



Al-Jarallah highlights Kuwaiti farms' role in national food security during Wafra visit Page 5



FUEL TANK FIRE EXTINGUISHED AFTER 58-HOUR BATTLE

Drones wreak havoc on Kuwait airport radar, target vital ports

By **Mohammad Ghanem** and **Marwa Al-Bahrawi**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The Ministry of Defense announced Saturday that it detected and dealt with 15 hostile drones over the past 24 hours, some of which targeted the Kuwait International Airport, causing severe damage to the radar system and no human casualties were reported.

In a media briefing about the latest developments and operational incidents related to the Iranian aggression on Kuwait, official spokesperson of the ministry Colonel Staff Saud Al-Atwan confirmed that the Kuwait Army firefighting units supported the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) in extinguishing the fire that broke out in fuel storage tanks at the airport after the attacks.

He said the Task Force (Ghaith) carried out several support and assistance missions in response to a number of reports and emergency cases, particularly during the unstable weather conditions that the country experience in the last two days.



PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister poses with officials and firefighting teams during his inspection visit to Kuwait International Airport, commending their efforts in containing the blaze following the drone attacks.

- Prime Minister conducts inspection visit at airport
- Authorities urge caution as drone debris falls
- No radiation leak, health ministry confirms
- Health Minister visits injured security personnel

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Be silent ... Egypt is part of us, and we are part of it

HOLD on, people of Egypt. There are 1,400 years of Islam between us. We remember Maria al-Qibtiyya (Mary the Copt), one of the wives of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the noble companion Amr ibn al-Aas. We are all Muslims, and we all follow Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Throughout history, many nations and religions have passed, peoples have differed, and states have changed.

But there are defining moments that remain in the memory of nations. We remember Egypt's clear stance against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, a voice that resonated throughout the world along with the leaders of Arab and foreign countries.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, along with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, stood united to resist the invasion, and Kuwaiti right ultimately triumphed over evil.

Yes, some Arab countries supported the invasion and chose a different path, due to either their own interests or their belief that the invasion of Kuwait might lead to the liberation of Palestine. It later became clear that this was a matter of influence and deals, with no real connection to the slogans that were being promoted.

There was also popular support for the Iraqi invasion in those countries, driven by massive brainwashing operations.

In time, the facts became clear, despite the efforts made by Kuwait and the Gulf states to present the truth.

This is what is happening today. The Gulf states do not have the right to blame the Egyptian people, or even some of them, who hold convictions and

act according to their beliefs.

What is happening in the region today may not be seen by some Egyptians as part of the struggle for the liberation of Palestine, while we in the Gulf face daily Iranian aggression.

Yes, there are those who have persuaded some Egyptians that Iran will be the one to liberate Palestine and Jerusalem. I urge Egyptians not to be misled by such slogans, especially since our Egyptian brothers have already experienced the pain of the Israeli occupation in 1967.

We do not blame these people, as everyone has the right to believe what they think is right and express it as they see fit. However, we criticize the statement issued by the Egyptian Minister of Information, who attempted to portray these opinions as representative of Egyptians living abroad.

Yes, there are those who believe that Iran will liberate Palestine, not only in Egypt but throughout much of the Arab world. We have been hearing this rhetoric for 50 years, while the reality is that Israel has expanded significantly during that time. The liberation of Palestine has become merely a slogan used by Iran to deceive Muslims and Arabs, while it pursues the export of its sectarian revolution and attempts to alter the religious and cultural beliefs of nations.

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False security reports risk legal action

'No threat' at Kuwait shopping complexes: Ministry of Interior

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The Ministry of Interior has clarified that recent reports circulating on social media regarding a supposed threat or security incident at one of Kuwait's shopping complexes are false. Authorities confirmed that the situation is stable and there is no cause for concern.

The Ministry in a press release

emphasized that the security presence and personnel deployment observed at commercial sites are part of routine measures under approved preventive security plans. These steps are particularly necessary given the current regional and national conditions, aiming to maintain readiness, safeguard vital and commercial locations, and ensure

public safety across Kuwait. Citizens and residents are urged to rely only on official sources, verify information before sharing, and refrain from spreading unconfirmed reports. The Ministry also warned that authorities are monitoring the dissemination of false information and will take legal action against anyone found spreading rumors.



Photo by Samer Shiqer
Clear skies seen over Kuwait City on Saturday, with the iconic Kuwait Towers standing tall against the skyline.

Travel bans, detentions surge

State security cases increase as traditional crimes decline

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The 2025 annual report of the Public Prosecution showed a remarkable increase in caseload volume, as well as exceptional completion rates and robust judicial outcomes, reflecting the heightened efficiency of the judicial system.



Al-Safran

This development came in the midst of notable changes in the nature of crimes, particularly the surge in technology-related and modern financial offenses, while the number of traditional crimes has declined.

Attorney General Saad Al-Safran announced the release of the report, while affirming the commitment of the prosecution to guarantee transparency and the development of an integrated database for criminal statistics to support the efforts of the State in upholding the rule of law.

The data indicated that 49,763 cases were registered in 2025, an increase of 7.6 percent compared to the previous year, with the rate of cases concluded reaching 97.5 percent or a total of 48,533 cases -- 61 percent of which were referred to the criminal courts, 37.7 percent were dismissed, and 1.3 percent were deferred due to lack of jurisdiction.

The data showed that the number of judgments issued reached 50,567, with convictions constituting 88 percent (44,480 judgments), compared to 12 percent acquittals, indicating the strength of judicial outcomes.

The prosecution handled 11,807 appeals against judgments, 10,730 of which were appeals within the legal guarantees for litigants and the right to a two-tiered judicial process.

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8 NBK shareholders approve the increase of authorized capital to KWD 1.5 billion



9 ABK holds Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly Meetings for the financial year ended 31 December 2025

Other Voices

When fear becomes the new normal

By **Hala Bader Al Humaidhi**

During long-term crisis situations, a dangerous phenomenon starts to occur. Something that used to be terrifying slowly turns into a part of daily life.

In the beginning, it's challenging for people to receive constant news updates, notifications, and abrupt changes. They feel stressed, restless, and hyper-vigilant. However, as time passes, they start to say, "I got used to it."

This response is mistaken for resilience.

It's not. The Civil Service Commission issued a circular mandating all government bodies to allow no more than 30% of employees to work from the office while the remaining employees work from home. It also instructed them to modify their working hours accordingly.

The circular is absolutely necessary. However, it also shows that people are expected to carry on with their lives despite the crisis.

The human mind is capable of adapt-



Hala Bader Al Humaidhi

ing to any situation, including chronic stress. One of its favorite ways to deal with it is to normalize it. It tones down the emotional response not because the situation has become less critical but because it can't sustain a state of panic for a long time.

That's the problem. When fear becomes the new normal, people's emotional awareness

diminishes. They carry on with their tasks, meetings, emails, and daily chores while carrying some level of stress they're not fully aware of. The automatic answer to "how are you?" becomes "I'm fine" even if that's not entirely true.

There's a thin line between resilience and emotional numbing.

Resilience is being able to function while acknowledging the stress. Emotional numbing is a disconnection from one's feelings as a defense mechanism for dealing with it. They look similar on the outside, but they're vastly different on the inside.

In many organizations, the difference between the two is blurred. The same level of productivity, responsiveness, and outcome is expected from employees regardless of the external circumstances.

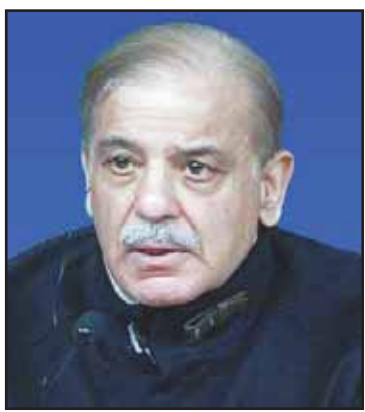
This isn't a matter of being weak or strong. It's being human.

Under these circumstances, leadership becomes extremely important.

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Sheikh Sabah Khaled



Shehbaz Sharif

Crown Prince lauds Pakistan effort to work for Gulf peace

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Friday called Prime Minister of the friendly Islamic Republic of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

During the phone call, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's greetings to President of the friendly Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari.

His Highness the Crown Prince commended Pakistan's role in supporting efforts in maintaining the pillars of regional security and peace, restating

Kuwait's welcome and absolute support for these efforts exerted to find a peaceful settlement that could lead to regional and international stability.

For his part, the Prime Minister of Pakistan reiterated his country's condemnation and denunciation of the heinous attacks targeting Kuwait and several other regional countries, while restating Pakistan's utter solidarity with the State of Kuwait.

During the phone conversation, they also discussed the latest regional developments and underlined the significance of de-escalating tensions, ceasing military operations in the region and prioritizing diplomatic solutions.

How to get Saudi transit visa?

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The Embassy of the Lebanese Republic in Kuwait issued a circular to citizens regarding emergency transit visa applications to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in response to growing inquiries about the process and requirements, reports Al-Rai daily.

The embassy explained that applications submitted through its dedicated link are exclusively for individuals returning to Lebanon or traveling from Saudi Arabia to another country. Approval is granted for a single land entry into Saudi Arabia under an emergency

transit visa and does not allow the holder to return to Saudi Arabia.

The embassy urged travelers who wish to return to Kuwait to apply for an entry visa through the official Saudi Embassy website to comply with all legal requirements.

It also emphasized that holders of an emergency transit visa must leave Kuwait within one week of approval, in accordance with regulations.

The embassy reaffirmed its commitment to streamlining travel procedures and providing clear instructions for citizens.

Pakistan market vast: Khan

Boost eyed in trade with Kuwait

ISLAMABAD, March 28, (KUNA): The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan on Thursday expressed Pakistan's desire to expand business-to-business linkages and explore new investment opportunities with the State of Kuwait.

Khan expressed the desire in a meeting with Ambassador of Kuwait to Pakistan, Nasser Al-Mutairi, to discuss bilateral relations



Al-Mutairi

and avenues for enhanced cooperation.

According to a press release issued by the ministry, Khan emphasized that Kuwait is a brotherly country and Pakistan shares strong and long-standing relations with it. He highlighted that under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan is actively working day and night to promote peace in the region amid challenging geopolitical circumstances. He further said that Premier Sharif has constituted special committees to enhance food exports to Gulf countries and underscored Pakistan's desire to expand business-to-business linkages and explore new investment opportunities between the two countries.

Other Voices

What drives man to treason?

By Ahmad alsarraf

ANY success by security forces in apprehending dangerous gangs or spy cells is commendable, given their role in protecting the nation from serious threats. Infiltrating such cells requires significant effort, knowledge, and risk.

However, it is not enough to simply arrest those involved. It is equally important to understand their motives, work to eliminate the environment that fosters their crimes, and address the societal flaws that lead to their deviance.

What drives a citizen, who supposedly enjoys all the benefits of their country, to commit treason and collaborate with the enemy? There is no single reason, but a combination of psychological, self-serving, and ideological motives, the most important of which are:

First, a feeling of injustice or exclusion, or a sense that their rights have been violated, leading them to seek revenge against the state by allying with its adversaries.

Second, greed for substantial financial gain or the promise of privileges and protection under the party they collaborate with against their country, found in those whose selfishness outweighs all other motivations.

Third, intellectual or ideological convictions, such as loyalty to an international ideological system like communism, can lead individuals to justify collaborating with the enemy as serving higher goals, as seen in the Cambridge spy cell's cooperation with the Soviet Union.

Fourth, personal hatred or a desire for revenge stemming from experiences with state institutions or family losses can create resentment, making a person willing to ally with any hostile party, even an external enemy.

Fifth, enemy intelligence agencies

exploit scandals, debts, or moral and legal transgressions to recruit individuals.

Sixth, psychological reasons, such as the desire for recognition. A feeling of insignificance drives some individuals to become a "reliable source" or a "secret agent."

Seventh, religious or sectarian loyalty, which some people place above loyalty to the nation and its leadership.

Eighth, women may play a role, as the French proverb says, "Cherchez la femme" (Search for the woman). This was evident during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, including the scandal involving British Defense Secretary Profumo and Christine Keeler.

It is not easy for any country to completely protect itself from traitors and spies, but its institutions and laws can minimize such breaches through strict and effective legislation and intelligent, well-trained security forces.

Most importantly, it requires adopting a vital, long-term, multi-layered national strategy with full government support. This strategy should promote justice among citizens in terms of rights and duties, equality in dignity, loyalty to the state and its leadership, and respect for ethnic, religious, and sectarian diversity. This can be achieved through a "National Charter for Tolerance" that is endorsed and supported by the government, serving as a reference for all.

This requires instilling national identity through educational curricula, making it take precedence over all other identities, and establishing the principle - Our homeland is one, our leadership is one, our flag is one, and our loyalty is one.

There must be zero tolerance for those who incite hatred against a tribe, sect, or ethnicity, or who call for violence. At the same time, it is essential to provide legal protections for freedom of expression and objective criticism.

The success of our vigilant security services in apprehending cells caused of collaborating with the enemy does not mean the danger has passed; it requires a firm yet wise approach.

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Kuwait intelligence hailed for neutralizing network

Lebanon, Bahrain join voices condemning terror

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received a telephone call on Thursday from Lebanese Premier Nawaf Salam, who expressed his strong condemnation of the terrorist plot targeting the State of Kuwait.

According to a government statement, Salam affirmed during the call his country's full solidarity with the measures Kuwait is taking to preserve its security and stability.

The Lebanese Prime Minister also emphasized the deep-rooted and enduring historical relations between the two brotherly countries, expressing Lebanon's condemnation of the attacks targeting the State of Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which threaten peace efforts in the region.

For his part, His Highness the Prime Minister expressed his appreciation to the Lebanese Prime Minister for his supportive stance towards the State of Kuwait and for all measures taken to protect its security and preserve its sovereignty.

The Lebanese Prime Minister characterized the involvement of Lebanese nationals in a dismantled terrorist cell in Kuwait as "regrettable," stressing that any threat to Kuwait's security is a threat to Lebanon.

Presiding over a session of the Council of Ministers, Salam reaffirmed the "stable and historical" bilateral ties between the two nations.

He added that the Lebanese community, by an overwhelming majority, remain law-abiding and are actively contributing to the Kuwaiti economic life, establishing a connection between the two countries.

He continued, stressing that the Iranian bombing has shifted from the Israeli occupation towards the Arabian Gulf countries, with official data showing that since the beginning of the war, 83 percent of Iranian missiles or drones have targeted the Gulf countries, compared to only 17 percent against the Israeli occupation.



Sheikh Ahmad



Nawaf Salam

The Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates issued a categorical condemnation of the recently thwarted terrorist plots aimed at destabilizing the sovereignty and security of the State of Kuwait.

In an official statement, the Ministry expressed its "absolute rejection" of any attempt to utilize Lebanese territory or its nationals to undermine Kuwait's national security.

The Ministry further affirmed Lebanon's full readiness to coordinate with Kuwaiti authorities in ongoing investigations to ensure all perpetrators are brought to justice.

The statement follows an announcement by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior on Wednesday regarding the dismantling of a sophisticated terrorist network.

In another development, the Bahraini Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the Kingdom's vehement condemnation of a "heinous" terrorist plot aimed at carrying out assassinations and undermining the higher interests of the sisterly State of Kuwait.

In an official statement, the Ministry commended the high vigilance and efficiency of the Kuwaiti security and intelligence apparatus in neutralizing the criminal network.

It noted that the cell, linked to the banned Hezbollah organization, comprised members of Kuwaiti, Iranian, and Lebanese nationalities.

The Ministry reaffirmed Bahrain's "full solidarity" with Kuwait, pledging absolute support for all measures taken to safeguard its sovereignty, stability, and security against terrorist entities and foreign interference.

This stance, the Ministry added, is rooted in the deep-seated historical and fraternal bonds between the two nations.

Including its statement, the Ministry expressed its sincere wishes for the continued security and prosperity of the State of Kuwait and its people.

Robust MEW teams toil to sustain power, water stock

Majority of electricity lines restored: Dr Al-Mashaan

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEWRE) announced that it has been implementing its comprehensive emergency plan since the start of the Iranian attacks in compliance with high-level directives.

All emergency teams were instructed to be present at their designated locations as per the plan to ensure rapid intervention and immediate response to any emergency, which contributed to the stability of the electricity and water systems.

On Feb 28, Minister of Public Works and acting Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan held an urgent meeting with the officials of the ministry to assess the situation and the readiness of the electricity and water systems in light of the regional developments.

On March 1, Al-Mashaan inspected the National Control Center to review the technical status of the electricity grid, following the outage of several overhead lines due to falling debris from drone interception operations. The

ministry confirmed on the same day that shrapnel fell on a fuel tank at the West Doha Power and Water Distillation Plant, causing a minor fire.

On March 3, the ministry announced that two overhead power transmission lines in the South went out of service due to falling debris from the interception of several drones.

On March 4, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem held a coordination meeting with ministry officials and members of the Emergency Plan Implementation Committee to discuss the repercussions of local developments and assess readiness of various sectors in the ministry.

At the same time, the ministry announced the completion of the repair of several power transmission lines damaged by falling debris. Five out of nine lines were restored in accordance with the highest technical standards.

On March 5 and 6, Al-Mukhaizeem inspected the shelters at the ministry building to assess their readiness level and ensure they are fully prepared under the current circumstances.

On March 7, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah inspected the National Water Control Center. He was accompanied by Al-Mukhaizeem. His Highness the Prime Minister looked into the operations of the center and the water system. He was reassured on the stability of the water network and the readiness of the concerned teams to improve preventative measures and deal with any emergency.

On March 9, the ministry confirmed the mi-

nor fire incident in one of the fuel tanks at Subiya Power and Water Distillation Plant, which resulted in smoke rising from the site. It stated that the security, safety and emergency teams at the plant responded immediately according to the procedures and emergency plans. Al-Mukhaizeem inspected the plant to assess the technical situation on the same day.

On March 12, six overhead power lines in various locations went out of service due to falling debris from the interception of several drones. This caused temporary disruption of the electrical grid and minor power outage in different areas. The ministry later confirmed that power was restored to the affected areas in record time.

On March 14, the technical teams at the ministry restored three overhead power lines and completed repair of two additional overhead power lines on March 15. These teams restored five out of the six damaged overhead lines.

On March 20, the technical teams restored one more overhead power transmission line.

On March 23, Al-Mukhaizeem inspected the East and West Doha power and water desalination plants to review operations and ensure the readiness of the operational systems during the Eid Al-Fitr holiday.

On March 24, seven overhead power transmission lines in several areas went out of service due to damage caused by falling debris from air defense operations.

On March 25, the ministry announced the repair of several power transmission lines damaged by falling debris early Tuesday morning, and that four of the seven lines were restored.



Dr. Al-Mashaan

EPA monitors emissions 24/7; gas limits in range

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The Environment Public Authority (EPA) has emerged as a vital entity in protecting the environment and ensuring public safety through an integrated system for monitoring, tracking and immediate response since the start of the American-Israeli war against Iran.

Over the course of one month, EPA has reassured the public, enhanced transparency and dealt with various environmental developments by relying on a sophisticated technological infrastructure, in close coordination with other concerned national entities.

EPA adopted an advanced network of fixed and mobile air quality monitoring stations, operating continuously to monitor pollutant indicators in various parts of the country every five minutes. The data are then displayed on the interactive monitoring section of the online portal of EPA, 'Our Environment'. Data collected during the reporting period showed that all environmental readings remained within normal limits and health standards, without any alarming increase.

It also developed real-time data analysis mechanisms, enabling specialists to monitor changes instantly and take the necessary measures without delay. Indicators confirm that EPA manages the environmental situation with a high level of professionalism, while ensuring transparency, rapid response and effective coordination with other relevant authorities.

It proved its ability to maintain environmental stability and ensure public safety, possessing the capabilities to continue this role efficiently and address future developments, thereby, enhancing environmental protection and boosting public confidence in national institutions.

Amidst the circulation of inaccurate information regarding gas leaks, EPA, in coordination with Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) and Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC), immediately issued a joint statement that there are no indications of leaks.

They stressed that all readings from environmental monitoring systems at operational sites and air quality stations are within normal limits, confirming the stability of the environmental situation and the reliability of official data.

EPA dealt with emergency situations efficiently, specifically the two fire incidents at the Mina Al-Ahmedi and Mina Abdullah refineries.

The EPA teams, in cooperation with KNPC, conducted intensive air quality monitoring in the surrounding areas. Analysis results showed no readings exceeding international health standards, affirming that the environmental situation remains within the safe limits and there is no direct impact on residential areas or public health. Wind direction was taken into account during the assessment process.

One of the most important elements of the success of EPA during this period is its effective coordination with the oil sector and other concerned government agencies.

Call 151 hotline 24/7: official

MoH says ready to address war-caused anxiety, stress

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: As part of the efforts of the Ministry of Health to mitigate the repercussions of the current situation, Consultant Psychiatrist and Head of Kuwait Center for Mental Health Dr. Ammar Al-Sayegh said the mental health system is fully prepared to support the public, indicating that services are offered round the clock to address the anxiety and stress resulting from the events.



Dr. Al-Sayegh

In a televised interview on Thursday, Al-Sayegh explained that feeling fear or anxiety upon hearing air raid sirens is normal. He urged people to deal with it calmly and consciously, considering the sirens an early warning and taking necessary precautions to guarantee safety.

He stressed the importance of reassuring children, especially since loud noises can frighten them. He said the role of the family is to reinforce the sense of security of the children and explain the nature of the events simply, while emphasizing that authorities are protecting the country.

Regarding services, he indicated that the center offers psychological, behavioral and occupational therapies, with a commitment to maintain patient confidentiality.

He pointed out that the 24/7

hotline (151) was established to receive inquiries and provide psychological guidance, especially for those unable to visit hospitals. He said cases requiring further follow up can be referred to specialized clinics, in addition to the continuous provision of emergency mental health services.

He disclosed that the ministry has expanded mental health services through 76 clinics in various health districts in cooperation with the primary healthcare sector. He stated that family physicians have also been trained to manage anxiety and depression and dispense necessary medications, and psychiatric clinics were established in public hospitals.

He advised maintaining daily routines as much as possible, especially for children, by engaging in activities and hobbies like drawing and playing, as these help reduce stress and promote a sense of well-being. He also reassured the public about the availability of medication.

He emphasized that the ministry prepared for such circumstances by securing sufficient drug quantities and ensuring continuous supply through alternative channels, thus, guaranteeing uninterrupted treatment.

He stressed that mental health is an integral part of overall health, calling for a correction of misconceptions surrounding it and urging people not to hesitate to seek help when needed, as it is a natural condition and not different from any other illness.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Iran 'regime' fails to learn from the annals of history

"ABOUT 45 years ago, there was talk about the Strait of Hormuz and whether Iran would be able to close it to maritime traffic," columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The 'Carter Doctrine' was announced by former US President Jimmy Carter in 1980, following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. He issued a strongly worded, though indirect, warning to the Soviets, stating, 'Any attempt by an outside power to control the Persian Gulf region will be considered an attack on the vital interests of the United States of America, and this attack will be resisted by any means necessary, including military force.'"



Ahmad Al-Dawas

"Years ago, we wrote that when Iran announces it will close the Strait, it may be seeking to divert the Iranian people's attention from their internal economic hardships and rally them around their leadership. Iran possesses enormous resources, but it has miscalculated. It has neglected internal affairs and the well-being of its people, resulting in declining living conditions and increased hardship. At the same time, it has interfered in Arab affairs, causing harm through its treacherous proxies in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria.

"Years ago, Iranian statements were hostile towards the Gulf states, including claims that Iran was capable of 'overthrowing the Gulf regimes.'"

"Iran was, and continues to be, oppressing its own people while squandering resources on foreign adventures. As a result, many Iranians have lived in poverty, leading them to chant against the government and the religious establishment - 'No to Gaza, no to Lebanon, death to Palestine!'"

"Iran has focused on military matters and pursued hostile policies toward its neighbors and the West. In this, it resembles North Korea, where people live in poverty and under oppression. At one point, North Korea's leader ordered starving people to kill and eat dogs, a statement made on August 16, 2016, and recorded on video.

"Today, power lies not in military might, but in economic strength. The proof is South Korea's progress compared to North Korea's backwardness. Iran has also failed to learn from history. European nations fought among themselves for centuries but eventually realized their mistake. After the wars, they formed the European Common Market, which later became the European Union, leading to their rise and allowing their people to live in security and prosperity.

"We gave another example - Denmark, which fought numerous wars with Sweden for many years. It realized its mistake and understood that reconciliation with Sweden was in its best interest. As a result, both countries developed significantly. Iran, however, has not reconciled with the Arab world or the West, and therefore has not progressed.

"Over the past four weeks, the United States and Israel launched airstrikes against Iran, which was eager to acquire nuclear weapons and maintained hostile stances, along with Hezbollah in Lebanon. In response, Iran launched missiles and drones at the peaceful Gulf states, continuing to strike them, damaging infrastructure and causing casualties. Despite this, the Gulf states have pursued a policy of restraint.

"Then Trump threatened to strike Iran if it closed the Strait of Hormuz, giving it 48 hours to comply with his demands. Iran appeared willing to negotiate, so Trump extended the deadline to five days, which he considered a major victory. He stipulated that Iran must agree on the next Iranian president, and he views Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf as a potential leader.

"We aim to strengthen the regional security system of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Some have proposed forming a confederation of GCC member states to coordinate defense and economic policies, while allowing each state to retain its internal and external sovereignty, similar to the European Union. Do not agree to the accession of any other Arab country to the GCC or the confederation, as this would undermine the Council, a scenario we have previously warned against."

Also:

"Throughout Arab and Islamic history, there have been remarkable and unforgettable stances taken by nations that stood by the oppressed and opened their doors to those in dire straits. Among these is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has often served as a refuge for its brethren and a shield for Arabs and Muslims in times of hardship." Kuwaiti lawyer **Dr. Abdullah Al-Turaiji** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"At the end of World War II and the fall of Germany in 1945, former Iraqi Prime Minister Rashid Ali al-Kilani was pursued by Allied forces. With no other options, he found safety and security in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where he was received by the founding King, Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud.

"This act reflects the chivalry of the Arabs and the nobility of their leadership. The scene was repeated years later when the monarchy fell in Iraq during the July 14, 1958 revolution. Amid the bloody events that affected the royal family, some members sought refuge in the Saudi embassy.

"The Saudi ambassador to Iraq contacted King Saud bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, and the response was quick and decisive, 'They are under my protection.'"

"Saudi Arabia's support extended to Muslims beyond the Arab world. When Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina were subjected to horrific massacres during the Bosnian War in the 1990s, King Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al Saud clearly expressed his political and humanitarian support for the Bosnian people. Saudi Arabia cooperated with the international community and NATO to help stop the tragedy that shook the conscience of the world.

"Palestine has always been central to Saudi Arabia's positions. Since the era of the founder, King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud, the Palestinian cause has been reflected in his stances and political messages, and this support has continued under successive Saudi leaders.

"King Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud also adopted an Arab peace initiative, known as the Fahad Initiative.

"King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud presented the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which was adopted by the Arab Summit in Beirut, calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital in exchange for comprehensive peace.

"Saudi support has not been limited to politics but has extended to humanitarian and relief aid through Saudi institutions that have stood with the Palestinian people in various crises.

"These are just a few examples of the many stances taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia alongside its brothers in the Gulf and the wider Arab and Islamic world. These stances affirm that Saudi Arabia has never been merely a state, but a shield for the Arabs and a sword and spear for Muslims in times of hardship.

"O God, protect the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its leadership, and its people, and bless its stances that have remained a testament to loyalty and chivalry throughout history."

"The world today is experiencing growing instability, marked by rapid changes and escalating conflicts, amid widespread regional and international uncertainty about the future." Doctorate in Plant Philosophy **Dr. Reem Ahmad Al-Hazim** for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"Political, economic, and humanitarian crises have become defining features of the global landscape, driven by rising regional tensions and worsening humanitarian conditions.

"These developments pose serious challenges to political security and overall stability. Amid these transformations, many countries are confronted with an imposed reality they did not choose and are forced to manage its consequences.

"The current situation is marked by a complex mix of regional tensions and the risk of war, along with escalating social and humanitarian crises.

"The succession of global crises in recent years has undeniably affected international supply chains, resulting in a significant rise in food prices and a decline in individual purchasing power.

"The growing impacts of climate change, including droughts, water scarcity, and rising temperatures, further increase the vulnerability of agricultural systems worldwide.

"Excessive reliance on food imports adds to this vulnerability, leaving many countries exposed to global market shocks, fluctuations, and regional instability.

"In this context, Kuwait serves as a clear example of a country heavily dependent on food imports from multiple sources.

"The country imports more than 90 percent of its needs, particularly food, highlighting the necessity of adopting effective strategies to strengthen the national food security system. Key measures include supporting innovation in the agricultural sector, diversifying local production, reducing reliance on imports, and empowering farmers and the private sector through investment promotion and the development of food infrastructure.

"Strengthening local supply chains and activating regional integration, especially among Gulf countries, is essential. Building strategic partnerships to manage food risks can achieve greater self-sufficiency and stability.

"Food security is no longer merely an economic choice but a strategic necessity to ensure stability amid current challenges. This calls for a radical transformation toward more resilient and sustainable food systems that secure a green and prosperous future for generations to come."

— Compiled by **Simi K. Kutty**



KUNA photo
Deputy Director General of the General Administration of Customs for Ports and Customs Investigation Affairs Saleh Al-Omar visits the customs department.

Customs told to maintain flow of shipments

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): Deputy Director General of the General Administration of Customs for Ports and Customs Investigation Affairs Saleh Al-Omar on Friday conducted an inspection visit to Shuwaikh Port, the Northern Ports Customs Department, and Failaka Island, as part of ongoing field follow-up and review of workflow.

In a press statement, the General Administration

of Customs said Al-Omar began his tour with a visit to the Customs Container Inspection Center, where he reviewed work mechanisms and procedures in place and was briefed by officials on operational progress and the readiness of field teams.

Al-Omar stressed the importance of intensifying efforts and strengthening joint coordination with the Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA), the Ministry of Interior, and all relevant clearance author-

ities to ensure the smooth flow of shipments and continuity of operations with high efficiency.

He noted that all procedures are in line with the approved emergency plan in an organized and positive manner, reflecting the readiness of the customs system to deal with various conditions and changes, commending the efforts of customs personnel and their vital role in supporting the country's security and economic framework.



Al-Seyassah photo
The Ministry of Commerce and Industry inspectors at one of the stores in Shuwaikh.

12 violations detected in building items store raid

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) conducted an inspection tour on Thursday of several construction materials stores to ensure price stability amid the current circumstances in Kuwait, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

In a press statement, the ministry explained that emergency teams in the Capital and Hawally governorates issued 12 violation reports during the tour for various infractions, including failure to display price lists, non-compliance with return and exchange policies, and failure to provide customers with invoices. These tours are part of an ongoing monitoring plan aimed at enhancing market transparency and ensuring that commercial establishments comply with laws and regulations designed to protect consumer rights and prevent monopolistic or exploitative practices.

'Production cut detrimental'

'Iran has no right to impose Hormuz fee'

By **Najeh Bilal**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: Several economic questions were raised, as the fourth week of the American-Israeli war against Iran draws to a close.

Does Iran have the right to impose fees on tankers, as it announced recently? What will be the impact of the war on the budget of Kuwait, which will start on April 1? What is the solution to the upcoming budget deficit?

Economic expert **Ahmad Al-Sadhan** answered these questions and others in an exclusive statement to the newspaper. He affirmed that Iran has no right to impose fees for passage through the Strait of Hormuz, according to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which guarantees the right of passage. He expressed surprise at Iran's de facto imposition of fees - around \$2 million per ship without justification. He stressed that the international community rejects this measure, as it is a violation, especially since the Strait of Hormuz closure led to a remarkable increase in maritime shipping costs and insurance premiums.

He pointed out that the halt in Kuwaiti oil production due to the ongoing war will negatively impact the Kuwaiti economy. He said the annual budget of Kuwait, which will start on April 1, will lose a significant portion of its public revenues as per the estimate of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He asserted that such a decline in revenues will lead to a huge budget deficit. He added that covering the budget deficit, if the war continues for several months, necessitate drawing from the reserves of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) to cover essential expenditures, including salaries and vital obligations.

He indicated that the crisis has not only affected Kuwait economically, but because its effects extended to global markets, which will witness further inflation, particularly since halting the export of refined petroleum products from Gulf refineries resulted in a surge in global fuel prices.

He said the worst problem caused by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz is the disruption of global air traffic and shipping. He warned that global inflation rates will continue to rise as the current crisis persists.

He continued stating that it is imperative to secure alternative routes, regardless of the cost, while advocating for stronger coordination among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations to integrate the oil sector through a pipeline network resilient to global crises.

He stressed that the current crisis showed to the international community the enormous impact of halting Gulf oil supplies on the global economy as a whole.

He underscored the need for Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) to reactivate its long-standing proposal to establish the land pipeline for the export of Kuwaiti oil through Saudi Arabia.

Update phones for alerts: MoI

'Trial phase for public safety'

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior, represented by the General Directorate of Civil Defense, said on Friday that activating the national emergency alert service on iPhone devices requires updating to the latest version of the iOS 26.4 operating system.

This came in remarks by Head of Alarm Systems Department at the General Directorate of Civil Defense Lieutenant Colonel **Yousef Al-Otaibi** during a media briefing on the ongoing developments in light of the Iranian aggression on the country.

Al-Otaibi pointed out that the update is the primary step to ensure activation of the system and the automatic, immediate receipt of alerts, noting that the first live test of the national emergency alert system was launched on Thursday on all

mobile devices.

He added that the test included Android and Huawei devices in addition to iPhones, with alerts successfully delivered to a number of phones as part of the Ministry of Interior's efforts to enhance the early warning system.

Al-Otaibi recommended users follow steps to ensure notifications are received by accessing settings, selecting notifications, and scrolling down to (KWT Alert), where three options appear allowing users to control activation or deactivation of alerts as desired.

He noted that the first option, "National Warning Alerts," is automatically enabled upon updating and does not provide an option to disable it, ensuring that warning alerts reach all users during high-risk emergencies, thus reinforces public safety.

He added that the current trial phase aims to ensure full readiness of the telecommunications infrastructure through repeated testing, technical development, and verification of the system's efficiency ahead of its official launch.

Kuwait boosts environmental, crisis readiness amid regional challenges

EPA ramps up coordination, real-time monitoring

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister for Development and Sustainability Affairs Reem Al-Fulaij said on Friday that the country is strength-

ening the readiness of its institutions, particularly environmental bodies, amid regional developments and rising challenges.



KUNA photo
Minister of State for Development and Sustainability, Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij, at the Public Authority for Environment laboratories.

Her remarks came during a field visit to the Kuwait Environment Public Authority, where she reviewed preparedness levels, including air quality monitoring systems, laboratories, and environmental data management units.

She stressed the importance of enhanced coordination and real-time environmental monitoring, noting that current systems reflect strong readiness and the ability to respond effectively to emergencies.

Al-Fulaij also highlighted ongoing efforts to support national capabilities and improve technical infrastructure to ensure environmental sustainability and rapid response during crises.

On her part, Acting Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) Nouf Bebehani told KUNA of the Authority's keenness to enhance institutional coordination in light of the current regional developments by holding coordination meetings chaired by the Minister of Development and Sustainability Affairs, with the participation of relevant government agencies.

The authority confirmed that air quality readings across the country remain within approved national standards.



Sheikh Jarrah Niang Mustonen

Officials laud leadership, urge restraint

Kuwait receives Senegal, Finland backing amid regional escalation

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received a telephone call Thursday from the Senegalese Minister of African Integration, Foreign Affairs, and Senegalese Abroad, Cheikh Niang.

During the conversation, Minister Niang expressed Senegal's unwavering solidarity with the State of Kuwait in the face of recent Iranian aggression, according to a statement released by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He underscored the critical importance of upholding Kuwait's sovereignty and maintaining its territorial integrity.

Meanwhile, Ambassador of Finland to Kuwait, Juha Mustonen, affirmed his country's solidarity with Kuwait and support for de-escalation efforts amid the current regional tensions.

In a statement on Thursday, Ambassador Mustonen praised Kuwait's leadership, describing its calm and steady response to the exceptionally difficult situation as "truly commendable."

He also expressed appreciation to the Kuwaiti authorities for their efforts to safeguard residents and ensure the safe return of visiting tourists.

He said Finland has been following the recent escalation of the security situation in the wider Middle East with grave concern, noting that the Finnish leadership has conveyed strong support and solidarity with Kuwait during this challenging period.

He stressed that, three weeks into the escalation, calls for de-escalation and the protection of civilian lives remain essential.

The ambassador noted that on March 2, Finland's Foreign Minister affirmed solidarity with Kuwait and other countries affected by Iranian military actions. Finland also participated in the GCC-EU Ministerial Meeting held on March 5, during which the European Union reaffirmed its support for GCC countries, he added.

During the meeting, ministers underscored their shared commitment to regional stability, the protection of civilians, respect for international humanitarian law, and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.

They also highlighted the importance of Gulf stability for both regional and global economic security.

Mustonen praised the responsiveness and goodwill of Kuwaiti authorities, noting that their cooperation has been instrumental in assisting Finnish nationals and reinforcing confidence in the strength of bilateral relations.

He hoped that continued dialogue and a shared commitment to stability would help ease tensions across the region.

The ambassador also highlighted the role of Finnish companies operating in Kuwait, including Nokia, in maintaining partnerships and supporting the country's resilience and long-term development, reflecting strong economic and technological ties between the two nations.

Ambassador Mustonen extended his heartfelt condolences to the families of victims of recent attacks, reiterating Finland's solidarity with Kuwait during this period of mourning.

He also conveyed his best wishes to the Kuwaiti people for continued safety, stability, and prosperity.

KU promotes mental, health and media awareness

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The Kuwait University has launched an awareness initiative titled, "Your Awareness is Reassurance," aimed at raising public awareness on psychological, health and media fields.

This initiative features a series of awareness messages presented by faculty members and specialists.

Dr. Ahmed Al-Shehab, Editor-in-Chief of Afaq Newspaper and a faculty member at the College of Arts, presented an awareness message titled, "The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Spreading Rumors." This message addressed the increasing role of artificial intelligence technologies in accelerating the spread of rumors and misinformation on digital platforms.

Dr. Sayed Mohammed Al-Tabtabaei, acting Dean of the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, presented a message titled "The Virtue of Patience." He discussed the value of patience in facing trials and crises and its role in instilling reassurance and promoting psychological and spiritual balance.

Dr. Hala Al-Essa, Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Health Practice at the College of Public Health, presented an awareness message titled "How to Maintain Healthy Eating Habits from a Public Health Perspective During Crises", focusing on the importance of maintaining a healthy and balanced diet in times of crisis.

Dr. Rashid Al-Rashid, Assistant Professor at the College of Medicine, presented psychological guidelines for dealing with anxiety during crises in his awareness message entitled, "How to Deal with Anxiety During Crises."



Capital Governorate photos
The Capital Governor, Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, conducted an inspection visit to electricity stations, accompanied by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Dr. Adel Al-Zamel, and Assistant Undersecretary for Monitoring and Control Engineer Fatima Hayat, to review the readiness of the power grid and monitoring and control systems.

Capital Governor reviews power plants to ensure grid readiness

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah conducted a field visit to several power plants, accompanied by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy, Dr. Adel Al-Zamel, and the Assistant Undersecretary for Monitoring and Control at the Ministry, Engineer Fatima Hayat, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The visit aimed to review the progress of work and assess the level of operational readiness.

During the tour, Governor Sheikh Abdullah emphasized that the stability of the electrical grid is a top priority, highlighting the importance of improving performance efficiency and ensuring the continuity of electricity supply, particularly during peak load periods.

He commended the efforts of the national workforce at various sites, and praised their role in maintaining service sustainability and enhancing the reliability of the electrical grid to meet the needs of citizens and residents.

MoE denies textbook delivery link

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The Ministry of Education confirmed that the link circulating on some social media platforms for registering textbook delivery information is not related to the ministry and was not issued by any of its official departments, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The ministry clarified that the ap-

proved mechanism for delivering textbooks is through direct telephone contact with parents, using the numbers registered and approved by school administrations.

It urged everyone to verify information before sharing it and to rely only on the ministry's official channels.

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

Industrial plots

Kuwait boosts land oversight

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Kuwait Municipality discussed mechanisms for strengthening coordination in the implementation of procedures related to industrial, service, craft and commercial plots.

Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai chaired the meeting, which was held at the headquarters of the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) on Thursday.

Present at the meeting were Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs Abdullah Al-Mishari, acting Director General of PAI Shamlan Al-Jahdali, Deputy Director General for the Industrial Cities Sector Khaled Khader, Director General of the Municipality Manal Al-Asfour, and Deputy Director General for the Capital and Jahra governorates Nizar Al-Awadh.

They deliberated on ways to develop joint working mechanisms between the relevant authorities to improve oversight and solidify the regulation of plot use.

They also talked about the automated link project between PAI and the Municipality, including the observed violations. This link aims to expedite data exchange and improve the accuracy of the resulting actions.

It is in line with the governmental approach to strengthen institutional integration among the concerned authorities, develop the business environment, and ensure compliance with the regulations governing all types of plans.

The objectives are to meet the requirements of the current stage, raise urban management efficiency, and improve economic organization.

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Boosting local produce, sustainability and economic growth

Al-Jarallah highlights Kuwaiti farms' role in national food security during Wafra visit

By Adnan Makkawi Jarada

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: Dean of Kuwaiti journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers, Ahmed Al-Jarallah, visited the farms of Mohammed Ali Al-Mutairi in Wafra Agricultural area late last week, accompanied by journalists Saud Al-Farhan and Ahmed Al-Aswad.

Al-Jarallah observed the agricultural operations at Mohammed Ali Al-Mutairi's farms, from planting seedlings to harvesting and preparing crops for local markets, particularly field potatoes and four-tiered strawberries grown in refrigerated agricultural complexes.

Al-Jarallah expressed his admiration for the development taking place in agricultural areas, especially in Wafra and Abdali.

He emphasized the importance of fresh Kuwaiti agricultural products, particularly potatoes, onions, corn, and dates, in achieving a measure of food security.

Al-Jarallah also highlighted the role of the agricultural sector in diversifying income sources and stimulating the national economy.

He stressed the significant benefits of productive agriculture along Kuwait's northern and southern borders, and called on the government, the public, and investors to give it greater attention.

Al-Jarallah commended the visits of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, to several farms in Wafra and Abdali, expressing optimism that these visits would yield positive results.

He also expressed appreciation for Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef's visits to local agricultural produce



Mohammed Ali Al-Mutairi explains to Ahmed Al-Jarallah about the farm's production.



Ahmed Al-Jarallah with Mohammed Ali Al-Mutairi, Ahmed Al-Aswad, and colleague Saud Al-Farhan at a Wafra farm.

marketing centers in Sulaibiya and Ardiya, as well as to farmers' markets in Andalous, Ruqai, Fahad Al-Ahmad, and Jahra.

Meanwhile, Mohammed Al-Mutairi, owner of a highly productive farm in Wafra, emphasized the importance of a clean and diverse nursery in achieving high-quality agricultural production in large quantities throughout the year.

Al-Mutairi stated that farming is both rewarding and enjoyable, provided the farmer has passion, dedication, and a professional ap-

proach to agriculture and marketing.

He affirmed that Kuwaiti farms produce approximately 20 varieties of potatoes, continuously improving in shape, weight, and quality thanks to the commitment of most Kuwaiti farmers to using the most advanced and sophisticated agricultural materials and supplies.

Al-Mutairi emphasized the farmers' dedication to using the best types of seeds, seedlings, and fertilizers, as well as their continu-

ous adoption of the latest prevention and care methods.

He stressed that the experience of Kuwaiti farmers accumulates season after season, enhancing both the quantity and quality of their produce.

Al-Mutairi explained that he cultivates potatoes twice a year. The first planting uses local potato seeds stored from May to October, while the second planting relies on imported virgin potato seeds from France, South Africa, the Netherlands, and the United States.

He noted that Kuwaiti farmers could supply local table potatoes to consumers if the Kuwaiti Farmers Union or other agricultural associations and unions established refrigerated storage facilities to preserve the increased production during April, May, and the summer months.

Al-Mutairi stressed the importance of paying attention to semi-strategic crops such as potatoes, garlic, onions, corn, pumpkins, and dates.

Continued from Page 1

Be silent ...

Iran may appear to be an Islamic state, but in reality, it is working to revive a defunct empire that has nothing to do with Islam.

For 47 years, we have suffered greatly because of Iran.

Iran has always used American military bases as a pretext to prevent the Gulf states from using them. The aggressor always seeks an excuse to justify its crimes, yet such excuses are often worse than the crimes themselves.

Self-defense is a legitimate right for everyone. No one can prevent people from defending themselves, as this right is guaranteed by international laws, conventions, and agreements. In the Gulf, we have exercised restraint, and our political leadership has shown great wisdom in addressing Iranian aggression.

We must not forget that Iran has targeted holy sites, not just civilian or oil facilities. The Houthis, backed by Iran, have attacked Makkah and Madinah.

A stance based on false slogans is therefore deeply unjust to the Gulf states.

However, this situation does not justify insulting the Egyptian people. No one has the right to influence public opinion with pessimism or disrespect.

I wish to apologize to the people of Egypt. Some have offended this great nation, its civilization, and its historic stances of solidarity with the Gulf states. The Arab Republic of Egypt has always stood with the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Blaming the Egyptian Minister of Information arises from the fact that everyone has the right to express their opinion as they see fit.

Those who ignore Iran's crimes of killing thousands of Yemenis, Iraqis, Syrians, Lebanese, and others, and insist on defending Iran are clearly detached from reality, and their opinions carry little weight.

This segment of the Egyptian people still has the right to defend its views.

Perhaps we have failed to convince them of our point of view. Many Arabs opposed Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion, but time revealed the truth, and their positions eventually changed.

To the Gulf citizens who criticize the Egyptian people, we would like to say - If you cannot persuade them through dialogue, then please remain silent. The Egyptians are a great people, led by a capable president, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

Leaders who govern their countries with logic do not control the opinions of their people.

We in the Gulf states are not afraid of a change in Egypt's position. Egypt is part of us, and we are part of it.

Drones wreak

He affirmed that the Armed Forces continue to carry out their duties with the highest levels of readiness and vigilance through an integrated system of monitoring, tracking and response to various threats, in full coordination with the military, security and State entities, in a way that guarantees national security and stability while maintaining the safety of citizens and residents.

He asserted that members of the Armed Forces stand with firm resolve and high morale, confirming their constant readiness and unwavering commitment to defend their nation and maintain its security and stability.

He concluded by imploring Allah Almighty to grant continuous safety and security for Kuwait under the wise leadership of 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.

Earlier, the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) announced that the airport has been subjected to several drone attacks without any human casualties and that the damage is limited to material losses, albeit the huge impact on the radar system of the airport.

Abdullah Al-Rajhi, PACA spokesperson, stated that Iran, its proxies and the armed groups it supports launched drones that attacked the airport.

In a press statement published on the X account of PACA, Al-Rajhi confirmed that the attack severely damaged the radar system of the airport. He said the emergency teams and other concerned authorities immediately dealt with the incident, indicating they took the necessary measures to assess the situation, ensure the safety of operations, and restore operational readiness as quickly as possible.

He reaffirmed the full commitment of PACA and its continuous coordination with the relevant authorities to take all the necessary measures to maintain the safety of civil aviation in the State of Kuwait.

Also, the Ministry of Interior affirmed on Saturday that its special forces, in coordination with the air defense units, detected, intercepted and shot down three drones that breached the airspace of the country through precise and specialized operations over the past 24 hours.

Speaking in the same media briefing, Director General of the Public Relations and Security Media General Department and official spokesperson of the ministry Brigadier Nasser Bouslaib revealed that the explosives teams handled nine reports about falling debris from interception operations in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of such reports since the onset of the aggression to 588.

He presented a video clip highlighting the efforts of the special forces in dealing with drones, as well as the response of explosives teams to incidents of debris or objects falling out-

side the threat zone.

He also expressed the appreciation of the ministry for the cooperation of the public in taking advantage of the exceptional and final grace period for surrendering unlicensed firearms, ammunition and explosives. He urged those in possession of unlicensed weapons to promptly hand them over before the deadline, which ends on April 1.

He concluded by praying to Allah Almighty for the safety of Kuwait, its leadership, citizens and residents, and for the preservation of security and stability in the country.

In addition, Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) announced on Saturday that its teams, with the support of the Kuwait Army, Kuwait National Guard (KNG) and the oil sector, have fully extinguished a fire that broke out in the fuel storage tanks at the airport, which lasted for 58 hours following the hostile drone attacks.

Director for Public Relations and Media and official spokesperson of KFF Brigadier Mohammad Al-Ghareeb stated that the damage was limited to material losses and no human casualties were reported.

He added that since the onset of the aggression, KFF has dealt with 82 unusual incidents, including fires caused by shrapnel or direct attacks, in addition to securing sites throughout the country.

He revealed that in the last 24 hours, the firefighting teams combated fires resulting from drone and missile strikes, and those caused by falling debris following air defense interceptions targeting vital facilities.

He urged the citizens and residents to exercise caution, avoid approaching or attempting to deal with fires or suspicious objects resulting from falling debris, as they could pose grave danger to lives, especially if they contain highly flammable or hazardous materials.

He also called for immediate reporting of such incidents through the emergency number (112) and to leave handling such incidents to specialized firefighting teams to ensure public safety.

He confirmed that all KFF personnel continue to perform their national duty with vigilance and dedication, prioritizing the protection of lives, properties and community safety above all else.

He also prayed to Allah Almighty for the continuous safety of Kuwait and its people under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince.

Moreover, the Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) said on Friday that Shuwaik Port came under an overnight hostile drone attack and there were no casualties.

In a press statement, KPA disclosed the initial reports showed that the drone attack caused material damage, and that emergency measures were put in place in collaboration with the relevant authorities.

Furthermore, Ministry of Public Works spokesperson Eng. Ahmed

Al-Saleh disclosed that hostile drones and cruise missiles attacked the infrastructure of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project at dawn Friday, targeting the facilities currently under construction.

In a statement to Kuwait TV, Al-Saleh indicated that preliminary field reports confirm material damage to the infrastructure of the project and no human casualties were reported.

Al-Saleh revealed that specialized technical reports are being finalized, while confirming the immediate activation of emergency procedures tailored to the nature of the development projects of the ministry. He stated that the project is being managed according to certain emergency protocols. He added there is continuous coordination with the relevant authorities at the site to take all the necessary measures within their respective jurisdiction.

On the other hand, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Friday conducted an inspection visit to Kuwait International Airport.

His Highness the Prime Minister was accompanied by Director General of PACA Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, KFF Chief Major General Talal Mohammad Al-Roumi, and Director General of Kuwait Aviation Fuelling Company (KAFCO) Meshal Abdullah Al-Tunaiib

During the visit, His Highness the Prime Minister chaired a meeting with officials to review measures taken to douse the fire that broke out following the attack on fuel tanks at the airport, as well as the level of preparedness and coordination among relevant authorities, leading to full containment of the blaze.

He also inspected the site of the attack in the fuel tanks area, reviewing the extent of damage, which was limited to material losses and no human casualties were reported. He was briefed on the safety and security measures implemented during the fire-out operation.

He also conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince, along with their appreciation for all personnel in various authorities for their valuable efforts and dedication in serving the nation under these exceptional circumstances.

He expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the national personnel and all teams that participated in extinguishing the fire, commending their sincere efforts and sacrifices, which reflect the highest forms of loyalty and devotion to their country and its wise leadership.

Meanwhile, official spokesperson for the Ministry of Health, Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, confirmed that reports circulating on some social media platforms about radioactive leaks in Kuwait were false.

He emphasized that these reports are completely unfounded and have no basis in official data.

Dr Al-Sanad stated that the min-

istry's monitoring and surveillance systems operate with high efficiency around the clock within an integrated national system that includes monitoring seawater, freshwater, airborne particles, and radiation levels in multiple monitoring stations.

He noted that all readings recorded so far are within normal limits, with no unusual indicators or changes that would warrant concern.

Dr Al-Sanad confirmed the stability of the radiation situation and the safety of environmental indicators according to approved technical standards.

He stressed the importance of verifying information before sharing it and avoiding rumors, as they can cause unnecessary anxiety. He also urged the public to rely on official sources.

In a related development, as part of his efforts to continuously monitor incidents and their medical repercussions, Health Minister Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi visited Al-Sabah Hospital to look into the condition of a security officer who was wounded while performing his national duty to protect the homeland. He confirmed that the health of the injured officer is improving significantly.

He said the concerned medical team removed the ventilator from the patient, signaling the start of the rehabilitation and recovery phase as per the comprehensive medical plan.

He affirmed the national healthcare system's high level of readiness and its efficiency in managing various cases, while commending the heroic acts and high level of professionalism of the medical staff in dealing with emergency situations.

He also praised the vital national role played by the security officers and their sacrifices in safeguarding the country and maintaining national stability, expressing his sincere wishes for the speedy recovery of the injured officer and his immediate return to normal life.

State security

As part of its role in protecting society, the prosecution issued 3,206 pretrial detention orders, 1,003 travel bans, 184 asset and property seizure orders and financial guarantees totaling KD1,236,603, showing a proactive approach parallel to judicial action.

State security cases increased by 15.74 percent or 125 cases compared to 108 in 2024, premeditated murder and attempted murder cases reached 69 or 6.2 percent increase, but remained below the 100 cases recorded in 2023. Theft felonies decreased to 1,313 cases, while suicide and attempted suicide cases rose slightly to 126, but remained below the previously high levels. Bribery and abuse of power cases decreased by 27.8 percent or 13 cases, while failure to submit financial disclosures increased to 532. Crimes related to journalism,

media and information technology rose by 31.1 percent or 5,323 cases -- the highest level in recent years. Misappropriation of public funds decreased by 67 percent or 73 cases, the lowest level recorded in recent years. Refusal to execute judgments rose to 624, while money laundering cases reached 207.

On the other hand, forgery of official documents decreased to 493, drug-related crimes declined to 3,066 cases, juvenile delinquency cases decreased to 3,486, and domestic violence cases fell to 2,010 -- a positive indicator of improvement in some aspects of society.

Crimes involving forgery of banknotes reached 3,822 cases, a significant increase, alongside a surge in human trafficking crimes, albeit limited in number. This shows the rise of new criminal patterns.

The Commercial Affairs Prosecution Office dealt with the highest number of cases at 7,799, followed by the Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer prosecutions and then the Media, Information and Publishing Prosecution Office.

The number of defendants reached 50,459, with males constituting 84.9 percent and the 30-39 age group recorded the highest percentage.

The Public Prosecution has 506 members -- 17.4 percent of whom are women, indicating the development of institutional efficiency.

It affirmed that this report is part of its commitment to maintain transparency and keep the public informed about its performance indicators in order to develop judicial policies and performance efficiency.

When fear

Decisions like modifying work policies such as working hours and allowing remote work are a step in the right direction, but they must be accompanied by something equally important, which is awareness.

A "business as usual" attitude can inadvertently add to the numbness. What people are looking for right now isn't motivation or more productivity but clarity, reassurance, and a sense of stability. Clear communication, realistic expectations, and the opportunity to express themselves freely can go a long way.

On a personal level, awareness is equally important. Carrying on with life as usual isn't the issue. Carrying on with life while ignoring the state of the mind and heart is. A few minutes of self-reflection to assess one's mental and emotional well-being can save a person from long-term burnout.

Adaptation is a part of being human. However, it shouldn't come at the expense of awareness.

Because when fear becomes the new normal, the aim isn't just to keep functioning.

It's to keep being present, aware, and human.

INTERNATIONAL

Minnesota serves as flagship for nationwide 'No Kings' protests against President Trump

ST. PAUL, Minn., March 28, (AP): Organizers of Saturday's "No Kings" rallies across the country are predicting that the protests against the actions of President Donald Trump and his administration could add up to one of the largest demonstrations in US history, with Minnesota taking center stage.

Organizers say more than 3,100 events have been registered in all 50 states, with more than 9 million people expected to participate.

And they've designated the rally at the Minnesota Capitol in St. Paul as the national flagship event, in recognition of how the state where federal agents fatally shot two people who were monitoring Trump's immigration crackdown became an epicenter of resistance.

Headlining that observance will be Bruce Springsteen, performing "Streets of Minneapolis," which he wrote in response to the deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, and in tribute to the thousands of Minnesotans who took to the streets over the winter. Springsteen's Land of Hope & Dreams American Tour, which has a "No Kings" theme, kicks off Tuesday in Minneapolis.

Minnesota organizers have told state officials they expect 100,000 people could converge on the Capitol grounds, where last June's event drew an estimated 80,000 people.

The St. Paul rally will also feature



Protesters demonstrate against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after Renee Good, who was fatally shot by an ICE officer last week on Jan 12, 2026, in Minneapolis. (AP)

singer Joan Baez, actor Jane Fonda, Sen. Bernie Sanders and a long list of other activists, labor leaders and elected officials.

The White House dismissed the nationwide protests as the product of "leftist funding networks" with little real public support.

"The only people who care about these Trump Derangement Therapy Sessions are the reporters who are paid

to cover them," White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said in a statement.

Rallies are also planned in more than a dozen other countries, from Europe to Latin America to Australia, Ezra Levin, a co-executive director of Indivisible, a group spearheading the events, said in an interview. Countries with constitutional monarchies call the protests "No Tyrants," he said.

14-year-old running for gov first teen to get on Vermont general election ballot

STOWE, Vt., March 28, (AP): Looking back, gubernatorial candidate Dean Roy says his political ambitions started in the eighth grade. And by that he means, last year.

After working as a legislative page at the Vermont Statehouse, the 14-year-old freshman at Stowe High School now has his sights set on the corner office. In November, he'll be the first candidate for governor under age 18 to appear on the state's general election ballot.

"I don't expect necessarily to win," he said. "What I do expect is to start the movement, and get more young people to come in behind me and say, 'Yeah, we also want to make change.'"

Another eighth-grader, Ethan Sonneborn, sought the Democratic nomination for governor in 2018 but finished last in a four-way primary. Roy secured his spot in the general election by creating his own third party, the Freedom and Unity party. Both were able to run because the state constitution sets no minimum age for gubernatorial candidates, requiring only that candidates have resided in the state for four years.

"I know it sounds crazy, a 14-year-old running for governor, but honestly, look at the people in charge right now," Roy said in a



Legislative page Dean Roy is pictured with Vermont Lieutenant Governor John Rodgers on February 14, 2025, in Montpelier, Vermont. (AP)

post on his campaign's Instagram page. "They've been doing this forever and things still aren't working."

Nearly all other states set minimum age requirements for governor, often 30 years old. In Kansas, lawmakers added a requirement that gubernatorial candidates be at least 25 years old in 2018 after six teenagers ran for office.

Peter Teachout, a professor at Vermont Law and Graduate School, has a different take than Roy on Vermont's constitution. He points to a section in the document referring to what qualifies someone to be "entitled to the privileges of a voter," and that is that they must be 18 years of age. Even under Roy's interpretation, Teachout doesn't predict a win for the teenager.

'America's air travel system has reached its breaking point'

Trump signs order to pay TSA employees after Congress fails to agree on DHS funding

WASHINGTON, March 28, (AP): US President Donald Trump on Friday signed a promised executive action to pay Transportation Security Administration employees after a bid to end the shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security abruptly fell apart in Congress.

Trump signed the action with an eye toward easing long security lines at many of the nation's top airports.

"America's air travel system has reached its breaking point," Trump said in the memo authorizing the payments. He added, "I have determined that these circumstances constitute an emergency situation compromising the Nation's security."

Trump said his administration would use "funds that have a reasonable and logical nexus to TSA operations" for the payments. In a statement Friday, Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin said TSA workers "should begin seeing paychecks as early as Monday."

While Trump's action could help ease the plight of air travelers, it does little to resolve the DHS shutdown that has jammed airports and imposed financial hardship on thousands of

federal workers. The House and Senate ended the week by passing vastly different bills, creating a new impasse as lawmakers leave Washington for a two-week recess.

The shutdown of Homeland Security will reach 44 days on Sunday, eclipsing the record 43-day shutdown last fall that affected all of the federal government.

The Senate passed a funding deal early Friday, but blowback from House Republicans came quickly. House Speaker Mike Johnson, upon opening the chamber for business, accused Democrats of playing a dangerous game and said he needed to talk with fellow Republicans about how to proceed.

After a lengthy conference call, Johnson blasted the Senate's action and announced that the House would be going in a different route. "This gambit that was done last night is a joke," Johnson said.

Instead, the House on Friday night passed a bill to fund the entire department through May 22. The vote was 213-203. Johnson said he had spoken with Trump about the House Republican plan and the president supported it.



Transportation Security Administration (TSA) workers check in travelers at Philadelphia International Airport in Philadelphia on March 27. (AP)

House Republicans were livid that the bill passed by the Senate does not fund Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol. Democrats refused to fund those departments without changes to immigration enforcement practices.

"We're going to do something different," Johnson said. He challenged the Senate to take up the House's short-term fix to fund Homeland Security to May.

But senators left town after voting to fund most of DHS, so it would take

time for them to return once the House passes a different measure. And even if they were to return, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer made clear the House GOP plan would be "dead on arrival in the Senate, and Republicans know it."

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said the Senate-passed bill would clear the House with Republican and Democratic votes if Johnson would allow it to be voted on.

"This could end, and should end, today," Jeffries said.

Senators worked through the night to approve a bill by voice vote that would fund much of Homeland Security, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Coast Guard and TSA.

Senate Republicans said they were disappointed by the lack of funding for ICE and Border Patrol, but noted that immigration enforcement has remained largely uninterrupted. That's because the GOP's big tax cuts bill that Trump signed into law last year funneled billions of dollars in extra funds to DHS, including \$75 billion for ICE operations.

Conservative Republicans, how-

ever, were against establishing a precedent that allows Congress during the yearly appropriations process to fund some agencies within Homeland Security, but not others.

"We will fully fund ICE. That is what this fight is about," Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Mo., said. "The border is closing. The next task is deportation."

Democrats have refused to provide funding for ICE and the Border Patrol after the deaths of two Americans protesting the sweeping immigration crackdown in Minneapolis.

They want federal agents to wear identification, remove their face masks and refrain from conducting raids around schools, churches or other sensitive places. Democrats have also pushed for an end of administrative warrants, insisting that judges sign off before agents search people's homes or private spaces - something Mullin, the new DHS secretary, said he is open to considering.

The rejection of the Senate deal creates a noticeable rift between Johnson and Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., who have mostly worked in tandem this Congress trying to enact Trump's agenda.

America

Tennessee school bus crash kills 2: A school bus crash in west Tennessee on Friday killed two students and injured at least seven other people, officials said.

The crash involving a Tennessee Department of Transportation dump truck, a Chevrolet Trailblazer and the school bus took place at about noon on Highway 70 in Carroll County, said Maj. Travis Plotzer, a spokesperson for the Tennessee Highway Patrol. Plotzer said details of the crash were still being sorted out, but it appeared that the transportation department dump truck did not contribute to the crash itself.

Plotzer said there were a total of 25 students and five adults on the bus. The school bus was carrying students and employees from Kenwood Middle School in Clarksville for a field trip to Jackson, Tennessee, the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System said in a statement. The cause of the crash was under investigation.

Plotzer announced the deaths of two students in the crash during a news conference. Officials said at least seven other people were taken by air ambulance to hospitals in Tennessee. The nature of their injuries was not immediately disclosed. Plotzer called the crash "a parent's worst nightmare." (AP)

3 killed in Hawaii helicopter crash: A sightseeing company's helicopter crashed near a remote beach off the coast of the Hawaiian island of Kauai, killing three people and injuring two others, authorities said. It was the latest in a series of fatal crashes that has plagued the industry for decades.

The helicopter was carrying one pilot and four passengers when it crashed Thursday afternoon just off Kalaheo Beach, the Kauai Fire Department said. The beach is on the Na Pali Coast on Kauai's North Shore, an area that is otherwise reachable only by hiking or boat. The area's geography of tall seaside cliffs and sharp mountain ridges can contribute to turbulent air and quick weather changes that pose hazards for aviation.

Kauai Police Chief Rudy Tai said two of the people who died were Margaret Rimmler, 65, and Patrick Haskell, 59, both of Massachusetts. Notification of next of kin is pending for the third, he said. He declined to provide details on survivors' conditions.



This image taken from video shows emergency responders at the scene of a fatal school bus crash on March 27 in Carroll County, Tennessee. (AP)

At least 16 people have died in helicopter crashes in Hawaii in the past seven years, including two crashes in 2019. A skydiving plane crash in Hawaii that year killed 11 people; investigators blamed the pilot's aggressive takeoff.

Despite the frequency of fatal crashes, the industry is important to the economy, Kauai Mayor Derek Kawakami said at a news conference Friday. (AP)

Mississippi train-van collision kills 5: Five people were killed when a train and van collided in rural Mississippi, authorities said Friday.

All five killed were in the van, Stone County Coroner Wayne Flurry said. The lone surviving van passenger, a 23-year-old woman, was flown to a hospital, Flurry said. No one aboard the train was reported injured.

The crash occurred when a Canadian Pacific Kansas City freight train collided with a vehicle in a crossing, the railroad said in a statement. The location was near the town of Wiggins about 45 miles (72 kilometers) northwest of Biloxi.

The Stone County Sheriff's Office was investigating the crash, the company said.

"Our most sincere condolences go out to the families of the victims of this tragedy," the railroad company said.

The driver of the van, Ryan C. Peterson, 26, and the front seat passenger, Kristina Carver, 45, were among those killed, Flurry said. (AP)

Pope Leo XIV visits Monaco

MONACO, March 28, (AP): Pope Leo XIV urged residents of the cosmopolitan Mediterranean principality of Monaco on Saturday to use their wealth, influence and Catholic faith for good.

Leo made a one-day trip to the glitzy enclave, becoming the first pope to visit since Pope Paul III came in 1538. As a cannon boomed, Prince Albert and Princess Charlene met Leo at the Monaco heliport, just down the coast from the marina that is home to the megayachts of the rich and famous.

At the palace, members of the royal family stood in the courtyard waiting for Leo, the women dressed in black and with lace head coverings. Charlene wore white - a protocol privilege granted by the Vatican to Catholic royal sovereigns when meeting popes, known in diplomatic terms as "le privilege du blanc."

In his opening greeting from the palace balcony, Leo urged Monaco to use its wealth, influence and "gift of smallness" for good. It was important, he said, "especially at a historical moment when the display of power and the logic of oppression are harming the world and jeopardizing peace."

Speaking in French, Leo urged Monaco's people to use their faith and be "always ready to protect every human life with love, at any time and in any condition, so that no one is ever excluded from the table of fraternity."

Monaco is one of the few European countries where Catholicism is the official state religion. And Prince Albert recently refused a proposal to legalize abortion, citing the important role Catholicism plays in Monaco society.

Strikes kill 5 in Ukraine, as Zelenskyy visits Gulf Arab states to talk drone defense

KYIV, Ukraine, March 28, (AP): Russia launched over 270 drones at Ukraine overnight, killing at least five people, Ukrainian authorities reported on Saturday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, meanwhile, made unannounced visits to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, as Kyiv seeks to use its drone expertise to help Gulf Arab states blunt Iran's attacks as the war in the Middle East rages on.

Two people were killed and at least 11 more were injured in a nighttime Russian drone strike on Odesa, according to the head of the region, Serhii Lysak. According to Lysak's Telegram posts, the attack damaged a maternity hospital and private houses in the major Black Sea port city.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that the "massive" strike involved more than 600 drones.

"Last night, the Russians launched a massive strike on Odesa. There was no military purpose whatsoever - this was pure terror against ordinary civilian life," he said Saturday on X. He added that port and "critical" infrastructure were also damaged, as well as business premises.

Two men died and two more were wounded early on Saturday in Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy's hometown in central Ukraine, after a Russian drone hit an industrial facility, regional head Oleksandr Gandzha said in a Telegram update. He did not specify what the industrial building was.



This photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service shows a residential building after a Russian drone attack in Odesa, Ukraine on March 28. (AP)

One person was killed overnight in the Poltava region, also in central Ukraine, as Russia struck unspecified industrial sites there, regional authorities reported on Saturday.

According to Ukraine's air force, Russia launched 273 drones at Ukraine during the night, 252 of which were downed or electronically jammed.

Also on Saturday, Zelenskyy and Emirati state media reported on a meeting between the Ukrainian President and his Emirati counterpart, Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to discuss regional security amid the Iran war.

Later that day, Zelenskyy posted on X to say he had arrived in Qatar.

"Real security is built on partnership, we value everyone and remain open to supporting all those who are ready to work together for this goal," he wrote alongside a video of himself disembarking a plane and shaking hands with Qatari officials.

The war in the Middle East erupted a month ago when the United States and Israel attacked Iran.

Europe

Severe weather in Balkan countries: Stormy winds, rain and snow closed schools and left thousands of people without electricity on Friday in parts of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia. Bad weather also snarled traffic and blocked roads in the region.

Authorities issued weather alerts for dozens of municipalities in northern and north-western Slovenia as wind speeds reached 141 kph (87 mph) in some areas, public broadcaster RTV SLO reported.

A number of roads in the area were blocked with fallen trees as emergency crews worked through the night to clear the debris.

More than 15,000 people have been left without electricity in the affected areas. The RTV SLO report said "wintry" conditions, with snow have been reported even in some lower parts of the Alpine nation, in the south.

In neighboring Croatia, winds swept through the capital of Zagreb on Thursday afternoon and overnight, crashing trees, damaging city tram lines and roofs. Authorities there also suspended classes Friday in primary and secondary schools because of bad weather and persistent wind.



Tomasevic

Zagreb's mayor Tomislav Tomasevic urged residents to stay indoors to avoid the possible danger from flying debris. City authorities said several people were slightly injured. (AP)

Fire breaks out in Netherlands: A large fire raged at a waste processor in the port area of Maastricht, the Netherlands, local media reported Saturday.

According to the local public broadcaster L1 News, emergency services were alerted around 5:30 am local time (0430 GMT), and the fire department classified the blaze as a major fire, signaling the need for additional firefighting capacity.

No injuries have been reported yet. (Xinhua)

14 taken to hospital after Hamburg bus crash: Fourteen people have been taken to hospital, including two in critical condition, after a bus veered off the road and crashed into a tree in Hamburg, Germany, police said.

In its latest press release, Hamburg police did not provide an exact number of casualties. However, German public broadcaster NDR reported that 21 people were injured, while news agency dpa said at least 16 were hurt.

According to police, the accident occurred at around 1:00 pm local time (1200 GMT). For reasons that remain unclear, the bus first struck two cars parked along the roadside before the driver lost control of the vehicle, which then crashed into a tree. (Xinhua)



From left: Crown Princess Gabriella, Princess Charlene of Monaco, Pope Leo XIV, Prince Albert II of Monaco, and Crown Prince Jacques pose for an official photograph at the Prince's Palace during Leo XIV's one-day pastoral visit to the Principality of Monaco on March 28. (AP)



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

Philippines president confirms ASEAN Summit to be held in May

MANILA, March 28, (Xinhua): Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos confirmed that the 48th ASEAN Leaders' Summit and Related Summits will be held in Cebu from May 8 to May 9, said local media on Friday.

According to the Philippine News Agency, Marcos made the announcement in Silang, Cavite, on Friday.

Marcos stated that, despite the ongoing oil crisis linked to the conflict

in the Middle East, ASEAN member states agreed that the meeting should proceed.

Marcos noted that discussions will center on the supply of petroleum and petroleum products, food supply and price, and migrant workers. However, he said that the summit will be scaled down into a meeting he described as "bare-bones."

The Philippines holds the ASEAN Chairmanship for 2026.

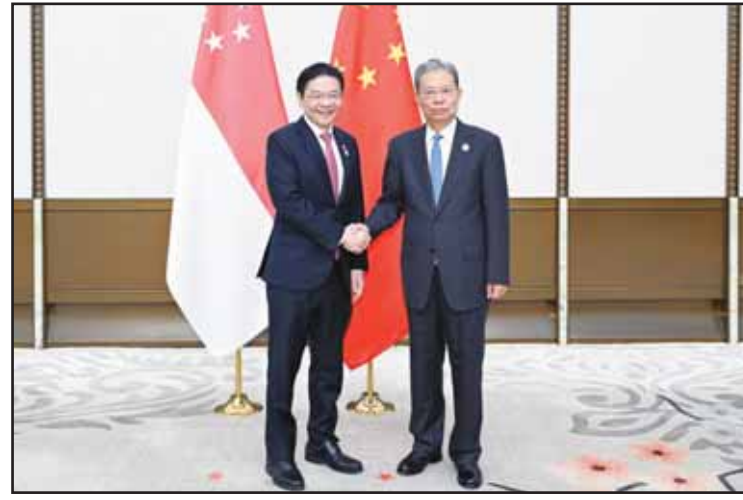
China's top legislator meets Singapore prime minister and Sri Lanka's parliament speaker

BOAO, Hainan, March 28, (Xinhua): China's top legislator Zhao Leji met separately with Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and Sri Lanka Parliament Speaker Jagath Wickramaratne, who were in Boao, south China's Hainan Province, to attend the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2026.

When meeting with Wong, Zhao, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, said China is ready to work with Singapore to strengthen the political foundation of bilateral relations, deepen high-level cooperation in economy, trade, technology, people-to-people exchanges and legislation, jointly uphold international fairness and justice, and contribute to peace and prosperity in the region and the world.

Wong reaffirmed Singapore's commitment to the one-China policy and its opposition to "Taiwan independence," and expressed willingness to expand cooperation in areas including the economy, free trade port development, emerging sectors, legislation and people-to-people exchanges.

When meeting with Wickramaratne, Zhao said China is willing to align its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) with Sri Lanka's development strategies and deepen Belt and Road cooperation.



Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, meets with Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, who is in China for the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2026, in Boao, south China's Hainan Province, March 26. (Xinhua)

Wickramaratne stressed Sri Lanka's firm adherence to the one-China policy and expressed gratitude for China's long-term support, adding that Sri Lanka's parliament looks forward to enhancing exchanges with the NPC to advance bilateral friendship and cooperation.

Also:

CAPE TOWN: Chinese Vice President Han Zheng met with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa here on Wednesday, with both sides pledging to deepen bilateral cooperation and re-

lations.

Han conveyed Chinese President Xi Jinping's cordial greetings and best wishes to Ramaphosa. During his visit, Han and his South African counterpart Paul Mashatile will co-chair the ninth plenary session of the China-South Africa Bi-National Commission. They will, under the guidance of the important consensus reached by Xi and Ramaphosa, comprehensively review the achievements of cooperation in key areas between the two countries and systematically plan the direction and key tasks for the next stage, he said.

Han noted that China attaches great importance to its relations with South Africa and stands ready to work with the country to further advance the China-South Africa all-round strategic cooperative partnership in the new era established by the two heads of state.

As true friends who share weal and woe, he said, China and South Africa should continuously enhance political mutual trust, support each other on issues of their respective major concern, maintain the momentum of high-level exchanges, strengthen mutual learning between their ruling parties, and promote practical cooperation in a coordinated manner.



People stand behind a makeshift shelter after heavy rainfalls triggered landslides killing scores on March 26, 2026 in the Mbeya region of Tanzania Southern Highlands. (AP)

Landslides kill 20 in Tanzania

Landslides triggered by heavy rainfall have killed at least 20 people in southern Tanzania in recent days, authorities said, as the death toll from across the wider East African region continues to rise.

Rainfall and high winds caused landslides that destroyed houses early Wednesday in the Mbeya region, said Jafar Haniu, administrator for the Rungwe district where the landslides happened.

"The death toll now stands at 20,"

he told reporters. "One victim is a very young child, a year and a half old."

He said meteorologists predict more rainfall in the days ahead, and urged residents of landslide-prone areas to evacuate.

In neighboring Kenya, which experiences seasonal flooding each year, at least 88 people have been killed. Flooding events have affected 21 counties and at least two rivers have burst their banks since heavy rains started earlier this month. (AP)

Mexico's navy searches for 2 missing sailboats carrying 9 to Cuba with aid

MEXICO CITY, March 28, (AP): Mexico's Navy searched for a second day for two missing sailboats carrying nine people bound for Cuba with humanitarian aid, officials told The Associated Press on Friday.

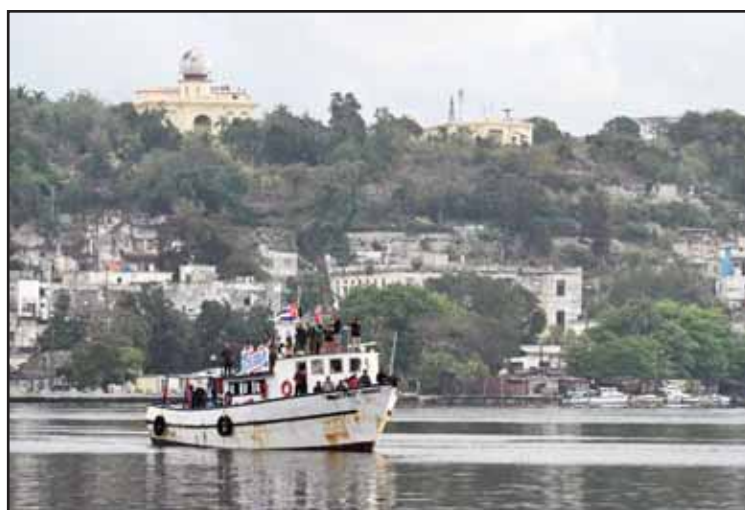
The announcement came after reports that the ships had been found by the U.S. Coast Guard. Mexican authorities said Thursday the vessels departed from Isla Mujeres in southern Mexico on March 20.

The disappearance comes as an increasing number of countries and aid organizations send shipments of aid to Cuba as a US fuel blockade causes crippling blackouts and pushes the Caribbean nation to the brink of collapse. The loss of contact with the vessels has fueled concern in Cuba, Mexico and beyond.

"From our country, we are doing everything possible in the search and rescue of these brothers in struggle," Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel wrote in a social media post on Friday.

Despite reports that the ships had been found by the U.S. Coast Guard, Mexico's Navy said authorities have received no communication or confirmation of the vessels' arrival in Cuba. The US Coast Guard told AP they were not involved in search efforts.

On Friday, the organization Nuestra America Convoy, said that based on



Activists wave Cuban and Palestinian flags from the vessel Maguro, arriving from Mexico with humanitarian aid as part of the 'Nuestra America,' or Our America convoy, in Havana Bay, Cuba on March 24. (AP)

the speed of the vessels reported to the Cuban maritime authorities, the window of arrival for the boats in Havana should be between Friday and Saturday. The organization made an open call for any information or sightings of the boats.

The captains and crews are experienced sailors, and both vessels are equipped with appropriate safety sys-

Mongolian parliament OKs prime minister's resignation

ULAN BATOR, March 28, (Xinhua): Mongolian parliament voted on Friday to accept the resignation of Prime Minister Gombojav Zandanshatar.

A total of 74 percent of the 73 lawmakers present at the plenary session of the 126-seat unicameral parliament voted in favor of approving his resignation.

The move came after Zandanshatar submitted his resignation letter at his own request to the governing board of the ruling Mongolian People's Party, which subsequently endorsed it earlier the same day.

Zandanshatar had been appointed to the position in June 2025.



Zandanshatar

Also:

VIENTIANE: The inaugural session of the Lao National Assem-

bly's 10th legislature concluded on Friday, with top leaders discussing and adopting key national priorities.

The closing ceremony, chaired by President of the Lao National Assembly Xaysomphone Phomvihane, was attended by Thongloun Sisoulith, general secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and president of Laos, along with other senior officials, according to Lao National TV on Friday.

The five-day session, held from Monday to Friday, marked the formal commencement of the new legislative term and a significant moment in the country's political calendar.

In his closing remarks, Xaysomphone said the session had officially launched the new term while addressing a wide range of key national issues. Proceedings began with a report from the National Election Committee on the outcome of the recent general elections, followed by the certification of elected members.



This photo released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) shows a shipwrecked boat on the shore of Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti, after it was used by migrants trying to cross the Bab el-Mandeb Strait from Djibouti to Yemen on March 24. (AP)

9 dead as boat capsizes off Djibouti

A boat packed with migrants capsized off the coast of Djibouti on the way to Yemen this week, the UN migration agency said Friday. At least nine people died and another 45 are missing after the shipwreck.

The tragedy was the latest in a series of shipwrecks between the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula that have over the past few years killed several thousand African migrants fleeing conflict and poverty in hopes of reaching

wealthy Gulf Arab countries. The boat had left from the Djibouti port town of Obock with more than 300 people were on board and was trying to cross the Bab el-Mandeb Strait when it went down on Tuesday, the International Organization for Migration said.

The Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Strait of Hormuz - Tehran's chokehold in the ongoing Iran war - are on opposite sides of the Arabian Peninsula. (AP)

Subcontinent

5 killed in Bangladesh train accident: Five people were crushed to death under the wheels of a train in Bangladesh's Tangail district, some 97 km away from the capital Dhaka, on Friday night, a local police official said Saturday.

Two others were seriously injured, said Mizanur Rahman, sub-inspector of Tangail Railway Station outpost.

According to the official, the accident occurred around 8:30 pm local time on Friday when a Dhaka-bound bus ran out of fuel and stopped by the roadside.

The driver and helper left to arrange fuel, leaving passengers waiting. Some passengers got off the bus and sat or walked along the nearby railway tracks and then a train coming from Dhaka ran over them, he said. (Xinhua)

Afghanistan landmine blast kills 2: Two children were killed and two others injured following a landmine explosion in eastern Afghanistan's Ghazni province, local media outlet Tolo news reported on Saturday.

The incident occurred in Khogyani district, where the children were struck by an explosive device, the report said. The injured were taken to a nearby medical facility for treatment.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance continue to pose a serious threat to civilians across Afghanistan despite ongoing clearance efforts. (Xinhua)



A woman weeps during a second mass funeral for victims killed in an airstrike that hit a drug rehabilitation center earlier this month, in Kabul, Afghanistan on March 26. (AP)

Pakistan resumes anti-terrorist op: Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that "Operation Gazab Lil Haq," a targeted military campaign against terrorist networks in Afghanistan, has resumed and will continue until its objectives are achieved.

The ministry's spokesperson, Tahir Andrabi, addressing a media briefing, said the operation is aimed at terrorist leadership, infrastructure, logistics networks, and facilitators operating within areas under the Afghan Taliban's control. (Xinhua)

Nepal police arrest former PM and former home minister over Sept protest deaths

KATHMANDU, Nepal, March 28, (Agencies): Police in Nepal arrested former Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli early Saturday over the deaths of dozens of people during violent protests in September that toppled the government and resulted in new elections.

Authorities arrested the powerful communist leader at his residence on the outskirts of the capital Kathmandu. They also arrested Ramesh Lekhak, the former home minister who has been accused of ordering authorities to fire on protesters.

Home Minister Sudan Gurung announced the arrests on social media. "No one is above the law. We have taken former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and former home minister Ramesh Lekhak under control," Gurung said. "This is not revenge against anyone, it is just the beginning of justice."

An investigation by a commission set up by the government called for punishment of up to 10 years in prison for Oli, Lekhak and the chief of police at the time of the protests.

Several trucks of police officers in riot gear conducted the arrests at the men's homes before taking them to the Kathmandu District Police office.

The arrests come a day after a new government headed by rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah took office following a landslide win in parliamentary election earlier this month by his Rastriya Swatantra Party.

Shah and Gurung have promised jus-



Nepal's former prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli is taken for procedural medical checkup after he was arrested by police in Kathmandu, Nepal on March 28. (AP)

the transition leading up to the election.

Also:

KATHMANDU: A helicopter with five passengers on board went missing in Nepal's Dolakha district on Friday, an official at the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal said.

The helicopter, operated by Mustang Helicopters and registered as 9N-ANO, was flying from Charikot to Lapcha when it lost contact.

The helicopter departed at 12:17 pm local time and was expected to reach its destination around 1:00 p.m.

Lat/Am

Brazil ex-prez Bolsonaro leaves hospital: Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro was discharged from a hospital in the capital on Friday to continue serving a 27-year sentence for a coup attempt at his residence in an upscale gated community.

The Supreme Court earlier in the week granted him the right of house imprisonment due to failing health. The measure could be revised within 90 days.

Bolsonaro left the hospital DF Star in Brasilia at around 10 a.m. local time and headed to the Jardim Botânico neighborhood, where he lived prior to his conviction with his wife, Michelle Bolsonaro, and his 15-year-old daughter, Laura.

The 71-year-old was hospitalized on March 13 for pneumonia, one of several health issues he has faced since he was stabbed by a man in 2018 before being elected president. He was put in intensive care for days due to kidney and inflammatory problems.

Bolsonaro governed between 2019 and 2022 and narrowly lost his reelection bid to current President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The former right-wing leader was accused of plotting with top aides to stay in office by decree despite the election loss, and was convicted of charges including attempted coup and attempted violent abolition of the democratic rule of law. He has denied wrongdoing and called the case a political witchhunt. (AP)



Bolsonaro

Chile school stabbing kills 1, injures 4: A stabbing at a school in northern Chile killed at least one person and injured four others on Friday, police said.

The attack occurred at about 10:40 a.m. local time at the Instituto Obispo Silva Lezaeta, located in the city of Calama, in the northern Antofagasta region.

A 12th grade student attacked three students and two members of school staff, Chile's national police force, the Carabineros, said in a statement.

Police also said that "upon the arrival of officers, the individual was subdued and detained."

The school was evacuated and classes were canceled. The attack resulted in the death of a 59-year-old school supervisor. No information on the conditions of the four injured was immediately available.

The attacker's identity and age was not immediately released, but Antofagasta governor Ricardo Diaz said that the assailant was a student. Diaz also said the student was carrying accelerant liquids, leading investigators to work on the hypothesis that the attack was premeditated. (AP)

Aircraft collision kills one in Ecuador: At least one person was killed and another injured after two light aircraft collided on Thursday in Pueblo Viejo canton, Ecuador's coastal province of Los Rios, according to the country's emergency response system.

Residents alerted authorities after hearing the impact and seeing a thick column of smoke rising from the crash site among a crop field. Emergency teams were deployed after the alert was received.

Local media reported that the planes were conducting crop-spraying operations. The cause of the accident remains under investigation. (Xinhua)

Oil barrel price up \$8.10 to \$118.93

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti oil price went up by USD 8.10 to reach USD 118.93 per barrel (pb) on Friday, compared with USD 110.83 pb the previous day, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Saturday. In international markets, Brent crude oil price rose by USD 4.56 to USD 112.57 pb, and West Texas crude went up by USD 5.16 to USD 99.64 pb.

Business

The EGM approved amendments to the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association

NBK shareholders approve the increase of authorized capital to KWD 1.5 billion



Hamad Al-Bahar, Isam Al-Sager, Shaikha Al-Bahar, and Salah Al-Fulaij during the Extraordinary General Assembly meeting.



Part of the audience.

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) held its Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) with a quorum representing 71.066% of shareholders, during which all agenda items were approved. Key resolutions included the increase of the Bank's authorized capital, in addition to amendments to several provisions of the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. This reflects shareholders' confidence in the Bank's strategy and future plans, as well as their commitment to supporting the strengthening of its financial position and its pursuit of growth opportunities.

During the EGM, shareholders approved an increase in the Bank's authorized capital from KWD 1 billion, distributed over 10 billion shares, to KWD 1.5 billion, distributed over 15 billion shares, with a nominal value of 100 fils per share, provided that the Board of Directors is authorized to increase the issued and fully paid-up capital within the limits of the authorized capital.

The EGM also authorized the Board of Directors to determine the amount and methods of the increase, the timing of its calls, and all related terms and conditions, as well as to manage any fractional shares resulting from the increase in the manner it deems appropriate.

- The Board of Directors is authorized to increase the issued and fully paid-up capital within the approved authorized capital ceiling
- Authority is delegated to the Board of Directors to determine the amount and structure of the increase, the timing of its calls, and all related terms and conditions

Shareholders further authorized the Board of Directors – other than in cases of capital increases for the purpose of issuing bonus shares distributed to shareholders – to impose a share premium on any capital increase or new subscription, determine its value to be added to the nominal value of the new shares, and engage any parties it deems appropriate to execute all or part of the foregoing, subject to fulfilling all requirements and obtaining the necessary approvals in accordance with applicable laws and the regulations and instructions of the relevant authorities.

Furthermore, the EGM approved amendments to Article Five (5) of both NBK's Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association to reflect the authorized capital following its approved increase. It also approved amendments to Article Forty-Nine (49)

of the Articles of Association governing annual appropriations to the statutory and voluntary reserves, as well as the 1% allocation of net profits to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences. These amendments are intended to provide the Board of Directors with greater flexibility in managing financial surpluses, including the ability to distribute interim cash dividends, provided that such distributions are made from realized profits in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and do not affect the Bank's paid-up capital.

These resolutions, approved by NBK's EGM, form part of the Bank's strategy to further strengthen its financial position and support the expansion of its operations, while maintaining full compliance with applicable regulatory requirements.

NBK had earlier convened its Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the financial year ended 31 December 2025 on March 14th during which all agenda items were approved. Key resolutions included the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 35 fils per share and bonus shares of 5% (five shares for every one hundred shares), reflecting the Bank's commitment to maximizing shareholder value, underpinned by the strength of its financial position and its ability to sustain strong performance while maintaining a robust capital base.

Other Voices

Oil prices: Fictitious numbers

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

With no oil movements, no lifting of crude oil, and no shipping sailing through the Arabian Gulf, major oil price publications are still quoting crude oil prices from the region at astronomical levels. The most striking example is the recent quotations for Arab Gulf crude, ranging from \$133 to \$160 for Oman crude, and \$146 for Kuwait crude, despite the fact that no crude oil is being lifted or loaded from Mina Al-Ahmadi.

Of course, there is a war ongoing in the Arabian Gulf, with attacks on Iran by the USA and Israel, which has halted the movement of crude oil, finished petroleum products, and gas from most loading terminals in the Gulf, including Kuwait. This has driven oil prices up, more than doubling them, with Brent crude exceeding \$111 a barrel.

How long will this war situation continue, causing disruptions to oil supply, fueling speculation, and contributing to global inflation? This will affect the cost of living for every household and could lead to a recession.

Today, the concern is over future tight supply and availability of finished products like jet fuel and diesel. Arabian Gulf refineries supply part of Europe with the required clean refined products, while most of their output goes to East of Suez markets, including Pakistan, India, South Korea, and Japan, which are the main outlets for Arabian

Gulf refineries.

With the Strait of Hormuz in its fourth week of disruption, pressure is growing daily. The halt of all oil shipments is creating tightness in the markets, which could force some countries to tap into their strategic reserves, if they have not already, potentially causing panic in some consuming markets.

The concern is that the war could widen, leading to a longer closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which could gradually cause shortages of oil and refined products and spread globally, creating panic and shortages worldwide. The Strait of Hormuz is controlled by Iran according to its own interests.

The navigational passage is free for all countries and does not belong to any single nation. It has been open for centuries. Now, Iran seeks to take control of the Arabian Gulf and impose fees for using and navigating the waters, which is unreasonable. It belongs to all and should remain free for everyone, without charges, duties, or fees. This is not the time to antagonize long-term friends and neighbors.

Today's high oil prices are unrealistic, with no transactions taking place at any level or volume. Quoting Kuwait crude at \$146 a barrel does not reflect actual sales. If no crude oil is sold at this price, it raises serious questions about the reliability of the source. With no oil tankers entering the Arabian Gulf, the figure of \$146 for Kuwait crude loading from Mina Al-Ahmadi is not real or practical. The number is fictitious, created by oil speculators.

□ □ □
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CBK affirms resilience of Kuwait's banking sector

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: The Central Bank of Kuwait affirmed that the Kuwaiti banking sector maintains strong regulatory indicators, which reflect its solid financial position, reports Al-Seyasah daily.

Financial soundness measures, including liquidity and capital adequacy ratios, exceed global averages and regulatory requirements by comfortable margins, demonstrating the strength of banks' financial positions and their continued ability to withstand various challenges.

This reinforces banks' ability to meet their obligations sustainably and continue providing bank-

ing services with high efficiency and reliability. The sector's resilience is a natural result of the prudent precautionary policies pursued over the past years.

In its ongoing monitoring of current geopolitical developments, the Central Bank of Kuwait confirmed that it has implemented a series of measures, including regulatory instructions and macroprudential policy tools, related to liquidity requirements and capital adequacy ratios. These measures aim to enhance the flexibility of the local banking sector, support economic activity, and maintain stability of the banking sector.

The measures include lowering liquidity standards applied to banks, such as the liquidity coverage ratio, net stable funding ratio, and regulatory liquidity ratio, as well as raising the maximum limits for cumulative gaps in the liquidity system, increasing the maximum lending limit, and releasing a portion of the precautionary capital buffer within the capital base.

The Central Bank emphasized its continued close monitoring of all economic indicators, vigilance regarding current geopolitical developments, and commitment to taking necessary actions to ensure the sustainability of local banking activity.

To redefine the investors' experience

Markaz launches 'iMarkaz Invest' online trading platform to boost digital investment experience

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" announced the launch of "iMarkaz Invest", a next-generation digital trading platform designed to enhance the client experience and expand access to financial markets in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the US through a secure, intuitive, and efficient digital interface.

The launch of "iMarkaz Invest" represents a key milestone in Markaz's ongoing digital transformation journey and reflects its proactive response to the rapid evolution of Kuwait's financial services landscape. As investor expectations shift toward seamless digital engagement and real-time access, Markaz continues to adapt by integrating advanced technology with its institutional investment expertise and governance standards.

"iMarkaz Invest" has been developed to empower investors with greater control, transparency, and flexibility in managing their portfolios. The platform provides seamless access to markets in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the US, as well as real-time market data and portfolio visibility, within a regulated and technology-driven environment, while maintaining the disciplined investment approach that has defined Markaz for over five decades. The simplified account opening process enhances accessibility, allowing investors to begin their investment journey faster and more efficiently.

Salman Olayan, Senior Vice



Salman Olayan

President – Strategic Planning, Digitization & Analytics at Markaz, said:

"The launch of 'iMarkaz Invest' reflects Markaz's focus on building digital solutions that are not only innovative, but also practical, secure, and intuitive for everyday use. The platform has been developed to offer a seamless user experience through a modern interface, efficient navigation, real-time visibility, and the speed required for today's investment decisions. Every aspect of the platform was designed to make the trading journey more accessible and responsive, while maintaining the reliability, security, and operational standards that our clients expect from Markaz."

Designed to work in harmony with Markaz's Wealth Management offerings, "iMarkaz Invest" creates a unified investment experience that blends self-directed digital capabilities with the option to access advisory expertise as clients' financial



Maryam Al Rifae

needs evolve. This integrated approach allows investors to navigate markets with confidence, supported by Markaz's research, insights, and long-standing investment discipline.

Maryam Al Rifae, Senior Vice President – Wealth Management and Business Development at Markaz, commented: "iMarkaz Invest" has been designed to elevate the client experience by providing straightforward digital access to a carefully selected group of markets that offer both strength and relevance for investors. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the US represent solid markets, combining regional significance with broader international investment potential. Through this platform, we are enabling clients to access these opportunities within a streamlined, trusted, and efficient environment that reflects Markaz's commitment to evolving alongside their needs."

The platform features a modern and intuitive interface, a real-time dashboard for monitoring holdings and

portfolio performance, streamlined digital onboarding for faster account opening, and access to both local and international markets. Users benefit from a robust technological infrastructure that prioritizes data security, operational resilience, and regulatory compliance, with dedicated resources available to assist and guide clients throughout trading hours, ensuring a seamless experience.

Integrated within Markaz's existing application ecosystem, the service is conveniently accessible through the current Markaz portal and mobile application, allowing clients to easily manage their investments from anywhere.

The launch also signals Markaz's broader ambition to continuously enhance its digital capabilities. Future enhancements will focus on expanding functionality, enriching data insights, and further integrating digital solutions across its service offerings, enabling clients to benefit from ongoing innovation aligned with global best practices.

By combining digital agility with institutional credibility, "Markaz" reinforces its position as a leading investment institution in Kuwait. The introduction of iMarkaz Invest reflects the company's ability to evolve with market trends, support the growing demand for self-directed investment solutions, and deliver long-term value through responsible and forward-looking innovation.

For more product information and related risks, please refer to markaz.com

ABK holds Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly Meetings for the financial year ended 31 December 2025



Chairman of ABK Group Talal Mohammed Reza Behbhani presides over the Annual Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly Meetings.

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) Group held its Annual Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly Meetings for the financial year ended 31 December 2025, with an attendance rate of 88.382% of shareholders.

The shareholders approved all agenda items, including the Group's financial statements for FY2025, the Board of Directors' report, the external auditors' report, and the distribution of cash dividends at 10% (10 fils per share) and 5% bonus shares (5 shares for every 100 shares).

Strong Financial Performance

On this occasion, Talal Mohammed Reza Behbhani, Chairman of ABK Group, said, "2025 marked another year of strong performance and continued progress across the Group's operations in Kuwait and its regional markets, including the UAE and Egypt."

He stated, "The Group reported net profit of KD 62.59 million for FY2025, representing growth of 19.42%, while earnings per share reached 22 fils, reflecting growth of 10%. Operating profit increased by 15.94% to KD 124.53 million. Total assets reached KD 6.93 billion, while customer deposits stood at KD 4.07 billion."

He added that the loan and advances portfolio reached KD 4.57 billion, while operating income increased by 10.32% to KD 221.47 million. The non-performing loan (NPL) ratio stood at a low 1.29%, with a strong coverage ratio of 366%.

Behbhani emphasised that the Bank continues to adopt proactive and prudent strategies to address economic challenges across local, regional, and global markets, ensuring the continued strength of its financial position, enhancing shareholder value, and reinforcing its leading position within the banking sector.

He further noted, "ABK continues to support Kuwait's national development plan by financing several major projects, including the Shagaya Renewable Energy Park and new residential developments, while continuing to support SMEs and entrepreneurs to help grow their businesses."

He also highlighted the Bank's readiness to capitalise on opportunities arising from new economic reforms aimed at stimulating economic activity in Kuwait and the wider region.

Capital Markets Activity

Behbhani noted that during 2025 the Bank successfully issued KD 30 million in Tier 2 capital bonds, which saw strong investor demand exceeding five times the offering size. The Bank also successfully launched a USD 500 million Certificate of Deposit programme, which was also well received by investors, reflecting ABK's growing reputation among the investment community.

Sustainability and Governance

Behbhani stressed that Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles remain central to ABK's strategy, reflecting the Bank's belief that long-term value creation requires balancing financial performance with economic, social, and environmental responsibility.

He added that the Bank continues to integrate ESG principles across its operations, activities, and investment decisions, while continuing to publish its annual Sustainability Report highlighting achievements across the organisation.

Ratings and Awards

Behbhani noted, "ABK maintained its strong



Talal Mohammed Reza Behbhani
ABK Chairman

"2025 marked another year of strong performance and continued progress across the Group's operations in Kuwait and its regional markets, including the UAE and Egypt."



Giel-Jan Van M. Der Tol, GCEO

"The Group's strong 2025 performance reflects its ability to adapt to market developments while maintaining a strong customer focus."



A section of the audience.

credit ratings of A (Fitch) and A2 (Moody's) with stable outlooks, reflecting confidence in the Bank's strategy, financial resilience, diversified funding base, and strong presence in Kuwait, the UAE, and Egypt."

He added that the Bank received 15 awards from international institutions in recognition of its excellence in digital transformation, retail banking, contact centre services, governance, and investor relations.

ABK Wealth Management

Behbhani also highlighted the integration of ABK Capitaland Private Banking under the ABK Wealth Management brand during 2025, a strategic move aimed at strengthening the Bank's wealth management capabilities locally, region-

ally, and internationally.

Strategic Priorities

On his part, Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol, Group Chief Executive Officer, said, "The Group's strong 2025 performance reflects its ability to adapt to market developments while maintaining a strong customer focus."

He noted the Bank's success in expanding its product portfolio, diversifying income streams, increasing market share, and attracting new customers. He added, "ABK continued to advance its digital transformation strategy during 2025, highlighted by the launch of a fully redesigned mobile banking application and the introduction of additional digital solutions providing secure and convenient banking services around the clock."

He further noted the continued development of the Bank's branch network across Kuwait in line with evolving banking industry trends. Van der Tol also highlighted the Bank's continued focus on innovation, developing products and services tailored to customer needs, and offering exclusive promotions through strategic partnerships across various sectors.

Regional Operations

Van der Tol noted that ABK-Egypt, ABK-UAE, and the DIFC branch which serves as the Group's international operations hub, continued to contribute significantly to the Group's financial performance.

ABK-Egypt's profits grew by 39% year-on-year to EGP 5.3 billion in 2025, continuing its growth trajectory since the Group's acquisition and strengthening its position within the Egyptian banking sector.

He continued, "In the UAE, the Bank successfully expanded its escrow services and became the first Kuwaiti bank in the GCC to receive approval from the Abu Dhabi Real Estate Centre (ADREC) to act as an escrow services agent."

Meanwhile, the DIFC branch successfully arranged several syndicated loan transactions during 2025, including a USD 1 billion 36-month syndicated facility involving 20 international investors.

The branch also successfully closed a second Asian syndicated loan facility to refinance a USD 600 million term loan originally arranged in 2022. The transaction closed at USD 650 million with participation from 17 international investors, reflecting strong global confidence in ABK's financial strength.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Van der Tol added, "ABK continued to strengthen its corporate social responsibility programme through sponsorship of sports, health, educational, environmental, and cultural initiatives. The Bank also continued promoting financial literacy among students and supporting the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association, where ABK was recognised among the campaign's leading supporting banks."

Investing in Talent and Future Plans

Van der Tol concluded by emphasising the Group's continued investment in employee development, strengthening female representation, and fostering an attractive work environment for talent across all levels.

He reaffirmed, "ABK Group remains committed to executing its strategy to further strengthen its position across the banking sector."

Appreciation

The Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer thanked the regulatory authorities, including the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Kuwait Clearing Company, Boursa Kuwait, the Central Bank of Egypt, the Central Bank of the UAE, and Dubai Financial Services Authority for their continued support of ABK and the banking sector.

They also thanked the executive management team and employees for their efforts in sustaining profitability and reaffirmed ABK's commitment to delivering sustainable value to shareholders, customers, and stakeholders.

BUSINESS

Kuwait Airways to restart Istanbul service via Dammam from April 1

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): The Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) announced Friday the resumption of its commercial flights to and from the Turkish city of Istanbul via the Saudi Dammam Airport, with two flights per week on Wednesdays and Fridays, as of April 1.

The KAC continues to carry out its operational plans with high efficiency to ensure smooth travel movement, the company's Acting Chief Executive Officer Abdulwahab Al-Shatti told KUNA.

He affirmed that the company adopts a flexible approach that keeps pace with operational changes and enhances the readiness of services offered to passengers.

Over the past period, the company worked ac-

curately on preparing all potential available to start receiving travel requests and then providing flights to travellers for certain destinations, he noted.

The company also provided a service of submitting a visa request for residents to Saudi Arabia provided that they have a prior booking on Kuwait Airways flights, he elaborated.

There is also a limousine service provided by the company for Royal and Business Class passengers to and from Al Khiran Mall only, and for Economy Class passengers at specified rates as well, in accordance with the service's terms and conditions, he stated.

Passengers will be received at Al Khiran Mall lounge 24 hours before the scheduled departure,

and buses heading to the land border crossing will depart 8 hours before the flight's departure from Dammam Airport, he explained.

Al-Shatti stated that passengers wishing to travel via their private vehicles can complete travel procedures at Al Khiran Mall or at the company's sales office located in the Sabah Al-Salem area.

Then they proceed to Dammam Airport to check in their baggage three hours before the scheduled departure time, and the final check-in deadline is one hour before departure, he said.

The Kuwait Airways booking is available for passengers wishing to travel through the customer service call center at 171, via WhatsApp at 009651802050, as well as through the company's sales offices, Al-Shatti concluded.



Abdulwahab Al-Shatti

Jazeera Airways relaunches Jeddah service

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): Jazeera Airways announced on Saturday that commercial flights to and from Jeddah via Al-Qaisumah Airport in Saudi Arabia will be resumed, with three weekly flights starting from April 7.

Jazeera CEO Barathan Pasupathi told KUNA that the flights will be resuming on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, explaining that this reflects the company's commitment

to connecting Kuwait and main destinations during the current situation.

Pasupathi added that the Jeddah destination is a main gateway in Saudi Arabia, serving a wide segment of travelers who have cultural, economic, and religious ties, as well as continuing transport of essential goods.

He stated that after the company's flights started operating from Dammam and Al-Qaisumah airports,

Jazeera Airways serves more than 1,000 flights to about 25 destinations, in addition to a large air cargo capacity until April 30.

Travelers can book their flights through the Jazeera Airways website or via the company's mobile application, urging all travelers to check the latest travel requirements, including transit visas through Saudi Arabia, and updates before their flight dates, he pointed out.

Jazeera Airways expands Dammam routes

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): Jazeera Airways announced Friday that it is resuming its commercial flights from Tbilisi, Georgia and Egypt's Sharm El-Sheikh and Hurgada to Dammam Airport in Saudi Arabia within two weekly flights for each destination starting from April 15.

CEO Barathan Pasupathi told KUNA that flights to Tbilisi and Hurgada are on Mondays and Thursdays weekly, while flights to Sharm El-Sheikh are on Wednesdays and Sunday weekly.

He added that ticket prices in Tbilisi start from KD 250 (about USD

811.9), KD 190 in Sharm El-Sheikh (about USD 617.5), and KD 220 in Hurgada (about USD 714.6).

Pasupathi explained that the Tbilisi destination allows access to the wider Caucasus region, which includes both Armenia and Azerbaijan, adding that the company is preparing to reoperate in previous areas including Egypt and India before the current regional situation.

He mentioned that following the flights from Dammam and Al-Qaisumah airports, Jazeera Airways serves more than 1,000 flights to about 25 destinations, in addition to the ability to transport more than two

million tons of essential goods until April 30.

Travelers can book their flights through the Jazeera Airways website or via the company's mobile application, urging all travelers to check the latest travel requirements and updates before their flight dates, he added.

In a similar statement, Georgia's Ambassador to Kuwait Noshrevan Lomtadize said to KUNA that this step strengthens the ties between the two countries, and ensures their continuity, expressing his welcome for the return of Jazeera Airways flights to Tbilisi.

Jazeera Airways relinks Kuwait-Karachi route

KUWAIT CITY, March 28, (KUNA): Jazeera Airways company declared Friday that it would start again its commercial flights to and from Karachi as of April 7, with two flights per week - on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Speaking to KUNA, CEO of Jazeera Airways Barathan Pasupathi said the Karachi destination is part of the company's role in maintaining the continuation of travel movement to and from Kuwait during this exceptional phase.

Karachi is one of the largest cit-

ies in Pakistan and a main economic hub, he added, noting that resuming this destination contributes to providing smooth travel options for passengers wishing to re-unite with their families and follow their business.

The company has fully restored its flight network to Pakistan as it was before the temporary suspension of operations at Kuwait airport, he mentioned.

Jazeera Airways, with flights from Dammam and Qaisumah airports, depends on an integrated travel model

combining ground and air transportation to maintain the continuation of its operations and expand connectivity across its network during operational challenges, he said.

Pasupathi lauded continued support of the relevant authorities in both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia that helped Jazeera Airways to provide this connectivity between Kuwait and the world, affirming the company's commitment to backing societies and ensuring continuity of passengers' movement and goods through its growing network.

Investigations could last up to 9 months

China investigates US trade measures

BEIJING, March 28, (AP): China launched two investigations into U.S. trade practices on Friday, signaling its resolve to push back against President Donald Trump's tariffs ahead of his visit in May.

The Commerce Ministry said the new probes are a response to two investigations announced by Trump earlier this month against multiple countries, including China.

A ministry statement said the two Chinese investigations were launched to safeguard the interests of relevant Chinese industries and expressed "firm opposition" to the American probes.

One will examine U.S. policies that restrict Chinese goods from entering the United States and that limit U.S. export of advanced technol-

ogy products to China. The other is focused on barriers to Chinese green energy exports.

The probes are expected to take six months and could be extended for another three months if necessary, the ministry said.

The Chinese investigations are the latest volley in a long-running trade war and could be bargaining chips to counter any possible new U.S. tariffs.

The U.S. Supreme Court struck down some of Trump's earlier tariffs, and he responded by launching what are known as Section 301 trade investigations.

One of those investigations is examining allegations of excess industrial capacity - which can drive up exports - and government subsidies that could give companies in China

and elsewhere an unfair advantage over U.S. competitors.

The probe, which targets 16 trading partners, including the European Union, could lead to higher tariffs on imports from those economies.

The other investigation, into dozens of countries, including China, could ban the import of goods made by forced labor.

China's trade representative warned at recent talks with the U.S. in Paris that the U.S. investigations could threaten a hard-won stability in economic relations between the two countries.

The talks were meant to lay the groundwork for a Trump visit to Beijing, initially due next week. The U.S. president has delayed the trip because of the war in Iran.

Trump says gas tax suspension is 'in our pocket' if needed

As fuel prices rise, US lawmakers push to suspend the federal gas tax

WASHINGTON, March 28, (AP): As the war in Iran pushes U.S. gas prices toward \$4 a gallon nationally, some lawmakers are pushing to suspend the federal gasoline tax in the latest attempt to try to control surging energy costs.

Lawmakers say the action would provide much-needed relief for families and businesses that rely on their cars and trucks to get to work and school and run everyday errands.

Asked about the gas tax at a Cabinet meeting Thursday, President Donald Trump said he has "thought about" suspending it but suggested states should consider suspending their fuel taxes.

"People have talked about" a gas tax suspension, Trump said. "It's something we have in our pocket if we think it's necessary."

As gas prices have spiked, the Trump administration has released millions of barrels of oil from the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve and temporarily lifted sanctions on some Russian and Iranian oil shipments already at sea. The U.S. is negotiating with countries reliant on Middle East crude to join a coalition to police the Strait of Hormuz, where about one-fifth of the world's traded oil normally flows.

Here's a look at what a gas tax holiday is and its potential impacts. A gas tax holiday is a temporary suspension of the federal gas tax, currently set at 18.4 cents per gallon on gasoline and 24.4 cents per gallon on diesel fuel. That does not include state taxes, which often are higher.

The tax provides more than \$23 billion per year in revenue for federal highway and public transit programs.

The president cannot suspend the federal tax on his own. Congress would have to approve the move.

Both the House and Senate are controlled by Republicans, and bills on the issue are unlikely to advance unless Trump signals his support.

Rising gas prices are putting renewed pressure on household finances, especially for low- and middle-income Americans who have less flexibility to absorb higher transportation costs. The increases can influence

how much people drive, where they travel and how they spend money on other things.

"Trump's war of choice with Iran is driving up gas prices across the country - and Americans shouldn't have to bear the additional economic burden of Trump's reckless decision making," said Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat who co-sponsored the Gas Prices Relief Act with fellow Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona.

The bill would suspend the tax through Oct. 1. A similar measure was sponsored in the House by Democratic Rep. Chris Pappas of New Hampshire.

The gasoline tax is the single largest source of revenue for federal highway and public transit programs.

While the House and Senate bills would offset any lost Highway Trust Fund revenue with general funds, the tax suspension could raise the federal deficit and jeopardize the long-term sustainability of investments for highway and public transit programs, according to the American Road & Transportation Builders Association, which represents the transportation construction industry.

The group cites studies showing that many retailers do not pass on the full amount of the gas tax reduction to consumers. Research also suggests that state and federal gas taxes are just one component of a complex pricing scheme that includes the global price of oil and other factors, the group said.

Some states are taking action to lower the gas tax. Georgia Republican Gov. Brian Kemp on March 20 signed into law a 60-day suspension of the state's 33-cents-per-gallon tax on gas and 37-cents-per-gallon tax on diesel.

The law was supported by both Republicans and Democrats. Kemp said he wanted to "return taxpayer money where it belongs, in the pockets of hardworking Georgians."

Early results are positive for Georgia drivers. It takes a few days or

Postponed draws begin April 8

Gulf Bank resumes Al Danah Millionaire Account draws, announces 272 winners

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: Following the successful completion of all regulatory requirements and upon receiving the necessary approval from the Central Bank of Kuwait, Gulf Bank has announced the resumption of the Al Danah Millionaire Account draws, reaffirming its longstanding role in creating millionaires and delivering value-driven banking experiences in the State of Kuwait.

As part of this resumption, the Bank will announce a total of 272 winners within the deferred draws for the year 2025, with a combined prize value of approximately KD 3.3 million. This step underscores Gulf Bank's continued commitment to transparency, customer trust, and adherence to regulatory frameworks governing prize-linked savings products.

According to the approved draw schedule, the deferred draws will be conducted over the course of one week, starting on April 8 with the announcement of the 270 winners of the monthly draws, each receiving a cash prize of KD 1,000. This will be followed by the announcement of the KD 1,000,000 prize winner. The process will conclude with the announcement of the winner of the annual grand prize valued at KD 2,000,000, which is officially recognized by Guinness World Records as the largest cash prize linked to a bank account globally.

Commenting on the resumption, Faisal AlAdsani, Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Gulf Bank, stated: "The resumption of the Al Danah Millionaire Account draws comes after full compliance with all regulatory requirements and the instructions issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait. We are pleased to once again fulfill our role in rewarding our customers and supporting their aspirations, in recognition of the trust they continue to place in Gulf Bank."

He added: "In preparation for the resumption of the draws, Gulf Bank has further enhanced its draw mechanisms in line with international best practices, ensuring the highest levels of accuracy, security, and integrity. All draws are conducted under the supervision of independent external auditors, reflecting our firm commitment to strong governance and transparency. The Bank has appointed RSM as its external auditor, in addition to another independent firm mandated to review and audit all banking sector draws."

For her part, Najla Aleisa, Chief Marketing Officer at Gulf Bank, said: "The resumption of the Al Danah Millionaire Account draws represents an important milestone for Gulf Bank, not only in terms of the product itself, but also in reinforcing the strength of our relationship with our customers. We extend our sincere appreciation to our custom-



Faisal AlAdsani



Najla Aleisa

- Total prize value amounts to approximately KD 3.3 million, including the world's largest cash prize linked to a bank account, valued at KD 2 million
- Draws are conducted under the supervision of independent external auditors, in line with the highest standards of governance, transparency, and regulatory compliance
- Faisal AlAdsani: We are pleased to resume our role in rewarding our customers and fulfilling their aspirations in appreciation of their continued trust
- Najla Aleisa: Our customers' trust remains the cornerstone of all our initiatives and long-term commitments



ers for their patience and continued trust during the period in which the draws were suspended- trust that we deeply value and regard as a responsibility we are committed to honoring and strengthening."

She further noted: "As part of our commitment to transparency and customer engagement, all Al Danah Millionaire Account draws will be live-streamed across Gulf Bank's official social media channels. This enables customers and the wider public to follow the draws in real time and enhances confidence in the draw process, while allowing customers to see first-hand whether they are among the winners."

AlAdsani concluded by saying: "We would like to express our sincere thanks to all customers who reaffirmed their confidence in Gulf Bank by maintaining their ac-

counts and balances throughout the draw suspension period. Their loyalty and trust are highly valued and continue to motivate us to deliver meaningful and responsible banking initiatives."

Gulf Bank clarified that all deferred draws will be conducted in accordance with the approved deposit and eligibility dates applicable to each draw. In the event that a customer wins while their account is closed, the customer will be required to reopen the account in order to receive the prize. The prize amount will be credited to the account in line with the applicable terms and conditions. For further details on the draw schedule, as well as the relevant terms and conditions, please visit the AlDanah Millionaire page on Gulf Bank's website e-gulfbank.com/AlDanah

more for the tax holiday to trickle through to pump prices, because wholesalers pay fuel taxes in the state. But while gas prices nationwide went up an average of 10 cents per gallon in the week that ended Thursday, they fell 15 cents a gallon in Georgia, according to motorist group AAA. On Friday, the state had the 13th-lowest average gas price among states at \$3.60 per gallon. Kansas was the lowest at \$3.27.

Several states - including California, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland and Utah - have weighed gas tax holidays as a way to provide relief at the pump.

Connecticut Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont recently suggested a temporary suspension of the state's 25-cent-per-gallon tax on gasoline and 48.9-cent diesel tax, but it remains unclear whether it will happen. State officials are also discussing possible rebate checks for taxpayers to help blunt high energy costs.

Florida Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has supported past gas tax holidays, was skeptical that motorists would see real savings.

"Our ability to influence fuel prices are really marginal," DeSantis said at a bill signing ceremony this month, according to Politico. "Sometimes the prices get raised so the consumer doesn't see any difference. ... I think when we did it in the past ... I don't think the consumer really felt relief."

The top advice for drivers looking to save at the pump is to obey the speed limit and drive smoothly, according to Consumer Reports. Driving habits can play a significant role in fuel economy, the magazine says.

Driving at a steady 55 mph can increase fuel economy by 6 to 8 mpg, the publication said in a report that offered tips to get the most out of a tank of gas. "Speeding up from 55 to 75 mph is like moving from a compact car to a large SUV," the article said.

Beyond fuel concerns, speeding also is a safety risk. And drivers should avoid hard acceleration and braking whenever possible, and skip premium gas if their cars allow it, the magazine said.



An Oscar statue appears at the 91st Academy Awards Nominees Luncheon, Feb. 4, 2019, in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)

Telecast shifts to YouTube

End of an era: Oscars are leaving Hollywood

LOS ANGELES, March 28, (AP): The Oscars are leaving Hollywood.

In 2029, the year the telecast moves from ABC to YouTube, the ceremony itself will move from its longtime home at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood to downtown Los Angeles and the Peacock Theater, 9 miles (14.5 kilometers) away. The Academy announced Thursday that it has reached a 10-year agreement with AEG, which operates the L.A. Live complex where the Peacock Theater sits.

It's a surprising move, given that the Dolby was developed by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences itself, expressly as a home for the Oscars. The ceremony has been held there since 2002 (with the exception of the COVID-driven downsized show at Union Station in 2021) and has provided an especially steady home for the Oscars, which have never stayed in a single venue for such a long stretch. The awards bounced between various L.A. hotels in its early years, before moving up to theaters in the mid-1940s.

The downtown Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, a fine arts facility that is home to the LA Opera, became heavily identified with the Oscars when it hosted the ceremony from 1968 to 1986. The ceremony then alternated between the Chandler and the Shrine Auditorium, next to the University of Southern California, until the long-term move to Hollywood.

The Dolby will continue to host the show as it airs in its final years on ABC, concluding with the 100th Academy Awards in 2028.

The Peacock Theater is next to the Crypto.com Arena, home to the Los Angeles Lakers and Kings. The theater has hosted the Emmy Awards nearly every year since 2008 and, in recent years, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremonies.

The academy says in its announcement that, under its agreement, AEG will make major upgrades to the theater and its tech setup, and will "collaborate closely with the Academy to incorporate bespoke design elements needed to accommodate the Oscars ceremony."

The Peacock Theater, previously known as the Nokia Theatre and Microsoft Theater, opened in 2007, as the then-Staples Center site expanded to become the L.A. Live entertainment complex. It hosted concerts from the Eagles and the Chicks to celebrate its opening.

The theater's capacity of about 7,000 is about twice that of the Dolby. And its plaza is bigger and more open-air than the Dolby's Ovation Hollywood complex, which has more of an enclosed shopping mall feeling. Like Hollywood, L.A. Live also has multiple hotels, essential to the logistics of the Oscars.

And there is a cinema at the site, though its Regal theaters multiplex lacks the historic patina of the TCL (formerly Grauman's) Chinese Theatre next to the Dolby on Hollywood Boulevard.

"For the 101st Oscars and beyond, the Academy looks forward to closely collaborating with AEG to make L.A. LIVE the perfect backdrop for our global celebration of cinema," the academy's CEO Bill Kramer and its president, Lynette Howell Taylor, said in a joint statement.

WH denies recognition

Bill Maher to win Kennedy Center's Mark Twain prize

WASHINGTON, March 28, (AP): Bill Maher will win the prestigious Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, the Kennedy Center said Thursday, less than a week after the White House forcefully denied that the comedian,



Maher

who has had a hot-and-cold relationship with President Donald Trump, would win it.

"For nearly three decades, the Mark Twain Prize has celebrated some of the greatest minds in comedy," Roma Daravi, the Kennedy Center's vice president of public relations, said in a statement. "For even longer, Bill has been influencing American discourse - one politically incorrect joke at a time."

Maher said in a statement that he "just had the award explained to me, and apparently it's like an Emmy, except I win."

After The Atlantic reported last week that Maher would win the award, the White House pushed back hard. White House communications director Steven Cheung said on social media that the story was "literally Fake News." White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt also called the initial report "fake news" and said Maher "will not be getting this award."

An administration official who refused to speak on the record about the

award on Thursday said the situation changed after further conversations between the Kennedy Center and event organizers.

The Kennedy Center has presented the award since 1998 as a way to recognize those who have made significant contributions to humor and commentary in the United States. Previous winners include Conan O'Brien, Dave Chappelle, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, David Letterman, Carol Burnett and Tina Fey.

The award will be presented on June 28, just before Trump plans to close the Kennedy Center for renovations expected to last about two years. Since returning to office, the Republican president has wielded tremendous influence over the venue, ousting its previous leadership and replacing it with a handpicked board of trustees that named him chairman.

The board added Trump's name to the Kennedy Center and approved the closure, actions that have prompted legal proceedings that are ongoing.

Maher and the president have long had a fraught relationship.

Before he entered politics, Trump filed a \$5 million lawsuit against Maher in 2013 for breach of contract. Appearing on Jay Leno's "The Tonight Show," Maher said he would give \$5 million to the charity of Trump's choice if he could prove he was not "the spawn of his mother having sex with an orangutan."

Trump claimed that when he provided his birth certificate, Maher didn't pay up, prompting the lawsuit. Trump ended up dropping it.

S. Katz and Lisa J. Banks said in a statement.

Representatives for the Kennedy Center didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on the motion.

Redd, a drummer and vibraphone player who has toured with everyone from Dizzy Gillespie to Ray Brown, has presided over holiday "Jazz Jams" at the Kennedy Center since 2006. He called off last year's performance shortly after Trump's handpicked board at the Kennedy Center voted to add the president's name to the facility. (AP)

NEW YORK: New York City has ended its legal fight with producer Jordan McGraw, the son of TV's "Dr. Phil" McGraw, reaching a settlement Friday that clears the way for the release of a reality show he's making about the New York Police Department.

Under the agreement, the city will retain editorial control over the show, titled "Behind the Badge," after accusing

Jordan McGraw and his production company, McGraw Media, of trying to wrest it away. McGraw Media will provide "rough cuts" of episodes to the NYPD and will incorporate its edits into the finished version for the show, hosted by "Dr. Phil," a clinical psychologist turned TV personality.



McGraw

MILAN: Italian authorities have impounded 20 million euros

(\$23 million) worth of property, artworks and financial assets in and around Florence that were allegedly purchased with money stolen from original Bond girl Ursula Andress, Italy's financial police said in a statement on Thursday.

The seizures were the result of an investigation launched after Andress reported to Swiss authorities that she had been swindled out of assets by financial advisers.

The 90-year-old former Bond girl told Swiss newspaper Blick in January that she had been defrauded out of 18 million Swiss francs, approximately 20 million euros, by her longtime financial adviser over an eight-year period. The newspaper said the adviser had died in the meantime.

"I am still in shock," Andress was quoted as saying. "I was deliberately chosen as a victim. For eight years, I was courted and wooed. They lied to me shamelessly and exploited my goodwill in a perfidious, indeed criminal, way in order to take everything from me. They took advantage of my age." (AP)

'My joy will be my protest'

Savannah Guthrie to return to 'Today' show on April 6

LOS ANGELES, March 28, (AP): Savannah Guthrie, who will return on April 6 as co-host of NBC's "Today" show after a nearly two-month absence sparked by the disappearance of her 84-year-old mother, said in an interview that aired on Friday that "joy will be my protest."

Guthrie, speaking with colleague Hoda Kotb, said that while it's hard to imagine returning to a place of joy and lightness, she wants to try, even as she acknowledged she's not sure she can do it or if she'll belong anymore.

"I can't come back and try to be something that I'm not. But I can't not come back, because it's my family," Guthrie said. "I think it's part of my purpose right now. I want to smile and when I do, it will be real and my joy will be my protest. My joy will be my answer. And being there is joyful and when it's not, I'll say so."

Nancy Guthrie was reported missing from her Arizona home on Feb. 1. Authorities believe she was kidnapped, abducted or otherwise taken against her will. The FBI released surveillance videos of a masked man who was outside Guthrie's front door in Tucson on the night she vanished. Authorities have not released new evidence publicly in weeks.

The Guthrie family has offered a \$1 million reward for information leading to the recovery of their mother.

Savannah Guthrie, who's co-hosted NBC's morning show since 2012, pulled out of covering the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics, which began just days after her mother's disappearance.

Abductions are rare. The vast majority of people



Savannah Guthrie visits the Today show at Rockefeller Plaza in New York on Thursday, March 5. (AP)

who are reported missing are believed to be runaways - not kidnapped or abducted. Throughout all of 2024, the latest year that the National Crime Information Center published data, over 530,000 missing person records were entered. Roughly 95% of the hundreds of thousands of cases filed in 2024 were believed to be runaways and only 1% were listed as abducted.

Savannah Guthrie, acknowledging her mother is among the many missing, donated to the Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The organization on Thursday highlighted the cases of three children

who disappeared in Arizona - Jimmy Hendrickson in 1991, Karen Grajeda in 1996 and Jesse Florez in 2001.

"We encourage everyone to stay alert," the center said in a statement. "It's up to the public to keep their eyes open. You never know when the next lead will be the one that brings someone home."

The Pima County Sheriff's Office said Friday that tips are still coming in on Nancy Guthrie but at a declining rate. The FBI says it's no longer revealing the number of tips it receives daily in the investigation. Portions of Kotb's interview with Savannah Guthrie were released over multiple days this week. In the videos, Guthrie said she and her siblings knew their mother didn't wander off, given her medical condition, and that doors were propped open at her house. Authorities also discovered blood and a missing camera near the doorstep.

Some media outlets reported receiving ransom notes tied to the case. Guthrie and her siblings responded to two that they believed were real and offered to pay money. Guthrie said her celebrity status might be the reason her mother was taken, but that possibility was "too much to bear."

She again appealed for information, saying the family can't be in peace or move forward with healing without knowing what happened to their mother.

"How can someone vanish without a trace?" Guthrie asked. "How? Someone knows something. Even if that something is someone's been acting strange for the last seven or eight weeks. Even if it's just that. Somebody knows. And maybe somebody's afraid and I understand that, but our hearts are in agony."

Film



This image released by Janus Films shows Alexander Kuznetsov in a scene from 'Two Prosecutors.' (AP)

Loznitsa applies sober nonfiction lens to fiction

'Two Prosecutors' nails horror of state power

LOS ANGELES, March 28, (AP): Sergei Loznitsa's "Two Prosecutors" is a nightmare of government corruption so perfectly composed that, by the time it reaches its chilling conclusion, you feel nearly as entrapped as its young protagonist.

Alexander Korniyev (Aleksandr Kuznetsov) is a fresh-faced prosecutor who arrives at the Soviet prison in Bryansk in 1937. This is not, you might be thinking, where anyone new to the job should be in a rush to get to. Yet before even the news of his appointment has reached this penal outpost, Alexander turns up with a note, written in blood, from a prisoner he wishes to speak with.

That this note has reached Alexander is nearly as surprising to the prison warden as Alexander's unexpected presence in his office. The first scenes of "Two Prosecutors," where a pile of prisoner letters all attesting to brutality and injustice are burned, only hint at how the note has made its unlikely way to the prosecutor.

This is the height of Josef Stalin's Great Purge, when suspected dissenters and Bolsheviks were rounded up by the NKVD, the secret police, and sent to prison, to the gulag or to death. It was not exactly an opportune time for a young lawyer hardly out of college to stroll into the belly of Stalin's bureaucratic beast and start asking questions.

Where could such an intriguing idea for a story come from? A prisoner, himself. "Two Prosecu-

tors" is based on a novella by Georgy Demidov, a physician imprisoned for 14 years in Soviet labor camps. He wrote the book in 1969, but it wasn't published until 2009, posthumously.

Loznitsa, a leading Ukrainian filmmaker, is also not unfamiliar with Russian state violence. The director, who has lived in Berlin since 2001, is best known for stark documentaries about his native country (including 2024's "The Invasion" and 2014's "Maiden") as well as films about Stalinist Russia (2021's "State Funeral" and 2019's "The Trial"). The cast also includes several Russian actors, including Kuznetsov, who left their country after speaking out against Vladimir Putin's war with Ukraine.

"Two Prosecutors," which debuted last year in competition at the Cannes Film Festival, is Loznitsa's first fiction film in seven years. But the sober eye he brings to nonfiction is very much at work in "Two Prosecutors," a starkly drawn period drama of bleak absurdism.

Beyond any direct lines of connection between past and present, "Two Prosecutors" has the neatness and timelessness of a parable, one that Gogol might have written, and one that could resonate in any era where the naively courageous challenge fascism.

It's cunningly, even sinisterly structured. In the first half of the film, we follow Alexander's prolonged entry into the prison. It takes countless series of doors and locks to get through, and each step is watched suspiciously by stone-

faced guards. He's made to wait for hours and urged to reconsider. "Do you know where your predecessor is now?" he's asked. Every step forward for Alexander into the totalitarian maw is potentially one step further from his own freedom.

When he does finally, stubbornly reach the prisoner, the encounter is equally foreboding. I.S. Stepiak (a tremendous Aleksandr Filipenko) is himself a former prosecutor, a Bolshevik who vividly relates his story and details Stalin's crackdown. He isn't seeking personal justice; he wants the truth out. His bruised body is evidence.

Alexander, knowing local officials can't be trusted, immediately sets out to Moscow to make a report to the chief prosecutor. In the capital, he encounters just as many hallways and barriers to entry as he did in the prison; "Two Prisoners" is composed like a sinister palindrome.

Alexander's second passage through the layers of totalitarian bureaucracy goes similarly. He manages to get a meeting with the prosecutor, Andrey Vyshinsky (Anatoliy Belyi), but we long ago knew that Alexander's whistle blow is sure to fall on deaf ears, and he is unwittingly sealing his own fate. The walls are closing in on him.

"Two Prosecutors," a Janus Films release in theaters, is not rated by the Motion Picture Association. In Russian and Ukrainian, with subtitles. Running time: 118 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

Variety

WASHINGTON: Chuck Redd, the musician who canceled a Christmas Eve performance at the Kennedy Center in protest of President Donald Trump's influence over the venue, is asking a judge to dismiss a lawsuit the performing arts institution brought against him. In a motion filed in D.C. Superior Court on Friday, lawyers for Redd said the breach of contract suit should be dismissed because he wasn't contractually obligated to perform. The motion included the contract provided by the Kennedy Center, which the artist never signed.

But his lawyers argued there was more at stake than contract law, portraying the Kennedy Center's suit as an effort to intimidate artists. "The Trump Kennedy Center filed this lawsuit to send a message to anyone who dares to publicly disagree with the decisions of those in power," lawyers Debra

Conversations with children key to understanding screen time

Create best practices for your child's social media use

BATON ROUGE, La., March 28, (AP) - In a pivotal moment that underscored how powerful and immersive social platforms can be for children and teens, a jury in California this week found both Meta and YouTube liable for mental health harms to kids using their services.

The jury's decision in the first-of-its-kind lawsuit - centered on social media addiction - was applauded by doctors and advocates, who say they are hopeful it could eventually lead to industrywide changes.

"I am excited about the outcome of the litigation, in part because we've had basically seen these platforms sort of go unregulated for many years ... and they didn't really consider, that much, the effects on children," Carol Vidal, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins Children's Center, told The Associated Press.

Experts say this moment provides a renewed opportunity to rethink how families approach social media. Here is some guidance for parents on conversations to have with their children about social media and practices to protect them.

For many parents, battles over screen time, fears of online harm and difficulty pulling kids away from endlessly scrolling has become a part of navigating an increasingly digital childhood.

And while there are decades' worth of articles, research papers, podcasts and - yes - social media posts outlining tips, tricks and rules when it comes to kids' screen time, experts say the most helpful thing a parent can do is simply talk to their kids.

Asking children what they enjoy online, the type of influencers they are following, how they are engaging and how they are feeling about certain apps can reveal a lot about their online experience and be more impactful than setting rigid rules.



Zoe Kent edits a social media video on the TikTok app, Jan. 20, 2025, at her farm in Bucyrus, Ohio. (AP)

Jenny Radesky, the division director of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at the University of Michigan Medical School, said the best way to begin conversations is with open-ended questions and "leaving space for teens to share their opinion."

"By listening as a parent, it lets you peek under the hood to understand how your child is thinking about things. It's way easier to solve a tricky problem when you really understand your child's perspective, instead of just trying to force a new limit," Radesky said.

Among conversations starters, Radesky suggested asking kids about posts they are seeing - things they saw that they think are funny, entertaining, creepy, cool or frustrating. From there, parents can ask if their child is seeing things they dislike and how to address that, such as resetting their feed, only looking at content from their friends or taking a break from the platform.

But when it comes to social media boundaries, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Radesky said framing rules around a child's well-being and needs, rather than restrictions that can feel like a punishment, can help children better understand how to use social media in a healthy way.

"As the parent, you know your kid best," Radesky said. "You've seen their anxious days. You've seen those days when they're out of control. You know what really grabs their attention and what calms them down. So think of all of your solutions centered around who your kid is."

Experts say setting timers, designating "phone free zones" or even taking a multiday break from social media can be very useful.

"It helps teens be more intentional about getting what they want out of their phone or out of that social media site - not it turning into this mindless, 'Oh, I've got nothing else to do so I'll just keep scrolling,'" Radesky said.

Again, figuring out a child's specific needs, patterns of use and challenges is beneficial to finding solutions that work for them.

Is social media interfering with their sleep? Have them leave their phone downstairs at night. Are they scrolling for hours at a time? Set a 20-minute timer to notify them when to put their phone down. Do they turn to social media out of boredom? Maybe set aside one day every week to go do something as a family.

Is there a specific age when kids should be allowed to go on social media, is the age-old question.

Nearly all major social media platforms have a minimum age requirement of 13, primarily due to the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act that restricts data collection on younger children. However, enforcement is often limited as there's no easy way to verify

a person's age when they sign up for apps and online services.

Additionally, individual states have taken action to prohibit children - in some cases up to the age of 16 - from opening accounts without parental permission.

The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend social media under the age of 13; "That doesn't mean you need to start an account at age 13. Many kids benefit from waiting longer," Radesky said.

Beyond just signing up for social media platforms, there is a push among parents, educators and tech experts to hold off on giving children phones until they are older. Some parents have joined the "Wait Until 8th" movement, pledging not to give their kids a smartphone until the 8th grade, or about age 13 or 14.

When it comes to social media habits, experts say it is crucial that parents lead by example.

"The most powerful thing that parents can do is actually model good behaviors, because kids sometimes respond more to what they see than what they're told," Vidal said.

While being on a phone can be necessary at times, experts say it is helpful when parents explain why they are on their phone around their child. Instead of aimlessly scrolling, perhaps a parent is checking a work email, looking up a recipe for dinner or paying a bill.

Ultimately, if parents want their child to change their social media use, then they should partner with them. Vidal suggested utilizing the American Academy of Pediatrics' family media plan - a free online tool that creates recommendations for a person's social media use based on that specific individual.

"This is not just a problem that teens experience. The designs are in everyone's feeds and everyone's social media," Radesky said. "So try to make a change together."

iHeartRadio Music Awards



Miley Cyrus accepts the Innovator Award during the iHeartRadio Music Awards. (AP)



Alex Warren, winner of the awards for song of the year for 'Ordinary,' best new artist (pop), iHeartRadio Breakthrough Artist of the Year, and favorite debut album for 'You'll Be Alright, Kid,' poses in the press room during the iHeartRadio Music Awards. (AP)



Lainey Wilson performs a medley during the iHeartRadio Music Awards. (AP)



Ludacris (left) accepts the landmark award as Vin Diesel looks on from right. (AP)



Taylor Swift accepts the award for Pop Album of the Year during the iHeartRadio Music Awards on Thursday, March 26, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Raye performs during the iHeartRadio Music Awards. (AP)



Sombr poses with awards for best new artist (alternative), alternative album of the year for 'I Barely Know Her,' on the verge (pop) for 'Undressed,' and on the verge (alternative) for 'Back to Friends.' (AP)



John Mellencamp performs at the iHeartRadio Music Awards. (AP)



Kehlani accepts the award for 'R&B Song of the Year' for 'Folded.' (AP)

Singer says album feels like a new chapter post-prison

Fetty Wap has a lot to say on his new album 'Zavier'

Nobel laureate Han Kang honored in US

NEW YORK, March 28, (AP) - A novel by Nobel laureate Han Kang, Karen Hao's examination of artificial intelligence and OpenAI (the company behind ChatGPT) and a memoir by the author Arundhati Roy were among the winners Thursday of the annual National Book Critics Circle awards.



Han's "We Do Not Part," translated by e.yaewon and Paige Aniyah Morris, addresses a 1948-1949 uprising on Jeju, an island south of the Korean mainland, in which thousands of people were killed.

Heather Scott Partington, who chaired the awards' fiction committee, described the novel as "a work of blinding melancholy, bleak weather, and murmuring syntax" and said it "lingers like an atmospheric and arresting dream."

The lifetime achievement award went to author and journalist Frances FitzGerald, whose 1972 "Fire in the Lake" was an early and prescient take on the Vietnam War.

NEW YORK, March 28, (AP) - Fetty Wap is beaming so big, it is almost as if his smile enters the room before he does. And these days, the Paterson, New Jersey-born melodic rapper and singer has a lot to be happy about.

In January, he was released from federal prison to home confinement after serving just over half a six-year sentence for his role in a New York-based drug trafficking scheme. During that time, he thought about everything he missed: his family, his kids, the sound of a car engine as he drives, food - "I love to eat," he told The Associated Press - and, of course, music. He wasted no time jumping right back into it: His next album, "Zavier," arrived Friday.

He started working on it "as soon as I got released," he said. "Jan. 7, 2026."

And when did he finish? "Jan. 10, 2026," he laughed. "I had a lot to say. It's been a few years of holding things in there."

He estimates that he and his collaborators made 123 songs in total; 17 make the final list.

Less than a week after the artist born Willie Maxwell II dropped

"The Butterfly Effect," in 2021, he was indicted and arrested. He released his last album - 2023's "King Zoo" - while incarcerated. Because of that, "Zavier" feels like both a reintroduction and new chapter for him - a real opportunity to make an album truly his own for the first time in half a decade.

"Before, being incarcerated, I had to call when I could call, 15-minute calls," he recalls of working on "King Zoo." "After a certain time, the phone was off. So, it was just, like, 'I just hope it sounds good.'"

This time, he could be in the studio. He could be hands on. "That's my safe haven," he said. "The studio is my safe haven."

Those expecting a concept record about Fetty Wap's time behind bars would be wise to look elsewhere. "I didn't want it to be an emotional album," he says. "I didn't want it to be, like, 'OK, we get it. You were away. You're home now.' Where's the fun Fetty?"

Fun Fetty Wap abounds on "Zavier," as does a serious Fetty Wap, a lustful Fetty Wap, a tender Fetty Wap. It's "a lot of different sounds up in there," he says. "A lot of different areas to go to."



Fetty Wap poses for a portrait on Thursday, March 12, 2026, in New York. (AP)

The eclecticism works, largely because of Fetty Wap's unmistakable style.

"The whole 'Zavier' thing is just, like, bring back the same energy as the 'Fetty Wap' album," he continued, referencing his 2015 breakthrough record - the one that

brought the diamond-selling "Trap Queen" to the masses. "Just a more matured sound. ... 'Zavier' is just an upgraded Fetty Wap."

As for that name? "I'm Zavier," he said. "This is who I am. It's just a different side of me when I came home from prison."

If there is a song that encapsulates that time in Fetty Wap's life, it's "I Remember" featuring Chicago rapper G Herbo. It's as diaristic as a songwriter can be: a list of recollections from each stage of his life atop a minimal beat and spare guitar. He describes it as "an ode to the past and the present."

"I gave them a glimpse of what was going on with me. ... Pre-Fetty, then being Fetty Wap, and after Fetty Wap," he said. "Then prison, then coming home, you know what I mean? I put everything in that song."

But there is no shortage of what he calls "feel-good music." That's found in the NSFW-and-then-some R&B banger with Tink, "Nasty" - "Gotta get a little freaky," he says, smiling - and in all-star collaborations, including tracks with Wiz Khalifa, Honey Bxby and Max B, the last of whom was also released

from prison recently.

"I got the beat, and I'm like, 'I'm about to sound like Max B. I'm going to sound like Max B and then I'm gonna make Max B sound like the old Max B,'" he said about the song "BossDon." "But it worked."

He also looked toward his family for inspiration: Fetty Wap's sisters are featured on the throwback "White Roses."

"'White Roses' is actually my favorite track," says Fetty Wap. "I recorded everything exactly how I wanted it to sound. ... And then after it was done, I'm like, 'Something's missing.' I called my sisters. I was like, 'Yo, come to the studio.' They was like, 'What's up?' (I said) 'I need you to go in there.'"

They add doo-wop-style harmonies to the song, a romantic moment on "Zavier" and Fetty Wap's strongest vocal performance - melodic, with a controlled vibrato.

In whole, Fetty Wap hopes "Zavier" gives his audience a sense of "good energy, positivity," he said.

"I'm not looking for any type of, like, sympathy," he adds. "Just love the music, you know? And if you don't - let me know so I can make better music."

Toxic air particles pose serious respiratory, cardiac risks

Burning oil depots and debris unleash hidden health threats

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



By Armin Sorooshian
University of Arizona

The waves of Iran's missile and drone attacks on neighboring countries in response of US and Israeli bomb strikes in Tehran and Beirut are damaging more than buildings - they are sending toxic debris into the air in cities that are home to millions of people.

Military strikes have hit Iran's missile stockpiles, nuclear facilities and oil refineries. When a strike set fire to an oil depot, it sent toxic black clouds billowing over Tehran and created oily rain that settled on buildings, cars and people. Residents described having headaches and difficulty breathing.

As a chemical and environmental engineer who studies the behavior and effects of airborne particles, I have been following the damage reports to understand the health risks residents are facing as toxic materials get into the air. The risks come from many sources, from heavy metals in the munitions themselves to the materials sent airborne by what they blow apart.

A disaster's effects on air quality and public health depend in large part on what is being destroyed.

The terrorist attacks on New York City's World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, were localized, but they ejected massive bursts of pollutants into the air. These included gases such as volatile organic compounds and particulates - often called aerosols - containing a myriad of substances, such as dust, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, metals, asbestos and polychlorinated biphenyls.

These pollutants can harm the lungs, making breathing difficult, and worsen cardiovascular problems, contributing to heart attacks, among other health damage. Tiny particles



KUNA photo
Kuwait official inspects Kuwait International Airport during the recent fuel tank fire.

smaller than 2.5 micrometers, called PM2.5, are especially harmful because they can travel deep into the human respi-

ratory system. But larger particles can also bring major airborne health risks.

When buildings are heavily damaged or collapse, the rubble often contains crushed concrete, gypsum and carcinogenic fibrous materials, such as asbestos. Even after the initial dust settles, wind and other disturbances, including efforts to find survivors or clear the rubble, can send those materials back into the air, putting more people at risk.

Many rescue and recovery workers who responded to the World Trade Center collapse in 2001 developed chronic respiratory problems. That's also a risk for people searching for survivors in bombed buildings after military strikes and later when cleaning up the debris.

Fires create additional hazards as vehicles, buildings and the chemicals and other materials in them burn. The January 2025 fires in Los Angeles sent a stew of dangerous particles and gases into the lower atmosphere. Studies have shown how lead particles that fell to the ground were kicked back up into the air again where people could inhale them, along with other contaminants.

Military attacks degrade air quality in other ways. The Gaza Strip, Iraq, Kuwait, Ukraine and most recently Iran and surrounding countries have all faced extensive damage from munitions, which contain toxic materials. Bombs and artillery often contain explosives and heavy metals, such as lead and mercury, which also contaminate soil, water and the environment.

When oil storage facilities and pipelines are damaged, they emit an especially harmful cocktail of pollutants. This chemical blend includes airborne soot particles, which darken the sky and contribute to the "black rain" observed in Iran.

During the Gulf War in 1991, downwind countries experienced similar polluted rain as Kuwait's oil fields burned. The US Department of Defense found that the smoke plumes contained sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, among other gases and soot.

The severe consequences of environmental pollution dur-

ing was prompted the US National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine to publish a series of reports on Gulf War military veterans' health, starting in the early 2000s. They documented illnesses soldiers suffered after being exposed to chemicals and heavy metals, including from oil well fires. They also examined scientific evidence on potential associations between pollution in war and reproductive and developmental effects in the veterans' children.

Nature, including rain and wind, can help reduce the pollution levels in the air.

Rain helps pull particles out of the air, depositing them back on the ground and surfaces. The raindrops form around particles and also collect more particles as they fall. However, rain has occurred only sporadically since the military attacks began in Iran.

And rain also contributes to runoff into streams, and pollutants can damage crops and contaminate waterways, soil and vegetation.

Wind can help blow pollutants out of an area, though at the expense of downwind sites.

People in war zones, where they are already under stress, can reduce their health risks by staying indoors in the days after military attacks, if possible. Keeping windows and doors closed can help reduce the amount of polluted ambient air that comes inside.

Indoor air quality is just as important as the air outside. For example, infants crawling on floors can be exposed to deposited particles with toxic materials that are tracked in or blow in under sills and doors, similar to wildfire smoke exposure.

As buildings continue to smolder and clearing debris sends harmful particles back into the air, the pollutants can also contaminate agriculture and waterways. People can try to avoid crops, water and seafood that were likely to have been affected by toxic airborne pollutants. However, getting information about risks gets harder in a time of war, and scarcity can leave people with few choices. (AP)

Study shows potential to combat age-related memory loss

Vagus nerve stimulation may fight Alzheimer's

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



By Elizabeth Riley
Cornell University

Most people think of Alzheimer's disease as an illness of aging. But in fact, the brain changes that characterize it begin much earlier - sometime around the third decade of life.

In the earliest of these changes, a tangled version of a protein called tau starts building up in a tiny region deep in the brain involved in sleep, attention and alertness, called the locus coeruleus. Tau later spreads to the rest of the brain.

Developing tau tangles doesn't mean a person has Alzheimer's disease - in fact, it happens to nearly everyone to varying degrees. But because these changes start in the locus coeruleus, some brain researchers - myself included - see this area as a canary in the coal mine for developing Alzheimer's disease.

We are exploring whether stopping or slowing down tau tangles in this brain region, or otherwise maintaining its health, may be a way to interrupt how the disease ultimately unfolds and to prevent other aspects of cognitive aging.

Emerging research from my lab and others is investigating the idea that a therapy called vagus nerve stimulation, which is already widely used for other health conditions, could be one way of keeping the locus coeruleus functioning properly.

The locus coeruleus sits in the brain stem, the lowest part of the brain. Its name, "blue spot," comes from a pigment called neuromelanin that its cells



A doctor looks at PET brain scan at Banner Alzheimer's Institute in Phoenix on Aug. 14, 2018. (AP)

produce.

The locus coeruleus plays a crucial role in multiple aspects of basic human functioning. It makes virtually all of the brain's norepinephrine, a chemical critical for sleep, alertness, focus, learning and even immune function. And it receives inputs from nerves originating throughout the brain and body - including from the vagus nerve, which carries information to and from the heart, lungs and other organs.

My research explores this brain region's structure, how nerve cells pass messages within it and how it connects with other brain regions. I also investigate how those features change throughout life and affect thinking and memory.

Studies suggest that starting in middle age, nerve cells in the locus coeruleus

may get damaged by tau buildup, and that damage may correlate with declines in memory. Tau buildup, cell death and loss of function in the locus coeruleus precedes and predicts Alzheimer's diagnosis and symptoms.

This has led researchers to hypothesize that keeping the locus coeruleus healthy could be a way to protect the rest of the brain, too.

The vagus nerve carries information between the brain and organs in the chest and abdomen, such as the heart and intestines, helping the brain monitor and regulate many of the body's essential organs. It is responsible for sending rest and digest messages throughout the brain and body, stimulating digestion and promoting cellular repair.

In the 1980s and 1990s, researchers

discovered that stimulating the vagus nerve can help ease epilepsy. They also found that doing so often also had other benefits, such as improving mood and thinking.

Today, vagus nerve stimulation is approved by the Food and Drug Administration not just for treating epilepsy, but also for migraine and depression, as well as to aid with stroke rehabilitation.

Vagus nerve stimulation for epilepsy and depression generally involves implanting an electrical stimulator in the left side of a patient's chest, where the vagus nerve passes. Noninvasive devices for treating headaches deliver gentle pulses of electricity to certain places on the neck or ear where the vagus nerve is very close to the surface of the skin.

Even before the discovery of locus coeruleus's link to Alzheimer's disease, researchers hypothesized that vagus nerve stimulation might help mood and thinking in people with the condition. That's because vagus nerve stimulation might work in part by raising brain levels of norepinephrine - and people with Alzheimer's have too little norepinephrine in their brains.

Neuroscientists still don't know exactly how or why vagus nerve stimulation might be beneficial for the brain, but one leading theory is that it helps regulate the activity of nerve cells in the locus coeruleus, enabling it to function properly.

Too much locus coeruleus activity could potentially make people too alert, causing them to feel stressed or even panicked. In fact, a hyperactive locus coeruleus fuels some symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Conversely, too little could cause depression or memory problems. (AP)



Artemis 2 crew members, (from left), Mission Specialist Jeremy Hansen, of Canada, Mission Specialist Christina Koch, Commander Reid Wiseman, and Pilot Victor Glover pose for a photo after the crew's arrival at the Kennedy Space Center Friday, March 27, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP)

Artemis II crew arrives for historic moon mission

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., March 28, (AP) - The astronauts set to become the first lunar visitors in more than half a century arrived at their launch site Friday, joining the towering rocket that stands poised to blast off next week and send them around the moon.

Artemis II Commander Reid Wiseman flew in with his three crewmates from Houston. It was the closest they've come to launching. Fuel leaks and other rocket issues caused two months of delay and double hangar-to-pad rollouts.

NASA's new administrator Jared Isaacman greeted the astronauts as they emerged from their T-38 training jets at Kennedy Space Center. Besides Wiseman, the crew includes NASA's Victor Glover and Christina Koch, and Canada's Jeremy Hansen. The welcoming committee also included the Canadian Space Agency's president, Lisa Campbell, dozens of NASA managers and more than 100 journalists.

"Hey, let's go to the moon!" Wiseman shouted to the crowd. "I think the nation and the world have been waiting a long time to do this again."

"We're all fired up to go to this," Hansen added. "So 'Allons-y!' " - French for let's go. NASA is aiming for liftoff as soon as Wednesday. The space agency has the first six days of April to launch the Space Rocket System rocket before standing down for nearly a month.

Wiseman stressed there's no guarantee they will launch in early April as planned, and that it could slip to May or even June. The Space Launch System rocket has soared only once before; the crew-less test flight to the moon was back in 2022.

FDA defines supplements as food products

Dietary supplement makers push FDA to allow peptides and new ingredients

WASHINGTON, March 28, (AP) - Makers of dietary supplements are pushing the Food and Drug Administration to expand the types of ingredients they can put in their products, a change that could open the door to more marketing of peptides, probiotics and other trendy wellness offerings.

The FDA held a public meeting Friday to discuss its long-standing criteria for dietary supplements and whether they could be broadened to include substances that don't come from food, vitamins, herbs or other traditional ingredients. FDA officials will hear from industry executives, consumer advocates and academics.

It's the first such meeting since Robert F. Kennedy Jr. became the nation's top health official last year. Kennedy has vowed to "end the war at FDA" on dietary supplements, peptides and other products that are popular within his Make America Healthy Again movement.

Friday's meeting came at the request of the Natural Products Association, an industry group that has clashed with the FDA over certain new supplement ingredients. The group asked for the meeting in a January letter, citing "the cost and uncertainty that arise when regulatory expectations are unclear."

The FDA's top food official, Kyle Diamantas, opened the meeting by underscoring the administration's commitment to "cutting red tape" to lower the industry's costs.

"The industry has grown tremendously over the last 30 years yet the regulatory framework has largely stayed the

same," Diamantas told attendees.

Here's what to know about the issue:

Under FDA regulations, supplements are deemed to be a category of food, with most of their ingredients coming from plants, herbs and other substances found in the American diet.

That requirement has become a challenge for the industry in recent years as newer wellness products often feature substances that have never been used in food.

Peptides, for instance, are druglike chains of amino acids that have been widely promoted by celebrities and influencers as a way to build muscle and look younger, although there's little science supporting their use.

Many specialty pharmacies and clinics sell them as injections or IV infusions, but some supplement makers have also begun adding them to capsules, gummies and powders.

Technically, those products violate FDA rules, according to FDA lawyers. The same goes for certain types of probiotics, bacteria-containing products that are pitched to aid digestion and promote gut health.

Companies argue that FDA law, as written, doesn't specify that all ingredients must come from food.

"The hope of the meeting is that FDA is willing to open up its interpretation of what constitutes a dietary ingredient to allow dietary substances that aren't already in food," said Robert Durkin, a former official in the FDA's supplements program who now consults for companies.

Astronaut suddenly couldn't speak in space

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., March 28, (AP) - The astronaut who prompted NASA's first medical evacuation earlier this year said Friday that doctors still don't know why he suddenly fell sick at the International Space Station.

Four-time space flier Mike Fincke said he was eating dinner on Jan. 7 after prepping for a spacewalk the next day when it happened. He couldn't talk and remembers no pain, but his anxious crewmates jumped into action after seeing him in distress and requested help from flight surgeons on the ground.

"It was completely out of the blue. It was just amazingly quick," he said in an interview with The Associated Press from Houston's Johnson Space Center.

Fincke, 59, a retired Air Force colonel, said the episode lasted roughly 20 minutes and he felt fine afterward. He said he still does. He never experienced anything like that before or since.

Doctors have ruled out a heart attack and Fincke said he wasn't choking, but everything else is still on the table and could be related to his 549 days of weightlessness. He was 5 1/2 months into his latest space station stay when the problem struck like "a very, very fast lightning bolt."

"My crewmates definitely saw that



In his image provided by NASA, NASA astronaut Mike Fincke is helped out of the SpaceX Crew-11 capsule after they re-entered the Earth in a middle-of-the-night splashdown near San Diego, Calif., on Jan. 15, 2026. (AP)

I was in distress," he said, with all six gathering around him. "It was all hands on deck within just a matter of seconds."

Fincke said he can't provide any more details about his medical episode. The space agency wants to make sure that other astronauts do not feel that their medical privacy will be compromised if something happens to

them, he said.

The space station's ultrasound machine came in handy when the event occurred, he said, and he's gone through numerous tests since returning to Earth. NASA is poring through other astronauts' medical records to see if any related instances might have happened in space, he said.

25-year-old Noelia Castillo dies by euthanasia in Spain after legal battle

MADRID, March 28, (AP) - Noelia Castillo, a Spanish woman who sought euthanasia and fought a protracted legal battle with her family over her right to do so, received life-ending medicine on Thursday in Barcelona. She was 25.

For nearly two years, Castillo pursued her right to die after her father put up a lengthy legal battle when a medical body in Catalonia approved her request for euthanasia in 2024.

As the family's struggle unfolded, Castillo's case was closely followed in Spain, which passed legislation in 2021 enshrining the right to euthanasia and medically assisted suicide for patients meeting certain conditions. Castillo's young age, the public battle waged by her family to stop her and the circumstances that led her to seek euthanasia animated public opinion as the courts ultimately ruled in favor of her right to end her life.

"At last, I've managed it, so let's see if I can finally rest now," Castillo told Spanish broadcaster Antena 3 in an interview that aired Wednesday. "I just cannot go on anymore."

Castillo's parents opposed her decision up until the end, and were represented by the conservative Catholic organization Abogados Cristianos. The Catholic organization on Thursday confirmed that she had died at a Barcelona hospital outside of which a small group of people had gathered.

Attorney Polonia Castellanos, president of Abogados Cristianos, said Castillo's family was deeply disappointed with the outcome, and believed the Spanish govern-



Castillo

ment had abandoned and failed their daughter by allowing her to die.

"Death is the last option, especially when you're very young," Castellanos said.

Castillo struggled with psychiatric illness since she was a teenager, and tried taking her life twice, she said, the second time after she was sexually assaulted. The injuries she suffered from her second suicide attempt in 2022 left her unable to use her legs and in a wheelchair.

The Associated Press does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted unless they come forward publicly, as Castillo has done.

In April 2024, Castillo solicited euthanasia with an independent body in Catalonia made up of doctors, lawyers and bioethics experts who deliberate on the application of Spain's law.

The body approved Castillo's request based on assessments that evaluated her condition as serious and incurable, and that the 25-year-old had severe, chronic and debilitating suffering.

Spain legalized physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia in 2021 for those suffering from terminal illness and for people with unbearable permanent conditions. The process involves submitting two requests in writing followed up by consultations with medical professionals not previously involved in the case. The law faced intense criticism from conservative political parties and the Catholic Church.

Castillo's father appealed the Catalan body's decision, and a court in August 2024 suspended the euthanasia request while it deliberated. Through Abogados Cristianos, Castillo's father argued that his daughter's mental illness rendered her incapable of making the decision to end her life.

Sakamoto seals golden farewell with 4th worlds title



Silver medalist, Mone Chiba from Japan, left, gold medalist, Kaori Sakamoto from Japan, centre, and bronze medalist Nina Pinzarrone from Belgium stand on the podium during the medal ceremony for the women free skating at the Figure Skating World Championships in Prague, Czech Republic. (AP)



Kaori Sakamoto from Japan reacts after seeing her score during the women free skating at the Figure Skating World Championships in Prague, Czech Republic. (AP)

Pinzarrone takes surprise bronze

PRAGUE, March 28, (AP): Kaori Sakamoto bid farewell to figure skating with a fourth world championship title before retirement as one of the most decorated skaters in decades.

Sakamoto took to the ice to cheers from a packed arena in Prague and delivered a typically artistic and consistent final free skate to stay ahead of her Japanese teammate Mone Chiba.

After signing off to Edith Piaf's "Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien," Sakamoto made a double fist pump as her coaches hugged rink-side and Chiba stood to applaud.

Minutes later, Sakamoto jumped up and danced in celebration at leaving on a personal-best total 238.28 points and embraced Chiba, who scored 228.47. "I'm so happy," Sakamoto said to whoops from the crowd. "I'm grateful that I get to skate here."

Nina Pinzarrone took a surprise bronze on 215.20, a breakthrough moment after years of being overshadowed by her Belgian teammate, 2022 world silver medalist Loena Hendricks.

Sakamoto broke through with individual bronze at the 2022 Olympics and won the first of three world titles in a row - a feat not seen in women's skating since the 1960s - soon after.

Sakamoto never won Olympic gold but leaves with four career Olympic medals including team and individual silvers from the Milan Cortina Olympics. She plans to become a coach.

Isabeau Levito was fourth for the United States and three-time U.S. champion Amber Glenn was still waiting for a first world medal in sixth after popping two jumps. Glenn had been third after the short program and started her free skate with a huge triple axel, but halfway through, a triple loop became a single, and then a double axel went missing too, leaving valuable points on the ice. "I lost my focus," she said.

A Japanese podium sweep had seemed possible before the championships but Olympic bronze medalist Ami Nakai was only ninth after errors in both programs.

Alysa Liu withdrew from the world championships as she negotiates her rise to fame after winning the Olympic gold last month.

Laurence Fournier Beaudry and Guillaume Cizeron of France improved their rhythm dance to take a commanding lead in the ice dance.

The crowd in O2 Arena was applauding the Olympic champions before the start of their unrivaled dance to music by Madonna, and they delighted the spectators from the opening twizzle sequence to a rotational lift at the end.

Fournier Beaudry and Cizeron hugged after seeing their personal-best score of 92.74 points, which was better than the 90.18 they received for their rhythm dance at the Milan-Cortina Olympics.

"It's our first world championships together so we really wanted to have fun and we really enjoyed the crowd," Fournier Beaudry said. "They were exchanging energy with us and it just reminds us why we do it, we wouldn't be there without them. It's just a very, very nice moment for us."

Olympic bronze medalists Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier of Canada were a

distant second with 86.45 heading to Saturday's free dance.

Britain's Lilah Fear and Lewis Gibson, third at last year's worlds, were third again with 85.09.

U.S. pair Emilea Zingas and Vadym Kolesnik, fifth at the Olympics, were lying fourth, and teammates Christina Carreira and Anthony Ponomarenko were seventh.

At the Olympics, Fournier Beaudry and Cizeron narrowly beat U.S. stars Madison Chock and Evan Bates to the gold in a result that sparked a furore over judging.

Chock and Bates decided not to pursue a fourth straight ice dance world championship, joining Olympic teammate Alysa Liu in withdrawing from the worlds, a common decision for skaters who compete at the Winter Games.

Cizeron said the skaters were not under as much pressure in Prague as they were in Milan, which helped their performance.

"What's really fun of this championships is that, I think I can speak for everyone, we feel it's more like a show and we're little bit less stressed maybe than at the Olympics," he said. "That extra magic from the crowd allows us to perform to our best."

The French couple was created this season when Fournier Beaudry, who previously skated for Canada, was left without a partner after Nikolaj Sorensen faced allegations of sexual maltreatment. Fournier Beaudry teamed with multiple world champion Cizeron, who retired after winning the 2022 Olympics with Gabriella Papadakis.

'2026 draft class to be one of the strongest'

NBA moves to curb tanking with draft lottery shake-up

LOS ANGELES, March 28, (Xinhua): The NBA is weighing significant changes to its draft lottery system amid growing concern that some teams are intentionally losing games to improve their chances of securing top picks, a practice known as "tanking" that the league believes undermines competitive integrity and erodes fan trust.

According to reports from local news outlets on Friday, the NBA's Board of Governors was presented this week with three draft lottery reform proposals. All three concepts would expand the number of teams eligible for the lottery and flatten the odds, thereby reducing the advantage of finishing at the bottom of the standings.

None of the proposals has been finalized, and team owners are expected to debate and potentially combine elements before a vote anticipated in May, the reports said, noting the league's commitment to addressing the "tanking" problem.

"We are going to fix it," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver told reporters earlier this month, adding that distinguishing between deliberate losing and legitimate rebuilding has become increasingly difficult.

The issue has gained urgency as league executives project the 2026 draft class to be one of the strongest in recent years, increasing the incentive for struggling teams to finish with the worst possible record.

Under the current system, teams with poorer records are assigned higher odds in the draft lottery, a structure designed to help weaker franchises rebuild but one that critics say encourages non-competitive play late in the season.

The proposals, disclosed by several media outlets Friday, are described as significant, complex and potentially controversial.

The first proposal would expand the lottery to include 18 teams - the 10 teams that miss the postseason and the eight teams that qualify for the Play-In Tournament. Under this plan, the bottom 10 teams would receive equal odds, while Play-In teams would share the remaining chances in descending order. All 18 draft positions would be determined by lottery rather than regular-season record.

League officials said the approach would make finishing last less advantageous and reduce incentives for extreme losing. Critics, however, warned that it could allow mid-tier teams to benefit nearly as much as genuinely struggling franchises, potentially leaving some teams without a clear path to improvement.

The second proposal would further expand the lottery to 22 teams by including four teams eliminated in the first round of the playoffs. It would also rank teams based on their combined win totals over the previous two seasons, rather than a single year. A minimum win threshold would be introduced to prevent teams from being rewarded for severe declines.

Supporters argued that such a system would discourage long-term tanking strategies. Opponents countered that playoff-caliber teams affected by injuries or short-term downturns could still be rewarded with high picks, raising concerns about fairness and competitive balance.

The third concept, known internally as the "five-by-five" double lottery, would retain an 18-team field but alter how odds are distributed. The five worst teams would share identical odds for the top pick, with one lottery determining the top five selections and a second lottery sorting the remaining teams. No bottom-five team could fall lower than 10th overall.

The proposal is intended to discourage a race to the bottom while protecting weaker teams from dramatic draft declines. However, some executives have expressed concern that consistently underperforming teams could struggle to rebuild if they repeatedly miss out on top-tier selections.

Silver has said the league must strike a balance between discouraging intentional losing and preserving legitimate rebuilding efforts, particularly for small-market teams. He also acknowledged that increasing the system's complexity could create new challenges if fans find it difficult to understand how draft positions are determined. If the lottery becomes too complicated, the league risks solving one problem while creating another.



Utah Jazz guard Bez Mbeng reacts after being called for a foul against the Denver Nuggets in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Denver. (AP)

Tennessee advances to third straight Elite Eight

Lendeborg stars as Michigan beats Alabama in Sweet 16

CHICAGO, March 28, (AP): Yaxel Lendeborg had 23 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists in a dazzling all-around performance, and Michigan beat Alabama 90-77 to advance to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament for the first time in five years.

Trey McKenney and Elliot Cadeau each scored 17 points as top-seeded Michigan set a school record with its 34th win of the season. Roddy Gayle Jr. finished with 16 points.

Led by McKenney and Gayle, the Wolverines (34-3) enjoyed a 33-6 advantage in bench points. But the versatile Lendeborg was the star of the show as his team grabbed control in the second half.

Next up for the Wolverines is Sunday's Midwest Region final against sixth-seeded Tennessee, which eliminated Iowa State with a 76-62 victory.

Alabama (25-10) was once again without star guard Aden Holloway, who missed the school's tournament run after he was suspended indefinitely following a March 16 arrest on felony drug charges.

Philon also had a team-high seven rebounds and four assists in what might have been his final game with the Crimson Tide. The dynamic guard could declare for the NBA draft.

Even without Holloway, the Crimson Tide stayed right with the Wolverines for much of the up-tempo matchup of two of the tournament's highest-scoring teams. But everything changed when Lendeborg, the Big Ten player of the year, started to assert himself at the beginning of the second half.

Lendeborg stepped in front of an Alabama pass along the baseline and threw the ball ahead to Nimari Burnett for a fast-break dunk that gave Michigan a 54-51 lead with 17:04 left.

The 6-foot-9 Lendeborg then made a 3 and converted a driving layup to make it 62-54 with 14:50 remaining. Two foul shots by McKenney made it 75-60 with 9:22 to go, and it was too much for Ala-



Alabama's London Jemison, front, drives past Michigan's Morez Johnson Jr. during the second half in the Sweet 16 of the NCAA college basketball tournament in Chicago. (AP)

bama to overcome. Getting to the Elite Eight is becoming an annual event for Tennessee. This time, the Volunteers hope to go another round or two.

Nate Ament scored 18 points, Ja'Kobi Gillespie finished with 16 and Tennessee beat Iowa State 76-62 to advance to the regional finals for the third straight year.

Tennessee used a dominant effort on the glass and a strong second half to put away Iowa State (29-8) to advance to its third regional final in coach Rick Barnes' 11 seasons. The Volunteers lost to Houston last year and to Purdue in 2024. Tennessee's only other Elite Eight was under Bruce Pearl in 2010.

"We do have a standard on a lot of things, not just what we do

on the basketball court," Barnes said. "We're pretty much a no-nonsense program. We talk about that through the recruiting process. We tell everyone it's going to be tough. We want them to come. We want them to come, and really help them live their dreams. We'd like them to have a chance to play for a national championship."

Barnes led Texas to a Final Four in 2003. But Tennessee has never been there.

The sixth-seeded Volunteers (25-11) have another big obstacle in their way, with top-seeded Michigan in the Midwest Region final on Sunday. The Wolverines beat Alabama 90-77 behind a dominant all-around performance by Yaxel Lendeborg.

Ament made three 3-pointers.

Felix Okpara chipped in with 12 points and 10 rebounds. Jaylen Carey added 11 points and 10 boards, and the Volunteers outrebounded the Cyclones 43-22.

"I'm just enjoying the process, being able to do it with these guys," Okpara said. "We put in so much work in the summer. We love to see it pay off."

Nate Heise and Tamin Lipsey each scored 18 points for Iowa State, but the Cyclones clearly struggled without injured star Joshua Jefferson.

The All-America forward was hurt minutes into the Cyclones' March Madness opener against Tennessee State and did not play in their lopsided win over Kentucky. He averaged 16.4 points, 7.4 rebounds and 4.8 assists.

Szmodics out of hospital and 'on the mend' after head injury

PRAGUE, March 28, (AP): Ireland forward Sammie Szmodics is out of hospital and says he is "on the mend" after he was left unconscious in a heavy collision with an opponent during the World Cup qualification playoff against the Czech Republic.

Szmodics collided with Czech player Stepan Chaloupek as they moved toward a high ball during extra time of Thursday's game in Prague, where the Czechs won a penalty shootout. Szmodics collapsed to the ground immediately and seemed to display involuntary arm movement. Coach Heimur Hallgrímsson said he was "knocked

out cold."

Medical staff treated Szmodics on the ground for several minutes before he was taken to a hospital.

In an update that he posted on Friday on Instagram, Szmodics thanked the medical staff "who acted so quickly to help me."

"On the mend - we go again," he wrote.

The Irish team wrote on Instagram on Friday, "Sammie Szmodics was transferred to hospital yesterday having sustained a head injury during extra-time of the play-off against Czechia.

"Following further tests and a period of observation, he has been safely discharged from hospital - and will continue his recovery under the care of the Republic of Ireland & Derby County medical teams."

Szmodics, who plays for Derby County in England's second-tier Championship, had been on the field for less than two minutes when the incident happened. He came off the bench late in extra time and had to be substituted himself.

The score was 2-2 after extra time and the Czechs won the shootout 4-3.

SPORTS

Germany's Wirtz destroys Swiss; White caps England return as hero and villain



England's Kobbie Mainoo, left, shields the ball from Uruguay's Facundo Pellistri during the international friendly soccer match between England and Uruguay in London. (AP)

Oyarzabal at the double, Spain beats Serbia

LONDON, March 28, (AP): Mikel Oyarzabal scored two impressive goals in Spain's 3-0 win over Serbia, and Florian Wirtz scored two and made two more as Germany twice came from behind to beat Switzerland 4-3, in entertaining pre-World Cup friendlies.

In other games, Ben White scored on his recall to the England side and then gave away a penalty in stoppage time as England drew 1-1 with Uruguay, while the Netherlands overcame Norway 2-1 in Amsterdam.

White was a controversial selection by England coach Thomas Tuchel, four years after walking out on his teammates in the middle of the last World Cup.

The Arsenal defender replaced Fikayo Tomori with 21 minutes left in a dull match on Friday and his appearance was greeted with both boos and cheers from the 80,000 fans present at Wembley.

However, he was in the right place at the right time 10 minutes from time to give England the lead after Cole Palmer's corner was flicked on and White poked the ball in at the far post for what will surely be one of the easiest goals of his career.

Uruguay did not have a shot on goal and that looked like being the winner, only for White to clip Federico Viñas in the box as the clock ticked past 90 minutes.

The referee pointed to the spot after a video review and Federico Valverde converted for Uruguay to leave the scores level.

It was the first goal that England



Germany's Jonathan Tah, left, fights for the ball against Switzerland's Dan Ndoye, right, during an international friendly soccer match between Switzerland and Germany in Basel, Switzerland. (AP)

has conceded in seven games and the decision left the coach and players furious, with Tuchel declaring it "not a penalty."

Harry Maguire shared that opinion and was even more upset about the referee's lack of action in dealing a rash challenge by Ronaldo Araujo on Phil Foden.

Maguire told broadcaster ITV, "You don't see tackles like that and not get red cards."

In Basel, Germany won for the sixth time in a row thanks largely to the brilliance of Liverpool's Wirtz.

Germany looked shaky at the back and went behind in the 17th minute when Dan Ndoye cut in from the left and crashed a shot past Oliver Baumann from a tight angle.

Germany leveled nine minutes later when Jonathan Tah headed home Wirtz's cross from the left but Breel Embolo put Switzerland ahead again in the 41st minute with a diving header after Baumann hesitated to leave his line.

Once again, Wirtz brought Ger-

many back into the game, when, on the stroke of halftime, his flighted pass carved open the Swiss defense and allowed Serge Gnabry to lift the ball over 'keeper Gregor Kobel.

Wirtz then gave Germany a 3-2 lead 11 minutes into the second half with the best goal of the night, his stunning right-foot shot from full 30 meters sailing over Kobel into the top corner of the net.

Joel Monteiro equalized for the home side 10 minutes from time with a rifled shot that gave Baumann no chance but Wirtz made it 4-3 with another superb shot from the 18-yard line six minutes from the end.

The result ended Switzerland's 10-match unbeaten run. In Villarreal, Oyarzabal was the star man for Spain in its hastily arranged game against Serbia.

The match was set up at short notice after Spain's proposed game with Argentina in Doha fell through due to war in the Middle East and the home side showed just why it is one of the favorites to win a second

World Cup title this summer.

Oyarzabal got his first goal with 16 minutes gone, hammering home after Alex Baena's smart dummy from Fermín López's pass gave him time and space on the edge of the Serbian box.

His second, a minute before half-time, was an unstoppable left-foot shot from almost 25 meters out.

The goals take his international tally to 26 in 53 internationals and extend his superb scoring streak. The Real Sociedad striker has scored 11 times in his last 10 games for Spain.

Oyarzabal was withdrawn after 63 minutes as Spain gave a debut to Osasuna winger Víctor Muñoz but there was no letup for the Serbs. The Osasuna winger capped a happy night with a goal nine minutes later, taking a lovely back-heeled pass from Ferran Torres and stroking the ball home to make it 3-0.

In Amsterdam, Norway rested its record scorer Erling Haaland but took the lead after 25 minutes thanks to a curling shot from Andreas Schjelderup.

Virgil van Dijk leveled 10 minutes later when he powered home a header from a corner and Tijjani Reijnders gave the home side the win when he crashed home from close range five minutes into the second half.

The win extended the Netherlands' unbeaten run to nine games. The last time Ronald Koeman's men were beaten was by Spain in a Nations League game a year ago.

In other matches, Algeria, which is pitted against Austria, Jordan and reigning world champion Argentina at the World Cup, beat Guatemala 7-0 in Genoa.

Morocco, which drew 1-1 with Ecuador, went behind early in the second half to a goal from John Yeboah but Neil El Aynaoui's goal two minutes from time ensured a share of the spoils.

Dalian teen edges Canadian amateur Liu

Ren wins GolfJoy Women's Open title in thriller

DONGGUAN, China, March 28, (Xinhua): Ren Yijia secured her maiden professional victory and fifth CLPG Tour title on Saturday, as the Dalian teenager edged Canadian amateur Shauna Liu on the first playoff hole to win the GolfJoy Women's Open in Guangdong province.

In her second start since turning pro, the 16-year-old Ren closed with a three-under 69 to finish deadlocked with 17-year-old Liu (66) on 11-under 205 for 54 holes, the first full-field tournament of the CLPG Tour season played on the Olazabal Course at Mission Hills Golf Club Dongguan.

With the rain starting just before the playoff, Ren quickly ended it when she put her approach to within eight feet of the pin on the 403-yard 18th hole. With Liu missing her 20-foot putt from the back of the green, Ren converted her birdie putt to take the win and the RMB 144,000 (20,800 U.S. dollar) purse.

"On the final hole of regulation, I knew I had to make birdie to win. I didn't get it, but I told myself it was okay. At least I could still go to a playoff," said Ren, who missed the cut earlier this month at the Blue Bay LPGA in Hainan.

"My first win on the China LPGA Tour [as an amateur at the Beijing Women's Challenge in May 2024] came in a playoff, and now my first victory as a professional also came in a playoff. Sometimes the world works in such wonderful ways. Still, I was nervous during the playoff." Thailand's Onkanok Soisuwan, the first-round leader, finished equal third after a 69, tied with China's Sui Xiang (68) at five strokes back. Amateur Peng Yanxuan, who was tied for the lead with Ren going into the final round, could not build on her second-round 63 and closed with a two-over 74 to finish equal fifth with rookie pros Xu Yings (70) and Zhou Shiyuan (66) at six strokes off the pace.

After building up a three-shot lead through 11 holes with four birdies and a bogey, Ren had to work to ensure a playoff

as Liu, playing in the group ahead of her, caught fire with five birdies in seven holes starting from the ninth hole. As Liu made her last birdie of the day at the par-five 15th to go a stroke ahead, Liu answered with a birdie of her own at the same hole to draw even with the Canadian. Both players would par the last three holes of regulation.

"I wasn't watching the leaderboard when I was 11-under. But when I fell to 10-under, I felt a little bit nervous, but not too much. In the playoff, my approach shot (from 175 yards out with a five-iron) into the green was fantastic, leaving me an eight-foot birdie putt, and I made it," said Ren.

"My chipping was excellent this week. I have to say that was the key to my win. I managed to chip it really close many times and then made the putts. I'm really happy to receive my first check. The money will be deposited into my account, so I'll decide how to use it - not my mom." Ren also receives a Spica 3 Plus portable golf simulator from GolfJoy - a company she said she shared a "special connection" with.

"I started my golf journey on one of its golf video simulators," she said. "Through GolfJoy's qualifying tournament, I played in my first national junior event. Not long ago, I became one of its sponsored players, and now I've won a GolfJoy tournament." Liu, the Canadian Junior Girls title holder, impressed in her CLPG Tour debut as she was in and around the top of the leaderboard throughout the tournament, closing with six birdies in her bogey-free round. The Toronto teenager has committed to play college golf at UCLA next year.

"Overall, I think I played pretty decent [this week]. There were some things I could have done better and some putts I probably could have dropped, but that's just golf," said Liu, who will play in the Chevron Championship next month, the first major of the LPGA Tour season.

"At the playoff hole, we both had pretty decent birdie chances. I was a little bit further away, and she made hers, and I didn't," she added.

Defending champion Wang Zixuan closed with a 70 for her best round of the week but never challenged in her title defense, finishing eight strokes back. Enditem



Ren

Stokes still recovering from a broken cheekbone

Pakistan pacer under fire for slamming politician's presence at the start of game

LAHORE, Pakistan, March 28, (AP): The Pakistan Cricket Board has attacked fast bowler Naseem Shah for criticizing a politician's presence at the start of the opening game of the Pakistan Super League, which is being played behind closed doors.

Fans are barred from attending games at the country's premier domestic tournament, which was originally scheduled for six venues but now reduced to just two - Lahore and Karachi. The Middle East conflict has resulted in exorbitant hikes for fuel in the region, and Pakistan's government is urging people to restrict travel and to work from home.

Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz was invited to Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday, along with other dignitaries, and was introduced to officials of the eight franchises and players ahead of the opening game of the tournament between defending champion Lahore Qalandars and first-timers Hyderabad Kingsmen.

Shah commented on a tweet about the opening game by the PCB, with the bowler saying on X, "Why is she treated like the queen at Lord's?" in an apparent reference to Nawaz's presence at the stadium. He deleted the post soon afterward and later said his account had originally been hacked.

The PCB said in a statement that Shah had been issued a notice for violating terms of his central contract as well as media policy and regulations.

"The show-cause notice has been served in accordance with the PCB's disciplinary

framework," the PCB said. "Naseem Shah is required to provide a response within the stipulated time. Upon receipt and review of his response, the PCB will decide on any further action in line with the regulations."

Last year Pakistan all-rounder Aamer Jamal was slapped with a fine of \$4,000 for displaying a slogan in favor of cricket great Imran Khan, Pakistan's imprisoned former Prime Minister.

Shah, a right-arm fast bowler, has taken a total of 152 wickets while representing Pakistan in 20 test matches, 34 one-day internationals and 37 T20s games.



England captain Ben Stokes' recovery from a broken cheekbone will keep him sidelined for the start of the county cricket season.

The 34-year-old Durham star was hit by a ball during a training session with academy players early last month, and he had surgery soon afterward.

Stokes has not played since the final game of England's 4-1 Ashes loss in Australia in January.

He'll miss the Durham's County Championship opener against Kent next week.

The all-rounder could return for matches against Worcestershire in early May, Durham coach Ryan Campbell said.

England's first summer test match is against New Zealand beginning June 4.

Last week, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced it is sticking with the current leadership following its review of the Ashes tour.

Managing director Rob Key, coach Brendon McCullum and Stokes as captain kept their jobs after England lost the Ashes in 11 days with two games to spare.



Shah

'Trump uses UFC to portray himself as a manly sportsman'

UFC brings cage-match bout to the White House

WASHINGTON, March 28, (AP): Cage-match fighting is coming to the White House to fete President Donald Trump, a proud proponent of cage-match politics.

In the coming weeks, crews will erect a 6-foot wire-mesh fence shaped into an octagon on the lawn, where UFC fighters will use a combination of kickboxing, jiu-jitsu, wrestling and other martial arts in a June 14 mixed martial arts show timed for Trump's 80th birthday and as part of the nation's 250th anniversary.

The celebration of bloody, brute force dovetails with Trump's gleefully combative charisma and extreme ideological masculinity - a brawling, no-holds-barred approach to the highest office in the land.

"I have respect for fighters, you know, when you can take 200 shots to the face and then look forward to the second round," Trump told podcaster Logan Paul as he campaigned for his second term.

Trump was the first sitting president to attend a UFC show, taking in a 2019 fight that was stopped because of a cut over the loser's eye that left blood pouring down the fighter's face.

To the uninitiated, the sport celebrates violence. It is wildly popular with young men.

"A lot of people don't understand fighting and they think fighting is about anger. It's not. If you're angry when you fight, you'll lose," said veteran MMA referee and commentator "Big John" McCarthy.

"Fighting is about technique and style, and understanding how to make your opponent make mistakes while you don't," McCarthy said.

"I totally understand why he likes it," he added of Trump. "Because I do."

It is hard to find a phrase more Trumpian than Ultimate Fighting Championship.

A committed devotee of hyperbole, Trump relishes grand descriptors that can elevate anything to its "ultimate" version. He also proudly fancies

himself a fighter: "Fight! Fight! Fight!" became his 2024 campaign mantra, one crystallized after an assassination attempt that summer.

Then there is "championship," another thing close to the heart of a president who constantly professes love for winning and those who do it frequently.

All of that means Trump giving UFC its largest-ever platform "is calculated. He knows what he's doing," said Kyle Kusz, a University of Rhode Island professor who studies the connection between sports and the far right.

Trump "uses UFC to portray himself as a manly sportsman," said Kusz, who said he sees parallels between the sport's style of masculinity and Trump's approach to policy and politics.

The league is planning to issue 85,000 free tickets for the event. Trump said UFC boss Dana White, a longtime friend, will build "a 5,000-seat arena right outside the front door of the White House" and eight large screens in a nearby park for ticket-holders to watch from afar.

The show falls on a Sunday, deviating from



In this file photo, President Donald Trump attends the UFC-316 mixed martial arts event, at the Prudential Center in Newark, N.J., as UFC's Dana White, left, looks on. (AP)

UFC's usual Saturday night time slot, and will be carried live on Paramount+, which is controlled by the Ellison family, also close allies of Trump. France even pushed back the Group of Seven summit it is hosting so as not to conflict with Trump's birthday festivities.

Trump has boasted that the event will feature "all top guys." But fans online have panned the card for lacking top talent such as former two-division champion Jon Jones, who requested his release from the UFC immediately after being excluded from the White House show. Also absent is MMA icon Conor McGregor, whose first bout since 2021 would have been a seismic moment for the sport. The UFC's White "knows the White House card sucks," said former champion Ronda Rousey, who is mounting her own MMA comeback outside the UFC because she says the promotion would not meet her financial expectations.

Rousey, who is close to White, says the White House show "fell extremely short of expectations."

While still being finalized, the card features two championship fights. Brazil's Alex Pereira will meet France's Cyril Gane for the interim UFC heavyweight title. Then Spanish-Georgian lightweight champion Ilia Topuria takes on interim champ Justin Gaethje, one of just two Americans who currently hold even a share of the UFC's 11 championship belts.

The White House did not answer questions about criticism of the card or the event's aggressive politics. Instead, communications director Steven Cheung, said, "This will be one of the greatest and most historic sports events in history."

Cheung, a UFC spokesman before joining Trump's 2016 campaign, called Trump's event "a testament to his vision to celebrate America's monumental 250th anniversary."

A UFC spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

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Team Austria stands on the podium after winning the flying hill team competition at the Ski Jumping World Cup event in Planica, Slovenia. (AP)

Sports

OKC stays on track for home-court advantage

Nuggets avoid costly loss

OKLAHOMA CITY, March 28, (AP): Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 25 points, and the Oklahoma City Thunder used a 22-0 second-half run to power a 131-113 win over the Chicago Bulls.

The usually efficient Gilgeous-Alexander made just 8 of 24 shots. His teammates picked up the slack and helped the Thunder shoot 46.5% from the field. Gilgeous-Alexander still scored at least 20 points for a record 134th consecutive game.

Cason Wallace added 21 points for the Thunder, who were coming off a loss at Boston that followed a 12-game win streak. Oklahoma City got back on track, despite All-Star forward Chet Holmgren sitting out with a bruised right hip.

It was an important win for Oklahoma City, which is trying to hold off San Antonio for home-court advantage in the playoffs. The Thunder opened the night two games ahead of the idle Spurs with nine games to play and San Antonio holding the tiebreaker.

It was Thunder forward Jalen Wil-

liams' first home game since Jan. 13. He had missed most of the past two months with a bruised right hip. The 2025 All-Star had 18 points, eight assists and six rebounds.

Nuggets 135, Jazz 129

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 33 points, 16 rebounds and 12 assists. Cam Johnson and Jamal Murray combined for four 3-pointers in the final 2:20, and the Denver Nuggets rallied from 13 down in the fourth quarter to beat the Utah Jazz.

Murray finished with 31 points two nights after scoring a season-high 53. Jokic had his fourth straight triple-double and 31st of the season to help Denver avoid a costly loss in the tight Western Conference playoff race.

The Nuggets are in fourth place, a game ahead of Minnesota and a half-game behind the Los Angeles Lakers.

Mavericks 100, Trail Blazers 93

In Portland, Marvin Bagley III scored a season-high 26 points off the bench and Cooper Flagg had 24 to lead the Dallas Mavericks past the Portland Trail Blazers, snapping a five-game skid.

Naji Marshall had 19 points and five steals for the Mavericks, who had dropped seven of their previous nine games on the road and bounced back from loss at Denver.

Bagley, who had his most points since scoring 25 last April, shot 11 of 14 from the field, including 3 of 5 from 3-point range, and had nine rebounds. Flagg had four steals for Dallas.

Raptors 119, Pelicans 106

In Toronto, Scottie Barnes had 23 points and 12 assists. Jakob Poeltl had 18 points and 11 rebounds, and the Toronto Raptors beat the New Orleans Pelicans.

RJ Barrett, Sandro Mamukelashvili and J'Kobe Walter also scored 18 points apiece for the Raptors, and Brandon Ingram added 13.

Zion Williamson scored 22 points for New Orleans on 9-for-13 shooting from the field and 4 for 4 from the foul line. Saddiq Bey added 19 points.

The Raptors won for the second time in three outings to remain in sixth place in the Eastern Conference, a full game ahead of the idle Philadelphia 76ers. The top six teams automatically make the playoffs in each conference.

Lakers 116, Nets 99

In Los Angeles, Luka Doncic had 41



Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray, center, is fouled by Utah Jazz forward Ace Bailey, right, as center Kyle Filipowski defends in the first half of an NBA basketball game in Denver. (AP)

points and eight rebounds while also picking up his suspension-triggering 16th technical foul during the Los Angeles Lakers' victory over the Brooklyn Nets.

Austin Reaves scored 15 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter while the Lakers finally pulled away from the young Nets to secure their 11th victory in 12 games. LeBron James added 14 points and eight assists for the Lakers in their return from a 5-1 road trip that has put them in third in the Western Conference standings.

Rockets 119, Grizzlies 109

In Memphis, Kevin Durant scored 25 points and led a fourth-quarter rally as the Houston Rockets pulled away from the Memphis Grizzlies.

Jabari Smith Jr. added 21 points and 16 rebounds and Amen Thompson had 18 points as Houston ended a two-game slide. Durant also had 10 assists.

Olivier-Maxence Prosper led the Grizzlies with a career-high 31 points and had seven rebounds. GG Jackson and Javon Small each added 14 points as Memphis lost its fifth straight and 13th in its last 14.

Warriors 131, Wizards 126

In San Francisco, Kristaps Porzingis had 28 points and eight assists. Gui Santos made a pair of free throws with 11.4 seconds remaining, and the Golden State Warriors held off the Washington Wizards.

Brandin Podziemski added 22 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists to help the Warriors win a third straight game for the first time in nearly two months. Santos scored 27 points, Gary Payton II had 15 and Pat Spencer scored 13.

Clippers 114, Pacers 113

In Indianapolis, Kawhi Leonard made a jumper with 0.4 seconds re-

maining, and the Los Angeles Clippers rallied from a 24-point deficit to beat the Indiana Pacers.

Leonard finished with 28 points, reaching 20 for the 50th straight game. Darius Garland led the Clippers with 30.

Los Angeles was run off the floor early by the team with the NBA's worst record. The Pacers were a sizzling 8 for 11 from 3-point range in the first quarter, opening a 42-21 lead.

It grew to 45-21 early in the second before the Clippers stormed back for their fourth straight victory, giving coach Tyronn Lue the 400th of his career.

Cavaliers 149, Heat 128

In Cleveland, Max Strus scored 29 points, Evan Mobley had 23 and Jarrett Allen came back from injury to add 18, leading the Cleveland Cavaliers

to a win over the Miami Heat in the second matchup between the teams in three days.

Strus made six of his eight 3-pointers in a 22-point first half as the Cavs bolted to a 35-point lead. He made one just ahead of the half-time horn to put Cleveland ahead 81-46 and cap the team's highest scoring half this season.

The Cavs bounced back from a 120-103 loss to the Heat on Wednesday with a strong performance and matched the team record for points in a regulation game.

Allen's return provided a major spark. He missed 10 games with tendinitis in his knee. The 27-year-old's absence especially hurt on defense and deprived him time to build chemistry with star guard James Harden, whose acquisition at the trade deadline has raised title hopes.



Golden State Warriors center Kristaps Porzingis (7) dunks during the second half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco. (AP)

Marmoush on target

Egypt cruises past Saudi Arabia ahead of WC

RIYADH, March 28: Egypt delivered a dominant performance, defeating hosts Saudi Arabia 4-0 in a friendly match as both sides gear up for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Islam Issa opened the scoring in the 4th minute, with Mahmoud Hassan "Trezeguet" doubling the lead in the 16th. Ahmed "Zizo" added a third just before halftime in the 44th minute, giving Egypt a comfortable advantage at the break.

The Pharaohs maintained control in the second half, with Omar Marmoush netting the fourth goal in the 56th minute to seal a comprehensive victory.

The match serves as part of preparations for the 2026 World Cup, set to take place across the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Egypt will compete in Group G



Egyptian players celebrate after scoring against Saudi Arabia.

alongside Belgium, Iran, and New Zealand, while Saudi Arabia is drawn in Group H with Spain, Cape Verde, and Uruguay.

Both teams aim to use these friendlies to fine-tune their lineups and boost readiness ahead of the tournament.

Four-time champion Verstappen to start 11th

Antonelli & Russell lock out front row in Japanese GPrix qualifying

SUZUKA, Japan, March 28, (AP): Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli took the pole for Sunday's Formula 1 Japanese Grand Prix, just two weeks after he led qualifying and won the first race of his career at the Chinese Grand Prix.

The 19-year-old Antonelli's qualifying time Saturday was 1 minute, 28.778 seconds on the 5.8-kilometer (3.6-mile) Suzuka circuit in central Japan.

Teammate George Russell will start alongside him. Russell won in Australia in the first race of the season and also took the pole, the start of Mercedes' early dominance in 2026. Four-time champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull will start 11th after struggling and complaining on his radio about his car.

"I think there is something wrong with the car, mate. It was completely undrivable," he said.

Saturday's qualifying was run on a sunny spring day with the same predicted for Sunday.

McLaren's Oscar Piastri, who has yet to start a race this season, will start alongside Charles Leclerc of Ferrari in the second row, and Lando Norris of McLaren starts on row three next to Lewis Hamilton of Ferrari.

"It was a good one. It was a clean one," Antonelli said. "I felt very good in the car. I'm really happy with the session and now we focus on tomorrow."

For the second straight race it was the young Italian upstaging the older British driver.

"He did a great job again," the 28-year-old Russell said.

Antonelli's quickest lap was three-tenths of a second faster than Russell, which is a big gap in Formula 1.

"I think overall it was a very strong session," Antonelli said. "But with the (new) regulations it's very easy to gain or lose three-tenths. It's



Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli of Italy, left, poses with Japan's sumo wrestler Kotozakura after the qualifying session of the Japanese Formula One Grand Prix at the Suzuka Circuit in Suzuka, Japan. (AP)

really easy to gain or lose time."

Formula 1 cars this season are powered 50-50 by battery power and combustion-engine power, and the chassis are slightly smaller and more nimble. This had made overtaking much easier in the first two races.

But Suzuka is an old-school circuit and is narrower with fewer straights, so passing will still be difficult.

"It can be good racing but I don't think it's going to be as easy as China and Melbourne," Antonelli said.

"The track is quite a bit tighter and you don't have as many straights where you can overtake. It's not going to be easy, that's why it's crucial to have a good start."

Russell struggled throughout the session, lucky to pull into the second spot. Early in the session he was much deeper in the pack.

"The car just did not feel the same as it did the whole weekend," Russell said.

Two weeks ago in China, neither McLaren car took part in the race because of electrical problems. And in Australia, Piastri sat out after crashing his car before the race even started. So being on the second row is a win for the Australian.

"This weekend we've looked good," Piastri said. "We've executed well. We clearly don't have the pace or the grip to match Mercedes still, but we are getting closer."

Al-Adwani and Lipovina boost Al-Arabi for key Cup campaigns

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 28: Qatar's Al-Arabi have reinforced its handball squad by signing Kuwait Club's Saif Al-Adwani for the Qatar Cup and Amir Cup competitions in the 2025-2026 season, as the newly crowned league champion gears up for crucial domestic challenges.

Al-Adwani will be joined by Montenegro international Vladan Lipovina, also recruited for the same tournaments, with the technical staff banking on their experience to strengthen the backcourt. Both players bring strong technical qualities and valuable Gulf competition experience.

The move marks a return for Al-Adwani, who previously impressed during a short stint with Al-Arabi, playing a key role in last season's league final triumph. He remains one of the standout players in the backcourt and is expected to play a major role once again.

Lipovina is also no stranger to the club, having contributed to Al-Arabi's historic triumph in the 41st GCC Handball Clubs Cup Winners' Championship last year. The team edged Kuwait Club 33-32 in a thrilling final held in Muscat, Oman, securing the title for the first time in its history.



In this file photo, Kuwait Club's Saif Al-Adwani goes for goal as an opponent looks on.

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