.

Prestianni, who denied the allegation, pulled up his jersey to cover his mouth when the alleged insult was said.

The Argentina winger was suspended by UEFA from the second leg in Madrid while he was under investigation. He faces a 10-game ban from UEFA competition games.

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A man who posted racially abusive online messages about England soccer player Jess Carter received a suspended jail sentence.

Nigel Dewale, a 60-year-old man from Great Harwood in Lancashire, northern England, sent two posts from his TikTok account during last year's Women's European Championship.

He sent them in response to a news article about police investigating online racial abuse received by Carter earlier in the tournament following England's matches against France and Sweden.

The messages were later traced to Dewale, who was arrested and charged. He was sentenced at Blackburn Magistrates' Court to six weeks in custody, suspended for 12 months, having previously pleaded guilty to sending a grossly offensive message via a public communications network.

Dewale also received a four-year football banning order, although the court was told he had not attended matches for "many years," and must abide by a three-month curfew and complete a community order of 10 rehabilitation days.

The 28-year-old Carter plays her club soccer for Gotham FC in the United States. She stopped using social media following the racist abuse, which according to prosecutor Graeme Tindall left her "anxious and genuinely scared" and not wanting to leave her hotel during the Euros.

Commissioner likes 65-game rule

NBA will 'fix' tanking issue before next season: Silver

NEW YORK, March 26, (AP): Tanking is going to be addressed. The 65-game rule might remain.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver insisted that the league will change its draft process and address its tanking problem before the start of next season. And he pointed to the league's player participation policy - citing the effect it has had on load management - as proof of how the league can make effective fixes.

The league's board of governors discussed tanking - the issue of teams trying not to win in order to enhance their odds of landing the best possible draft pick - at its two-day meeting that ended Wednesday. No votes were taken and no fingers were pointed at any specific teams, Silver said.

"We are going to fix it," Silver said. "Full stop."

Silver said the league has been working on the most recent tanking issues for months - and noted that the NBA has addressed the problem countless times over the years, including with several changes to the draft and lottery process.

"I would say it seemed unanimous in the room that we needed to make a change, and we need to make a change for next season," Silver said at a news conference, wrapping up the two-day session with owners. "Exactly what that change is, we're continuing to work on. ... I think there's also unanimous agreement that we need to make this change in advance of the draft and free agency this year, so all the teams understand the rules of the road going into next year."

The next step, Silver said, will likely be a special board meeting in May to get something done. The league's general managers have discussed the matter multiple times, and numerous teams have offered some sort of suggestion about how to fix the issue.

Utah was fined \$500,000 for sitting some of its best players late in games earlier this season, including one the Jazz actually won. Three teams - Sacramento, Indiana and Washington - have had losing streaks of 16 games so far this season, and other teams like Brooklyn have not been shy about saying they're looking at the future more than the present.

"I will say I really like where the league is right now. I'm sorry to have to talk about tanking because it takes away from the incredible competition we're seeing from roughly 20 teams in the league right now, going into a wide-open playoffs, so many different teams," Silver said. "It's really exciting basketball. ... Of course, the opposite of that is when there's a sense that both teams aren't out there trying



In this file photo, NBA commissioner Adam Silver speaks during a news conference at the NBA basketball All-Star weekend in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

to kill themselves to win a game. As I said, we have to fix that problem."

In other matters addressed Wednesday:

Silver responded to the National Basketball Players Association's statement Tuesday calling for change to the 65-game rule for major individual awards.

The NBPA, through collective bargaining, agreed to that rule as part of the current agreement between the league and its players. It pointed to the case of Detroit star Cade Cunningham, who would almost certainly be an All-NBA selection this season but may fall short of qualifying because of the 65-game threshold.

"We always knew when there's a line you draw that somebody's going to fall on the other side of that line and it may feel unfair in that particular instance," Silver said. "Let's see what happens at the end of this year. By the way, Cade Cunningham, he's an incredible player. I'm sorry that he's injured and can't wait to see him back on the floor."

"But having said that, we also have to remember that to the extent that one player is no longer eligible, some other player will then be All-NBA and will slot into that spot. I'm not ready to stand here saying, I don't think it's working. I think it is working."

The NBPA believes the rule should focus on preventing "excessive load management," and that precautions should be taken so players don't miss out on deserved recognition or get forced to play when injured just to meet a games-played standard.

Silver said the NBA's governors - many of whom have a significant stake in the WNBA as well - discussed the new collective bargaining agreement between that league and its players.

US gets exemption to send 7 women to half marathon worlds after runners led off course in error

London Marathon organizers looking at creating two-day event for 2027

LONDON, March 26, (AP): The London Marathon could become a two-day event in 2027 so more people can take part.

Organizers say they are "continually exploring innovative ways" to make the event bigger "while delivering positive benefits for London."

"We are looking at the intention for the London Marathon to take place across two days," organizers said. "No approval has been given at this stage."

British newspaper The Guardian reported the men's and women's elite races could be held across the weekend, and a total of 100,000 runners taking part.

More than 1.1 million people applied through the public ballot to run in this year's race on April 26. That's a 36% year-on-year

increase and nearly doubles the application pool from 2024.

The 2025 event raised around 87 million pounds (\$116 million), with 56,640 runners crossing the line.

The London mayor's office said it would work with London Marathon partners "to consider if it might be possible to host an event that will run across two days next year."

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Three U.S. runners who were mistakenly led off the course by a guide vehicle in the women's race at the U.S. half marathon championships will be allowed to compete at the world championships in September, the world track and field governing body said on

Wednesday.

World Athletics said it made an "exceptional decision" to allow the U.S. to



In this file photo, a London Marathon finisher's medal is seen at Nathaniel Dye's home in London. (AP)

bring seven runners to the event instead of the usual four. However, only four of them will be entered as "scoring athletes," meaning the other three will not be able to compete for medals or prize money at the world road running championships in Denmark.

World Athletics said it made the decision because of the extraordinary nature of the incident during national qualifying for the event.

Jess McClain was ahead by a wide margin with about 1.5 miles to go on March 2 when she and three other runners followed the guide vehicle on a wrong turn. McClain, who is from Phoenix, ended up finishing ninth. The next two runners who followed her off the course - Emma Hurley of Colo-

rado Springs, Colorado, and Ednah Kurgat of Roswell, Georgia - were 12th and 13th, respectively.

"In working to find a solution, World Athletics has been sympathetic to the impacted athletes who would otherwise miss out on competing at the WRRCC Copenhagen 2026, and understanding of the unprecedented situation USATF - one our leading Member Federations - has found itself in," World Athletics said.

It will be up to the USATF to pick which four athletes are entered as scoring athletes, World Athletics said.

USATF said on X that "we are grateful for their collaboration in helping us honor all the athletes involved in this extraordinary situation."

SPORTS

Blitzer describes the league as one of great growth stories in global sport

American investors bet big on Indian cricket with two separate billion-dollar deals for IPL teams

NEW DELHI, March 26, (AP): American investors are making a big move into Indian cricket, with two separate billion-dollar deals made on the same day for teams in the country's most popular sports league.

No team in the Indian Premier League - one of Asia's most-watched sports events - had ever sold for more than \$1 billion until a consortium backed by U.S. businessmen Kal Somani and Rob Walton - the former Walmart chairman - agreed to buy the Rajasthan Royals in a deal that Indian media valued at \$1.63 billion.

That record only lasted hours, though, as an even bigger deal was announced the same day for reigning champion Royal Challengers Bengaluru. That team was bought for \$1.78 billion by another consortium that includes U.S. billionaire David Blitzer's Bolt Ventures and American asset manager Blackstone.

The two deals highlight the increasing allure of India's national pastime among international investors looking to be part of the most popular sport in the world's populous country. "It's mind-boggling numbers," Indian cricketing great Sourav Ganguly told local reporters. "But great news for Indian cricket and the way forward. I think it's already as big as the NBA." The valuations for the two teams mark a huge jump from their original 2008 sales, when liquor baron Vijay Mallya purchased RCB for \$111.6 million and Rajasthan sold for \$67 million.

Sports teams overall have become a major target of global investments, as businesses try to tap into new markets abroad and spending from their fan bases. Deloitte analysts wrote in an outlook published last month that the industry is "entering an age of expansion" - and that private equity deals across sports leagues have jumped in recent years.

The IPL, which only runs three months a year, features the sport's shortest format - called Twenty20 - and has developed into cricket's hottest property. In 2022, the broadcast rights for the 2023-27 cycle were bought for \$6.4 billion by Disney Star and Reliance Viacom18. Disney has since exited its India business and the two entities together formed JioStar in 2025. In a statement, Blitzer described the IPL as "one of the great growth stories in global sport."

In 2021, the league was expanded from eight to 10 teams and the two new franchises, Gujarat Titans and Lucknow Super Giants, sold for \$670 million and \$940 million, respectively.

In comparison, the London Spirit team of the British cricket league The Hundred was valued in 2025 at \$370 million - the highest for any team in that tournament - when its partial stake was up for sale last year.

"Over the past two decades, the IPL has morphed to become a global sporting

powerhouse that has changed the face of Indian cricket, creating enormous value for India," said Kumar Mangalam Birla, chairman of Aditya Birla Group, which is part of the consortium that includes Blitzer. "RCB, as one of the most compelling franchises in modern sport, offers us a distinctive platform to extend our legacy into the arena of global sport."

The 2025 title was RCB's first, but the celebrations turned tragic when at least 11 people died in a deadly crowd crush at the team's stadium.

The new ownership consortium will bring in a reformed management team for RCB. Aditya Birla director Aryaman Vikram Birla will serve as chairman, while Satyan Gajwani of the Times of India Group will take on the role of vice chairman.

Blitzer already has ownership stakes in the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers, the NHL's New Jersey Devils and the Premier League's Crystal Palace, among a slew of other teams.

For Rajasthan, Somani was an existing shareholder and moved to take full control of the franchise in a deal that still needs approval from the Board of Control for Cricket in India, Indian media reported. The Arizona-based tech entrepreneur is also one of the founders of Motor City Golf Club in the TGL league co-founded by Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy.

Barcelona routs Madrid, moves closer to record-extending 8th straight semifinal



Barcelona's Irene Paredes, right, Aicha Camarad and Real Madrid's Athenea del Castillo battle for the ball during the women's Champions League quarterfinal first leg soccer match between Real Madrid and Barcelona in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

MADRID, March 26, (AP): Barcelona moved closer to a record-extending eighth straight semifinal in the Women's Champions League with a 6-2 rout of Real Madrid in the first leg of the quarterfinals, while Manchester United made its last-eight debut with a 3-2 loss to Bayern Munich at Old Trafford.

Ewa Pajor scored twice, and Esmee Brugts, Irene Paredes, Vicky López and Alexia Putellas added a goal each in Madrid to take the Catalan club a step closer to the last four.

Linda Caicedo scored a goal in each half for Madrid, which will need a big comeback in Barcelona next week to make it to its first semifinal.

Barcelona, a three-time champion, has reached the final in five straight seasons. It lost last year's final to Arsenal, which on Tuesday defeated English rival Chelsea 3-1 in their first leg of their quarterfinal.

Also, Wolfsburg took a 1-0 lead over record eight-time champion Lyonnes in a meeting of two of



Bayern Munich's Momoko Tanikawa, center, celebrates scoring their side's third goal of the game during the Women's Champions League match between Manchester United and Bayern Munich in Manchester, England. (AP)

the competition's most storied names.

Barcelona topped the league phase with an unbeaten campaign that included 20 goals scored and three against. Madrid, in its second consecutive quarterfinal, was eliminated by Arsenal in the last eight last season. It finished seventh in the league phase.

"We came here to play a good match and win, and we've done just that," Paredes said. "It's a good result. We'll prepare just as thoroughly for the second leg because we want to perform just as

well. The coaching staff prepared very well and we executed it very well. When things go your way so early on, it helps. We have to be happy. We're a team that wants to win everything, always."

Barcelona was leading 2-0 at the Alfredo Di Stefano Stadium with goals by Pajor and Brugts before Caicedo pulled the hosts closer in the 30th.

Paredes, Pajor and López scored for Barcelona again for a 5-1 advantage before Caicedo's second goal in the 66th. Putellas then converted an 89th-minute

penalty kick.

"Everything went wrong today," Madrid coach Pau Quesada said. "The team fell apart after the first goal. We then found ourselves 2-1 down and it looked like we were making a comeback, but the next goal from a set piece finished us off. The gap to Barça is what it is. They've got that extra gear and we have to match it. On the day you don't, this is what happens to you."

Man United's first quarterfinal appearance started with Bayern taking the lead with a goal by Perrine Harder two minutes into the match.

United equalized with a penalty kick converted by Maya Le Tissier in the 24th. Harder struck again in the 71st for her seventh goal in Bayern's European campaign this season.

The hosts evened the match again with Hanna Lundkvist in the 76th and Momoko Tanikawa put Bayern back ahead in the 84th.

United is in its first European experience since a defeat to Paris Saint-Germain in qualifying in the 2023-24 season. Bayern recovered from a 7-1 loss at Barcelona at the start of the league phase to finish fourth and qualify for the quarterfinals for the eighth time in 10 seasons.

Bayern is trying to reach its first semifinal since 2020-21.

Kulusevski had 'small intervention' on injured knee

Mbappé denies that Real Madrid examined wrong knee after injury

BOSTON, March 26, (AP): Kylian Mbappé denied media reports that claimed Real Madrid examined the wrong leg when the France star sustained a knee injury late last year.

The soccer show "After Foot" on French broadcaster RMC Sport reported this week that the Spanish club had initially scanned his right knee, rather than the left one, in December. Other media outlets in Spain ran similar stories, nearly all of them citing RMC.

Mbappé played throughout January but was then sidelined for three-and-a-half weeks before making his latest comeback.

"The report that said that they (examined) the wrong knee is false," Mbappé said at a press conference ahead of France's World Cup warmup against Brazil.

"I am maybe responsible indirectly for this situation, because when you don't communicate on what's happening, it opens doors to others' interpretations."

The club said in late December that Mbappé had sprained his left knee.

Mbappé said he has "very clear communication" with Real Madrid.

On Monday in Paris, Mbappé said his knee feels fine. He was used as a substitute in Real Madrid's last two matches as he works his way back into form.

"There was a lot of frustration, a lot of anger, and then also some anxiety at one point," Mbappé told French media late Mon-

day at a promotional event. "I had reached a stage where I didn't know what was wrong with me. I didn't go through that period in the best way. I wasn't the happiest player in the world. But I'm happy now because it's truly behind me. It's all gone."

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Tottenham midfielder Dejan Kulusevski revealed he had a "small intervention" on his injured right knee that has kept him sidelined all season and will cause him to miss the World Cup playoffs with Sweden.

Kulusevski has been in Sweden's camp this week for the buildup to the semifinal playoff against Ukraine in Valencia, Spain, on Thursday, but wasn't picked in the squad and will not play.

Footage showed Kulusevski apparently walking with a limp and he took to Instagram to explain why.

"Just to clarify things. I'm limping because I had a small intervention in the knee 2 weeks ago," he wrote on Instagram. "Went in and took out what was not supposed(d) to be there. Knee is great now."

Kulusevski hasn't played for club or country since last May when he hurt his knee in a Premier League game.

He has been a big miss for Tottenham, which is fighting to avoid relegation.

Tottenham interim manager Igor Tudor said last week there was no timeline on Kulusevski's potential return.

Lens-PSG showdown in Ligue 1 postponed

PARIS, March 26, (AP):The French league postponed the Ligue 1 title clash between Lens and Paris Saint-Germain on Thursday to allow PSG better preparation for its Champions League quarterfinal against Liverpool next month.

Initially set for April 11, the Lens-PSG game fell in between defending champion PSG's two quarterfinal legs against Liverpool - at home three days before and away three days later.

It will now be played on May 13, which falls between the last two rounds of the French championship. Ligue 1 is enjoying a close title race, with Lens one point behind PSG having played one game more.

Strasbourg's game at Brest on April 12 was also postponed by league organizer the LFP because it landed between Strasbourg's Conference League quarterfinal against German club Mainz.

The LFP said in a statement that its board of directors "unanimously decided" to accept requests made by PSG and Strasbourg, adding that the decision - with did not need approval from Lens or Brest - was made in the wider interests of French soccer.

"These decisions are in line with the strong strategic direction of the board of directors to enable France to retain its fifth place in the UEFA (coefficient) index, which allows it to obtain four places in the UEFA Champions League," the LFP said.

Lens vehemently rejected moving the fixture, saying in a statement this week that Ligue 1 was being relegated "to accommodate the European ambitions of certain parties."

The league had precedent, however. It helped Marseille two years ago, moving a game against Nice due to Marseille's Europa League quarterfinal against Benfica.

Lens president Joseph Ouhourlian said on a LinkedIn post ahead of Thursday's decision that he had "few illusions" about the outcome. Lens director Benjamin Parrot questioned if PSG's request would have happened in other circumstances.

"Would this same debate take place if PSG had a 15-point lead? Maybe they would just rotate their squad," Parrot told L'Equipe newspaper on Wednesday. "The LFP, generally speaking, compares itself to England, Italy, Spain and Germany, but none of those leagues function in this way."

Lens will play three games in eight days during a tough period from April 17-24, facing Toulouse in Ligue 1 and in the French Cup semifinals then at Brest on April 24. That game is scheduled on a Friday rather than over the weekend, which would have afforded Lens more rest.

Parrot said Lens was not going to ask the French league to modify those dates. "We'll take the series of matches," he said. "But without the same depth of squad. It's unfair."

PSG soccer adviser Luis Campos said his team's eventual progress in the Champions League was vital.

"The postponement of Lens-PSG has advantages, not only for PSG, but also for French football," Campos said on RMC radio on Wednesday. "We have nothing against Lens. The point is to be in the best possible position to represent France well in Europe, which needs it."

CAS confirms Senegal's Africa Cup appeal registration, verdict timeline unclear

Senegal vows to fight 'unfair administrative robbery'

PARIS, March 26, (AP): Senegal was the victim of a "grossly unfair administrative robbery" when it was stripped of the Africa Cup of Nations title, Senegalese Football Association president Abdoulaye Fall said on Thursday.

At a news conference in Paris, Fall said Senegal will fight to defend its "honor" at the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Lawyer Seydou Diagne said Senegal suffered a "betrayal" and has gathered international lawyers from Switzerland, Spain, France and Senegal to plead the case. The Senegalese FA is challenging a surprise ruling last week by the Confederation of African Football to strip Senegal of the title won in a chaotic final in January and award it to host nation Morocco.

Senegal's legal team said the country still considers itself the champion of Africa despite the CAF's ruling.

"If CAS let this situation happen, the winner of the next World Cup could be decided within a lawyers' firm," Diagne said.

Senegal is in France this week to play a friendly against Peru at the Stade de France on Saturday as part of its preparations for the World Cup.

Senegal's appeal to be reinstated as Africa Cup champion was registered on Wednesday by CAS, which set no timetable for a likely long process toward a verdict.

The appeal was promised by the Senegalese government, which also called for an international investigation "into suspected corruption" within the CAF.

CAS said the Senegal federation also asked for extra time to file an appeal brief because CAF has not yet given detailed written reasons to explain its decision.

CAF appeal judges took the title from Senegal two months after the final in Rabat as punishment for players walking off in protest and causing a 15-minute stoppage after Morocco was awarded a penalty that was set to decide the title with the last kick.

When Senegal returned to the field and play restarted, the Morocco penalty was saved, sending the game into extra time. Senegal scored the only goal in extra time to beat the host nation 1-0.

The laws of soccer state the referee's decision



Senegal's Idrissa Gueye calls players to walk off the pitch during the Africa Cup of Nations final soccer match between Senegal and Morocco, in Rabat, Morocco. (AP)

on the field of play is final.

The CAF judges, however, cited a tournament rule that any team refusing to play "shall be eliminated for good from the current competition."

The verdict in Morocco's appeal of CAF disciplinary rulings from January fueled a perception the country, which will co-host the 2030 World Cup, has increasing influence in international soccer politics.

CAF's South African president Patrice Motsepe insisted last week "not a single country in Africa will be treated in a manner that is more preferential, or more advantageous, or more favorable than any other."

Senegal's appeal to be reinstated as Africa Cup of Nations champion was registered by sport's highest court, which set no timetable for a likely long process toward a verdict in a heated soccer controversy.

The Senegal soccer federation is challenging a surprise ruling last week by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to strip the title won in a chaotic final on the field in January and award it to host nation Morocco.

CAS said in a statement that the Senegal federation also asks for extra time to file an appeal brief because CAF has not yet given detailed written reasons to explain its verdict.

"At this early stage of proceedings and considering the (Senegal federation) request to suspend deadlines, it is not possible to anticipate a procedural timeline and to indicate when a hearing will be scheduled," the court said.

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Los Angeles Clippers guard Benedict Mathurin, left, shoots as Toronto Raptors forward Sandro Mamukelashvili defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

Sports

Timberwolves shock Rockets with record OT rally

Celtics beat Thunder to split season series

MINNEAPOLIS, March 26, (AP): Julius Randle hit the go-ahead jumper with 8.8 seconds left in overtime to cap a game-closing 15-0 run by the Minnesota Timberwolves for a 110-108 victory over the Houston Rockets.

Minnesota overcame a 13-point deficit in overtime, the biggest comeback since detailed play-by-play throughout the game began in 1997.

Randle, who had all of his 24 points after halftime, was called for a foul on Kevin Durant's drive with 3.3 seconds remaining. After the Rockets started 23 for 23 from the free-throw line, Durant's first attempt was short. He missed the second one intentionally to try to keep possession, but the Rockets never got a final shot.

Durant and Alperen Sengun each scored 30 points and teamed up on a 12-0 run late in the fourth quarter to put the Rockets in front after trailing by 11 points with 3½ minutes left. Houston scored the first 13 points in OT before Minnesota responded with the final 15.

Jaden McDaniels had 25 points before leaving with an apparent leg injury for the Wolves, who are 10-5 this season without superstar Anthony Edwards.

Celtics 119, Thunder 109

In Boston, Jaylen Brown scored 14 of his 31 points a pivotal third quarter and the Boston Celtics rallied to beat the Oklahoma City Thunder, snapping the defending champions' 12-game win streak.

Jayson Tatum recovered from back-to-back rocky performances to add 19 points and 12 rebounds while also contributing seven assists as Boston earned a split in the two regular-season matchups between the past two NBA champs.



Chicago Bulls' Patrick Williams, left, and Philadelphia 76ers' Paul George dive for a loose ball during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

Brown added eight rebounds and eight assists, and his big quarter helped the Celtics take an 88-83 lead into the fourth. Boston's edge grew as high as 14 in the final period.

Heat 120, Cavaliers 103

In Cleveland, Norman Powell scored 19 points, Tyler Herro added 18 and the Miami Heat got contributions from everyone while stopping a five-game losing skid with win over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

As healthy as they've been all season, the Heat squandered a 17-point lead in the third quarter before recovering in the fourth. Miami led by nine with five minutes left before Bam Adebayo converted a three-point play and Kel'el Ware scored on a layup in an 11-second span.

Hawks 130, Pistons 129, OT

In Detroit, CJ McCollum scored 27 points, making the tiebreaking three-point play in overtime, and the Atlanta Hawks beat the Detroit Pistons.

Jalen Johnson also had 27 points and came close to another triple-double, finishing with 12 assists and eight rebounds.

The surging Hawks improved to 15-2 since the All-Star break, best in the Eastern Conference, and snapped Detroit's four-game winning streak.

76ers 157, Bulls 137

In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid scored 35 points in his return to the lineup from injury, Paul George had 28 points in his first game since serving a 25-game suspension, and the

Philadelphia 76ers rolled to a 157-137 victory over the Chicago Bulls.

Josh Giddey scored 23 points to lead the Bulls.

Embiid missed 13 games with a strained right oblique but showed no signs of rust.

Lakers 137, Pacers 130

In Indianapolis, Luka Dončić scored 43 points to lead the Los Angeles Lakers to a 137-130 victory over the Indiana Pacers.

With Indiana Fever star Caitlin Clark snapping pictures on the sideline as a credentialed photographer, Dončić sank 15 of 30 shots and hit 9 of 10 free throws. Austin Reaves scored 25 points, LeBron James scored 23 and Jaxson Hayes had 21 points and 10 rebounds for Los An-

geles.

The Lakers have won 10 of 11, with Dončić scoring at least 30 points in each. Los Angeles, which sits third in the Western Conference, lost Monday night at Detroit, ending a nine-game winning streak.

Spurs 123, Grizzlies 98

In Memphis, Victor Wembanyama had 19 points, 15 rebounds and seven blocks as the San Antonio Spurs built an early lead and coasted to a 123-98 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies.

Devin Vassell matched Wembanyama's 19 points, while Stephon Castle and Keldon Johnson finished with 15 points each, as seven Spurs finished in double figures.

With its seventh straight victory, San Antonio moved within two games of Oklahoma City for the top spot in the Western Conference.

Nuggets 142, Mavericks 135

In Denver, Jamal Murray scored a season-high 53 points, Nikola Jokic had 23 points, 21 rebounds and a season-high 19 assists, and the Denver Nuggets held off the Dallas Mavericks.

Jokic entered the night with 5,992 assists and reached the milestone when he fed Murray for a layup with 4:56 left in the second quarter. It was part of a 33-point first half for Murray, who was 11 of 16 from the field and scored 14 straight points in one stretch.

Clippers 119, Raptors 94

In Inglewood, Calif. (AP) - Kawhi Leonard had 27 points, Darius Garland added 24, and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Toronto Raptors.

Benedict Mathurin had 23 off the bench and Brook Lopez scored 11 of his 14 points in the first quarter for the Clippers, who have won three in a row.

Los Angeles stayed a half-game ahead of the Portland Trail Blazers for eighth in the Western Confer-

ence.

Brandon Ingram had 18 points, Sandro Mamukelashvili chipped in with 13, but the Raptors have now lost three straight.

Toronto dropped into sixth in the Eastern Conference, one game behind the Atlanta Hawks, and is a half-game ahead of the Philadelphia 76ers in seventh.

Warriors 109, Nets 106

In San Francisco, Gui Santos scored a career-high 31 points, Draymond Green made two clutch free throws with 6.9 seconds remaining and the Golden State Warriors beat the Brooklyn Nets to clinch a play-in spot.

Brandin Podziemski had 22 points, six rebounds and five assists for the Warriors (35-38), who won their first game at Chase Center since returning from a grueling 2-4 road trip.

Trail Blazers 130, Bucks 99

In Portland, Scoot Henderson had 23 points and the Portland Trail Blazers routed the Milwaukee Bucks 130-99 on Wednesday night as Giannis Antetokounmpo remained sidelined with a left knee injury.

Jerami Grant and Deni Avdija each had 18 points and Donovan Clingan added 14 points and 15 rebounds for the Blazers, who have already clinched a play-in spot. Portland has won five of its last six games.

Wizards 133, Jazz 110

In Salt Lake City, Juju Reese had 26 points and 17 rebounds, Will Riley added 19 points and 10 boards, and the Washington Wizards snapped a 16-game skid with win over the Utah Jazz.

It was Washington's first win since Feb. 20 against Indiana.

Cody Williams scored 24 points for the Jazz, who have lost 15 of 18. Blake Hinson added a career-high 21 points and John Konchar had 14 rebounds.

AFC postpones 2027 Asian Cup draw in Saudi Arabia, new date to be announced

RIYADH, March 26: The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has announced the postponement of the 2027 AFC Asian Cup draw, originally scheduled for April 11 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

According to the AFC, the decision was made after careful consideration to ensure full participation from all stakeholders and to guarantee the ceremony is conducted in an optimal and well-organized manner.

The confederation expressed its appreciation to the local organizing committee in Saudi Arabia, confirming their readiness to host the draw once a new date is set. The AFC also thanked national member associations, fans, and partners for their understanding and cooperation.

A new date and details for the draw will be announced later, after alternative arrangements are finalized in coordination with the relevant authorities.



Asian Cup trophy

FIFA's program launched in Cameroon

World Cup tickets enter fourth and final sales phase

GENEVA, March 26, (Xinhua): Ticket sales for the 2026 World Cup will enter their fourth and final phase on April 1 and run until the end of the tournament, FIFA announced.

The fourth and final ticket sales phase will allow fans to purchase tickets via FIFA.com/tickets for the 48-team tournament, which is scheduled to be held in Canada, Mexico and the United States in June and July.

The tickets will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis, and fans will be able to choose their seats after purchase. Ticket holders from previous phases will also be able to see the seats allocated to them.

"A historic number of fans from across the globe have already secured their spots at the biggest FIFA World Cup ever through the three ticketing phases completed so far. During the Random Selection Draw phase alone, more than 500 million ticket requests were submitted by members of the general public, resulting in over one million tickets being sold by the end of that sales period on February 27," FIFA announced in its statement.

"With the tournament now under 80 days away, the cumulative attendance record of 3.5 million set at the 1994 FIFA World Cup is on course to be surpassed during this

year's competition," FIFA claimed.

Meanwhile, the Cameroon Football Federation (FECAFOOT) signed a partnership agreement with the country's Ministry of Basic Education to implement FIFA's Football for Schools (F4S) initiative in the central African nation.

The agreement marked the launch of the initiative, which uses fun football sessions to teach children life and academic skills.

More than 100 children took part in the launch in Yaounde, experiencing the joy of the game while developing important values.

FECAFOOT President Samuel Eto'o said F4S "will permit children to dream and help them achieve life's goals." "This project needs to permit us to have new football talents in a short period of time. Football will become to us an academy. Boys and girls must get involved. This shows that education in Cameroon is inclusive," said Minister of Basic Education Laurent Serge Etoundi Ngoa.

First launched in 2019 by FIFA, F4S aims to make football more accessible to children worldwide and uses the sport to support education, development and social inclusion.

The teenager is currently with the Al Nassr youth system and has previously been in the ranks at Manchester United and Juventus, as he develops into a forward, who like his father, can also play on the wing and he has already made his debut with the Portugal Under-16 team.

Cristiano Ronaldo (father) joined Real Madrid from Manchester United in the summer of 2009, scoring 450 goals in 438 appearances and winning four Champions Leagues, two Copas del Rey, two La Liga titles and three World Club Championships before joining Juventus in 2018. (Xinhua)

Sheikh Yousuf, Al-Jalahma back Kuwait Club and Qadsia ahead of international matches

KUWAIT CITY, March 26: The Chairman of the Kuwait Football Association, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah, met with Minister of Youth and Sports Dr. Tarek Al-Jalahma to discuss organizing overseas training camps for Kuwait Club and Qadsia ahead of their crucial upcoming matches.

Kuwait Club is set to face Oman's Al-Shabab in the quarterfinals of the AFC Challenge League, while Qadsia SC will take on Qatar's Al-Rayyan in the semifinals of the Gulf Club Champions League.

Sheikh Yousuf highlighted the minister's dedication to supporting both clubs to ensure they perform at their highest level and compete strongly for the titles. He praised Dr. Al-Jalahma for his efforts in facilitating the teams' successful participation in these prestigious tournaments.

The Kuwait FA affirmed its commitment to providing full support to both clubs, including all necessary resources, facilities, and arrangements to prepare the teams for the upcoming challenges.



The Chairman of the Kuwait Football Association, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah, meets Minister of Youth and Sports Dr. Tarek Al-Jalahma.

Saudi Arabia takes on Egypt in friendly as preparations for World Cup intensify

JEDDAH, March 26: The Saudi national team will host Egypt tonight at 8:30 PM at Al-Inma Stadium in King Abdullah Sports City, Jeddah, in an international friendly as both sides gear up for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The friendly has seen adjustments to its timing and accommodation arrangements. Egypt will compete in Group G at the World Cup alongside Belgium, Iran, and New Zealand, a group that promises balanced yet challenging competition.

Saudi Arabia, led by French coach Hervé Renard, will play its second friendly in Belgrade against Serbia on March 31. The Green Falcons are drawn in Group H of the World Cup alongside Spain, Uruguay, and Cape Verde.

Meanwhile, Argentina will take on Mauritania at 2:30 AM Saturday at La Bombonera Stadium in Buenos Aires.

The match has generated controversy over ticket prices, with fans on social media complaining about costs ranging from €56 to €302. However, the presence of Lionel Messi in the squad has driven a surge in ticket sales.

This game, followed by another



Saudi Arabia coach Hervé Renard oversees the team's training sessions.

friendly against Zambia, will mark Messi's final appearances before the World Cup. Fans' excitement remains high despite ticket concerns, reflecting the immense anticipation for watching the three-time World Cup champions in action.

In addition to the match, the Ar-

gentine Football Association has organized a special fan show after the game, featuring two entertainment segments. La Bombonera is expected to be packed with roughly 57,200 fans, all eager to witness Messi and his teammates in what promises to be a memorable spectacle.