



HH the Amir receives Justice Minister, Nazaha board members Page 2



IRANIAN AGGRESSION ON KUWAIT TRIGGERS UNIFIED ARAB RESPONSE

Fatal drone strike in Kuwait claims life of Indian worker



Ministry of Defense photo
Minister of Defense checks on the health and the medical care provided to one of the military personnel injured in a recent hostile drone attack on Monday.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo
Minister of Foreign Affairs headed Kuwait's delegation at a ministerial meeting of the foreign ministers of the GCC states, Jordan and Russia.



Embassy of India photo
Ambassador of India Paramita Tripathi visits the Central Mortuary of Kuwait where the remains of the Indian national who lost his life were brought.

By Fares Ghaleb and Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: The Kuwait Ministry of Defense stated on Monday that it tracked and intercepted 13 hostile drones over the past 24 hours, which targeted a power and water desalination plant.

During a media briefing, spokesman of the ministry Colonel Saud Al-Atwan said that a worker was killed during the drone attack on the power facility, in addition to serious material damage to the building.

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- Armed forces intercept 13 UAV
- 3 arrested for unauthorized drone use
- Indian Ambassador Tripathi visits morgue
- Kuwait summons Iraqi Charge d' Affaires for 2nd time
- FM heads Kuwait's delegation to joint ministerial meeting
- Ministry of Social Affairs ensures food security

Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, may your glory and that of Saudi Arabia endure

WE say with great pride, on behalf of all the people of the Gulf, "Thank you, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. Thank you, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia."

The people of the Gulf states have witnessed the true meaning of their shared destiny through the actions of the Saudi government, under the directives of King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

These actions reflect the role of the big sister among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, standing firm in the darkest of times to preserve the stability of the Gulf states.

This is Saudi Arabia - the Kingdom of Glory - and this is its vital role toward the GCC countries.

While Iranian aggression sought to disrupt supply routes by targeting the ports and airports of the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman, and despite the severity of attacks against Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom opened its airports and ports in Jeddah and Yanbu to the people of the Gulf states, securing supply chains and making its warehouses accessible to all GCC countries.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia even amended its laws specifically for this purpose, allowing trucks free passage across the Gulf states.

In times of crisis, the true character of wise and responsible leaders toward their people is revealed.

What Saudi Arabia has done is a true embodiment of shared destiny and a reaffirmation of GCC's charter of unity.

Saudi airports and seaports have become a major hub and a critical factor in overcoming the challenges posed by Iranian aggression against the Gulf states. These measures are a practical manifestation of Gulf solidarity.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has once again proven that it is a safe haven and a strategic guarantee for the smooth flow of movement and trade, as well as for protecting the economies of the Gulf states.

This monumental step reflects unity in the face of crises, providing logistical alternatives to ensure the continuity of daily life and strengthening economic ties among the brotherly Gulf states.

Ensuring the availability of essential goods is a fundamental factor in maintaining social and economic stability and a basis for confronting the enemy.

The battle is not limited to military and security fronts. One of its most crucial pillars is raising public morale and instilling reassurance in people's hearts.

Saudi Arabia has been ahead of everyone. It acted quickly in taking the necessary measures before the people of the region even began to worry about the fate of supplies.

The government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques responded proactively by opening all avenues to facilitate the movement of goods and people.

It is as if Saudi Arabia is saying, "I know exactly when and how to act, even before I am asked."

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Kuwait beefs up legal arsenal with terror prosecution office

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: Attorney General Saad Abdul Karim Al-Safran has issued Decision No. 107/2026 for establishing a specialized prosecution office called the "Prosecution Office for State Security Crimes, Terrorism, and Terrorism Funding."

The decision aims to develop the criminal justice system and enhance the efficiency of combating state security crimes.

The newly established prosecution office is subordinate to the Attorney General's office and includes a director, a deputy director, and a sufficient number of public prosecutors.

The new prosecution office is responsible for investigating and preparing cases related to crimes affecting the state's entity, security, and stability, as stipulated in Law No. 31/1970 amend-

ing certain provisions of Penal Code No. 16/1960. It also covers crimes stipulated in Decree-Law No. 47/2026 on combating terrorism and terrorism financing, as well as those specified in Law No. 106/2013 on combating money laundering and terrorism financing.

The Public Prosecution's jurisdiction further extends to crimes under Decree-Law No. 13/2026 concerning the security and protection of the supreme interests of military entities, as well as international crimes, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression, in accordance with Decree-Law No. 156/2025 promulgating the Law on Combating International Crimes.

The decision empowers the new Public Prosecution to review and examine requests related to terrorism risks and provide opinions on them before submission to the Attorney General. It also authorizes the office to prepare specialized studies and issue awareness messages within its scope.

The decision emphasizes establishing a system for registering cases and requests under specific categories, with relevant administrative bodies

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Day by Day

IT is said that the trees beside a well die of thirst because they never bend down to ask for water.

How profound self-respect must be, if even inanimate things seem to embody it.

Yet, there is a fine line between self-respect and public boasting.

Many have been undone by their own arrogance, while others have chosen death over compromising their dignity.

It is admirable for a person to possess self-respect and preserve their dignity. What is important is ensuring it does not turn into pride or arrogance.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

5 What did Santhanaselvam Krishnan do to deserve this?



8 KfH shareholders reaffirm confidence, endorse Board of Directors



10 Warba holds FY25 AGM, approves 5% cash dividend and 5% bonus shares

11 NREC reports FY2025 loss of KD 72.4 million driven by one-time non-cash adjustments

Newswatch

TEHRAN: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) confirmed on Monday the death of the naval forces' commander, Brigadier General **Alireza Tangsiri**, who succumbed to wounds sustained in a recent attack.

In a statement, the IRGC said Tangsiri had been injured during what it described as an attack by "hostile forces" while overseeing efforts to reinforce defensive positions along Iran's islands and coastal areas. (KUNA)

BRUSSELS: Belgian Defense Minister **Theo Francken** said on Monday that **Belgium** will join the "Coalition of the Willing" aimed at guaranteeing free maritime passage through the Strait of Hormuz, in a step intended to protect the security of vital maritime routes.

Francken wrote in a post on social media platform X, that Belgium will join the coalition to guarantee the free maritime passage through the Strait of Hormuz. (KUNA)

389 Filipinos flee Kuwait this week amid flight disruptions

MANILA, March 30: The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) on Monday reported via its official Facebook page that 389 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and their dependents are being repatriated from Kuwait this week, amid ongoing flight

limitations and airspace restrictions. In its update, OWWA confirmed that 99 OFWs arrived in Manila on Monday, while another 99 are scheduled to return on Tuesday and 191 more on Thursday.

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Photo courtesy of OWWA
99 Filipinos from Kuwait land at NAIA Terminal 3 on Monday amid ongoing repatriation.

EU backs Kuwait, calls for 'stability'

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: European Union (EU) Special Envoy for the Gulf **Luigi Di Maio** on Monday met with the ambassadors of EU member-states to Kuwait.

They discussed the ongoing regional tensions and strategies to bolster alliance between Kuwait and the EU.

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No food shortage in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, March 30, (KUNA): Food supplies in the local market are adequately available and response teams are standing by to handle all incoming shipments in the country around the clock, said Kuwait's Public Authority for Food and Nutrition on Sunday.

In a press statement to KUNA, the authority's Deputy Director General for Community Nutrition **Dr. Shaima Al-**

Asfour said that work is proceeding at full speed to ensure the smooth entry of food products into the Kuwaiti market.

He added that Authority's outlets and laboratories are operating around the clock to receive and inspect food products, checking their safety and compliance with standard specifications, only out of its vital role in protecting public health and providing a safe and stable food environment.



Amiri Diwan photo

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, received Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait and the Nazaha board chair and members.

HH the Amir receives Justice Minister, Nazaha board members

KUWAIT CITY, March 30, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime

Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, received Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait on Monday. The Minister of Justice introduced to His Highness the Amir Board Chairperson of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority

(Nazaha), Dr. Rana Al-Faris, Deputy Chairperson Dr. Majed Al-Deihani and Board Members Rania Al-Fulaij, Dr. Abdullah Al-Dabbous and Dhay Al-Otaibi, who were sworn in on the occasion of the recent Amir decree naming them new Nazaha board.

Amir condoles passing of ex-Algeria president

KUWAIT CITY, March 30, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, sent a condolence cable to Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, expressing heartfelt sympathy on the passing of former Algerian President Liamine Zeroual.

In the cable, His Highness prayed to Allah to grant the deceased vast mercy and patience for President Tebboune, the Algerian people, and the family of the late leader.

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Morocco, top African nations vow Kuwait support, rap Iran

RABAT, March 30, (KUNA): Morocco renewed its full solidarity with the Arab countries in the face of the current security challenges, calling for the immediate halt of the Iranian attacks that threaten the region's stability, while Mauritania announced its full rejection of the threats facing the Gulf countries.

In a statement, the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates Nasser Bourita emphasized during the 165th ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level that Morocco, under the leadership of King Mohammed VI, has expressed from the outset of the crisis a clear and consistent position supporting Arab countries and safeguarding their sovereignty.

King Mohammed VI held direct communications with the leaders of the Gulf countries, during which he reiterated the Kingdom's strong condemnation of the attacks targeting the sovereignty of these states and the integrity of their territories, it added.

He affirmed Morocco's full support for all measures they take to protect their security and stability. The minister warned of the serious situation in the Arab region in light of attacks targeting civilians and vital infrastructure, including airports, ports, and energy facilities, in a blatant violation of international laws and norms and directly undermining the security and stability of the peoples, it noted.

In another statement made during the 165th ordinary session held via video-conference, Mauritania's Foreign Ministry said that the current phase requires the highest levels of Arab coordination and solidarity.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Ould Merzouk expressed his country's categorical rejection and condemnation of any threats target the sovereignty and security of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Jordan and Iraq, it stated.

Meanwhile, Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Al-Nafti, and the Libyan Libya's Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Government of National Unity Al-Taher Al-Baour, affirmed unequivocal rejection of any aggression that violates the sovereignty of Arab states or targets their stability and the resources of their peoples.

The two foreign ministries of both countries made these separate remarks during the 165th video conference session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level.

They emphasized their country's firm adherence to the fundamentals of international legitimacy, based on the enduring principles of foreign policy, foremost among them respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Both sides stressed that the Arab region is going through a highly delicate phase amid escalating tensions that risk could trigger serious repercussions for regional and international security and stability, while further aggravating the humanitarian and economic situation across the region.

They also reaffirmed their complete solidarity with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq, and Jordan, stressing their firm rejection of any violations that undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of these states.

Relative calm as no mad dash seen to pull money

ATM withdrawals remain stable: report

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: In a further indication of the strong liquidity in Kuwaiti banks and the high confidence in the resilience of the local banking system, sources from the banking sector revealed that ATM cash replenishment rates recently exceeded individual customer withdrawal requests. This indicates stable cash withdrawals despite the impact of the ongoing war between the US and Israel on one side and Iran on the other, as well as the psychological pressures it has created, reports Al-Rai daily.

They explained that banking monitoring, which measures cash withdrawal and deposit rates against pre-war averages to ensure liquidity flow, shows that

customer ATM withdrawals have remained stable on many days, averaging between KD 150 and KD 200 per transaction, which is the same average as before the war began on February 28. Meanwhile, deposit figures have shown similar stability in both volume and value.

Banking data on cash flow in their systems showed a moderate increase in customer demand for cash, particularly at ATMs, at the start of the war.

However, this demand remained within acceptable withdrawal limits and did not indicate any cause for concern, as the withdrawals were neither significant nor remarkable. After a few days, the "fear index" decreased, and customer cash withdrawals declined to levels that, on some days, fell below pre-war values and volumes.

The decline in withdrawal rates and amounts applied across all methods, including ATMs, bank branches, and electronic transfers. Deposit levels remained stable across all maturities, from both indi-

viduals and companies.

Also, money transfers through various banking channels, including electronic methods, stayed within normal limits, with no restrictions beyond standard regulatory requirements and controls.

In line with directives from the Central Bank of Kuwait and proactive measures by banks to meet any unusual liquidity demands, driven more by psychological anxieties from the war than by actual cash needs, ATM reserves were increased beyond normal levels. This regulatory measure was intended to accommodate any additional withdrawal requests, which, in practice, have not been fully utilized.

Monitoring of customer withdrawals showed stable patterns, with demand even declining on several days compared to pre-war averages. This stability is attributed to customers' secure financial situations, limited need for cash, reduced spending outside essential goods, and the near-complete halt of travel and tourism.

The sources explained that the stability of liquidity withdrawals

and deposits by individual and corporate clients since the start of the war is reinforced by the high trust placed in Kuwaiti banking systems.

This is largely due to the Deposit Guarantee Law, which classifies client funds as high-quality because they are guaranteed by the government. Such a level of security is unique to Kuwait and is not widely available elsewhere, increasing the assurance of clients in the safety of their funds under any pressure.

One indicator of this stability is the low volume of calls to bank customer service departments, which are mostly limited to routine inquiries, such as questions about salary deposits, loan repayments, and other typical banking matters.

The sources revealed that the Central Bank continuously monitors liquidity with local bank officials and is prepared to provide any necessary levels of cash.

They stressed that, since the beginning of the war, no local bank has requested additional liquidity, which reflects the stability of banking reserves and the calm pace of cash withdrawals.

Hearing put off to April 13 in funds scandal case

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: The Court of Cassation, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Jassem, postponed the trial of former Interior and Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled until April 13 to listen to the testimony of a witness in the two cases of embezzlement of public funds in the ministries of Defense and Interior.

Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled appealed the ruling that the Ministers Court issued in January, which sentenced him to 14 years in prison, ordered him to pay around KD10 million and fined him about KD20 million for embezzling and laundering funds from the budgets of the two ministries.

He also appealed the ruling of the Ministers Court in a separate case in the Court of Cassation, which sentenced him to seven years in prison, ordered him to pay KD500,000, fined him KD1 million and dismissed him from his position.

In the other case related to the expenses in one of the ministries, he appealed the seven years imprisonment with hard labor sentence imposed on, the obligation to return about KD9 million, fine of about KD19 million and confiscation of the vehicles involved in the case.

Jail-term upheld: The Court of Cassation upheld the ruling of a lower court that sentenced an X platform user -- an activist under the illegal residents category -- to three years and six months in prison for spreading false news and insulting employees at the Central Agency for Remediating Illegal Residents Status (CARIRS), reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In another case, the same court, presided over by Judge Sultan Boursli, upheld the three-year prison sentence imposed on X platform user Mansour Al-Muhareb for spreading false news and rumors through the platform in response to the complaint filed by the Ministry of Interior.

The court affirmed that the charges against the defendants were proven and that their action constituted disseminating false information that could harm public interest and sow discord in society.

Citizen acquitted: The Court of Appeals reversed a lower court's conviction of a citizen, leading to his acquittal.

Case files indicate that the citizen and another person were accused of using force and violence to resist and assault two security officers during the execution of their official duties. The second defendant was charged with personal use of narcotics.

An officer from the Drug Control General Department testified that the two defendants were identified outside a juice shop. The officer stated that while the second defendant was harassing someone near a vehicle, a policeman intervened to request identification, but the latter refused to present his identification card or enter the patrol car.

The citizen then exited his vehicle and grabbed the policeman to help the other defendant escape, leading to a struggle and the arrest of both men upon arrival of backup officers.

During the appeal, defense lawyer, Bashar Al-Nassar, argued that the necessary elements for an assault charge were not present. He contended that the initial police stop and the demand for identification were unlawful.

He asserted that the defendant's resistance and refusal to comply were legitimate acts of self-defense against illegal procedures.

Other Voices

Forgotten human rights

By Ahmad alsarraf

Despite the paramount importance of the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued in 1948, which represented a significant leap and became a tool for measuring how political entities respect human rights, numerous violations of human rights have continued and, in many cases, increased.

Nevertheless, the situation could have been far worse without the Declaration, as even partial progress is better than total neglect.

In line with international standards, the Kuwaiti government approved the establishment of a civil society organization dedicated to human rights in 2005.

I was one of the founders of this organization, which was then headed by the late Jassim Al-Qatami, before its light was extinguished, or nearly so.

Under strong pressure from MPs and Salafist figures, the government approved the establishment of another human rights organization, making Kuwait the only country of its size with two opposing organizations claiming to defend the same human rights.

Several years later, the government responded to international demands by establishing the "National Human Rights Bureau" as an independent body intended to serve as a link between civil society organizations, government agencies, and international organizations.

However, true independence was never achieved. Consequently, it did not come as a surprise when Kuwait received low rankings from international monitoring organizations.

The government appointed the experienced ambassador Jassim Al-Mubarak as head of the National Human Rights Bureau. Despite his strong leadership, the government succeeded in marginalizing the bureau's role and undermining its independence.

It was striking that representatives of

government agencies on the bureau's board of directors often refrained from participating in its meetings.

The bureau was further weakened by the frequent transfer of its oversight from one ministry to another with each new Cabinet formation.

Most recently, it was placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice. The Minister of Justice then issued a decree for dissolving the bureau and appointing a three-member committee, headed by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice, to carry out its duties. This move clearly contradicts the standards set by relevant international bodies.

The government had previously established a Human Rights Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The difference between this department and the National Human Rights Bureau is that the bureau was created as an independent body in accordance with the Paris Principles on Human Rights, which Kuwait has ratified.

In contrast, the Human Rights Department is a government entity primarily concerned with representing the state in human rights conferences and defending its positions. It does not, to my knowledge, handle complaints from citizens or residents regarding grievances or violations. Sheikh Jawaher Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, as Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights, heads this department. Its responsibilities include providing opinions and advice on human rights matters referred to it, preparing the state's human rights reports in accordance with international agreements, and submitting them to the relevant international monitoring bodies, in coordination with the competent authorities in the country.

Despite the presence of multiple entities concerned with human rights, information about their activities are scarce. Few people, I believe, are aware of how the Human Rights Department operates or how to easily contact it.

A review of these institutions may be necessary, eliminating those that are redundant and granting the remaining bodies the attention and independence they deserve.

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KUNA photo

Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mashari during his tour of the under construction buildings.

'Owners liable if buildings breach safety standards'

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs Abdullatif Al-Mashari stressed the importance of regular building safety inspections, particularly for investment properties.

Al-Mashari made the statement during an inspection tour he conducted Sunday in the investment buildings in Manqaf, along with Kuwait Municipality Director Manal Al-Asfour, and officials from the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) and Ministry of Interior.

The inspection tour aimed to assess compliance with the safety regulations issued by the relevant authorities and ensure adherence to municipal regulations and bylaws. The minister said the property

owners must implement all safety measures for these buildings, and prepare for all eventualities to ensure the safety of residents.

He stated that the government agencies are working as a unified team to maintain security and operate within an integrated framework to implement municipal regulations and laws.

He disclosed that the Municipality signed memoranda of understanding with several relevant entities like KFF and the Ministry of Interior to unify efforts and guarantee the safety and security of these buildings.

The tour included on-site demonstrations by specialized teams from relevant authorities on implementing regulations, as well as a review of the measures taken by the oversight departments, in cooperation with KFF.

Sacrifices of Kuwait forces engraved in hearts, minds

"ONE month has passed since the beginning of the war waged by Iran against the Gulf states, and many positive aspects have emerged that deserve praise and are appreciated by all citizens and residents," columnist Sheikh Eng. Fahad Dawood Al-Sabah wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"The current war has proven Kuwait's unwavering resolve in confronting the challenges it faces during this ordeal. No matter how much we thank the Kuwaiti Armed Forces and the Kuwait Army, we can never fully repay their efforts."

"The Kuwaiti Army is exerting every effort to secure the country and strengthen its stability. It is making tremendous efforts and deserves recognition for repelling the aggression. The blood shed for Kuwait this month is a treasure that will never be forgotten throughout history. Those who sacrificed their lives for the homeland have embodied the highest meaning of loyalty and have given everything to protect it."

"Today, we live our normal lives thanks to the sacrifices made and the tremendous efforts of the Armed Forces, the National Guard, and the Ministry of Interior in defending Kuwait and preserving its security."

"Today, we are living normal lives thanks to the sacrifices made and the tremendous efforts exerted by our Armed Forces, the National Guard, and the Ministry of Interior in defending Kuwait and preserving its security."

"I would like to express my gratitude to all the relevant government agencies, including the Kuwait Fire Force, Civil Defense, and the Ministry of Health. They are all unsung heroes serving this nation."

"Undoubtedly, these efforts have been made possible thanks to the wise leadership dedicated to the country's security and safety."

"It is the responsibility of every citizen and resident to remain vigilant against anything that could threaten national security."

"Everyone must be cautious of unverified information circulating on social media, as there are attempts to undermine social cohesion."

"Social unity is a fortress against which all enemy attempts will crumble. Kuwait must remain an impregnable stronghold against its enemies. We must not tolerate anyone who seeks to undermine the high morale that has emerged during this crisis."

"In a world full of challenges, Kuwait stands as a model of stability and security, made possible by a wise vision and sincere national efforts dedicated to protecting the nation."

"The peace we are witnessing today is the result of a comprehensive security system that operates quietly, efficiently, and with a high level of social awareness."

"The strong field presence of the Ministry of Interior, the National Guard, and the Armed Forces, along with their vigilance in safeguarding Kuwait's security, reflects the strength of this front and offers many examples to follow in the future."

"Kuwait is a beacon of resilience, hard work, dedication, and generosity toward a brighter future for generations to come."

Also:

"In 2026, borders will no longer be defined solely on maps, but will run through cables, data centers, and information flows," writer Eng. Yasmine Al-Rifai wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"For years, cybersecurity was seen as a technical function aimed at protecting systems. Today, that perception has completely changed. It is no longer a supporting role but has become central to national power and a main driver of modern warfare."

"States no longer face isolated technical attacks but are now confronted with advanced digital siege models powered by artificial intelligence. When vital data pathways are compromised, critical infrastructure, from energy grids to government services, becomes a strategic vulnerability."

"The new cybersecurity landscape rests on three clear fronts:

■ Automated institutional attrition - Attacks capable of disrupting systems and dismantling operations within moments, directly threatening the continuity of the state.

■ Targeting public consciousness through disinformation and deepfakes - The objective is no longer territorial control but trust. When trust erodes, the state's ability to govern is undermined.

■ The blurring of lines between civilian and military spheres - Energy networks, water infrastructure, aviation, and supply chains have become part of the battlefield, and citizens themselves are now part of the equation. In this context, cybersecurity is no longer merely a technical issue but it is a matter of sovereignty, and the response cannot be conventional.

"A clear shift in thinking is required. This includes the following:

■ Elevate cybersecurity to the level of sovereign decision-making, rather than treating it as an operational concern.

■ Implement rapid recovery models that restore systems within hours, not days.

■ Protect cyberspace from manipulation, influence, and disinformation campaigns.

■ Build national artificial intelligence capabilities to reduce reliance on external sources.

"In this world, the question is no longer how to prevent attacks, but whether we can survive them. The countries that will succeed are not the most heavily armed, but the most prepared; not those who possess the technology, but those who control it. The real battleground is no longer visible, but today, it is the most decisive."

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"Perhaps the first task of the head of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) should be to monitor Kuwaiti employees in the private sector to determine who is still employed and who has left. These statistics would reveal the extent to which Kuwaitis prefer working in the government versus the private sector," Kuwaiti journalist Hassan Ali Karam wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"It may be best not to overload the system, and this applies to some extent to CSC, which has already been burdened with more than it can handle. Since the CSC has accepted these responsibilities, it should be capable of fulfilling them."

"The government's main avenue for employment is the CSC. This has led to numerous complaints and protests. With no third party involved, the CSC bears full responsibility for unemployed citizens. However, we should not burden CSC with more than it can handle."

"The problem is that the government refers complaints from unemployed citizens to the CSC, while it is so mired in problems that it has lost direction and is unable to resolve the employment crisis or alleviate the suffering of thousands of unemployed young people. Most of these individuals hold advanced degrees and are university graduates."

"It is likely that CSC's difficulties stem from the rigid rules and conditions established by its founders, which may have been suitable at the time. The issue is that the current generation of CSC officials lacks the ability to adapt or deviate from these outdated rules, treating them as untouchable taboos. Unemployment in Kuwait is not an artificial problem... it is real. Government offices are overcrowded, with more employees than needed, exceeding their capacity to absorb them."

"The government sector is burdened with more employees than it needs, creating a heavy strain. As a result, the government has required employees to clock in three or even four times a day to control absenteeism during working hours. Many spend their time in cafes, restaurants, or even chalets, as they often have little work to do in their offices, especially with the rise of remote and online work. Tasking the CSC with providing jobs for thousands of unemployed young men and women, along with thousands more entering the public sector job market, is an extremely difficult challenge."

"How can any government hire all these unemployed people, particularly in light of technological advancements and the steady increase in the number of job seekers? The CSC is caught between the hammer of outdated administrative traditions and the anvil of thousands of young job seekers who are still dependent on their parents even years after graduation. The responsibility for employment should lie with the government and all its agencies. It should not fall entirely on the CSC."

"Did the government make a mistake by opening the doors of public and private universities to Kuwaiti students? The government covers the cost of education and provides generous monthly stipends. So, is the solution to abolish the CSC and place the entire burden on the unemployed to find suitable work. Kuwaitis should become self-reliant and stop depending on the government for everything, as if it were their father or mother. The world around us is changing, yet we continue to repeat, 'We are different from others.'"

"The head of the CSC does not possess a magic wand to solve the unemployment problem while outdated regulations remain in place. The CSC needs to adopt a future-oriented mindset that embraces advanced technology and online work. Tasks that once required thirty employees can now be completed by a small machine in minutes. Before replacing CSC office furniture, we need to refresh our thinking and discard antiquated regulations."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Al-Sabah



KUNA photo

Director of the GCC Emergency Management Center Brig. Dr. Rashed Al-Marri held talks with EU Special Representative to the Gulf Luigi Di Maio on boosting technical and operational cooperation in crisis management.

GCC, EU to enhance crisis control cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, March 30, (KUNA): Director of the GCC Emergency Management Center Brig. Dr. Rashed Al-Marri held talks Sunday with EU Special Representative to the Gulf Luigi Di Maio on boosting technical and operational cooperation in crisis management.

Speaking to KUNA, Al-Marri stressed the importance of expanding international partnerships and exchanging expertise to bolster

regional preparedness and improve response to cross-border risks. He said the envoy's visit to Kuwait came amid growing international focus on developments in the Gulf and efforts to enhance coordination in support of regional and international security.

For his part, Di Maio reaffirmed the EU's commitment to strengthening its strategic partnership with GCC states in areas of mu-

tual interest.

During the visit, he was briefed on the central operations room and the center's role in monitoring and analyzing regional risks, as well as mechanisms with national operations rooms across member states to support faster information sharing and joint decision-making, particularly in light of ongoing regional escalation.



KUNA photo

Chief of Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Maj. Gen. Talal Al-Roumi checks on Captain Falah Mohammad Falah, a KFF member who was wounded while performing his duty.

KFF chief wishes fireman hurt on duty to get well

KUWAIT CITY, March 30, (KUNA): The Chief of Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Maj. Gen. Talal Al-Roumi on Sunday checked on Captain Falah Mohammad Falah, a KFF member who was wounded while performing his duty.

During the visit, Al-Roumi affirmed the keenness of the leadership to follow up on the KFF members and check on them, wishing a rapid recovery to Falah, the KFF said in a statement.

Al-Roumi conveyed the greetings of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah to Falah, it added.

Blogger gets 1 year jail for spreading rumors

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: The Criminal Court sentenced Fadel Al-Dabbous to one year in prison with hard labor for disseminating false information through his account on the X platform, based on a complaint filed by the State Security Unit at the Ministry of Interior, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

The court also ordered the suspension of the defendant's account on the platform due to allegations that he published information deemed harmful to public interest and incitement of unrest.

Security authorities took measures after monitoring the published content and referred the defendant to the Public Prosecution, which conducted the investigation and then referred him to the Criminal Court.

PACI multiple channels to renew civil ID cards

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: As part of its ongoing efforts to streamline government services and advance digital transformation, the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) has announced several flexible channels for renewing civil ID cards. These channels allow citizens and residents to complete their transactions easily, with in-person visits required only for card collection, reports *Al-Rai* daily.

Card renewal can be completed through four main methods - the unified government application "Sahel", telephone service, the PACI website, and SMS.

Through the Sahel application, users can access civil ID services, submit renewal requests electronically, and track the status of their applications in real time. Renewal is also available by calling 1889988, where users can follow voice instructions to complete the process without an internet connection.

PACI's official website www.paci.gov.kw serves as a primary platform for electronic services, allowing users to renew cards and make payments online. Card renewal is also available via SMS.

Kuwait deplores attack on Kurdistan Barzanis' homes

KUWAIT CITY, March 30, (KUNA): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed on Sunday Kuwait's strong condemnation and denunciation of the attacks that targeted the residences of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani and leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Masoud Barzani.

In a statement, the ministry reaffirmed Kuwait's position rejecting all forms of violence and condemning all acts that undermine security and stability in Iraq and across the region.

Raids on health clubs intensified

Industrial plots withdrawn

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: The Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry inspected several health clubs, refreshment and juice shops, and grocery stores throughout the country as part of its intensified monitoring campaigns.

This inspection campaign resulted in two warnings and summons issued to a health club and a nutritional supplement store for failing to comply with regulations governing the sale and distribution of energy drinks.

The inspection teams also closed a health club for operating without a license, reflecting strict enforcement of applicable laws and regulations.

The ministry affirmed its continuous monitoring of establishments to ensure compliance with regulations and its commitment to take the necessary legal measures against violators to ensure consumer protection and maintain market integrity.

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Plots withdrawn: Minister of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) Osama Boodai issued ministerial decrees terminating contracts and withdrawing five industrial plots in Shuwaikh Industrial Area, Sulaibiya, East Ahmadi, Al-Rai and South Amghara due to violations such as engaging in unlicensed industrial activities and subletting the plots.

The decrees, published Sunday in the official gazette - Kuwait Al-Youm - are part of efforts to strengthen oversight of industrial plots and ensure compliance with regulations to protect industrial activities and guarantee fairness among investors.

The decrees mandated the erring plot owners to vacate the plots and hand over them free of encumbrances or physical or legal obstacles, in accordance with the procedures of PAI, and settle all outstanding dues until the handover date.

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Services suspended: The government app Sahel announced the suspension of two important online services provided by the Ministry of Interior - "Vehicle Ownership Transfer" and "Vehicle Ownership Renewal" - due to a technical malfunction in the systems of the Insurance Regulatory Unit, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily. On its X account, Sahel confirmed that work is underway to resolve the issue and restore services as quickly as possible.



PM Diwan photo

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in presence of Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait, received on Monday Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Board Chairperson Dr. Rana Al-Faris and Nazaha board members on the occasion of having been appointed as new Nazaha board.

PM chairs FATF compliance meeting

KUWAIT CITY, March 30, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Monday chaired a meeting to review remarks and requirements of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The meeting discussed ways to enhance cooperation and coordinate action plans among state bodies to ensure commitment to combatting money laundering and terror finance, reflecting Kuwait's high level of national response to this file as a strategic priority, and compliance with international standards and requirements within the specified timeframe.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Justice Nasser Al-Sumait, Advi-

sor at His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Dr. Basel Humoud Malek Al-Sabah, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Dr. Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Basel Al-Haroun, Acting Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammed Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Managing Director of the Kuwait Investment Authority Sheikh Saud Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Salah Al-Majed, Chairman of the Kuwait Financial Intelligence Unit Dr. Hamad Al-Mukrad, and senior officials of the Foreign Ministry, Public Prosecution and Financial Investigation Unit.



PM Diwan photo

His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, chaired a meeting today regarding the observations and requirements of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

League calls for UN compliance

Arab FMs condemn Iranian attacks, defend sovereignty

CAIRO, March 30, (KUNA): The Arab foreign ministers reaffirmed on Sunday their full condemnation of the brutal and deliberate Iranian attacks on several Arab countries, considering them an escalation and a blatant violation of the sovereignty, as well as an act that targets civilians and threatens security and stability.

This came during the 165th video conference session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level, chaired by Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Abdulatif Al Zayani, with the participation of the Arab foreign ministers and the Secretary General of the Arab League Ahmed Aboul Gheit.

The session condemned the Iranian attacks that targeted Kuwait, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar, Iraq, and Jordan with ballistic missiles and drones, striking residential areas, infrastructure, vital facilities, energy installations, civilian sites, and diplomatic missions, resulting in human and material losses and spreading fear among civilians.

Furthermore, they described these attacks as deliberate and brutal, considering them a blatant act of aggression and a violation of the principles of international law, the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, and the principles of good neighbourliness.

They also stressed the right of the affected states to take all measures to defend their territories, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, affirming that Arab national security is indivisible, and reiterating support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of all Arab states.

The council welcomed Security Council Resolution 2817, which reflects the international community's commitment to safeguarding state sovereignty and maintaining international peace and security, calling on Iran to implement the resolution immediately.

They also condemned the Iranian measures aimed at disrupting international navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

In this regard, the Council welcomed the resolution issued by the Human Rights Council on 25 March 2026 regarding the human rights implications of the Iranian attacks, emphasizing the need for accountability and full compensation for those affected.

They also reaffirmed rejection of Iran's continued financing and arming of militias in several Arab countries, seeing such actions as a grave threat to the security and stability of the region.

The conference also featured support for Lebanon's unity, sovereignty, and independence, and stressed the need for the state to extend its authority over all its territory and to ensure that arms remain exclusively in the hands of state legitimate institutions.

Moreover, the Council called the international community to put pressure on the occupying Israeli forces to end its occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories, implement the two state solution, and establish an independent State of Palestine on the June 4, 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, in a manner that ensures the achievement of just and lasting peace in the region.

In conclusion, they called for continued Arab consultation and coordination to follow up on the developments of the crisis and work toward resolving it in a manner that serves the shared Arab interests.

Other Voices

Risks of public 'treason' claims in Kuwait

When accusation replaces evidence

By Dr. Fawaz Khaled Alkhateeb

In times of tension, nations are not only tested by external pressures, but by the strength of their internal cohesion.

Kuwait today stands as a state founded on the rule of law, constitutional legitimacy, and institutional integrity. Yet, an increasingly concerning trend has begun to surface within public discourse, the casual and often reckless use of serious accusations, particularly labeling others as traitors without evidence.

This is not merely a matter of expression. It is a matter that directly engages the principles of justice and the stability of society.

Treason is not a term to be used lightly. It is among the gravest criminal accusations, carrying severe legal consequences. In any system governed by law, such a charge is not determined by individuals, nor argued in public arenas, but addressed through a structured and disciplined legal process.

In Kuwait, this process is clear and safeguarded by institutional roles that must not be bypassed. The initial stage of criminal inquiry is undertaken by the competent authorities, including the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which conducts the necessary inquiries and evidence-gathering within the limits of the law. The authority of accusation lies exclusively with the Public Prosecution, which serves as the trustee of the public action, entrusted with evaluating evidence and deciding whether formal charges should be brought. The authority of judgment rests solely with the judiciary independent, impartial, and bound only by the law, reaching its conclusions through fair and properly conducted trials.

This framework is not procedural formality. It is the safeguard that protects both the individual and the State.

When individuals assume the roles of inspector, prosecutor, and judge, they do not reinforce national security, they weaken the rule of law. Public ac-

cusations without evidence erode trust, inflame division, and threaten the cohesion that sustains any society.

Freedom of expression remains a protected right. However, it is not without limits. There is a fundamental legal distinction between expressing an opinion and alleging a criminal offense. The latter, when made without evidence, may itself constitute a violation of the law, potentially exposing the speaker to legal accountability.

Beyond its legal implications, the issue carries profound societal consequences. In an era where information travels instantly, words are no longer confined, they shape perceptions, influence public sentiment, and can escalate into broader tensions that are difficult to contain.

It is for this reason that both legal principles and moral values converge on the same warning. The Qur'anic verse, "Fitna is worse than killing" (Al-Baqarah: 191), reflects a profound recognition of the destructive nature of internal discord. Division, once ignited, rarely remains contained; it spreads, weakening the very foundation of society.

Kuwait's strength has never been in uniformity, but in unity, unity grounded in respect for the Constitution, trust in institutions, and adherence to due process. These are not abstract ideals, but practical safeguards against disorder.

At moments such as these, the true measure of patriotism is not found in the intensity of accusations, but in the discipline of restraint. It is reflected in the commitment to the law, the respect for institutional roles, and the rejection of unfounded claims that risk tearing the social fabric apart.

Every word spoken or written today carries weight. It either contributes to strengthening Kuwait or to weakening it.

Kuwait does not require louder voices. It requires more responsible ones. It does not need accusations without evidence. It needs respect for due process. And above all, it needs unity protected by law, guided by institutions, and upheld by a collective sense of responsibility.

Because in the end, nations are not only protected by their borders, they are protected by the integrity of their justice and the awareness of their people.

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Fawaz@tahergrp.org

AOU strengthens crisis readiness with Private Universities Council

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: As part of the commitment of the Arab Open University (AOU) to enhancing its readiness and ensuring the continuity of the educational process according to the highest quality standards, and in implementation of the approved emergency plan in coordination with the Council of Private Universities, an official delegation from the university visited the Secretariat of the Council of Private Universities.

According to a press release issued by AOOU, the delegation was headed by the AOOU President Dr. Salah Al-Hammadi, and included Vice President for Academic and Research Affairs Dr. Afnan Al-Khaldi, Vice President for Academic Support and Scientific Research Dr. Sawsan Malik, and Assistant Dean of the College of Administrative Studies Dr. Dalal Al-Oumi. They were received by the Secretary-General of the Council of Private Universities Dr. Jassim Al-Ali.

The meeting included an extensive

discussion on the latest developments in the current educational situation and their impact on the academic process, along with a comprehensive review of the educational emergency plan, which aims to ensure the safety of students as well as the academic and administrative staff, while maintaining the continuity of studies efficiently and flexibly.

The meeting also addressed a set of accompanying academic and administrative measures for implementing the plan, including remote learning mechanisms, development of assessment tools, and ensuring the quality of educational outcomes under various circumstances. Emphasis was placed on the importance of institutional integration and continuous coordination between the university and the council for enhancing the speed of response to challenges and ensuring a safe and stable learning environment, with lectures continuing through remote education.

Continued from Page 1

Custodian of

Here, I recall the words of Imam Al-Shafi'i, "May God reward hardships with all good, for they have shown me who my enemy is and who my friend is."

Brotherhood among nations is revealed by the actions of historical leaders, which shine as guiding beacons in critical moments. This reflects the meaning of the Gulf proverb that celebrates the strength of unity - "A bundle of sticks."

The Arab poet Al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufra was right when he advised his sons on his deathbed - "Be united, my sons, in times of hardship. Spears cannot be broken while bound together, but they break easily when scattered."

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states are the solid rock upon which the dreams of all enemies shatter.

The six Gulf states have proven themselves too strong to be broken by systematic Iranian aggression.

The Gulf states have proven themselves as an unbreakable force as long as they preserve their unity and cohesion, in accordance with Article Four of the GCC Charter, which states, "The ultimate goal is to achieve coordination, integration, and interdependence among the member states in all fields, leading to unity."

389 Filipinos

With direct flights constrained, authorities said evacuees are being transported by land from Kuwait to Saudi Arabia to ensure they can board flights back to the Philippines.

The agency added that by the end of the week, the total number of Filipinos repatriated from Kuwait will reach 530.

Upon arrival, returnees will receive government assistance, including financial aid, livelihood support, free transportation to their home provinces, temporary shelter if needed, and medical services.

The repatriation is being carried out under the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., with various agencies working together under a "One Country Team Approach."

Personnel from the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait and Riyadh, along with MWO-OWWA teams and OWWA Rapid Response units, are overseeing operations to ensure the safe and orderly return of OFWs.

OWWA emphasized that services remain uninterrupted even during the Holy Week, reaffirming the government's commitment to assisting Filipinos overseas.

For immediate assistance, OWWA urged concerned individuals to reach out through the following channels:

■ OWWA Hotline: 1348

■ MWO-OWWA Kuwait: +965 6040 3858/+965 6558 5355

■ Email: tulong@owwa.gov.ph

■ Repatriation portal: repatriation.owwa.gov.ph

Kuwait beefs up

responsible for supporting the work of the Public Prosecution. Its provisions are effective from the date of issuance.

Cases within its jurisdiction will be referred to the new office, while existing Public Prosecutions will continue handling their pending cases unless otherwise directed.

EU backs

During the meeting, the EU and its constituents confirmed their commitment to support the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, including Kuwait, while stressing the need for regional stability and security.

Furthermore, the EU issued a stern condemnation of the Iranian strikes, labeling them "unjustified." It expressed firm opposition to any escalation that could harm countries in the region.

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Other Voices

What did Santhanaselvam Krishnan do to deserve this?

By Nasser Al-Hajeri

In times of conflict, numbers often take over the story. We hear about strikes, targets, and damage. But behind every headline, there is a human life. Yesterday, that life was Santhanaselvam Krishnan.

He was not a soldier. He was not part of any conflict. He was simply a worker, living his life, doing his job, and likely thinking about his future and his family back home.

Like many others in Kuwait, he came here to build a better life, to support those who depend on him, and to work with dignity.

And yet, in a single moment, his life was taken.

It raises a simple but difficult question. What did he do to deserve this?

The truth is, nothing. He did nothing wrong. He was not a target, but he became a victim. And that is the reality of war that is often ignored. It does not always reach

those who are part of the conflict. Sometimes, it reaches those who have nothing to do with it at all.

In Kuwait, we live among people from all over the world. They are not strangers. They are part of our daily lives. They work beside us, support our economy, and contribute effectively to the country we all call home. When something like this happens, it is not distant. It is personal.

Santhanaselvam Krishnan was one of many who came to Kuwait

in search of decent work and a better future. He had every reason to believe he would be safe and able to continue his life normally. But when the Iranian regime chose to target Kuwait and its vital infrastructure, that sense of security was shattered in a tragic and unjust way.

This moment should remind us of something important. Behind every political decision, every escalation, and every strike, there are real people. People with families,

responsibilities, and dreams. People who are not part of any conflict, yet carry its consequences.

As we reflect on what happened, we should not only focus on the event itself, but on the life that was lost. His name should not be just another passing mention. It should be remembered as a reminder of the human cost of conflict.

Because in the end, the question remains.

What did Santhanaselvam Krishnan do to deserve this?



Santhanaselvam Krishnan

Continued from Page 1

Fatal drone

He reassured that the Kuwait Armed Forces were on high alert and performing their duties with complete efficiency and vigilance in order to guarantee the safety of citizens and residents.

The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy confirmed the death of an Indian worker, resulting from the heinous Iranian attack on a service building at the power and water desalination plant.

In a press statement, official spokesperson of the ministry Fatima Hayat disclosed that the technical and emergency teams immediately dealt with the incident according to the emergency plan to ensure continuous operational efficiency, in coordination with the security and other relevant authorities to protect the affected sites.

She urged everyone to remain calm, avoid spreading rumors, and obtain information only from official sources, emphasizing that the ministry will continue to monitor developments in a transparent manner.

She stressed that the safety and stability of the electricity and water systems are the top priority, and that all technical teams are working round the clock to prepare for any emergency and ascertain the continuity of vital services.

In addition, Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Paramita Tripathi visited the central morgue, where the body of the Indian citizen who lost his life last night during the attack on a power and water desalination plant is being held.

In a statement on the X platform, the embassy said the ambassador met with the Director General of the General Department of Criminal Evidence, Brigadier General Abdulrahim Al-Awadhi, to express her appreciation for the support he provided in this matter.

The embassy clarified that it is in con-

tact with the family of the deceased and is coordinating with Kuwaiti authorities to expedite the transfer of the body to India.

Moreover, Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on Monday visited the military personnel injured in a recent hostile drone attack to check on their health and the medical care provided.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Defense disclosed that Sheikh Abdullah was briefed by the medical team on the condition of the injured personnel, commending the efforts of healthcare workers in providing the necessary treatment. He wished the wounded speedy recovery, good health and well-being.

In the meantime, Kuwait National Guard (KNG) announced on Monday that it has intercepted and shot down 62 drones and seven hostile unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) since the start of the Iranian aggression.

KNG spokesperson Brigadier General Dr. Jadaan Fadhel Jadaan affirmed that the Engineering Battalion, through its Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit, handled 51 reports about missile debris, shrapnel and drones in different areas.

He said the specialized teams have been operating round the clock to neutralize threats and secure affected sites with high efficiency, while ensuring public safety and protecting lives and properties.

He stressed that KNG continues to carry out its duties with high level of readiness, securing 82 vital sites as part of an integrated security system to protect major facilities in the country, in addition to supporting other State institutions whenever necessary.

He reassured citizens and residents that readings in Kuwait's airspace and territorial waters remain normal, indicating that the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Center for Chemical Defense and Radiological Monitoring is fully operational round the clock, monitoring any potential risks and issuing early warnings to the relevant au-

thorities.

He added KNG also supported the Ministry of Public Works in draining rainwater in several areas, as well as assisting the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) in firefighting efforts.

He reaffirmed that the KNG personnel continues to carry out their duties in coordination with other relevant authorities to maintain national security and stability.

Furthermore, the Interior Ministry announced the arrest of three individuals for using drones without a permit in violation of recent regulations and prior warnings.

Spokesperson of the ministry Brigadier Nasser Busalib said the suspects were referred to the competent authorities for legal action. He reiterated the warning against violating official instructions under current conditions, stressing the total ban on drone usage, because it is a threat to security and military operations.

He also stated that the explosive ordnance disposal teams handled 606 reports about debris from interception operations since the beginning of the Iranian aggression. He presented a video of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team's efforts in dealing with debris and unidentified objects outside threat zones.

He went on to say that there are only three days left before the deadline for the exceptional grace period to surrender unlicensed firearms, ammunition and explosives, urging the public to comply before the deadline ends on Wednesday.

He added the ministry will strictly enforce the law against violators after the April 1 deadline, calling for full compliance with official instructions to ensure public safety and to support security efforts.

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Monday headed Kuwait's delegation to the joint ministerial meet-

ing of the foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Jordan and Russia.

In a press statement, the Foreign Affairs Ministry said the meeting, held through video-conference, addressed the repercussions of Iran's heinous attacks on the countries in the region and their impact on regional and international security and stability.

Also on Monday, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned on Monday the Charge d'Affaires of the Iraq Embassy in Kuwait, Zaid Shanshol, and handed him a second official protest note over the continued attacks carried out by Iraqi armed groups targeting Kuwaiti territory.

Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani said that the launching of armed attacks against Kuwait from Iraqi territory constitutes an act of aggression against the country, a violation of its sovereignty, and a breach of international law and the United Nations Charter.

He reaffirmed Kuwait's strong rejection of these serious attacks, calling on the Iraqi government to take all necessary measures against those responsible to deter such actions.

Al-Daihani stressed Kuwait's full and inherent right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, and to take all necessary and lawful measures to counter threats that endanger its security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Social Affairs, under the leadership of Minister of Social, Childhood and Family Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah and Undersecretary Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi, has emerged as a cornerstone of internal preparedness under the current circumstances.

The ministry achieved this through intensive field operations in cooperative societies, welfare homes and centers for people with disabilities. These op-

erations prioritize rapid response, close monitoring of strategic reserves in cooperative societies, ensuring the availability of goods, and instructing the cooperatives to prepare shelters for government entities.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the ministry has ensured intensive field presence to efficiently manage the situation.

The minister conducted inspection tours in cooperative societies to assess the availability of essential goods, stability of food stocks, and their readiness to meet citizens' needs without being affected by the recent developments. These tours are in line with the supervisory and regulatory roles of the ministry in maintaining food security and reassuring the public.

In addition, the ministry is focusing on the social welfare sector. Both the minister and undersecretary have been visiting welfare homes to assess their readiness and the implementation of emergency plans.

These visits are aimed at ensuring the safety of residents and the continuity of services – the top priorities within a proactive framework designed to ascertain that the most vulnerable groups are not affected by the current situation.

The field visits included the participation of elderly and child residents in social events, a humanitarian message that strengthens community bonds. The two officials are committed to be present among them and bring joy to their lives as per the pledge of the State to take care of them and help them fully integrate into society.

They also visited the welfare homes for girls and rehabilitation centers, where the minister met with the residents and staff and issued a directive to provide their needs and guarantee comprehensive care covering the social, psychological and educational aspects.

On people with disabilities, the comprehensive plan of the ministry emphasizes developing services for this group,

raising the efficiency of facilities and rehabilitation programs, and supporting partnerships with charitable organizations to modernize therapeutic and rehabilitative services.

In related news, His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received a telephone call Sunday evening from Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

During the conversation, Sheikh Salman conveyed the greetings of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He strongly condemned the brutal Iranian aggressions that targeted Kuwaiti territory and injured ten Armed Forces personnel, expressing Bahrain's full solidarity with Kuwait and support for all measures to safeguard its sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity. Sheikh Salman also wished the injured a speedy recovery and prayed for Kuwait's continued security and prosperity.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled extended the Amir's greetings to the King of Bahrain and underscored the importance of joint Gulf security and the rejection of any threats against Bahrain amid regional tensions. He described attacks on Gulf nations as aggression against Kuwait itself, and expressed gratitude for Bahrain's fraternal stance, reflecting the deep-rooted historical ties between both countries and peoples. His Highness wished Sheikh Salman good health and lasting stability and prosperity for Bahrain.

Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab Parliament, and the Arab League all issued strong condemnations of the Iranian attacks on Kuwait, describing them as flagrant violations of sovereignty and international law.



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America

Dozens arrested in LA 'No Kings' rally: Authorities in Los Angeles deployed tear gas near a federal detention center and made dozens of arrests following one of thousands of "No Kings" rallies held this weekend across the United States and in Europe to protest President Donald Trump's actions and the war in Iran.

Los Angeles police said Sunday that 74 people were arrested for failing to heed a dispersal order that was given after Saturday's rally ended. One other person was taken into custody on suspicion of possessing a weapon that police described as a dagger.

The arrests stood out from what otherwise were mostly peaceful protests. Organizers said there were more than 3,100 events registered in all 50 U.S. states.

As hundreds of protesters surrounded a federal complex in downtown Los Angeles, some threw rocks, bottles and broken concrete blocks at officers, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said in a statement late Saturday night. (AP)

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Fraternity leader charged: The pledge master for a fraternity at Northern Arizona University was indicted recently on a felony hazing charge involving a student who died in late January at a rush event.

The hazing charge alleges Carter Eslick caused or forced the drinking that led to the death of 18-year-old Colin Daniel Martinez on Jan. 31 at an off-campus house.

Martinez was found unresponsive at the home by police after bystanders performed CPR on him. He died at the scene.

An autopsy found Martinez died of alcohol poisoning and had a level of 0.425% — more than five times the state's legal limit for drivers 21 and over. The state has a zero-tolerance policy for anyone under 21 who is driving under the influence of alcohol.

"The loss of a young person is always a tragedy," Coconino County Attorney Ammon Barker said in a statement.



Police detain a protester near the Metropolitan Detention Center in downtown Los Angeles during a 'No Kings' protest on March 28. (AP)

Josh Blumenrich, an attorney representing Eslick, didn't immediately return a phone call seeking comment. (AP)

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Secret Service agent accidentally shoots self: A US Secret Service agent assigned to protect former first lady Jill Biden accidentally shot himself in the leg at Philadelphia International Airport recently, authorities said.

Biden was not in the area when the agent was injured during a "negligent discharge" of his firearm Friday morning, Secret Service spokesman Anthony Guglielmi told The Associated Press. According to initial reports, the agent was traveling in an unmarked car when he accidentally discharged his gun shortly before 9 am, said Philadelphia Police Officer Tanya Little.

Other law enforcement officers came to assist the injured agent, who was taken to a local hospital. He is being treated for his injuries and was in stable condition, Guglielmi said.

Airport operations were not affected, said Heather Redfern, public affairs manager for the city's Department of Aviation. (AP)

After immigration arrests, Calif lawmakers wonder: Are police telling feds too much?

WASHINGTON, March 30, (AP): Citing fear of authoritarianism and invasive surveillance, California lawmakers voted this week to audit the operation of joint intelligence centers where federal, state, and local agencies share information.

The decision was made along party lines by the Joint Committee on Legislative Audit, a 14-member body made up of members of the California Senate and Assembly. Nine members voted in favor, one against, and four did not vote. The audit will be conducted by State Auditor Grant Parks.

Advocacy groups like the American Civil Liberties Union, Electronic Frontier Foundation, and Oakland Privacy urged lawmakers to demand the audit to rein in what they described as abuses at the facilities, known as fusion centers. They cited an incident in which Immigration and Customs Enforcement reportedly asked La Habra police to run searches on its behalf at an Orange County fusion center and several others in which San Francisco police circumvented a local ban on facial recognition by asking for help from a fusion center with access to the technology.

CalMatters investigations last year and last month found instances where local law enforcement agencies shared license



Vehicles wait outside the international terminal at San Francisco International Airport, in San Francisco, July 11, 2017. (AP)

plate information with ICE or the Border Patrol, violating state law. California Attorney General Rob Bonta sent letters to more than a dozen local law enforcement agencies since 2024 for potential violations of the state law banning it and sued the City of El Cajon for allegedly violating the ban.

The audit will seek details about three California fusion centers, includ-

ing: 1. Information about violations of legal authority and policies for the past decade and disciplinary actions taken in response. 2. What state and local law enforcement personnel are assigned to the fusion centers. 3. What private sector entities work with fusion centers. 4. Which state or local officials oversee fusion center activity to ensure compliance with state and local law.

'It is a disaster in progress'

TSA pay may be coming, but airport delays could persist and ICE agents may not leave soon

WASHINGTON, March 30, (AP): Even after US President Donald Trump ordered emergency pay for Transportation Security Administration agents to ease long security lines, major US airports on Sunday were still urging travelers to arrive hours early — and federal immigration officers brought in to help may not be leaving anytime soon.

Trump's executive order on Friday instructed the Department of Homeland Security to pay TSA officers immediately, though it's unclear how quickly travelers will see an impact. The move comes during a busy travel stretch, with spring breaks underway and Passover and Easter approaching.

Tens of thousands of TSA employees have been working without pay since DHS funding lapsed on Valentine's Day. The department's shutdown reached 44 days on Sunday, eclipsing the record 43-day shutdown last fall that affected all of the federal government.

Trump deployed Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to some airports a week ago to help with security as TSA callouts rose nationwide — the same officers who may now remain in place if TSA staffing strains continue.

Making the rounds on Sunday morning news shows, White House border

czar Tom Homan said it depends on how many TSA employees would be returning to work after they start receiving their pay.

"ICE is there to help our brothers and sisters in TSA. We'll be there as long as they need us, until they get back to normal operations and feel like those airports are secure," he told CBS' "Face the Nation."

Speaking on CNN's "State of the Union," Homan said it also depends on how many TSA agents "have actually quit and have no plan on coming back to work." Nearly 500 TSA officers have left the agency since the shutdown started, according to DHS.

On Saturday night, Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said in a post on X that more ICE agents were being deployed to Baltimore-Washington International Airport to assist at TSA security checkpoints to "speed up the clearance process for passengers — not immigration enforcement."

Homan, in his CNN interview, said he hopes TSA officers will be paid by Monday or Tuesday.

"It's good news because these TSA officers are struggling," Homan said. "They can't feed their families or pay their rent."

Also on Sunday, Charlotte Douglas International Airport said in a post on



Airliner passengers make their way through the security lines, next to a closed screening area, in Terminal C at George Bush Intercontinental Airport on March 29, in Houston. (AP)

X that backup could arrive for TSA agents beginning Monday.

"While this action provides critical relief, CLT supports long-term solutions to ensure continued stability for this essential workforce," the airport said.

Johnny Jones, secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of Govern-

ment Employees' TSA chapter, said

Sunday that he has heard from workers worried they may not receive their full back pay because TSA management was given very short notice to begin processing payments. He also said TSA agents are concerned they could miss pay for time they were unable to work because they couldn't afford to

report for duty.

"It is a disaster in progress," Jones said.

Some of the busiest US airports continued to ask travelers to plan ahead in order to get through security lines.

Houston's main airport, George Bush Intercontinental, warned Sunday evening that TSA wait times could reach four hours or longer. Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport also told passengers to arrive at least four hours early for both domestic and international flights.

LaGuardia Airport posted an alert Sunday evening on its website that "TSA lines are currently longer than usual."

Baltimore-Washington International Airport said Sunday on X that "wait times have greatly subsided on this Spring Break Sunday," but it still asked passengers to show up several hours early. Louis Armstrong International Airport in New Orleans offered the same guidance.

Also on Sunday, passengers could once again see estimated security wait times at the three main airports serving the New York City area — LaGuardia, John F. Kennedy and Newark Liberty.

All three had removed that feature from their websites earlier in the week, citing "rapid" changes in passenger

volumes and TSA staffing. For the same reason, they cautioned that the restored wait times may not always "reflect current conditions."

It's hard to tell.

Caleb Harmon-Marshall, a former TSA officer who runs a travel newsletter called Gate Access, said the staffing crisis won't improve significantly until officers are confident that they won't be subjected to more skipped paychecks.

"It has to be an extended pay for them to come back or want to stay there," he said, estimating longer lines could linger for another week or two.

Jones, the TSA union leader, offered a more optimistic outlook on Sunday, saying he's hopeful that passengers could see wait times ease closer to typical levels once workers are able to afford basic expenses like gas to get to work.

TSA will also have to decide whether to reopen the checkpoints and security lanes they closed or consolidated at some airports due to inadequate staffing, which led to passengers standing in screening lines that clogged check-in areas or showing up far too early for their flights.

A handful of airports have experienced daily TSA officer call-out rates of 40% or higher in recent weeks.

Europe

2 drones crash in Finland: Two drones entered Finnish airspace and crashed near the town of Kouvola in southeastern Finland on Sunday morning, the country's Ministry of Defense said. No injuries were reported.

The drones came down in separate locations near Kouvola, with one landing north of the town and the other to the east. Police have cordoned off both crash sites as investigations continue.

Finnish Air Force FA-18 Hornets were airborne in the area at the time. However, the Ministry of Defense clarified that the aircraft were conducting a reconnaissance mission. Prime Minister Petteri Orpo later confirmed that no force had been used against the drones.

Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen said the authorities are treating the incident with utmost seriousness. "The investigation is ongoing, and more information will be provided once it has been confirmed," he said.

Public broadcaster Yle reported that a local resident alerted police at 10:04 a.m. after noticing an object falling into a nearby forest.

In a separate statement, police said they were "working to determine the origin of the flying objects."

In a radio interview, Orpo suggested that the drones were likely Ukrainian. He noted that Russia frequently engages in electronic interference against drones, which may have caused drones to veer off course into Finnish territory. He also emphasized the need for Finland to strengthen its preparedness to counter drone-related incidents.

Ukraine has recently targeted Russian sites at the Rus-



Hakkanen

sian end of the Gulf of Finland. A major fire broke out at Russia's Ust-Luga port on Sunday following a wave of drone attacks over the past week, Russian media reported. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

3 found dead in Germany: A man, a woman, and a child were found dead in a single-family home near the southern German city of Nuremberg, police said on Sunday, adding that the case is being investigated as a suspected homicide.

A witness found them in a detached house and alerted authorities at around noon, according to local media. Police have not yet confirmed whether the three victims were members of the same family, as formal identification is still pending.

A wide area around the property has been cordoned off as investigations continue. (Xinhua)

□ □ □

Romania adopts emergency ordinance: The Romanian government approved an emergency ordinance declaring a crisis situation on the crude oil and petroleum products market, including gasoline and diesel, for the period from April 1 to June 30.

The measures aim to protect the economy and consumers amid rising pressure in energy markets, the government said.

Authorities noted that the period may be extended in increments of up to three months if conditions persist, with policies subject to regular review.

Under the ordinance, fuel producers, importers and distributors will be required to cap commercial markups at their 2025 average levels.

The government said the move is intended to deter speculative behavior and prevent unjustified price increases. Companies must report markup data to the National Agency for Fiscal Administration, with fines ranging from 0.5 percent to 1 percent of annual turnover for violations. (Xinhua)



People listen to the speech of former Hungarian government insider Peter Magyar next to Kossuth Square on Tuesday, in Budapest, Hungary on March 26, 2024. (AP)

Youth-led push for change threatens Orbán's 16-yr rule in Hungary elections

BUDAPEST, Hungary, March 30, (AP): A group of friends in their mid-20s campaigned door to door last week in a small Hungarian city, supporting a political movement that soon could end Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's 16-year grip on power.

The young men from Hungary's Lake Balaton region were volunteering for the center-right Tiszta party and its leader, Péter Magyar, and campaigning to move past what they described as Orbán's broken system.

"We've lived our whole lives in this system, and we want to see what it could be like outside of it," said Florián Végh, a 25-year-old student. "I can say on behalf of my fellow university students and my friends that this system is absolutely dysfunctional."

A generational gap is widening, with Hungary's youth pushing overwhelmingly for an end to Orbán's autocratic rule while the oldest citizens remain loyal to the prime minister — a split that could be a decisive factor in the April 12 elections. Orbán, 62, trails in the polls behind Magyar, a 45-year-old lawyer who broke with Orbán's nationalist-populist Fidesz party over a political scandal in 2024. He has led Tiszta on a rapid political rise, inspiring a voting cohort that had largely avoided politics for at least two decades.

Fidesz's declining popularity during economic stagnation and political and



Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán speaks during a countryside campaign tour in Kaposvár, Hungary on March 16, 2026, ahead of April 12 parliamentary election. (AP)

corruption scandals has widened the demographic divide. A recent survey by pollster 21 Research Center found that 65% of voters under 30 support Tiszta, while 14% are backing Orbán.

One Tiszta volunteer, 24-year-old student Levente Koltai, pointed out that Fidesz is an acronym in Hungarian for "Alliance of Young Democrats." But he believes the party no longer lives up to its name.

"Fidesz has lost the title of young,

democratic and alliance," he told The Associated Press. "It's gone from young to old, from democratic to tending toward dictatorial, and from an alliance to a circle of cronies."

Andrea Szabó, a senior researcher with Eötvös Loránd University's Institute for Political Science in Budapest, said a changing of the guard was emerging in Hungary, where "a new, active political generation is beginning to unfold before our eyes."

Russia expels British diplomat

Top DPRK leader's visit still on agenda: Moscow

MOSCOW, March 30, (Xinhua): Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko said the visit of the top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Kim Jong Un, to Russia remains on the agenda, according to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.

The visit of Kim, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, is still on the agenda, with dates to be coordinated through diplomatic channels, Rudenko said in an interview with the TASS news agency published on Saturday on the ministry's website.

Regular high-level meetings help strengthen bilateral relations, Rudenko said.

The DPRK side has not yet released an official statement on the matter.

Also:

MOSCOW: Russia has revoked the accreditation of a British diplomat over "intelligence and subversive activities," the Federal Security Service (FSB) said Monday.

The diplomat, identified as second secretary of the British Embassy **Janse Van Rensburg**, has been ordered to leave the country within two weeks, according to an FSB statement.

The security service said it had documented the diplomat's attempts to obtain sensitive information during informal meetings with Russian economic experts.

It also said that the British diplomat provided false information when entering Russia and was involved in activities posing a threat to the country's national security.

□ □ □



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting via videoconference in Moscow on March 27. (AP)

ST PETERSBURG: A major fire broke out at Russia's Ust-Luga port on Sunday following a wave of drone attacks over the past week, local media reported.

The Ust-Luga port, a major oil export terminal roughly 150 km west of St. Petersburg, has been repeatedly targeted by Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in recent days, with emergency crews working to contain the blaze. The week of drone attacks marked the largest such assault on Leningrad Oblast since 2022.

According to the TASS news agency, Russian air defense systems has repelled continuous waves of drone attacks from Monday to Sunday, with 235 UAVs shot down.

INTERNATIONAL



Myanmar lawmakers attend a session at Lower House of Parliament in Naypyitaw, Myanmar on March 30. (AP)

Myanmar's parliament houses nominate candidates for VP

NAY PYI TAW, March 30, (Xinhua): Myanmar's Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) on Monday held separate sessions to nominate the country's vice-presidential candidates.

During the sessions, Pyithu Hluttaw nominated Min Aung Hlaing and Kyaw Swe as candidates. Meanwhile, Amyotha Hluttaw nominated Nan Ni Ni Aye and Manam Tu Ja.

According to the election procedures, the groups of elected representatives from Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw will each elect one vice president. The group of military representatives from both houses of the Union Parliament will elect another vice president.

The presidential electoral college, composed of all representatives of the Union Parliament, will elect the president from among the three elected vice presidents. Enditem

Meanwhile, Ye Win Oo has been appointed Myanmar's commander-in-chief of defence services, military-owned Myawady TV reported on Monday.

Ye Win Oo succeeded Min Aung Hlaing, who had served as the commander-in-chief of defence services since March 30, 2011.

The handover ceremony of the commander-in-chief of defence services was held with guards of honor at the Zeyathiri Beikman in Nay Pyi Taw on Monday morning.

Also:

YANGON: Myanmar celebrated its 81st anniversary of Armed Forces Day with a military parade in the capital **Nay Pyi Taw** recently in commemoration of the start of its anti-fascist movement during World War II.

Speaking at the military parade event, Chairman of the State Security and Peace Commission and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General **Min Aung Hlaing** said the anniversary is a solemn and proud occasion that resonates with the enduring legacy of the Armed Forces, forged in the crucible of the nation's struggle for independence.

He also said that the Tatmadaw (Myanmar armed forces) has faithfully discharged its sacred duties, unflinchingly upholding the welfare of the nation and its people above all considerations throughout successive epochs.

The Tatmadaw shall remain steadfast, a modern and patriotic institution that ensures the wellbeing of the nation and its people, he added.

Asia

Accused police killer shot dead in Australia: Australian police said they believe they shot dead a suspect Monday accused of killing two police officers and seriously wounding a third in a remote forest region seven months ago.



Bush

There had been no confirmed sightings of Dezi Freeman, 56, since he allegedly opened fire on police officers who came to serve a warrant at his home near Porepunkah in Victoria state northeast of Melbourne on Aug 26 last year, Victoria's Chief Commissioner of Police **Mike Bush** said on Monday.

A man believed to be Freeman was fatally shot by police on Monday at a remote location near Thologolong, around two hours' drive north of Porepunkah, a police statement said.

"We believe it is Freeman, but we have to go through a formal identification process," Bush told reporters in Melbourne. Identification could take up to 48 hours through processes including fingerprinting.

Heavily armed Special Operations Group tactical police were involved in a standoff for three hours before the suspect was shot. He had been inside a shelter like a shipping container and did take up a police offer to surrender, Bush said. (AP)



Boat sinks in Indonesia, 27 missing: A motor vessel, named Nazila 05, sank in the northern waters of Taliabu Island in Indonesia's North Maluku province, leaving 27 passengers missing, the Palu Search and Rescue Office reported on Monday.

The incident was first reported by the boat owner at around 10 a.m. local time, prompting authorities to launch a search and rescue operation, said Muh Rizal, head of the Palu Search and Rescue Office, in a written statement.

He added that further developments regarding the search and rescue operation would be delivered in the next report. (Xinhua)

Cambodia's parliament adopts law on combating online scams, with life imprisonment for scam bosses

PHNOM PENH, March 30, (Xinhua): The National Assembly of Cambodia on Monday passed a draft law on combating online scams, which will deliver up to 30 years or life imprisonment to scam bosses. A total of 112 lawmakers in attendance unanimously approved the draft bill.

According to the bill, online scam bosses will face between 15 and 30 years or life imprisonment if their operations lead to one or many deaths.

Ringleaders of online scam centers will face between five and 10 years in prison and a fine of up to 1 billion riels (250,000 U.S. dollars), and they will face between 10 and 20 years in jail and a fine of up to 2 billion riels (500,000 dollars) if their operations are found to involve violence, torture, illegal confinement, human trafficking, or forced labor.

Online scammers will be imprisoned between two and five years with a fine of up to 500 million riels (125,000 dollars).

Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Minister Koet Rith said Cambodia was one of many countries in the re-



Journalists look at equipment confiscated in a raid by Cambodian police at a scam center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on March 11. (AP)

gion that criminals had used to operate online scams.

"This crime has not only seriously

affected public security and order, but also badly damaged Cambodia's reputation and image on the international

stage," he told the parliament.

Koet Rith said the law would "enhance the effectiveness of the fight against online scams, aiming at safeguarding security and public order as well as enhancing the effectiveness of cooperation in combating online scams."

The draft bill will need to be finally reviewed by the Senate before being submitted to King Norodom Sihamoni for promulgation.

The kingdom has launched an unprecedented nationwide crackdown on cyber scam networks to maintain social security, safety, and public order, and to restore the kingdom's image on the international stage.

The Southeast Asian country is committed to eradicating all online scam centers by April this year.

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sar Sokha said in February that Cambodia had deported more than 30,000 suspected foreign scammers, as over 210,000 others had voluntarily left the kingdom after operations against online scams had intensified since June 2025.

Floods and landslide leave 3 dead, 5 injured

Afghanistan accuses Pakistan of shelling outskirts of eastern city, killing and wounding civilians

KABUL, Afghanistan, March 30, (Agencies): Afghanistan's government accused Pakistan's military of shelling the outskirts of an eastern Afghan city on Sunday, killing one person and wounding more than a dozen in the latest episode of renewed fighting between the two neighboring countries.

The fighting, which erupted in late February, has been the most severe between Afghanistan and Pakistan in decades.

Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of providing a safe haven for militants who carry out attacks inside Pakistan, especially for the Pakistani Taliban. The group is separate but closely allied with the Afghan Taliban, which seized power in Afghanistan in 2021 during the chaotic withdrawal of US-led troops. Kabul denies the allegation.

Afghan deputy government spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said that "mortars and other heavy weaponry" were used Sunday afternoon to strike rural areas and civilian homes on the outskirts of the city of Asadabad in Kunar Province.

In a post on X accompanied by photos of wounded children, Fitrat said that preliminary figures indicated that one person had been killed and 16

others were wounded, mostly women and children. There was no immediate response from Pakistan to the accusations.

The fighting between Afghanistan and Pakistan has seen repeated cross-border clashes as well as airstrikes inside Afghanistan, including several in the Afghan capital Kabul.

Earlier this month, Afghanistan said that a Pakistani airstrike had hit a drug treatment hospital in Kabul, killing more than 400 people. The UN humanitarian affairs office has said the total death toll is still under verification. Pakistan has disputed the claim and denied targeting civilians, saying that it struck an ammunition depot.

The fighting in February began when Afghanistan launched a cross-border raid into Pakistan, saying it was in retaliation for deadly Pakistani airstrikes on Afghan border areas that it said had killed only civilians. Islamabad had said the strikes were targeting militants.

Last month, Pakistan declared that it was in "open war" with Afghanistan. The conflict has alarmed the international community, particularly as the area is one where other militant organizations, including al-Qaeda and the Is-



Taliban police guard the area where a strike hit a house in the Momand Dara district of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, near the border with Pakistan on March 13. (AP)

lamic State group, still have a presence and have been trying to resurface.

The two sides declared a temporary truce last week before the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, following mediation by Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar. The truce expired earlier this

week, and renewed fighting erupted on Wednesday, with Afghan officials saying that at least two civilians had been killed in eastern Afghanistan.

Tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan has been high for months. The most recent fighting has upended

a Qatari-mediated ceasefire in October that had halted earlier clashes between the two sides that had killed dozens of civilians, security forces and militants. The two sides differ widely on the casualty figures.

Peace talks held in Istanbul in November failed to reach a long-term solution.

Also:

KABUL: At least three people were killed and five others injured following heavy rains, floods, and a landslide in parts of **Afghanistan**, the official media Bakhtar news agency reported on Monday.

According to the report, two people lost their lives and five others were injured after floods triggered by heavy rainfall hit eastern **Laghman** province and western **Herat** province earlier in the day.

In a separate incident, a child was killed when a landslide struck an area in northern Afghanistan's **Sar-e Pul** province.

The recent downpours and ensuing floods have also caused widespread damage in several provinces, destroying homes as well as agricultural lands and orchards.

Authorities have urged residents, particularly those living in vulnerable and flood-prone areas, to remain cautious as adverse weather conditions continue to pose risks.

Meanwhile, at least 320 commuters have been killed and more than 16,500 others injured in road accidents across western Afghanistan's Herat province over the past year, local media outlet TOLONews reported on Monday.

In the past week alone, 11 individuals were killed and 430 others injured in traffic accidents, according to records at the provincial hospital, TOLONews quoted the hospital's official as saying.



KABUL: Afghan police arrested 10 individuals and confiscated 11 firearms, including eight Kalashnikov assault rifles, in the eastern **Laghman** province on Sunday, a news release from the provincial police office said Monday.

The arrested individuals, from two villages in **Alishing** district, began firing at each other after a quarrel over a disputed issue, the news release said, adding that police arrived at the scene and took all of them into custody.

Central Haitian town descends into fire, bloodshed from gang warfare

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, March 30, (AP): Violence erupted in the central Haitian town of Petite-Rivière de l'Artibonite early Sunday morning as a powerful gang warred with a vigilante group, regional officials confirmed to The Associated Press.

The rampage from the gang **Gran Grif** left bloodied bodies scattered across the streets of the neighborhood of Jean-Denis, videos show. Gangs set fire to houses and left civilians reeling.

It wasn't immediately clear how many people were slain by the gang. The massacre is just the latest bloodshed in a nation that has been left reeling by spiraling gang warfare for five years following the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse.

Around 2023, vigilante groups began to emerge in the Caribbean nation to strike back against gangs sucking the life from Haiti. The wave of brutal vigilante justice has made the conflict in Haiti even more complicated at the same time as international forces have sought to pacify the country.

Vigilante groups often close off neighborhoods, stone and chop off the



A police officer stands guard in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on March 3. (AP)

limbs of suspected gangster, behead them and set them afire, sometimes while they are still alive.

Meanwhile, the **Gran Grif** gang has continued to sow terror in the Artibonite region of Haiti, where Petite-Rivière de l'Artibonite is located. The **Gran Grif** gang was among a number of Haitian gangs to be designated as

a foreign terrorist organization by the Trump administration last year.

According to the U.N., it's the largest gang in the region, responsible for 80% of civilian deaths there. It has massacred and raped civilians, including a minor, forced thousands of people to flee their homes and dismembered people, the organization said.

Lat/Am

2 killed in Brazil small plane crash: Two people on board a small aircraft were killed after it crashed on Sunday in Rio Claro in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro state, according to authorities.

The crash occurred at approximately 11:55 a.m. local time near the Sao Joao Marcos road, where the aircraft went down in a private forested area.

Firefighters said that when rescue teams arrived at the scene, both occupants showed no signs of life. Rescue and response operations are still underway, and technical experts will conduct an on-site investigation.

Brazil's National Civil Aviation Agency said the aircraft was registered as an experimental category plane and was authorized to operate only during daytime. (Xinhua)

Costa Rica to accept 25 deportees from US: Costa Rica said that it would accept 25 migrants deported from the United States per week as part of an agreement to help the Trump administration's latest policy of deporting immigrants to "third countries."

The Central American nation joins a growing number of countries across Africa and the Americas that have signed contentious, often secretive agreements with the US to accept deportees from other countries as US President Donald Trump pressures governments to help him advance his agenda. In many cases, migrants who previously hoped to seek asylum in the US are left in a legal "black hole" in foreign countries where they don't speak the language.

Countries who have agreed to receive third-party migrants include South Sudan, Honduras, Rwanda, Guyana, and several Caribbean islands like Dominica and St Kitts and Nevis. (AP)

Gunmen kill more than 70 in South Sudan after dispute at gold mine

JUBA, South Sudan, March 30, (AP): Gunmen killed more than 70 people in South Sudan over a gold mining row on the outskirts of the capital over the weekend, a police spokesperson confirmed on Monday.

A video of dozens of bodies lying on open ground was shared online, and a local journalist said many other victims are believed to have fled to the bushes.



Yakani

The gold mining site at Jebel Iraq in Central Equatoria State has in the past been the site of violent clashes involving illegal miners. Gold mining in South Sudan is largely unregulated, with state governments operating their own sectors independently of national authorities.

Police spokesperson Kwacijwok Dominic Amondok said he would share more information about the attack once he gets more details.

"All I know is that unknown gunmen attacked Jebel Iraq at a gold mine. There are more than 70 dead and many more injured," he said.

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army - In Opposition, or SPLM/A-IO, condemned the attack on Monday and blamed government forces, known as the SSPDF.

"Jebel Iraq lies within a zone that is entirely under the exclusive control of the SSPDF. Consequently, full responsibility for the massacre rests with the SSPDF forces that control the area," a statement from the opposition said.

Human rights activist **Edmund Yakani** urged the authorities to address the emerging trend of communities competing for natural resources.

AGM approves distributing second portion of cash dividends of 14% and bonus shares of 7%

KFH shareholders reaffirm confidence, endorse Board of Directors

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) held its Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly meetings, with a nearly 77.224% quorum, and approved distributing the second portion of cash dividends for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2025, of 14% of the nominal share value (14 fils per share), noting that 2025 semi-annual cash dividend of 10 fils per share was distributed previously.

The AGM approved the distribution of 7% bonus shares to shareholders.

Additionally, Non-independent and Independent Board Members for the next 3 years term (17th session 2026-2028) were elected where shareholders reaffirmed confidence and endorsed Board of Directors. The General Assembly meeting resulted in the election by acclamation of the undermentioned board members.

All items on the agenda for both the Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly meetings for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2025, were also approved.

Chairman's Message

Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq said: On behalf of myself and my fellow members of the Board of Directors of KFH, I would like to present to you the 2025 KFH Group Annual Report, including major achievements, consolidated financial statements, and other reports.

KFH continued the pursuit of its ambitious strategy, reinforcing its leadership in the financial and Islamic banking sector. KFH reaffirmed its commitment to providing the best banking and financing solutions by leveraging the latest digital innovations and Artificial Intelligence technologies. This approach is designed to deliver integrated and innovative services and products that meet the needs of its corporate, institutional, and retail clients across various sectors, enhancing its competitive edge and expanding its geographical footprint in key markets.

KFH achieved outstanding financial performance, highlighted by the sustained delivery of record net profits, positioning us as the leader among Kuwaiti banks and across the broader market. This performance was underpinned by our success in preserving asset quality through the adoption of prudent credit and robust risk management policies. These measures proved essential in mitigating the impact of global economic fluctuations and operational difficulties within our markets. Furthermore, we substantially strengthened our customer confidence and deposit base, ensuring both a powerful profitability foundation and stable, robust levels of capital adequacy and liquidity. This performance led to KFH securing the rank of the country's best-performing bank in The Banker magazine's prestigious 2025 ranking of the top 1000 global banks.

Our success stems not only from positive financial indicators but also from the effective execution of several strategic pillars. These include the diversification of activities, funding sources, and revenues, strengthened cooperation and coordination across the Group, and successful digital transformation. This transformation was realized through ongoing investment in Fintech solutions, the launch of new digital banking products, a focus on operational efficiency and cost rationalization, and the establishment of robust safety and financial stability buffers against operational challenges. These initiatives are managed under a comprehensive framework emphasizing sustainability, green finance, transparency, strong governance, and social responsibility.

The most important financial statements and indicators for 2025 are as follows:

KFH, by the grace of Allah, reported a net profit for its shareholders of KD 632.1 million up to the end of 2025, an increase of 5.0% compared to last year. Earnings per share reached 35.64 Fils; an increase of 5.8%, compared to last year.

Net financing income increased to KD 1.3 billion; an increase of 11.5% compared to last year. Net operating income increased to KD 1.2 billion; an increase of 10.7% compared to last year. Total assets reached KD 42.8 billion; an increase of 6.1 billion or 16.5%, compared to last year.

Depositors' accounts reached KD 21.0 billion, while the Capital Adequacy Ratio recorded a rate of 19.81%, which is above the regulatory requirement, compared with 19.89% as of December 31, 2024.

The Board of Directors considered the distribution of cash dividends to shareholders of 24% (including 10% in H1 2025). The Board of Directors also considered the distribution of bonus shares of 7% after the approval of the General Assembly and the competent authorities, considering the distributed returns on investment deposits and saving accounts as shown in the following table:

At the start of last year, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) unveiled its new visual identity under the slogan "Beyond Horizons". This strategic move reflected KFH's trajectory of growth, success, and global expansion, and underscored its dedication to technology, innovation, and enhanced leadership and excellence in Islamic banking. The new identity was also adopted by KFH - Egypt and KFH - Bahrain, respectively. To further recognize and manage



Hamad Al-Marzouq



Khaled Al-Shamlan

Account type	2025 (%)	2024 (%)
Investment Deposit "Al-Khumasiya"	4.600	4.650
Investment Deposit "Continuous"	4.150	4.200
Investment Deposit "Al-Dimah" 12 Months	3.750	4.000
Investment Deposit "Al-Dimah" 6 Months	3.575	3.825
Long Term Investments Plans	3.450	3.700
Investment Deposit "Al-Sedra"	3.150	3.350
Investment Saving Account	0.250	0.250



Khalid Al-Nisf



Ahmed Ali Al-Qadhi



Fahad Al-Ghanim



Mazen Mohammed Madouh



Abdulaziz Al-Nafisi



Muad Al-Osaimi



Abdulkarim Al-Samdan



Mohammad Naser Al-Fouzari

the increasing strategic importance of our international presence, the Group established the International Banking Unit. Operating from the Mishref branch, this unit is tasked with spearheading the next phase of growth and value creation for the Group.

Driven by our commitment to supporting the ambitious economic transformation plans in Kuwait and the wider region and leveraging our ability to meet the diverse financing needs of various economic sectors, KFH actively led and participated in several prominent deals. These deals focused on financing Kuwaiti companies, major development projects, SMEs, and entrepreneurs. KFH's contribution in key sectors in Kuwait, including oil, gas, energy, water desalination, and infrastructure, amounted to approximately KD 500 million.

Regionally, KFH led, arranged, and participated in sovereign financings and deals across the real estate development, trade, industry, retail services, and energy sectors in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. These deals totaled more than USD 3 billion, confirming KFH's diverse and influential role in driving regional economic growth.

KFH Capital, the investment arm of Kuwait Finance House (KFH), has successfully arranged and led over USD 29 billion in Sukuk issuances for governments, institutions, and companies across various sectors and markets. KFH Capital has also established two real estate funds in the U.S. valued at USD 145 million, introduced Equity Trading Finance product on Boursa Kuwait, and launched KFH Wealth e-application to facilitate remote wealth monitoring and transaction execution for its clients.

KFH Group treasury has increased its foreign exchange activities within the year to reach a total volume of USD 165+ billion. To meet growing client demand, precious metals services and products were expanded. The Group's total Sukuk investment portfolio size reached more than USD 23 billion, including USD 2.38 billion in ESG Sukuk, a growth of more than 30%. The newly launched KFH Sukuk Trading Portfolio achieved over USD 6.8 billion in trade during its first nine months, confirming its role as an active market maker.

KFH intensified its efforts to invest in its employees, enhance their efficiency, and develop their capabilities. Consequently, the Group achieved a remarkable 91% participation rate in its annual employee engagement survey for 2025.

KFH's commitment to developing and empow-

ering Kuwaiti competencies is reflected in the increased percentage of national employment to 83.7%. This focus is reinforced by comprehensive training programs across all job levels, delivering a total of 96,474 training hours to 2592 employees.

In 2025, KFH significantly developed its work environment, improving both employee experience and job satisfaction. The bank achieved a new milestone by winning nine Brandon Hall Group awards for excellence in human resources, education, and development.

In line with our digital transformation strategy and efforts to enhance technical infrastructure and cybersecurity, we launched several advanced systems. These include the automation of credit card collection and profit distribution, AI-based screening for letters of credit, and features like facial recognition and a fraud detection model.

We launched a suite of innovative digital products and competitive services. Key offerings include the addition of QR codes to letters of guarantee, a virtual prepaid card, and an investment management platform. We also introduced Financing Against Gold Account Collateral, toll-free calls to some Group subsidiaries, real-time foreign currency pricing, trading on our e-channels, and mobile payment services for corporates. Internally, digitization covered the operations of the Legal, Private Banking, and Financial Control Departments.

The Group's automation and AI initiatives have contributed to improved efficiency and the integration of technological innovation with operational expertise in finance and card services. The introduction of the Afaq payment system and the implementation of automated processes using robotics stand out as the most prominent achievements in the digital transformation of operations.

The Group Strategic Planning and Follow-up department played a pivotal role in updating the annual strategic business plan and ensuring its implementation through the application of the Balanced Scorecard and the standardization of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Furthermore, Sharia Research and Advisory significantly contributed to developing services and products by offering professional support and Sharia advice.

KFH restructured all local activities and operations across its markets, placing them under the Group Private Banking and Wealth Management umbrella. This move enabled the launch of new initiatives, including Discretionary Portfolio Management and an expansion of the bank's wealth management product suite.

Our customers demonstrated strong trust and loyalty in many of our products. This is highlighted by Gold Account, which recorded its highest level of sales and purchases since its launch, with total trading volumes reaching about 2.8 tons of gold. The investment deposits portfolio also posted a notable growth of 4.9%, while the Financing Against Gold Account Collateral product witnessed strong demand. Meanwhile, the strong demand for the Zafafi financing product reflected the distinctiveness of its objective: covering the essential requirements of marriage. By improving the E-Corp platform, we were able to accommodate the steady increase in our corporate clients' utilization of digital banking services.

Utilizing AI and e-channels, we introduced Kuwait's first AI virtual assistant, Fahad, to handle customer inquiries, coinciding with a redesign of the KFH online application and ATMs. The app was further enhanced with a customer profile and benefits page. We also launched the Hybrid Branch in The Avenues mall, blending digital and human banking services. Internally, the Speech Analytics system improved call center quality, while the Sharia Research and Advisory utilized the Smart Sharia Bot Program to enhance the mechanism for Sharia research and responses.

As a result of successive achievements, KFH secured around 60 awards from international providers and maintained positive ratings from international rating agencies. The bank also strengthened its social responsibility practices through

numerous contributions, most notably providing KD 15 million to build a cardiac diseases and research center, establishing the tenth ward in the Addiction Treatment Center, and contributing to a campaign to pay off the debts of defaulting debtors.

Furthermore, I would like to emphasize that KFH is proceeding with its integrated corporate strategy and future vision, which are

based on sustainability, innovation, and digital excellence, in order to meet the aspirations of its shareholders and customers. KFH will continue to implement decisions and reforms that enhance growth and sustain high profitability, while simultaneously strengthening its sectoral and geographical presence. The bank will also accelerate efforts to rank among the top 100 global banks and consolidate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices across its operations.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah safeguard him, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Our thanks and appreciation are also extended to the Central Bank of Kuwait and all the regulatory authorities for their constant support to the banking sector in the State of Kuwait. The Board of Directors would also like to express its sincere gratitude to the esteemed shareholders, customers, KFH Executive Management, and all employees for their efforts and cooperation throughout the year.

Group CEO Message

Meanwhile, KFH Group CEO- Khaled Yousef Al-Shamlan said: In 2025, KFH solidified its position as a leading global Islamic financial institution. This success was underpinned by robust operational and financial performance, a disciplined and well-defined strategy, and seamless integration across the Group's subsidiaries in key markets. KFH successfully aligned its growth plans with evolving economic developments by expanding its core business and enhancing operational efficiency through the adoption of FinTech. Furthermore, by continuously investing in its workforce, specifically in national talent, KFH ensures sustainable leadership and the delivery of consistent value.

Operational and financial performance

The Group sustained its record financial results and growth in core business areas, while significantly improving operational performance. The Group reported net profit of KD 632.1 million attributable to the shareholders of the bank; an increase of 5.0% compared to last year 2024. These historic profits are the highest in the Kuwaiti banking sector. Net Financing income for the year 2025 reached KD 1.3 billion; an increase of 11.5% compared to last year. Net operating income reached KD 1.2 billion, an increase of 10.7% compared to last year. Financing receivables reached about KD 21.8 billion, an increase of KD 2.7 billion, or 14.4%, compared to last year.

Total assets reached KD 42.8 billion for the year 2025, an increase of KD 6.1 billion, or 16.5%, compared to last year. This growth was accompanied by an upward trend across all key financial indicators.

Continued on Page 9



Hamad Al-Marzouq, Dr. Sayyed Al-Tabtaba'e, Khaled Al-Shamlan, and Abdulkarim Al-Samdan during the General Assembly.



Hamad Al-Marzouq, Khaled Al-Shamlan, and Abdulkarim Al-Samdan



Khalid Al-Nisf, Fahad Al-Ghanim, and Muad Al-Osaimi

Continued from Page 8
Strategy pillars

The Group's strategy is founded on three core pillars, which are periodically refined to ensure alignment with market requirements and shareholder expectations. First, the Group prioritizes digital transformation by upgrading systems and platforms, enhancing infrastructure readiness, and leveraging advanced analytics to build comprehensive automation capabilities that accelerate service delivery and mitigate operational risks. Second, the Group pursues excellence in customer service by elevating the banking experience through integrated digital channels, improved turnaround times, and the development of loyalty programs that offer competitive benefits to both individual and corporate segments. Finally, the Group focuses on enhancing synergy and integration across its banks by unifying common platforms, harmonizing policies, and exchanging best practices to foster innovation and drive superior performance efficiency.

KFH established the Group International Banking Unit (GIBU) and unveiled its new visual identity, "Beyond Horizons". This new identity reaffirmed KFH's dedication to sustained growth and innovation. The Group's operations across Bahrain, Egypt, Turkey, and the United Kingdom achieved substantial advancements in both performance and services. This progress was furthered by the expansion of financial and operational integration initiatives, which aligned all entities under a unified framework for risk and performance.

Sustainability

KFH continues to integrate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into its investment, financing, and operational models. The Bank also released its fifth Sustainability Report and third Carbon Footprint Report, underscoring its commitment to aligning corporate objectives with national directives and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the financial markets, the Group increased its ESG Sukuk exposure to nearly USD 2.38 billion in 2025, up from USD 1.81 billion in 2024. This growth of more than 30% underscores the Group's leadership in sustainable finance within the Islamic finance industry.

KFH has further enriched its track record in social contributions with new initiatives, chief among them is pledging KD 15 million to fund the creation and equipping of a dedicated cardiac diseases and research center at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital. Additionally, KFH contributed to the establishment of the 10th ward of the Addiction Treatment Center. KFH also contributed to launching a strategic initiative in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs to settle the indebtedness of defaulting debtors. KFH also continued its leading role in providing social contributions to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), the National Employment Support Program, and Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies



The General Assembly held at the bank's headquarters.



Part of the General Assembly attendance.

(KIBS).

Achievement and leadership

The Group's achievements throughout 2025 underscore its strong execution and the effective synergy maintained across its diverse business lines. Notably, the Group solidified its leadership in the Sukuk market through KFH Capital, its investment arm. KFH Capital led and arranged Sukuk issuances totalling more than USD 29 billion, serving governments, institutions, and corporations across multiple global markets, as well as managing local and regional issuances for leading financial institutions.

The Group launched two real estate funds in the United States, totaling over USD 145 million in high-quality investments designed to generate stable income and enhance asset value.

KFH successfully issued a USD 850 million Additional Tier 1 Mudaraba Sukuk, the largest of its kind in Kuwait. The issuance saw exceptional demand, with subscription orders of over USD 1.7 billion, more than twice the issue size.

KFH successfully issued a USD 1 billion Sen-

ior Unsecured Sukuk. The issuance was oversubscribed, with the order book reaching more than double the target size. This move supports the Bank's strategy to grow its capital, diversify funding, and back Kuwait's development projects.

On the corporate side, KFH led several landmark transactions in Kuwait. A key highlight was the successful underwriting of the Islamic tranche of KD 675 million for Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, as part of a broader KD 1.5 billion syndicated Islamic and conventional facility. KFH retained a final hold of KD 405 million, representing its share as the primary strategic partner of the oil sector, in addition to other facilities provided by the Bank for infrastructure and energy projects.

In digital innovation, KFH customers completed over 600 million digital transactions in 2025. This reflects strong customer trust and highlights the Bank's leadership in modern financial solutions. In addition, the Group expanded KFHOnline, upgraded the KFH Rewards program, and improved the eCorp platform for corporate clients.

Regarding human capital, KFH solidified its standing with nine Brandon Hall awards recognizing its excellence in talent development and re-

ruitment. This success stems from a commitment to empowering Kuwaiti talent, fostering the inclusion of people with disabilities, and conducting impactful internal engagement. Additionally, the Group's global reputation was reaffirmed by winning nearly 60 international awards from major providers including Euromoney, Global Finance, MEED, and EMEA Finance. Notably, The Banker ranked KFH as the "Best Performing Bank in Kuwait for 2025".

Outlook

KFH will remain steadfast in strengthening its financial and operational performance, achieving sustainable growth, innovating banking services and products while reinforcing integration across the Group's subsidiaries. Additionally, KFH will continue moving forward to promote digital transformation and develop its human capital, the cornerstone of the Group's success. We will also continue to integrate sustainability in operations, enhance Private Banking and Wealth Management services, increase institutional and social partnerships, as well as expand sustainable finance and leverage its tools in the Islamic finance markets.

Non-Independent Members

- Mr. Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq- Chairman
- Mr. Abdulaziz Yacoub Al-Nafisi- Vice Chairman
- Mr. Khalid Salem Al-Nisf
- Mr. Muad Saoud Al-Osaimi
- Mr. Fahad Ali Al-Ghanim
- Mr. Mohammad Naser Al-Fouzan
- Kuwait Investment Authority

Represented by:

- Mrs. Hanan Fares Al-Fares
The Public Institution for Social Security

Represented by:

- Mr. Abdullah Falah Al-Mdaires
The Public Authority for Minors Affairs allied with the Awqaf Public Foundation

Represented by:

- Mrs. Alyaa Fahed Al-Saqer
The Kuwait Investment Authority

Represented by:

- Mr. Naser Abdullateef Al-Rodhan

Independent Members

- Sheikh Salem Abdulaziz Al-Saud Al-Sabah
- Mr. Rasheed Mohamed Almaraj
- Mr. Mazen Mohammad Madooh
- Mr. Ahmed Ali Al Qadhi

The General Assembly meeting was followed by a meeting held by the new Board of Directors where Mr. Hamad Al Marzouq was elected as the Chairman of the board by recommendation, and Mr. Abdulaziz Alnafisi as the Vice Chairman by recommendation.

The Board members whose tenure has ended are as follows:

- Salah Abdulaziz Al Muraikhi- Representative of Kuwait Investment Authority
- Ahmad Meshari Al Fares
- Noorur Rahman Abid
- Ahmad Abdullah Al Omar

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah safeguard him, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Our thanks and appreciation are also extended to the Central Bank of Kuwait and all the regulatory authorities, shareholders, customers, KFH Executive Management and employees for their efforts and cooperation throughout the year.

With a quorum of 72.062%

Warba holds FY25 AGM, approves 5% cash dividend and 5% bonus shares



Photo of the general assembly.



Board members group photo.

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: Warba Bank held its postponed Ordinary General Assembly Meeting for the financial year ended 31 December 2025. The General Assembly approved all agenda items, most notably the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividend of 5% (equivalent to 5 fils per share) and bonus shares of 5% (equivalent to 5 shares for every 100 shares), to shareholders registered in the bank's records on the entitlement date.

The General Assembly was held at an exceptional time, reflecting the strength of the bank's financial position and its ability to meet its obligations to shareholders and customers despite the geopolitical challenges facing Kuwait and the wider region. Warba's financial results for 2025 showed notable growth across all key indicators, underscoring the success of the bank's expansion strategy and the strength of its risk management framework.

"The People's Bank": A Promise of Loyalty

In remarks marked by gratitude, Warba Bank Chairman Mr. Hamad Musaed Al-Sayer opened his speech by expressing his appreciation to Kuwait's leadership and all those safeguarding the nation's security. He said: "First, we would like to express our deepest appreciation to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may God protect him, and to His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, may God protect him, for their wisdom and sound leadership. We also extend our pride and appreciation to our brave men in the military, police, ad fire service, to our dedicated medical teams, and to every vigilant eye working with sincerity and commitment to protect the safety and security of our beloved Kuwait and its loyal people."

Al-Sayer reaffirmed the bank's deeply rooted identity, saying: "When we speak about Warba Bank, we are not simply speaking about a financial institution. We are speaking about 'the people's bank', a bank that grew from the land of Kuwait and was established by its people to serve them. We feel a deep responsibility towards every shareholder who has placed their trust in us and we see ourselves as custodians not only of your money, but also of your hopes and aspirations."

Al-Sayer added: "The decision to distribute dividend today, amid the exceptional circumstances facing our region, carries a message that goes beyond numbers and returns. It is a message of loyalty and commitment and a reflection of our determination to stand by our people. Warba's success is a success for every Kuwaiti home and our real strength comes from your support and trust, which remain our most valuable asset."

Al-Sayer concluded by saying: "We remain committed to dedicating all our efforts and capabilities to living up to your expectations by understanding and responding to the evolving needs of every segment of society, and by delivering services that meet your aspirations at all times and under all circumstances, so that we always remain the bank closest to you."

Strong Financial Performance and Sustainable Growth in 2025

Al-Sayer reviewed the bank's financial results, noting that Warba Bank maintained its upward growth trajectory throughout 2025, delivering financial achievements that reflect the strength of its operating performance and the resilience of its financial position.

The bank's net profit rose by 122% to reach KD 50 million. This growth was driven by a notable 14% increase in operating income, which reached KD 307.4 million, supported by the bank's strategy to diversify income sources,

Al-Sayer:

■ Our vision is shaped by our community and we remain fully committed to meeting its evolving needs and serving all segments of society.

■ The dividend is a message of loyalty to our shareholders who placed their trust in us, and a reaffirmation of our position as a bank founded by the people to serve the people.

Al-Ghanem:

■ The circumstances we are facing have once again shown that Kuwait, through its institutions and its people, is capable of resilience, adaptation and defending the interests of the nation.

■ We remain committed to investing in our national economy and working hand in hand to secure a prosperous future for Kuwait.

■ Warba will continue to play a vital role in supporting economic development and meeting the aspirations of society under all circumstances.

enhance operational efficiency, and achieve strong growth in net financing income, fees and commissions.

In terms of financial position, the bank's total assets rose by 14% to reach KD 6 billion by the end of 2025, reflecting its success in expanding its asset base. The financing portfolio also grew by 10% to reach KD 5 billion, underlining the bank's vital role in financing various sectors of the economy and meeting the financing needs of individuals and businesses alike.

Reflecting growing customer confidence in Warba Bank, customer deposits reached KD 3.5 billion. The bank also maintained a strong capital adequacy ratio of 16.87%, exceeding regulatory requirements and further strengthening its ability to navigate future challenges and capture growth opportunities.

Among the bank's most notable strategic achievements in 2025 was its successful acquisition of a significant stake in Gulf Bank, a move aimed at strengthening its position in the Kuwaiti banking sector and diversifying its investments, with positive implications for future shareholder returns.

What Comes Next: National Commitment and Resilience in the Face of Challenges

For his part, Warba Bank Chief Executive Officer Mr. Shaheen Hamad Al-Ghanem focused in his remarks on the next phase, the challenges it presents, and the opportunities it creates, while underscoring the national role of financial institutions during times of crisis.

Al-Ghanem said: "We are living through a period of uncertainty, with geopolitical challenges casting their shadow across the region. Yet, as Kuwait has

always shown, these circumstances have once again proved that our country, through its institutions and people, has the strength and resilience to protect its achievements, adapt to change and stand united in the higher interest of Kuwait."

He added, reaffirming the bank's steadfast commitment to the nation: "Our message today is clear and firm: Warba Bank is not separate from this country; we are an integral part of its economic and social fabric. That is why we remain committed, with full determination, to investing in our national economy and moving forward with our ambitious development plans. We firmly believe that our role goes beyond banking services. It extends to being a key pillar in supporting the stability and prosperity of our country and contributing actively to the realization of Kuwait's development vision."

Al-Ghanem noted that the bank is fully aware of the scale of the responsibility it carries during this sensitive period and has therefore put in place flexible strategic plans that enable it to respond to all potential scenarios while maintaining business continuity and delivering uninterrupted service to customers.

A Promising Outlook: Innovation and Empowerment

Speaking about the future, Al-Ghanem said Warba Bank will continue to focus in the coming phase on two main priorities: digital innovation and the empowerment of national talent.

On innovation, the bank will continue to invest significantly in strengthening its digital infrastructure and developing smart banking solutions that keep pace with rapid technological developments and respond to evolving customer expectations, particularly among young people, who represent a large segment of the bank's customer base. Through this, the bank aims to deliver a seamless, secure and innovative banking experience that further reinforces its position as a leader in digital banking services.

On empowerment, Al-Ghanem stressed that investment in human capital remains a top priority for Warba Bank. He said: "We believe Kuwait's youth are its true wealth and the leaders of its future. That is why we will continue to support national talent, provide a work environment that encourages creativity and innovation, and empower them to take on leadership positions within the bank, so they can become drivers of positive change and genuine contributors to building a brighter future for our country."

Al-Ghanem concluded with a message of optimism and confidence, saying: "We are confident in Kuwait's ability, through the wisdom of its leadership and the unity of its people, to overcome this period and its challenges and emerge stronger and more resilient. At Warba Bank, we will always remain at the forefront, working with all our capabilities to serve our customers and our community, and to contribute effectively to the journey of development and progress, so that Kuwait remains a land of security, stability and prosperity."

Key Financial Indicators for 2025:

- Net profit increased by 122% to KD 50 million
- Financing receivables increased by 10% to KD 4 billion
- Depositors' accounts increased by 11% to KD 3.5 billion
- Total assets increased by 14% to KD 6 billion

Restores a vital connectivity corridor

First Jazeera flight to Pakistan takes off from temporary base

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: Jazeera Airways operated its first flight to Pakistan via Dammam Airport earlier today, marking a major milestone in restoring connectivity between Kuwait and the country. The flight represents a critical step in the airline's efforts to maintain essential air links for both passengers and cargo, enabling the continued movement of people and supporting communities that rely on these connections.

The inaugural departure from Jazeera's temporary arrivals and departures hall at Kuwait International Fairgrounds, Hall No. 8, was flagged off in the presence of His Excellency Dr. Zafar Iqbal, Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait, alongside Paul Carroll, Chief Commercial Officer of Jazeera Airways, underscoring the importance of this route in reconnecting communities and strengthening bilateral ties.

Pakistan remains a key market for Kuwait, home to a large expatriate community with strong economic and social ties between the two countries. The resumption of services provides a vital link for passengers reuniting with families, returning to work, and undertaking essential travel, while also supporting cargo movement and the continuity of supply chains.

Following the temporary closure of Kuwait International Airport, all outbound flights from

Kuwait were suspended. Jazeera Airways became the first airline to quickly establish an alternative travel corridor via Qaisumah Airport (AQI), and is now operating dual-base services from both Qaisumah and King Fahd International Airport in Dammam (DMM), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The airline offers an integrated air and overland transport solution to ensure passengers can continue their journeys to and from Kuwait despite ongoing operational constraints.

These flights are not just about travel, they are about supporting communities, enabling livelihoods, and ensuring continuity during a crucial time. With flights to Islamabad starting 3 April and to Karachi starting 7 April, Jazeera Airways will operate six weekly flights across three destinations in Pakistan, further strengthening this essential corridor between the two countries.

As part of its expanded operations, Jazeera Airways continues to offer a growing network of more than 25 destinations, over 1,000 flights, 200,000 seats, and 2 million tons of cargo via its Saudi Arabia bases, supporting both passenger travel and cargo flows into Kuwait.

Passengers wishing to travel can book via the Jazeera website: jazeeraairways.com or mobile application.



Jazeera operates first flight to Pakistan.

Premier market gains 0.54% on active trading

Boursa Kuwait ends in positive territory, General index rises 0.45% to 8,372.59 pts

KUWAIT CITY, March 30 (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended trading on Monday in positive territory, with the general index climbing 37.50 points, or 0.45 percent, to close at 8,372.59 points. Trading activity reached 145.9 million shares through 15,727 cash transactions, with a total value of KD 48.14 million, equivalent to about USD 147.7 million.

The main market index edged down slightly by 1.32 points, or 0.02 percent, to 7,598.80 points. The session saw 52.3 million shares exchanged in 5,390 cash transactions, worth KD 9 million, or around USD 33.3 million.

In contrast, the premier market index advanced 47.80 points, or 0.54 percent, to finish at 8,971.80 points. It recorded 93.5 million

shares traded across 10,337 transactions, with a value of KD 39 million, equivalent to approximately USD 119.7 million.

The Main 50 Index also posted gains, rising 45.94 points, or 0.58 percent, to close at 7,908.32 points. It registered 45.3 million shares traded in 4,057 cash transactions, with a value of KD 7.5 million, or about USD 23 million.

Enhancing liquidity on Boursa Kuwait

Markaz Market Maker Team records KD1.68 bln in traded value during '25

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" recorded a strong performance from its Market Maker Team in 2025, executing trades totaling KWD 1.681 billion. Accounting for 6.3 percent of total market traded value on Boursa Kuwait, the Team continued to play a key role in enhancing liquidity and supporting stable trading conditions across the market.

This performance reflects a significant acceleration in year-on-year activity. The Market Maker Team's traded value in 2025 represents a 120 percent increase compared to KWD 762 million in 2024, as Markaz expanded its market-making coverage and activity. On a stock-level basis, the Team accounted for an average of 35.4 percent of traded value across covered securities throughout the year, underscoring sustained participation across its portfolio.

Commenting on the Market Maker Team's outstanding performance, Mr. Azzam Al-Otaibi, Assistant Vice President,



Azzam Al-Otaibi

MENA Equities at Markaz, said: "Being among the first financial institutions to obtain a Market Maker license from Kuwait's Capital Markets Authority (CMA) marked an important milestone for Markaz. Since then, the Market Maker Team has continued to build on that foundation, with our market-maker portfolio now covering 22 listed companies, including 11 mandated for the Premier

Market. Over the past year, our focus has been on consistent execution and close engagement with issuers, which has enabled us to support these companies in maintaining their Premier Market status."

Beyond overall trading volumes, the Market Maker Team's activity delivered tangible outcomes for listed companies across Boursa Kuwait. During the year, Markaz supported Combined Group Contracting (CGC) in meeting the liquidity and trading requirements for its promotion to the Premier Market. In addition, the Team assisted eight listed companies in maintaining their Premier Market status, contributing to stable trading conditions, enhanced issuer confidence, and sustained market performance.

Markaz also continued to broaden its market-making footprint in response to growing issuer demand for structured liquidity support. From the beginning of 2025 to date, the Market Maker Team expanded

its coverage universe from 16 to 22 listed companies, reflecting increased confidence in Markaz's disciplined market-making capabilities and its ability to provide consistent participation across an expanding portfolio of securities.

Backed by deep sectoral expertise and advanced trading infrastructure, Markaz remains among the leading market-making teams in Kuwait and was one of the first institutions to obtain a Market Maker license from Kuwait's Capital Markets Authority (CMA). As Kuwait's capital markets continue to evolve, Markaz remains focused on expanding its market-making activities and partnering with listed companies through disciplined practices that enhance liquidity and support orderly trading. Looking ahead, Markaz aims to build on its growing market participation, contributing to the continued maturation of Boursa Kuwait and the broader investment landscape.

Portfolio diversification and disciplined risk management support stability amid evolving market conditions

NREC reports FY2025 loss of KD 72.4 million driven by one-time non-cash adjustments

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: National Real Estate Company (NREC) reported its financial and operational results for the year ended December 31, 2025.



Faisal Jamil Al-Essa

The Company reported a net loss of KD (72.4) million and a loss per share of (36.32) fils in 2025, compared to a net profit of KD 9.3 million and a profit per share of 4.66 fils in 2024.

Operating revenue totaled KD 3.5 million, compared to KD 5.8 million in 2024, while total assets stood at KD 544 million as of December 31, 2025, compared to KD 574 million in the prior year.

For Q4 2025, NREC recorded a net loss of KD (27.2) million and operating revenue of KD 0.9 million.

Commenting on the Company's results, NREC Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Faisal Jamil Sultan Al-Essa, said: "Our fourth quarter results were impacted by broader market conditions across our investment portfolio. However, our diversified exposure across sectors continues to play a key role in navigating volatility and positioning the Group for long-term resilience.

FY2025 performance was primarily impacted by one-time, non-cash accounting adjustments, including the revaluation of Agility Global PLC following Makhazen's in-kind distribution recognized in Q2 2025, as well as a non-cash adjustment related to the Company's investment in

KOREK Telecom recognized in Q4 2025. These items reflect accounting treatment and do not represent underlying operational performance."

Dividend Recommendation
The Company's Board of Directors has recommended that no dividends or bonus shares be distributed for FY2025, subject to shareholder approval at the General Assembly.

Resilience through Strategic Risk Management

"We remain focused on protecting shareholder value through disciplined risk management frameworks to navigate evolving geopolitical and economic uncertainties, while actively pursuing selective investments and optimizing our portfolio,"

Financial Highlights for the Periods Ended December 31, 2025 (Million KD)						
Item	Q4 2025	Q4 2024	Variance (%)	FY 2025	FY 2024	Variance (%)
Operating Revenue	0.9	2.1	-54.6%	3.5	5.8	-38.7%
Net Revenue	0.6	1.8	-64.3%	2.5	3.9	-35.9%
EBITDA / (Negative EBITDA)	(25.4)	8.9	-385.4%	(63.5)	19.7	-422.6%
Net Profit / (Loss)	(27.2)	5.6	-582.4%	(72.4)	9.3	-877.5%
EPS / (Loss per Share) (fils)	(13.66)	2.97	-559.9%	(36.32)	4.66	-879.4%

Sultan added, **Strengthening Kuwait's Economic Resilience**

In light of current regional developments, NREC reaffirms its role as a long-term partner in supporting Kuwait's economic stability.

Through its strategic exposure to infrastructure and logistics platforms, including Makhazen, the Group is well-positioned to support supply chain resilience, ensure continuity of essential services, and contribute to national priorities during periods of uncertainty.

The Group remains ready to leverage its capabilities, partnerships, and infrastructure exposure to support market stability and the reliable flow

of essential goods and services when required.

Key Projects Update

Reem Mall - Abu Dhabi
Since opening in May 2024, Reem Mall has demonstrated strong early momentum, supported by Abu Dhabi's growing tourism and leisure sector. The mall continues to attract both residents and visitors with its diverse retail, dining, and entertainment offerings, including Snow Abu Dhabi.

NREC is a co-investor in the \$1.3 billion Reem Mall on Reem Island, featuring advanced digital solutions and a curated line-up of global brands and experiences.

Grand Heights - Egypt
The Grand Heights project con-

tinues to progress steadily, offering a modern integrated community near Cairo and meeting growing demand for quality residential developments.

South Aqaba Investment Park - Jordan

The logistics and industrial park maintained full occupancy and stable rental income, demonstrating resilience despite regional challenges.

Strategic Investment in Agility Global PLC

Sultan reaffirmed NREC's commitment to long-term value creation beyond its traditional real estate portfolio through its strategic investment in Agility Global PLC, a diversified logistics and infrastructure group listed on ADX. NREC

holds both direct and indirect stakes through NREC Global Limited and Makhazen Company.

Agility Global manages a portfolio of leading businesses, including Menzies Aviation, Tristar, and Agility Logistics Parks (ALP), operating across logistics, aviation, and industrial infrastructure in key global markets.

Sultan emphasized that this investment supports NREC's diversification strategy, providing exposure to high-growth sectors while reinforcing long-term resilience and value creation.

He added: "Our investment in Agility Global strengthens our diversification strategy and positions NREC to benefit from industries driving global trade and transportation."

Advancing ESG Commitments
"At the Group level, we remain committed to ESG principles aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, embedding sustainability, responsible practices, and strong governance across our operations to support long-term value creation," Sultan noted.

About NREC
Established in 1973 and listed on Boursa Kuwait, National Real Estate Company (NREC) is a leading real estate investment and development company operating across the Middle East and North Africa, with a diversified portfolio spanning retail, commercial, and residential assets.

Reaffirming position as top ICT player

The Future Communications reports strong growth in '25

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: Future Communications Company (FCC) has announced during the Annual General Meeting held at the end of March 2026 its solid financial and operational results for 2025, reaffirming its continued growth and its position as a leading player in the information and communications technology sector. This achievement coincides with the company marking 30 years of experience, leadership and excellence in the market.

Over the past three decades, FCC has built a strong reputation grounded in consistent performance and a proven track record of success. This has been driven by a highly skilled workforce whose expertise and dedication remain central to the company's long-term sustainability. Close collaboration across departments and the effective performance of all business units have played a key role in delivering steady, positive results and maintaining a robust operational structure.

In 2025, the company sustained its strong performance despite economic headwinds and shifting market conditions. Its strategy of diversifying revenue streams proved instrumental in navigating challenges and strengthening operational resilience. FCC also main-

tained its commitment to delivering value to shareholders through regular dividend distributions, reflecting both its solid financial position and management's confidence in future performance.

The company's CEO Mr. Salah Al Awadhi emphasized that these achievements are the result of a clear vision, a well-defined strategy, and an ongoing commitment to innovation and the delivery of advanced technology solutions that meet evolving customer needs and keep pace with rapid industry developments.

Looking ahead, FCC expressed optimism about continued growth and expansion, supported by its extensive experience, the strength of its team, the diversity of its business portfolio, and its strategic partnerships, all of which enhance its ability to capture opportunities and respond effectively to challenges.

Founded in 1996, Future Communications Company is a Kuwait-based organization providing a broad range of ICT solutions and services. Its offerings include enterprise business solutions, telecom engineering, mobility services, and retail & distribution, serving both public and private sector clients in Kuwait and across international markets.



Salah Al Awadhi

Reinforcing its commitment to empowering Kuwait's future tech leaders

talabat hosts second 'Next Tech Gen' visit at GUST

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: Building on its commitment to advancing tech education in Kuwait, talabat, the leading on-demand online ordering platform in the MENA region, organized its second "Next Tech Gen" (NTG) visit at the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST).

As part of its broader education focused efforts, NTG is talabat's latest corporate social responsibility (CSR) effort to support aspiring students preparing to lead Kuwait's future technology sector through structured monthly visits to universities, schools, and academies. Each visit features different talabat leaders and experts who share hands-on insights across key tech-driven functions, including product and data, logistics and operations, artificial intelligence (AI), automation, digital platforms, strategy, and marketing.

For the program's second event, talabat delivered an engaging session to 160 participants, including GUST undergraduate students.

"Following the strong engagement we witnessed during the launch of Next Tech Gen, we were pleased to bring the program to GUST," said Amal Bukhamseen, Manager of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait. "During this session, we focused on the role of data in shaping marketing strategies and guiding key business decisions, giving students practical insight into how a technology-driven



talabat's Amal Bukhamseen

platform operates and evolves."

Hawraa Alsaleh, Vice President of the Marketing Club at GUST, said: "Hosting the second NTG event offered our students a rich experience that brought them closer to the field they aspire to join upon graduating. As part of our efforts to foster a dynamic academic environment that efficiently equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed professionally, we are always honored to collaborate with market leaders such as talabat whose experience complements students' in-class experience and encourages them to



GUST's Hawraa Alsaleh

pursue their ambitions with confidence."

The session, delivered by talabat experts, centered on the company's journey of more than two decades from a homegrown food delivery application to a regional tech company and leader in data-driven solutions. In addition to exploring the company's journey, the session highlighted how data drives marketing communication strategies and supports informed organizational decision-making.

As a people-first company, talabat representatives also highlighted the diverse skill sets and talents that con-



talabat x GUST

tribute to the company's continued growth, showcasing the wide range of career opportunities available within the organization. Discussions were supported by real-life case studies and interactive dialogue, ensuring meaningful engagement with the participating students.

The initiative supports Kuwait Vision 2035 by fostering local digital capabilities and investing in national human capital. As a long-term knowledge-sharing program, Next Tech Gen (NTG) aligns with talabat's overarching strategy to contribute to the country's growing tech ecosystem.

Unveiling liquidity support and loan relief measures

QCB assesses financial sector resilience

DOHA, March 30, (KUNA): Qatar's Central Bank (QCB) released an assessment of the resilience of the country's financial sector, announcing proactive support measures amid recent geopolitical developments.

The review, reported by Qatar News Agency (QNA) on Monday, confirmed that the financial system remains robust, with liquidity levels and capital buffers significantly exceeding regulatory requirements, and provisions providing strong coverage against credit risks.

The assessment highlighted that banks maintain substantial liquidity in both local and foreign currencies, sufficient to meet client demands, support normal market activity, and withstand short-term financial pressures under exceptional circumstances.

QCB noted that the structural strength of the financial sector, built over the

years, has shown resilience during previous periods of global market stress. While the current environment remains uncertain, these conditions do not undermine the underlying strength of the sector.

To address potential challenges, the central bank announced precautionary measures, including unlimited repo facilities in Qatari riyals against eligible securities held by banks to ensure continued local liquidity.

Additionally, banks will be allowed to offer borrowers affected by the current situation the option to defer loan principal and interest payments for up to three months, subject to individual bank policies and supervisory guidelines.

The QCB affirmed its commitment to closely monitoring global, regional, and local developments and taking timely actions to maintain financial stability and ensure orderly market operations.

New women-only branch promotes health and empowerment

Weyay Bank supports healthy living through The Burrow Sidra

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: Amid the rapid changes witnessed in recent days, and in line with its commitment to supporting customers in all circumstances, Weyay Bank continues to strengthen its initiatives aimed at enhancing customer well-being and empowerment. This commitment is reflected in the Bank's successful, long-standing partnership with The Burrow, celebrated through the opening of the new women-only branch, The Burrow Sidra, marking a significant milestone in their shared mission to support women's health, confidence, and overall lifestyle balance.

The Burrow Sidra offers a premium, modern fitness experience featuring state-of-the-art equipment, spacious training zones, and a variety of workout environments tailored to women's needs. The facility is designed to promote both physical and mental wellbeing in an atmosphere that blends privacy, luxury, and comfort.

Weyay Bank is also announcing exclusive gym membership discounts for all customers - 40% for Weyay cardholders and 50% for SELECT customers. This is to encourage them to invest in their well being and maintain a fitness routine that suits their needs and lifestyle.

Weyay Bank reaffirms that this initiative reflects its commitment to promoting a healthy, active lifestyle among customers, particularly youth, through meaningful partnerships that elevate wellbeing and encourage long-term healthy habits.

As part of the soft opening, and in collaboration with Weyay Bank, The Burrow Sidra welcomed Weyay female customers with an exclusive set of experiences, including:

- Guided tours showcasing its facilities, sections, and services, a highlight that was especially appreciated by Weyay customers, particularly the motivational displays featuring



Group photo of the collaboration.

the Bank's branding and visual identity.

- Free Pilates sessions for visitors during the soft opening.

Alya Al-Sane, Vice President, Marketing Department at Weyay Bank, commented: "We are proud to see our partnership with The Burrow reach this exciting new milestone with the opening of the new branch for females. This step reflects our commitment to offering experiences that speak directly

to our customers' needs and support their journey toward a healthier, more balanced lifestyle."

Jassim Al-Mudhaf, CEO of The Burrow, stated: "Our partnership with Weyay Bank is a strong example of purposeful collaboration that serves the community and elevates wellness standards. With The Burrow Sidra, we aim to provide an innovative, fully integrated training environment



that meets the expectations of Kuwaiti women and offers them an exceptional fitness experience."

This collaboration marks another step in a series of ongoing initiatives led by Weyay Bank to support healthy living, empower younger generations, and offer transformative experiences that contribute to improving overall quality of life within the Kuwaiti community.

'They Will Kill You' opens soft as horror hits saturation

'Project Hail Mary' flies to \$54.5M second weekend

NEW YORK, March 30, (AP) — "Project Hail Mary" stayed aloft in its second weekend, holding strongly with \$54.5 million, according to studio estimates Sunday, and adding to the long-term prospects of the year's biggest hit thus far.

The Phil Lord and Chris Miller sci-fi adventure, starring Ryan Gosling, dipped only 32% after notching the best non-franchise opening weekend since 2023's "Oppenheimer." Amazon MGM's yet, "Project Hail Mary" has grossed \$300.8 million worldwide in two weeks.

"Project Hail Mary," which cost nearly \$200 million to produce, didn't face any significant new competition and kept premium format screens largely to itself. Potentially the weekend's most watched movie, the KPop documentary "BTS: The Return," went straight to streaming on Netflix.

But "Project Hail Mary" is on an enviable trajectory. Its second weekend hold was even better than that of "Oppenheimer," which collected \$46.7 million in its follow-up frame.

Meanwhile, the weekend's top new release,

"They Will Kill You," debuted with a disappointing \$5 million for Warner Bros. The gory R-rated horror film stars Zazie Beetz as a woman who applies to be a maid at an apartment complex where she's to become a sacrificial offering.

While the result was far from catastrophic for a movie with a modest \$20 million budget, it did suggest that theaters may have become oversaturated in horror. David A. Gross, who runs the movie consulting firm FranchiseRe, noted that there has been a new horror film released every weekend for the last 14 weekends.

That included last week's "Ready or Not 2: Here I Come" (\$16.3 million domestically so far) and a second horror-comedy that also debuted this weekend. IFC's "Forbidden Fruits," about a coven of witches who work at a Texas mall, debuted with \$1.2 million in sales.

Despite the glut, Gross is forecasting horror films will account for about \$2.1 billion in North American ticket revenue in 2026, down from \$2.75 billion last year. While horror re-

mains popular with audiences and relatively cheap to produce, the genre may be approaching overkill.

Also, family movies continue to thrive. The Pixar original "Hoppers" remained in second place with \$12.2 million in its fourth weekend. The Walt Disney Co. release has accumulated \$297.6 million globally.

Next weekend, though, it will face stiff competition in Universal Pictures' "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie." It's expected to have the biggest opening of 2026.

With final domestic figures being released Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore: 1. "Project Hail Mary," \$54.5 million; 2. "Hoppers," \$12.2 million; 3. "They Will Kill You," \$5 million; 4. "Dhurandhar The Revenge," \$4.8 million; 5. "Reminders of Him," \$4.7 million; 6. "Ready or Not 2: Here I Come," \$4 million; 7. "Scream 7," \$2.6 million; 8. "GOAT," \$2.2 million; 9. "Undertone," \$1.7 million and 10. "Forbidden Fruits," \$1.2 million.



Ryan Gosling poses for photographers upon arrival at the world premiere of the film 'Project Hail Mary' on Monday, March 9. (AP)

Pop Mart eyes beyond collectibles

Excitement builds as Labubu to come alive on big screen

BEIJING, March 30, (Xinhua) — The announcement of a film featuring Labubu has sparked heated online discussions in China, with many fans expressing anticipation at the prospect of seeing the popular plushie dolls -- known for their toothy, mischievous grins -- on the big screen.

Chinese pop culture giant Pop Mart announced last week plans to collaborate with Sony Pictures Entertainment in developing a feature film starring Labubu. The film will be a live-action and CGI hybrid.

"Looking forward to Labubu coming alive on the big screen," wrote an internet user named "Daliang." "Can't wait for the movie to come out," wrote another user named "AA OK." Others commented that only a movie series like "Toy Story" would fully satisfy them.

Still in its early stages, the film has a preliminary script and will follow a "warm and touching story" about Labubu's entry into the human world, said Wang Ning, Chair and CEO of Pop Mart International Group.

"For us, it's not necessarily about making movies just for the sake of making movies," Wang said in a written statement provided to Xinhua, adding that the company plans to build a rich commercial ecosystem encompassing theme parks, products and entertainment.

The entrepreneur believed that the complete story of the Labubu family is well-suited for the big screen.

The incoming Labubu film will be produced and directed by Paul King, the filmmaker behind "Paddington," "Paddington 2" and "Wonka," while Kasing Lung, creator of Labubu, will serve as an executive producer.

The artist, born in Hong Kong and raised in the Netherlands, first brought Labubu and other IPs of "The Monsters" to life in a series of picture books collec-

tively known as "The Monsters Trilogy" in 2015.

At an event to unveil earnings results on Wednesday, the company reaffirmed that preparations for the movie were underway and that richer content would be delivered to support Labubu over the next decade.

Pop Mart's revenue surged 184.7 percent to reach 37.12 billion yuan (about 5.37 billion U.S. dollars) in 2025, with "The Monsters" series -- of which Labubu is a part -- generating over 10 billion yuan for the first time.

Riding on buoyant results, the company has been exploring ways to extend the popularity lifecycle of its best-known characters and, as Wang once put it, "bring more pleasant surprises in the future."

"Film and TV content not only helps boost IP awareness and user engagement, but is also expected to fuel merchandise sales in turn, creating a virtuous cycle between content and products," said Yang Huaiyu, an analyst covering the consumer sector.

Yang noted that Pop Mart is advancing along a proven path. "It's about first building emotional connections with consumers through retail, then magnifying IP value through content, and ultimately forging a more expansive industrial chain."

Beyond commercial benefits for the company itself, observers believed Pop Mart's attempt signals a new chapter for Chinese IPs aiming for the global stage.

"It represents an opportunity for Chinese IPs to present contemporary Eastern aesthetics to global audiences and better promote their cultural symbols," said Xiang Kai, a Chinese playwright and director.

The company has made no secret of its ambitions. "We no longer aim to be China's Disney, but rather the Pop Mart of the world," Wang once said.

Film



This image released by 1-2 Special shows Barbara Auer, (left), and Paula Beer in a scene from 'Miroirs No. 3.' (1-2 Special via AP)

Petzold crafts a gentle tale of human connection

In 'Miroirs No. 3,' a slender and elegant tale of mutual healing

LOS ANGELES, March 30, (AP) — Christian Petzold's beguiling and restorative new drama "Miroirs No. 3" begins with a glance and a car crash.

Wreckage and its long-term aftermath have long marked the movies of Petzold, arguably Germany's foremost filmmaker. In his finest and most exquisitely haunting film, 2014's "Phoenix," an Auschwitz survivor and cabaret singer (Nina Hoss, colossally good) returns unrecognized to her German hometown with a reconstructed face, to a husband who's said to have betrayed her to the Nazis.

"Miroirs No. 3" doesn't have that film's grandiosity of melodrama; it's more of a lightly enigmatic chamber piece. But it's likewise preoccupied with piecing life together again after tragedy, and maybe finding some catharsis in music. (The title comes from a Ravel piano piece.) And its startling power will, like "Phoenix," sneak up on you.

Laura (Paula Beer, the star of Petzold's "Undine" and "Transit"), a piano student from Berlin, is reluctantly riding in the backseat of a car. Our first glimpse of her, before this road trip, was staring blankly, maybe suicidally, into a river. With Laura is her musician boyfriend, Jakob (Philip Froissant) and a producer that Jakob is hoping to impress. As they drive through the countryside, Laura locks eyes with a solitary middle-aged woman standing outside her home. For a fleeting moment they share a mysterious connection, maybe of some shared

strain of depression.

Soon after, Laura says she wants to return to Berlin and Jakob, annoyed, drives her to the nearest train station. But just after again passing the same woman's house, they skid off the road in a wreck that kills Jakob and throws Laura from the car. The woman runs to help. After the paramedics arrive and treat a still dazed Laura, they're surprised at her request. She asks if she can stay at the woman's house, rather than go to the hospital.

What follows is a sweetly oblique, even dreamlike interlude of recuperation. But it's not just Laura's. It's also healing for the woman who happily takes her in. Betty is her name, and Barbara Auer's performance is as deft and delicate as any you're likely to see this year. Their time together is spent not discussing their own traumas, but with soft, unspoken kindnesses and daily routine.

Petzold, who also wrote the script, is masterful at meting out backstory. He does it in a way that never feels like withholding to the audience or girding for a big twist, but remains tied to the psychology of his characters. As much as his films might ebb and flow with grief and recovery, their backbone is that of a thriller. Petzold, a great admirer of Hitchcock and "Vertigo," in particular, makes movies where identity, rather than people, can go missing.

The source of Betty's pain isn't revealed until well into "Miroirs," but it's not hard to guess at. We learn that her husband Richard (Matthias

Brandt) and their adult son Max (Enno Trebs) - auto mechanics who look skeptically on Laura's arrival - live separate of Betty. Meanwhile, Betty gives Laura her daughter's clothes to wear, and encourages her to play the piano her daughter used to. Together, they paint a fence and restore a herb garden.

Strange as their domestic life might seem, something warm and good is taking place. We have the feeling Richard and Max haven't been around much, even though their shop is just a bike ride away. But the four soon begin to almost resemble a family unit. In a movie about two women who intuitively understand each other, Brandt and Trebs are charmingly oafish as men who are eager to fix a dishwasher but less keen on how to repair trauma.

That this idyll is bound to expire, sooner or later, goes without saying. But while another filmmaker might steer such a story toward either disaster or, more likely, schmaltz, Petzold ends "Miroirs" without sacrificing the ambiguous grace that came before. And he turns "Miroirs," a slender and sweet 86-minute puzzle, into one of the more lovely and profound little movies about how hearts can be mended by just opening a door.

"Miroirs No. 3," a 1-2 Special released in theaters, is not rated by the Motion Picture Association. In German, with subtitles. Running time: 86 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

Variety

TBILISI: The National Archives of Georgia will host the 5th Tbilisi International Archival Film Festival from Oct. 27 to 31, 2026 in Tbilisi, NewsGeorgia reported Sunday.

The festival adopts a new theme each year. The 2026 edition will be organized around "Memory Restored: Archives in the Age of Technology," reflecting growing global interest in how digitization and restoration techniques are transforming the preservation and reinterpretation of cinematic heritage.

Film institutions worldwide have been invited to showcase archival films and preservation initiatives. Participants are also encouraged to deliver short presentations of up to 15 minutes on their collections, restoration projects, or research connected to the festival's theme. (Xinhua)

ROME: Three masterpieces by French artists Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Paul Cezanne and Henri Matisse were stolen in a burglary at a museum near Parma in northern Italy, Italy's Ansa

news agency reported Sunday.

The theft took place overnight between March 22 and March 23 at the Magnani-Rocca Foundation in Mamiano di Traversetolo, which is an art museum that houses an extensive collection of works by major European artists.

According to Ansa, a group of professional thieves forced entry through a gate to the museum and stole the paintings quickly. The stolen works include Renoir's "Les Poissons" (1917), Cezanne's "Tasse et plat de cerises" (1890), and Matisse's "Odalisque sur la terrasse" (1922). All three pieces, valued in the millions of euros, were part of the museum's permanent collection and displayed in a gallery dedicated to French art. (Xinhua)

MACAO: The 2026 Macao International Parade was held on Sunday afternoon, with the theme "the Maritime Silk Road as a bridge for cultural exchange."

Organized by the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao Special Administrative Region government and others, this year's parade embodied the concept of "love, peace and cultural integration," gathering performing groups from

at home and abroad to sing and dance in dazzling costumes through the urban streets.

The event features over 10 art groups from countries and regions along the Maritime Silk Road across Asia, Europe and Africa, as well as nearly 50 local groups, in an estimated total of nearly 1,600 artists. (Xinhua)

MANDURIA: The first Forum of Italian Cuisine following its recent recognition as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage was held over the weekend in the southern region of Puglia, bringing together policymakers, industry representatives, and producers to enhance the competitiveness of Italy's food sector and promote its sustainable growth.

The two-day event, promoted by Italian journalist Bruno Vespa and organized in cooperation with ICE Agency and Comin & Partners, served as a platform for discussions on the global reach and economic potential of Italian cuisine.

According to research by Deloitte, the global value of Italian cuisine is estimated at approximately 251 billion euros (about 272 billion U.S. dollars), with the potential to reach 300 billion euros if current growth trends continue. (Xinhua)

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RECALL INFORMATION



Toyota HIGHLANDER
Model Year 2021, 2022 & 2023

VIN: 5TDLB3CHXMS043712 to 5TDLB3CH7P5599559

RECALL REASON

The subject vehicles are equipped with second row seats that use recliner assemblies to unlock the seat backs, allow for seat back angle adjustment. Due to manufacturing defect, it will lead to the seat back not remaining in a locked position. Causing risk of injury during an event of crash.

REMEDY

Owners of affected vehicles will be contacted by Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Est. Co. W.L.L. and are asked to make an appointment once repair parts are available and the repair is without any charge to the customer.

CONTACT

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AI drives modernization of traditional Chinese medicine

TCM emerges as 'China service' brand on global stage

HEFEI, March 30, (Xinhua): At Anhui Acupuncture Hospital in Hefei, capital of east China's Anhui Province, Svetlana Strinzhina from Russia scanned a QR code and took a photo of her tongue with her phone. Within seconds, an AI-powered tongue diagnosis device generated a comprehensive health report.

"It is really interesting to see such a device that combines AI with traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) diagnosis. It has given me a deeper and clearer understanding of my own health condition," Strinzhina said with obvious enthusiasm.

Having strong faith in the effectiveness of TCM treatment, she has visited China on multiple occasions. This time, she dedicated a whole week to an in-depth exploration of TCM, hoping this trip will make her healthier.

AI is paving new paths for the modernization and internationalization of TCM. The AI tongue diagnosis system, as explained by Dong Changwu, the chief TCM expert behind the system at Anhui Acupuncture Hospital, delves deep into the unique characteristics of tongue diagnosis in TCM.

It presents health information in a more intuitive and understandable



Tourists from various countries experience traditional Chinese medicine at Anhui Acupuncture Hospital in Hefei, east China's Anhui Province, March 19. (AP)

way. Currently, the system is available in several languages including English, Russian, French, Korean, German and Thai. It has been deployed in more than 10 countries, such as Switzerland, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, receiving widespread recognition.

"The AI tongue diagnosis device features high accuracy and easy operation, enabling efficient medical services for more people while saving healthcare resources," said Kiu Caracani, a Swiss TCM practitioner. Caracani envisions a future where

relevant functions are integrated into mobile applications, making it ideal for remote areas, mountainous regions and even war-torn environments with scarce medical resources. Such an innovation could quickly screen health risks and save more lives.

"I have installed the same device at my clinic, and it has provided fast and effective services for local patients in need," he added.

This year, Caracani, Strinzhina and other tourists from various countries formed a group to travel to Anhui. They not only received TCM acupuncture treatment and witnessed the transformation brought by AI technology in TCM, but also ventured into the mountainous areas of southern Anhui to experience ecological health and wellness.

"We enjoyed the unique and beautiful scenery of Mount Huangshan while experiencing local TCM diagnosis and treatment," Caracani shared. He noted that China's visa facilitation policies in recent years have provided more international patients with the opportunity to deeply experience TCM diagnosis, treatment and culture in China.

"Nowadays, an increasing number of foreigners who believe in TCM

come to China, seeking more in-depth experiences of TCM diagnosis, treatment and culture," Caracani observed. After conducting in-depth research on some local ecological health and wellness practices in Anhui, he hopes to introduce his patients to the concept of ecological health and wellness combined with TCM services in the future.

The hospital has not only attracted overseas patients but has also taken proactive steps to "go global" by sending TCM physicians abroad to foster international cooperation and exchanges.

Recognized as a TCM international cooperation base by the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the hospital has dispatched personnel to TCM centers in Russia, Greece and Germany since 2017. It has also established a TCM treatment cooperation site in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where experts are stationed long-term to provide diagnosis, treatment, teaching and pharmaceutical support. Currently, over 500 types of traditional Chinese medicines are available at the Kazakhstan site.

"From acupuncture diagnosis and treatment to center construction, and

from technology exports to talent cultivation, we use TCM as a link to promote exchanges and mutual learning between China and foreign countries, enabling more people to understand, believe in and choose TCM," said Lei Li, Party secretary of Anhui Acupuncture Hospital.

Today, TCM is gradually becoming a distinctive cultural symbol that connects the world and benefits humanity.

In recent years, the global expansion of TCM has accelerated, ranging from the broadening of overseas cooperation networks to the sharing of intelligent diagnosis and treatment technologies, and including the export of traditional TCM services in response to growing international interest in TCM health and wellness concepts.

According to the National Health Commission, as of May 2025, TCM had spread to 196 countries and regions worldwide. Additionally, China has signed TCM cooperation agreements with more than 40 foreign governments, regional authorities and international organizations, and TCM content has been included in 16 free trade agreements. TCM is truly emerging as a shining "China service" brand on the global stage.

'Folic acid fortification safe, effective'

US pushes to add folic acid to 'tortillas' to cut birth defects

NEW YORK, March 30, (AP): Fifteen years after she lost her first baby to a rare and devastating birth defect, Andrea Lopez takes comfort in knowing that other Latina mothers might finally avoid the same pain.

In January, California became the first state to require food makers to add folic acid, a crucial vitamin, to corn masa flour used to make tortillas and other traditional foods widely used in her community.

It's a long-delayed move aimed at reducing Hispanic infants' disproportionately high rates of serious conditions called neural tube defects, which claimed Lopez's son, Gabriel Cude, when he was 10 days old.

"It's such a small effort for such a tremendous impact," said Lopez, 44, who lives in Bakersfield and is now a lawyer with two young daughters. "There is very little that I wouldn't do to spare anybody this heartache."

A similar law takes effect in Alabama in June, and legislation is pending or being considered in Florida, Georgia, Oklahoma and Oregon. Four more states - Texas, Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania - have expressed "active interest" in the issue, according to the Food Fortification Initiative, an advocacy group that focuses on addressing micronutrient deficiencies.

"All women and children in the United States should have access to folic acid and have healthy babies," said Scott Montgomery, the group's director.

For nearly 30 years, folic acid, a key B vitamin, has been required to be added to enriched wheat and white breads, cereals and pastas in the US.

Decades of research show the 1998 requirement cut rates of serious defects such as spina bifida and anencephaly by about 30%, preventing about 1,300 cases a year. It is regarded as one of the top public health triumphs of the 20th century.

But corn masa flour, a staple used in



This photo provided by Andrea Lopez shows her son, Gabriel Cude, at a hospital Bakersfield, Calif., in 2011, where he was born with anencephaly, a rare and severe birth defect tied to a lack of folic acid, a key vitamin. (AP)

Latino diets, was left out of the original fortification requirement - and rates of conditions such as spina bifida and anencephaly in that community have remained stubbornly high.

In 2016, federal regulators allowed, but did not require, folic acid to be added to corn masa products. By 2023, only about 1 in 7 corn masa flour products and no corn tortillas contained folic acid, a review found.

Nationwide, Hispanic women have the highest rates of having those defects during pregnancy. In California, the rate among Hispanic mothers is twice as high as for white or Black women, state data show.

California's new law - and the state's huge buying power - could help expand its adoption nationwide, said state Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula, who sponsored the legislation passed in 2024.

California's action and pressure from advocates have already spurred changes.

Gruma Corp., the parent company of Mission Foods and Azteca Milling, has been involved in the fortification issue for nearly two decades. Azteca began selling some - but not all - varieties of Maseca, its largest brand of corn masa flour, with folic acid in 2016.

As of this year, 97% of the com-

pany's retail sales in the U.S. include folic acid. The rest are expected to be fortified before July, Gruma said in a statement.

Mission Foods began fortification in 2024. It now adds folic acid to all of its branded and private label corn tortillas in the US.

Such actions by large producers have helped pave the way for smaller manufacturers to follow suit, according to a recent report by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer advocacy group that has pushed for fortification.

Initially, the industry was concerned folic acid could affect flavor and the cost of changing labels, said Jim Kabbani, head of the Tortilla Industry Association. But he now expects tortilla makers will start selling fortified products on a broader scale.

Public health experts cheer the growing momentum.

"The science is clear: Folic acid fortification works," said Vijaya Kancharla, an Emory University epidemiology professor and director of the Center for Spina Bifida Prevention. "It's safe. It's proven. And it's cost-effective."

That view contrasts sharply with critics - including some at the highest level of government - who regard fortification of the food supply as a form of government overreach.

Late last year, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. criticized California's new law in a post on X: "This is insanity. California is waging war against her children - targeting the poor and communities of color," he wrote.

A spokesman for Kennedy declined to explain the comments.

Social media feeds are rife with people claiming that folic acid fortification is "toxic" or that people with a certain gene variation known as MTHFR can't properly process the vitamin.

None of those claims is accurate, according to advocates and medical experts.

Food, climate, and well-being at risk

Global population pushing Earth past sustainable limits, study warns

CANBERRA, March 30, (Xinhua): Humanity is living far beyond what the Earth can support, according to new research warning of increasing pressure on food, climate, and human well-being.

The study shows that continued growth under current patterns of consumption will intensify environmental and social challenges for communities worldwide, a statement from Australia's Flinders University said Monday.

Published in Environmental Research Letters, the study examined more than two centuries of global population records and used ecological growth models to track how population size and growth rates have changed

over time.

Researchers identified a major demographic shift in the mid-20th century, when population growth rates began to decline even as total numbers kept rising.

"This shift marked the beginning of what we call 'a negative demographic phase'. It means that adding more people no longer translates into faster growth," said Flinders University's Professor Corey Bradshaw, the study's lead author.

The study shows a strong link between increasing population size and rising global temperatures, larger ecological footprints, and higher carbon emissions during the negative phase.

It projects a global population peak of between 11.7 and 12.4 billion by the 2070s if current trends continue, far above the roughly 2.5 billion people the planet could support sustainably.

The huge gap between that sustainable level and today's 8.3 billion population underscores global over-consumption, hidden for decades by heavy reliance on fossil fuels that boosted food, energy, and industry while accelerating climate change and pollution, the researchers said.

"The planet's life support systems are already under strain," Bradshaw said, urging rapid shifts in how we use energy, land, and food.

Immunization gaps fuel outbreak

Dozens die from measles in Bangladesh

DHAKA, March 30, (Agencies): Dozens have died from measles and related complications so far this year in Bangladesh, as the highly contagious disease continues to spread in parts of the country.

Doctors and health officials in Dhaka said measles cases began rising in December and have escalated sharply this month.

Of the 38 deaths reported so far this year, 32 occurred this month alone -- 21 of them at the Infectious Disease Hospital in Dhaka, including three on Sunday, leading local newspaper The Daily Star reported on Monday.

While Dhaka remains the epicenter,

a growing number of infections have been reported in other regions.

Experts attributed the outbreak to gaps in immunization coverage, particularly the long intervals between specialized measles vaccination campaigns, as well as the cyclical nature of such outbreaks that tend to resurface every few years.

Health authorities warned that measles often leads to severe complications in children, including pneumonia, diarrhea, and infections of the ears and brain.

□ □ □

E. coli: Nine people, including children, have been sickened in an expand-

ing outbreak of E. coli food poisoning tied to raw milk and cheddar cheese made with it from Raw Farm, a Fresno, California, producer, health officials said.

Two cases in California were added Thursday to the outbreak first announced March 15, bringing the total number of ill people in that state to seven. Two others fell ill in Texas and Florida, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Over half of the illnesses are in children younger than 5. Three people were hospitalized and one developed a dangerous type of kidney infection, the CDC said.



NASA's Artemis II moon rocket sits on Launch Pad 39-B at the Kennedy Space Center at sunrise Sunday, March 29, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP)

China emerges as new lunar competitor

Apollo vs. Artemis: What to know about NASA's return to the moon

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., March 30, (AP): NASA's Apollo moonshots are a tough act to follow, even after all this time.

As four astronauts get set to blast off on humanity's first trip to the moon in more than half a century, comparisons between Apollo and NASA's new Artemis program are inevitable.

The world's first lunar visitors orbited the moon on Apollo 8. The Artemis II crew will play it safe and zip around the moon in an out-and-back slingshot.

Another key difference: Artemis reflects more of society, with a woman, person of color and Canadian rocketing away.

While Artemis builds on Apollo and pays homage to it, "there is no way we could be that same mission or ever hope to even be," said NASA astronaut Christina Koch, part of the Artemis II crew.

Here's the lowdown on Apollo vs. Artemis, the twin sister of Apollo in Greek mythology, as NASA targets the first six days of April for liftoff.

It took NASA just eight years to go from putting its first astronaut in space to putting Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the moon in 1969, beating President John Kennedy's end-of-decade deadline.

"The Apollo program still just absolutely blows me away," said Artemis II astronaut Jeremy Hansen of the Canadian Space Agency.

Artemis has progressed much more slowly, after decades of indecision and flip-flopping between the moon and Mars as the next grand destination. NASA's new moon rocket, the Space Launch System, or SLS, has soared only once in a test flight without anyone on board more than three years ago.

This plodding approach is why NASA's new administrator Jared Isaacman overhauled the Artemis program in February. Keen to emulate Apollo, he added a mission between the upcoming Artemis II mission and the moon landing that's now shifted to Artemis IV in 2028.

During next year's revamped Artemis III, astronauts will stick closer to

home the same way Apollo 9 did in 1969. Instead of attempting a moon landing as originally envisioned, they will practice docking their Orion capsule in orbit around Earth with one or both lunar landers under development by Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin. The rival companies are accelerating work on their landers in a bid to be first.

The Soviets were America's fierce rivals during Apollo, but their moon rockets kept exploding at liftoff and they eventually gave up. Now the Chinese are the competition.

China already has landed robotic spacecraft on the moon's far side - the only nation to achieve that - and is scrambling to land astronauts near the lunar south pole by 2030.

NASA is aiming for the same polar region, where shadowed craters are thought to hold vast amounts of ice that could provide drinking water and rocket fuel. Like his predecessor Bill Nelson, Isaacman is determined to beat China to the finish line and win this second space race.

Apollo's Saturn V rockets stood 363 feet (110 meters), with five first-stage engines. The Artemis SLS rocket comes in at 322 feet (98 meters) but packs more liftoff thrust with its four main engines and two strap-on boosters.

All but one Saturn V rocket soared from Kennedy Space Center's Launch Complex 39-A, now leased by SpaceX. NASA will use neighboring pad 39-B for all SLS flights. While the Saturn V launched twice before carrying astronauts, the SLS has flown only once. Hydrogen fuel leaks delayed the SLS debut in 2022 and struck again during a countdown test in February, stalling Artemis II. Then helium trouble reappeared, causing further delay. NASA is now targeting an April liftoff.

Launch Control remains at the same place. There was one woman in the packed firing room for the liftoff of Apollo 11. Now a woman leads it: Artemis launch director Charlie Blackwell-Thompson.

Apollo 8 still ranks as the gutsi-

est space mission of all time. Frank Borman, Jim Lovell and Bill Anders became the first humans to launch to the moon in 1968. Borman, the commander, insisted on as few lunar orbits as possible given the risks. He and his bosses settled on 10 orbits as a warmup for 1969's moonwalk by Armstrong and Aldrin.

NASA decided long ago against orbiting the moon on Artemis' crew debut, judging it too dangerous. The main goal is to test the Orion capsule's life-support equipment, flying for the first time.

One big similarity between Apollo 8 and Artemis II is the troubled times surrounding them. "If we can contribute a little bit to hope for humanity," said Artemis II pilot Victor Glover of NASA, "that is a huge thing."

The Artemis astronauts will orbit Earth for a day to make certain everything is working properly before igniting the main engine and heading for the moon. It will take three to four days for the capsule to reach the moon and continue some 5,000 miles (8,000 kilometers) beyond, exceeding the distance record set by 1970's ill-fated Apollo 13.

Like Apollo 13, Artemis II will take advantage of the moon and Earth's gravity, making a figure eight after whipping around the moon to head home in what's known as a free-return trajectory requiring little if any fuel. It got Apollo 13's three astronauts safely back although they had to abandon their moon landing.

Artemis astronauts will parachute into the Pacific after their mission like the Apollo crews did.

For Apollo, the white, bulky space suits did double duty. What the astronauts wore for launch and return was the same for moonwalks since there wasn't enough storage space for different outfits.

The Orion capsules for Artemis are bigger, designed to hold four astronauts instead of three plus two sets of space suits. NASA created brand new space suits for use inside the capsule, while turning to private companies for the moonwalking attire.

China launches world's first Hep D drug

BEIJING, March 30, (Xinhua): The world's first prescription for a groundbreaking monoclonal antibody treatment for the hepatitis D virus has been issued recently at a Beijing hospital, marking a milestone in global viral hepatitis care, Science and Technology Daily reported.

Developed by a team from Tsinghua University and the Beijing-based biopharmaceutical company Huahai Health, the drug Libevitug is the first monoclonal antibody ever approved for viral hepatitis worldwide, filling

a long-standing treatment gap for one of the most severe forms of the disease.

China's National Medical Products Administration granted conditional approval in January 2026 following priority review.

Of the over 254 million chronic hepatitis B carriers worldwide, approximately 5 percent are co-infected with the hepatitis D virus, and patients with co-infection have long lacked effective targeted therapies.

Libevitug is a monoclonal anti-

body that works by blocking hepatitis B and D viruses from entering liver cells. Clinical trials for this drug began in 2018, with an international multi-center study launched in 2023 among patients with chronic co-infection.

Clinical results demonstrated significant efficacy in virological response and normalization of liver function, with particularly notable benefits for patients with cirrhosis.

This year, 10 innovative drugs have been approved for marketing in China.

SPORTS

Woodland wins Houston Open in emotional comeback after surgery



Hyo Joo Kim, of South Korea, poses for photographs with the winner's trophy after winning the LPGA Ford Championship golf tournament in Chandler, Ariz. (AP)



Gary Woodland hits on the 18th fairway next to the gallery during the final round of the Texas Children's Houston Open golf tournament in Houston. (AP)

Kim tops Korda again

HOUSTON, March 30, (AP): Gary Woodland won the Houston Open, an emotional moment that seemed so improbable 30 months ago when he had brain surgery and even two weeks ago when he opened up about his frightening struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Woodland took a one-shot lead into the final round and stretched it to seven shots until coasting home to a trophy that felt as big as his U.S. Open title at Pebble Beach in 2019.

He closed with a 3-under 67 to win by five shots over Nicolai Hojgaard.

Woodland finished at 21-under 259 for his first victory since the U.S. Open, and the fifth of his career. This one came with a big bonus - it makes him eligible for the Masters in two weeks.

Hojgaard fell back with a double bogey on the par-3 seventh and never caught up. He shot 71 and easily stayed in the top 50 in the world ranking to secure his Masters invitation. Daniel Berger, Jake Knapp and Matt McCarty also were added to the Masters field through the world ranking.

Hyo Joo Kim beat Nelly Korda for the second straight week, pulling away around the turn and closing with a 3-under 69 for a two-shot victory in the Ford Championship.

Kim was poised to break the LPGA Tour's scoring record for 72 holes until one mistake led to a double bogey on the eighth hole and allowed Korda to pull within one shot. But the American missed a pair of short putts, Kim made an 18-inch birdie and the lead was back to four shots.

Korda never got any closer until the tournament was out of reach, finishing eagle-birdie for a 67.

Kim, who also won the Ford Championship last year, now has back-to-back wins for the first time in her career, both against Korda. Last week in the Founders Cup, the 30-year-old South Korean held off a Sunday charge by Korda.

Kim finished at 28-under 260, three shots short of the LPGA's scoring record.

Alex Fitzpatrick overcame a six-shot deficit with a blazing run of birdies to overcome Eugenio Chacarra with a 3-under 69 to win the Indian Open, finally joining his older brother as European tour winners.

Matt Fitzpatrick, the 2022 U.S. Open champion and a nine-time European tour winner, won the Valparaiso Championship last week in Florida. It's the first time brothers have won in consecutive weeks on the PGA Tour and European tour.

Fitzpatrick had a pair of early bogeys that dropped him six behind Chacarra through five holes of the final round at DLF Golf and Country Club. Ten holes and seven birdies later, Fitzpatrick led by one shot as the Spaniard faded badly on his way to a 75.

Fitzpatrick made double bogey on the 18th hole and still won by two shots at 9-under 275.

Stewart Cink closed with 6-under 65 for a four-shot victory Sunday in the Hoag Classic, his second title this year on the PGA Tour Champions.

Cink built a two-shot lead after 36 holes when he closed out the second round by holing out from the fairway for an albatross on the par-5 18th.

Freddie Jacobson caught him early with three straight birdies, only to make double bogey on the par-3 eighth hole to fall back. Cink poured it on along the back nine at Newport Beach Country Club with three birdies on his last five holes.

Zach Johnson (65) and Ernie Els (67) tied for second.

Davis Lamb won his first Korn Ferry Tour title, pulling away from John Pak and 18-year-old Blades Brown with a 4-under 68 for a two-shot victory in the Club Car Championship.

Brown had a chance to become the youngest winner in Korn Ferry Tour history, starting the final round tied with Pak. He was one shot behind Lamb until consecutive three-putt bogeys on the 15th and 16th holes. He closed with a 72 to finish alone in third.

Pak shot 71. He needed birdie on the par-5 18th for any chance and narrowly missed a 12-foot putt. Lamb hit his wedge into 6 feet and made the putt to finish on 19-under 269. Lamb, who played most of his college career at Notre Dame, moved to No. 3 on the Korn Ferry points list.

Verstappen again questions future and says this season could be last

SUZUKA, Japan, March 30, (AP): Four-time world champion Max Verstappen has not ruled out retiring at the end of the Formula 1 season, saying he is trying "very hard" to enjoy racing under the new changes.

The Red Bull driver again openly expressed his dissatisfaction on Sunday after an eighth-place finish at the Japanese Grand Prix, which was won by 19-year-old Kimi Antonelli of Mercedes.

"Privately I'm very happy," Verstappen told the BBC after the race. "You also wait for 24 races. This time it's 22. But normally 24. And then you just think about is it worth it? Or do I enjoy being more at home with my family? Seeing my friends more when you're not enjoying your sport?"

The 28-year-old Verstappen said "That's what I'm saying" when asked by the BBC if this could be his last season.

"I want to be here to have fun and have a great time and enjoy myself. At the moment that's not really the case," he said. "Of course I do enjoy certain aspects. I enjoy working with my team. It's like a second family. But once I sit in the car it's not the most enjoyable unfortunately. I'm trying. I keep telling myself every day to try and enjoy it. It's just very hard."

Verstappen is among the drivers struggling after one of the most significant regulation changes in F1 took place this season.

"I can easily accept to be in P7 or P8 where I am," he said.

"Because I also know that you can't be dominating or be first or second or whatever, fighting for a podium every time. I'm very realistic in that and I've been there before. I've not only been winning in F1.

"But at the same time when you are in P7 or P8 and you are not enjoying the whole formula behind it, it doesn't feel natural to a racing driver," he said.

"Of course I try to adapt to it, but it's not nice the way you have to race. It's really anti-driving. Then at one point, yeah, it's just not what I want to do."

Formula 1 now takes a five-week break with races scheduled for April in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia called off because of the war in Iran.

The next race is on May 3 in Miami.



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands during the Japanese Formula One Grand Prix at Suzuka in central Japan. (AP)

Surging Nuggets overcome short-handed Warriors

Nets snap 10-game losing streak as Raptors stay 5th in East

NEW YORK, March 30, (AP): Ochai Agbaji scored 18 points in 25 minutes off the bench and the Brooklyn Nets snapped a 10-game losing streak with a 116-99 win over the Sacramento Kings.

Agbaji led five Nets in double-figure scoring as Nolan Traore had 17, Drake Powell 16, Noah Clowney 15 and Nic Claxton 10 for Brooklyn.

Sacramento fell to 19-57 with its fourth straight loss.

Devin Carter scored 20 points for the Kings, who lost their fourth straight. Nique Clifford added 17, Precious Achiuwa had 16 and DaQuan Jeffries 14.

The second matchup in six days of franchises building for the future saw Nets coach Jordi Fernandez and Kings coach Doug Christie get extended looks at their young players.

Raptors 139, Magic 87

In Toronto, RJ Barrett scored 24 points, Scottie Barnes had 23 points and a career-high 15 assists, and the Toronto Raptors used a 31-point run to rout Orlando, handing the slumping Magic their seventh loss in eight games.

Sandro Mamukelashvili scored 19 points and Jamal Shead had 12 points and 10 assists for the Raptors (42-32), who remained fifth in the Eastern Conference standings following their largest victory this season. The top six teams automatically make the playoffs.

Barnes has posted 10 or more assists in four straight games.

Thunder 111, Knicks 100

In Oklahoma City, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 30 points, including 10 in the fourth quarter, and the Oklahoma City Thunder defeated the New York Knicks.

Gilgeous-Alexander was 5 of 15 from the floor in the first three quarters, but drained all three of his shots in the fourth. He made 13 of 16 free throws overall to help him extend his NBA record for consecutive games with at least 20 points to 135.

Jalen Williams scored 22 points for the Thunder, shooting 7 of 11 from the floor and making all seven of his free throws. An All-Star last year, he appears to be rounding into form. He missed the first 19 games of the season with a wrist injury, then later missed 26 with a strained right hamstring.

Chet Holmgren added 16 points and nine rebounds for the Thunder, who won for the 14th time in 15 games. Oklahoma City (59-16) leads San Antonio (56-18) by 2 1/2 games in the race for the league's best record with eight remaining.

Nuggets 116, Warriors 93

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 25 points and 15 rebounds, Jamal Murray had 20 points, and the surging Denver Nuggets beat the short-handed Golden State Warriors.

Jokic finished two assists shy of his fifth straight triple-double but led Denver to its sixth consecutive win. The Nuggets (48-28) are two games ahead of Minnesota and Houston for fourth in the Western Conference.

Brandin Podziemski and Kristaps Porzingis scored 23 apiece for Golden State, which continued to be without Stephen Curry.

Celtics 114, Hornets 99

In Charlotte, Jayson Tatum scored 32 points, Payton Pritchard added 28 points and the Boston Celtics defeated the cold-shooting Charlotte Hornets for their third straight victory.

Neemias Queta added 17 points and eight rebounds for the Celtics, who played their second consecutive game without Jaylen Brown (Achilles tendinitis).

LaMelo Ball had 19 points and Miles Bridges 14 for the Hornets, who entered the game leading the NBA in made 3-pointers (1,210) and third in 3-point percentage (38.2), but were just 12 of 43 from beyond the arc against the Eastern Conference's second-place team.

Ball, Brandon Miller and Kon Knueppel finished a combined 7 of 27 on 3-point shots.



Indiana Pacers guard Kobe Brown drives on Miami Heat forward Simone Fontecchio and guard Kasparas Jakucionis during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis. (AP)

Rockets 134, Pelicans 102

In New Orleans, Alperen Sengun had 36 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists, Houston dominated the second quarter, and the Rockets beat the New Orleans Pelicans.

Houston (45-29) moved into a tie for fifth place in the Western Conference with idle Minnesota, 1 1/2 games behind Denver.

Sengun made 5 of 7 from 3-point range and added three steals and three blocks. Kevin Durant and Jabari Smith Jr. each had 20 points for Houston and Tari Eason scored 15.

Clippers 127, Bucks 113

In Milwaukee, Benedict Mathurin scored 28 points, John Collins 22 and Kawhi Leonard 20 as the Los Angeles Clippers got past the short-handed Milwaukee Bucks for their fifth consecutive win.

Darius Garland added 15 points and 11 assists and Derrick Jones Jr. 13 points for Los Angeles, which made 45 of 77 shots (58.4%). Gary Trent Jr. had a season-high 36 points to pace Milwaukee, which had only eight players available. Taurean Prince added 18 points and AJ Green

scored 15 for the Bucks, who have lost 10 of their last 12 games.

Pacers 135, Heat 118

In Indianapolis, Pascal Siakam scored 30 points and Micah Potter added 21 and tied a career high with five 3-pointers to help the Indiana Pacers get past the Miami Heat for a rare victory.

Siakam also had 11 rebounds and six assists for short-handed Indiana. Potter scored 19 points and made all of his 3s as part of a flurry of 13 first half 3-pointers for the Pacers. Kobe Brown was one of five other Indiana players to score in double figures.

Trail Blazers 123, Wizards 88

In Portland, Toumani Camara scored 23 points and the Portland Trail Blazers routed the Washington Wizards. Scoot Henderson added 21 points and Deni Avdija had 20 for the Blazers, who have won six of their last eight games. Portland led by as many as 39 points in the second half.

Will Riley scored 14 points off the bench for Wizards, who have lost 18 of their last 19 games. Washington was eliminated from the playoffs more than two weeks ago.

Change Name

I, Nuruddin Kutbuddin Bhabhravala, Previously Nuruddin Kutbuddin Vohra in my Passport # Z.3826179, Dated: 30/03/2017, my wife name is Arva Nuruddin Bhabhravala as her Passport # X9164432, Resident of Lucky Mansion, Husami Mohalla, Dahod, PO Dahod, District, Dahod, Gujarat 389151 Solemnly declare, that I have changed my name to Nuruddin Kutbuddin (given name) surname Bhabhravala for and on behalf of myself, my wife, Children and abandon The use my former name / surname from to day.

Wuhan knocked out of AFC Women's Champions League

WUHAN, March 30, (Agencies): Defending champion Wuhan Jiangda was eliminated from the AFC Women's Champions League after a 4-0 defeat to South Korea's Suwon FC Women in the quarterfinals.

Wuhan went into the match at Hankou Cultural and Sports Center under new

coach Liu Lin with limited preparation time. Five key players, including Wang Shuang, Yao Wei, Wu Haiyan, Chen Chen and Peng Shimeng, had returned only 10 days earlier from the Women's Asian Cup, leaving little time for full-squad training.

Suwon took the lead in the 12th minute when Choi

Yu-ri delivered a cross from the right and Ji So-yun finished. Wuhan thought they had equalized five minutes later through Deng Mengye, but the goal was disallowed for offside.

Wang came closest for the host team before half-time, creating two clear chances, but Suwon dou-

bled the lead in the 35th minute through Haruhi Suzuki's effort.

Goalkeeper Ann-Katrin Berger made four saves for Gotham FC in a scoreless draw against the Orlando Pride on Sunday in the National Women's Soccer League.

Gotham (1-1-2) hasn't won a match since its season-opening opening 1-0 victory over the Boston Legacy. It is the team's lone goal through four games.

Barbra Banda had scored in the previous three games for the Pride (1-1-2) but she couldn't find the net against Berger, who had her third

clean sheet of the season. Orlando goalkeeper Anna Moorhouse finished with two saves for her second clean sheet.

Gotham was coming off a 2-0 loss on Wednesday night against the expansion Denver Summit, while Orlando got its first win, defeating the Chicago Stars

3-0. Gotham midfielder Rose Lavelle made her 100th regular season NWSL appearance.

One of Gotham's best chances came in the 35th minute when Lavelle crossed to Savannah McCaskill, but the shot went straight to Moorhouse.

Azzurri desperate to avoid missing out on third consecutive World Cup

Dzeko is familiar face for Italy's defenders in World Cup playoff at Bosnia

ROME, March 30, (AP): If Italy is going to qualify for its first World Cup in 12 years, the Azzurri's defenders are going to have to contain a striker they respect and know well.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's 40-year-old forward Edin Dzeko has been a club teammate of all three of Italy's starting defenders.

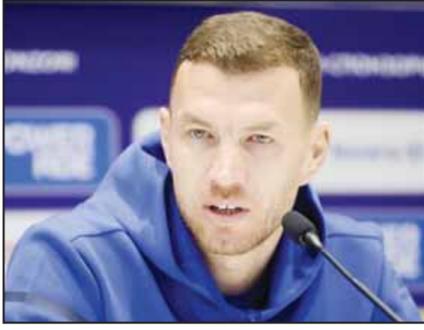
Dzeko played with Gianluca Mancini and Riccardo Calafiori while he was at Roma from 2015-21. Having then moved to Inter Milan, Dzeko teamed with Alessandro Bastoni on the squad that reached the 2023 Champions League final.

Italy and Inter winger Federico Dimarco contacted Dzeko to congratulate him after Bosnia beat Wales in a penalty shootout last week to set up Tuesday's playoff final against the four-time World Cup champion.

Dzeko's headed equalizer in the second half against Wales was his 73rd international goal. At 6-foot-4 (1.93 meters), Dzeko excels in the air - where Italy's defenders often struggle.

"Edin is a great player and a great person," Dimarco said. "I saw him on vacation over the summer and I've maintained a nice relationship with him."

Dimarco will have to momentarily set aside the relationship, though, with Italy desperate to avoid missing out on a third consecutive World Cup.



Bosnia's captain Edin Dzeko speaks at a press conference ahead of their World Cup playoff final soccer match against Italy, in Sarajevo, Bosnia. (AP)

Italy was eliminated by Sweden and North Macedonia, respectively, in qualifying playoffs for the last two World Cups.

In last week's European playoff semifinals, Italy beat Northern Ireland 2-0.

Tuesday's other playoff finals are: Sweden vs. Poland;

Turkey vs. Kosovo; and Denmark vs. the Czech Republic.

Bosnia has chosen to host the playoff in the 14,000-seat Bilino Polje Stadium in Zenica, which is surrounded by apartment towers overlooking the field.

The stadium's capacity will be reduced by 20% following punishment from FIFA for discriminatory and racist abuse by fans during Bosnia's game against Romania in November.

Italy is concerned over the status of the stadium's pitch after a recent snowfall in Bosnia.

"We're expecting a difficult atmosphere," Dimarco said. "But if we're able to remain in the right frame of mind for 95 minutes, I think we can get the result."

Bosnia has seized upon video footage of Italy's players celebrating after seeing the victory over Wales - as if they considered Bosnia an easier opponent than Wales.

"It was an instinctive reaction," Dimarco said. "I certainly did not disrespect either Bosnia or Bosnians."

The referee for the match in Bosnia will be Clement Turpin of France, who was also in charge when Italy was beaten 1-0 at home by North Macedonia in the playoff semifinals four years ago.

Dimarco has been a consistent force on the left wing for Serie A leader Inter this season with six goals and 15 assists.

The only World Cup he's played in was the Under-20 version in 2017 when Italy finished third with Dimarco scoring in the quarterfinals.

"I've always said that goals and assists don't interest me unless they help the team achieve results," Dimarco said.

Italy's attack got a boost in the second half against Northern Ireland when Pio Esposito replaced Mateo Retegui. Now the 20-year-old Esposito could start in Retegui's place alongside Moise Kean in Bosnia.

Dimarco also plays with Esposito at Inter.

"He's a special kid," Dimarco said. "He's mature for his age and always gives 100% - both in matches and in training. ... He just needs to be left alone and we shouldn't put too much pressure on him."

The pressure is on Italy since an entire generation - basically anyone under 15 - has no memory of the last time the Azzurri played in the World Cup - an elimination loss to Uruguay in 2014 in Brazil mostly remembered for Luis Suarez's bite of Giorgio Chiellini's shoulder.

Just ask right winger Matteo Politano, who has won two Italian league titles at Napoli but at 32 has still never played in a World Cup.

"We all know what we're playing for," Politano said. "For me, and for a few of the other senior players, it's probably our last chance."

Sharma, Rickelton lead Mumbai to 6-wicket victory over Kolkata



Mumbai Indians' captain Hardik Pandya plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight Riders in Mumbai, India. (AP)

Indians pull off historic 224 chase at Wankhede

MUMBAI, India, March 30, (AP): Openers Ryan Rickelton and Rohit Sharma hit aggressive half-centuries to lead Mumbai Indians to a six-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL with five balls remaining.

Rickelton scored 81 off 43 balls with eight sixes while Sharma hit 78 off 38, including six sixes, as Mumbai went on to win with 224-4 in 19.1 overs. It was the highest run-chase at the iconic Wankhede Stadium in an Indian Premier League game.

Earlier, after losing the toss, Kolkata skipper Ajinkya Rahane scored 67 off 40 balls, with five sixes, providing the base for his side's challenging 220-4 in 20 overs. Angkrish Raghuvanshi hit 51 off 29 deliveries and Shardul



Kolkata Knight Riders' Varun Chakravarthy bowls a delivery during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight Riders in Mumbai, India. (AP)

Thakur picked up 3-39 for Mumbai.

Chasing 221, Mumbai set a hectic pace - Rickelton and Sharma put on 148 runs off 71 balls for the first wicket, including 80-0 in the powerplay.

Sharma sped to 50 off 23 balls. Rickelton reached his half century off 24 balls as Kolkata's bowling didn't have any answers.

Vaibhav Arora got the breakthrough in the 12th over when Sharma was out after Anukul Roy took a wonderful catch running back to midwicket.

India's T20 World Cup-winning captain Suryakumar Yadav walked in at No. 3 as the impact player and scored 16 off eight balls before holing out to the square leg boundary. Rickelton was run out in the 16th over, with Mumbai suffering a minor hiccup at 184-3, down from 148-0.

Tilak Varma (20) and Hardik Pandya (18 not out) made sure

that the five-time champion won its opening game of the season - a first since the 2012 IPL season.

Kolkata opens Finn Allen and Rahane put on 69 off 32 balls.

Allen scored 37 off 17, including six fours and two sixes, while Rahane reached his 50 off 27 balls. Kolkata scored 78-1 in the powerplay, with Allen caught in the sixth over off Thakur.

Returning to the Mumbai camp this season, Thakur also accounted for Cameron Green (18) and later Rahane in the 14th over.

At 145-3, Kolkata's innings was nearly derailed before Raghuvanshi played a rescuing hand. He hit six fours and two sixes, racing to 50 off 28 balls. Vice-captain Rinku Singh was 33 not out off 21.

The duo put on 60 off 30 balls for the fourth wicket to help Kolkata cross 200. But the team's bowling didn't match its batting efforts.

Logano finishes third

Elliott beats Hamlin for 1st win of season

MARTINSVILLE, Va., March 30, (AP): The strategy calls don't always work out for Chase Elliott in the Cup Series.

So when the plan comes together - as it did in a victory at Martinsville Speedway - it's especially sweet for NASCAR's eight-time most popular driver and his legions of adoring fans.

"It's really cool when this stuff works out, and to win these races is so tough," Elliott said while celebrating on the frontstretch to huge cheers after his first win this season and the 22nd of his career. "So just really, really grateful for the opportunity. I never take it for granted. Trust me, this is a dream come true for me."

The 30-year-old from Dawsonville, Georgia, capitalized on a shrewd gamble by crew chief Alan Gustafson to pit the No. 9 Chevrolet earlier than the other contenders. When the caution flew on the 312th lap, Elliott was in second behind Denny Hamlin and pitted with the rest of the lead-lap drivers aside from Ross Chastain, who took the lead by staying on track.

Elliott took first from Chastain after a restart and led the final 69 laps to win by 0.565 seconds over Hamlin's No. 11 Toyota.

"It was definitely a team effort," Elliott said after his second win on the 0.526-mile oval. "That was awesome. So proud of Alan and the whole team. They did a great job, and we took a gamble. But just so proud of them. They put up with a lot, and they got to put up with me all the time. So I just appreciate them for sticking with me."

Joey Logano finished third, followed by Ty Gibbs and William Byron.

Elliott, who has been voted NASCAR's most popular driver annually since 2018, led 84 laps in delivering the first win this year for Hendrick Motorsports. The winningest team in NASCAR history has a record 31 victories at Martinsville.

Gustafson, whose calls are frequently second-guessed by one of NASCAR's biggest fan bases whenever Elliott struggles, said he got a supportive call Sunday morning from team owner Rick Hendrick.

"He's like, 'Everything's great, love you guys, playing the long game, and this is a marathon, not a sprint,'" Gustafson said in recounting the conversation. "But nevertheless, when the boss calls you, it gets your attention."

The decision was virtually a no-brainer for Gustafson after Elliott started 10th and ran mostly outside the top five for the first half of the 400-lap race.

"We were just kind of trapped in like the 10th spot," Gustafson said. "It's really hard to pass, and we just need to do something different. I just felt like it was worth a shot. And when we pitted early, I think it just drug a lot of guys down. Obviously, the caution's great. It gave us track position, and the rest is history."

Hamlin, who has a series-best six wins at Martinsville, started from the pole position and dominated, leading 292 of the first 317 laps. The Joe Gibbs Racing star got shuffled



Chase Elliott poses with the trophy in Victory Lane after winning a NASCAR Cup Series auto race in Martinsville, Va. (AP)

from the lead during a pit stop sequence under a yellow flag that began on the 312th lap and then lost momentum on the ensuing restart. He also thought a loose wheel caused his handling to fade in the final stage.

"(Elliott) did a good job of controlling the pace there," Hamlin said. "It just really came from that bad restart I had. Just not much really I could have done, and it felt like we gave it our all. We'll check it out here, but I just thought the wheel was loose here on that last run. Either way, these are just some of the races that get away from you and your career."

The win came 11 years to the day of Elliott's debut in the Cup Series. He finished 38th in the March 29, 2015, race that was won by Hamlin. Elliott said he was reminded of the anniversary at an autograph session Sunday morning.

"A couple fans that were here that day came up to me and told me about it," Elliott said. "So I got to thinking about it. Really cool to kind of see all that come full circle."

Tyler Reddick's blazing start to the Cup season comes during a contract year for the 23XI Racing driver. Though he would be the hottest free agent in NASCAR on the open market, Reddick has said he's committed to staying at the team he joined three years ago.

After winning the pole position Saturday, Hamlin guaranteed that 23XI would sign Reddick to an extension soon.

"Tyler's one of those guys that was very important for us to get our hands on him very early," Hamlin said. "I think he's lived up to the expectations for us. We're seeing it this year. He's putting it all together, and our race cars are really fast, too."

The NASCAR Hall of Fame unveiled a list of 15 candidates for the three-member class of 2027 that will include two from the Modern Era category and one from the Pioneer division. Among the new nominees are 2014 Cup Series champion Kevin Harvick, six-time ARCA champion Ray Elder, championship crew chief and engine builder Ernie Elliott, winning car owner Ray Fox and championship crew chief Herb Nab.

Some of the notable holdover nominees are Cup Series winners Jeff Burton and Greg Biffle, who was killed in a plane crash last December.

French court dismisses Cardiff's \$138 mln claim against Nantes over Emiliano's death

NANTES, France, March 30, (AP): A commercial court in France dismissed Welsh club Cardiff's claims for compensation in the death of soccer player Emiliano Sala in a ruling issued Monday, more than seven years after the plane crash that killed the Argentine forward.

In a long-running legal dispute, Cardiff was seeking more than 120 million euros (\$138 million) from the player's former team Nantes following a series of previous legal setbacks for the Welsh club.

Rulings by FIFA, the Court of Arbitration for Sport and Switzerland's supreme court have gone against Cardiff in its legal dispute with Nantes since Sala died in January 2019.

The 28-year-old Sala was signed by Cardiff from Nantes for a club-record fee of 17 million euros as it tried to stave off relegation from the lucrative Premier League. But the single-engine Piper Malibu aircraft the Argentine player was traveling in from France to begin his career with Cardiff crashed into the sea near the Channel Island of Guernsey. The pilot, David Ibbotson, also died.

The court ruled that Nantes was not at fault in relation to the flight and that Cardiff did not suffer reputational damages. It added that Cardiff's "extravagant claims" had already been ruled on by other courts and that Nantes suffered moral damage. It ordered Cardiff to pay 300,000 euros in damages, plus an additional 180,000 euros for

legal costs.

After the crash, Cardiff disputed that the transfer deal with Nantes had been finalized. FIFA ruled it had received the required international registration forms.

The businessman who organized the flight was found guilty of endangering the safety of an aircraft in 2021. David Henderson, the aircraft operator who arranged the flight, had asked Ibbotson to fly the plane as he was away on holiday. Ibbotson, who regularly flew for Henderson, did not hold a commercial pilot's license or a qualification to fly at night, and his rating to fly the Piper Malibu had expired.

Ahead of the hearing at Nantes' commercial court last year, Cardiff said it wanted Nantes to be held accountable for "the faults committed" by Willie McKay, a football agent who had helped arrange the flight. Cardiff argued that he acted on behalf of Nantes, with the French club denying any wrongdoing.

The court found that McKay served as an agent for Nantes, but that he did not organize the flight and was not aware of the illegality of the flight.

Cardiff was relegated from the Premier League at the end of the 2018-19 season and currently competes in the third tier of the English football league system.

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Gary Woodland holds the championship trophy after winning the Texas Children's Houston Open golf tournament in Houston. (AP)
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Sports

Kuwait's Alkharafi wins three-star event at Al Shaqab Cup in Doha



Alkharafi receives first place award.

DOHA, March 30, (KUNA): Hussein Alkharafi claimed first place in the three-star category at the conclusion of the Al Shaqab Cup, part of the five-day Doha Equestrian Tour in Qatar's capital.

In the CSI3* Accumulator 1.40m event, Alkharafi rode Gk C'Est Un Reve to victory, scoring 65 points and finishing in 50.97 seconds.

The Al Shaqab Cup, hosted at the Longines Arena in Al Shaqab, featured over 150 male and female riders competing for a total prize fund of USD 900,000.

Uncertain future for Renard

Regragui the frontrunner as Saudis mull coaching change

BELGRADE, March 30: Saudi Arabia faces Serbia today at 7:00 PM at TSC Stadium in an international friendly, as both sides continue preparations for the World Cup.

Meanwhile, reports indicate that Walid Regragui has emerged as the leading candidate to take charge of the "Green Falcons," with a decision expected in the coming days. Regragui is reportedly close to assuming the role and could lead Saudi Arabia at the upcoming World Cup if the federation decides to part ways with current coach Hervé Renard.

The move follows a series of disappointing results, including a heavy 4-0 defeat to Egypt, which has prompted the Saudi Arabian Football Federation to consider changes in a bid to restore stability ahead of key international competitions.

Other candidates under consideration include Xavi Hernández, Roberto De Zerbi, and Rúben Amorim, as the federation weighs its options before making a final decision.

A heavy loss to Serbia could accelerate a coaching change, with Regragui widely viewed as the frontrunner to guide Saudi Arabia into the 2026 World Cup.



A Saudi player assists his teammate during a friendly against Egypt.

France keeps winning streak alive

LANDOVER, Md., March 30, (AP): Désiré Doué scored a pair of goals and France defeated Colombia 3-1 on Sunday as both teams prepare for the men's World Cup this summer.

Marcus Thuram also scored for the French before an announced crowd of 60,734 at Northwest Stadium, home of the NFL's Washington Commanders.

After starting in France's 2-1 victory over Brazil earlier this week, Kylian Mbappe

came in as a substitute in the 78th minute. He remains a goal away from matching France's all-time goal scoring record, held by Olivier Giroud with 57 goals.

Mbappe was working his way back after a knee injury that has sidelined him in matches for his club team, Real Madrid.

Mbappe and Hugo Ekitike both scored against Brazil on Thursday in Foxborough, Massachusetts. Bremer scored a late goal for Brazil.

Les Bleus, the World Cup winners in 1998 and 2018, have not dropped a match since last June and are ranked second in the FIFA rankings.

Colombia, ranked No. 13, was coming off a 2-1 loss to Croatia in Orlando, Florida, on Thursday.

Doué scored in the 29th minute. Marcus Thuram added a goal off a cross from Maghnes Aklouché before halftime.

Doué's second goal came in the 56th with an assist from Thuram, before Jáminton Campaz closed the gap for Colombia in the 77th.

France opens the World Cup in East Rutherford, New Jersey, on June 16 against Senegal in Group I. Colombia opens against Uzbekistan in Mexico City in Group K on June 17.



France defender Lucas Hernández (21) and Colombia forward Luis Suárez (24) battle for the ball during the international friendly soccer match between Colombia and France in Landover, Md. (AP)

UConn clinches Final Four berth with stunning long-range winner



UConn players celebrate after their win against Duke in the Elite Eight of the NCAA college basketball tournament in Washington. (AP)

Mullins delivers the moment against Duke

WASHINGTON, March 30, (AP): Braylon Mullins retrieved a loose ball near midcourt and suddenly, improbably, UConn had a chance to win.

As the frantic final seconds unfolded, Dan Hurley figured a timeout would do little good.

"It just felt like the window where you've just got to let March Madness take over," Hurley said. "March magic."

The Huskies have enjoyed plenty of that through the years, and this may have been their most astonishing win yet. Mullins sank a desperation 3-pointer with 0.4 seconds left to give UConn a 73-72 victory over top-seeded Duke on Sunday, earning the Huskies a spot in the Final Four after they rallied from a 19-point first-half deficit.

The Blue Devils (35-3) led by three before UConn's Silas Demary Jr. made one of two free throws with 10 seconds left. With Duke playing keep-away to prevent the Huskies from fouling, Cayden Boozer's pass near midcourt was deflected by Demary, and after UConn came up with the ball, Mullins swished a 3 from 35 feet away.

UConn (33-5) went just 5 of 23 from 3-point range. The fifth will be remembered in Connecticut for generations.

It's the second straight season to end in a huge collapse for Duke, which was the top overall seed in this year's tournament. The Blue Devils led by six with 1:14 remaining before falling to Houston in last year's national semifinals.



UConn guard Braylon Mullins (24) scores the winning basket during the second half against Duke in the Elite Eight of the NCAA college basketball tournament in Washington. (AP)

Hurley is trying to coach the Huskies to a national title for the third time in four seasons, a feat that hasn't been accomplished since UCLA in the 1970s. UConn now faces third-seeded Illinois in Saturday's semifinal in Indianapolis.

To get there, the Huskies needed one of the biggest comebacks in regional final history. Only Louisville, which came from 20 down to beat West Virginia in 2005, had a bigger one. Duke led 44-25 late in the first half and 44-29 at the break. That's now the largest halftime lead in tournament history blown by a No. 1 seed.

Cameron Boozer, who had 27 points for the Blue Devils, fought his way to a basket inside with 28.9 seconds to play, and the next UConn possession used precious time before Demary was

fouled.

After he made one of two, the inbound came to Cameron Boozer, who passed out of a double team to Dame Sarr, who then found Cameron's twin brother, Cayden Boozer, in the middle of the court. Instead of waiting to be fouled, Cayden Boozer - who shoots about 81% from the line - tried for one more pass as Mullins and Demary closed in on him.

There were two Duke players alone deep, but the ball never got there. Demary was able to deflect it and Mullins picked it up near midcourt. He passed to Alex Karaban, who gave it back to Mullins. The freshman was in rhythm, but about halfway between the 3-point arc and half court.

Nothing but net. It'll go down alongside the great

NCAA Tournament game-winning shots, next to Christian Laettner's for Duke in the 1992 Elite Eight against Kentucky and Kris Jenkins' to win the national title for Villanova in 2016. Or Laettner's shot in the 1990 regional final - which turned another Duke-UConn classic from a loss into a win for the Blue Devils.

The Blue Devils smothered UConn defensively for most of the game, in part because the Huskies missed 17 of their first 18 attempts from beyond the arc. When told of that stat after the game, Hurley laughed and held his hands over his face.

Tarris Reed Jr. led UConn with 26 points, and for a while he had little help offensively. The Huskies gradually cut into their deficit in the second half, though, and a 3 by Karaban pulled them within one with under a minute left.

UConn has now won 18 consecutive games in the Sweet 16 or subsequent rounds. The last loss for the Huskies in those stages of the tournament came against Michigan State in the 2009 Final Four.

For all the success Duke has had through the years, the Blue Devils have now had hearts broken by UConn three straight times in the Big Dance. The Huskies beat one of Duke's greatest teams in the 1999 title game and rallied late to beat the Blue Devils in the 2004 semifinals.

This one was a gut punch very much on par with those.

UConn: The Huskies have met Illinois in the NCAA Tournament once. UConn won 77-52 in the Elite Eight in 2024.

Duke: The Blue Devils are expected to lose Cameron Boozer to the NBA.

Lehecka beaten in Miami Open final

Sinner follows Sabalenka's lead with Sunshine Double

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla., March 30, (AP): Jannik Sinner rolled to a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Jiri Lehecka to capture the Miami Open title and complete the "Sunshine Double" on Sunday, a day after Aryna Sabalenka accomplished the same feat in a win over Coco Gauff.

The last male player to complete the double - winning Indian Wells followed by Miami in the same season - was Roger Federer in 2017. Sinner is the first male to do so without dropping a set in either tournament.

"It's very, very special moment," Sinner said. "Coming here, performing in a good way after Indian Wells, means a lot to me. Physically, it's tough when you come here (from California). You're a little bit tired, but the motivation is very high."

The second-seeded Sinner didn't let either of the two 90-minute rain delays slow him. He notched 10 aces in the final, and 70 in the tournament for the second-most of his career. He often had No. 21 Lehecka running from side to side with his precise, deep groundstrokes.

Sinner, 24, won his first 23 first-service points

- a streak that lasted midway into the second set.

He became the eighth male to run the table at Indian Wells and Miami, and he and Sabalenka became the first to accomplish the double in the same year since Novak Djokovic and Victoria Azarenka in 2016.



Jannik Sinner of Italy hoists the Butch Buchholz trophy after defeating Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic in the men's singles final at the Miami Open tennis tournament in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

This was Sinner's second Miami Open title in three years as he ran his Hard Rock Stadium win streak to 12 matches dating to 2024. Last year, he missed the tournament serving a suspension for testing positive for a banned substance.

"It has been on my mind," Sinner said on Tennis Channel of missing last year's events. "I missed these type of tournaments. These are very important weeks."

Lehecka, 24, in his first ATP 1000 final, was a big underdog, losing all three prior matches to Sinner.

Top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz was upset by Sebastian Korda in three sets in the third round, and Djokovic skipped the event due to a right shoulder ailment.

The rain pushed the earlier women's doubles final to the grandstand court. The doubles was won by Taylor Townsend and Katerina Siniakova, who beat Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini 7-6 (7-0), 6-1. Townsend-Siniakova also claimed the double for women's doubles - the first time since 2019.