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Amir, Crown Prince receive Kuwait's newly appointed envoys



Amiri Diwan photo

HH the Amir receives the Minister of Foreign Affairs along with the newly appointed Kuwaiti heads of diplomatic missions.



Crown Prince Diwan photo

HH the Crown Prince receives the Minister of Foreign Affairs along with the newly appointed Kuwaiti heads of diplomatic missions.

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

During the meeting, the minister presented the newly appointed Kuwaiti heads of diplomatic missions to His Highness.

The diplomats who took the oath before His Highness the Amir include:

- Saleh Mubarak Al-Sar'awi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.
- Abdulaziz Saud Al-Jarallah, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

■ Naif Mohammad Al-Mudhaf, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Senegal.

■ Abdulrahman Shehab Al-Shehab, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Syrian Arab Republic.

■ Mohammad Ali Al-Roumi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Hellenic Republic (Greece).

■ Salem Hamad Al-Jiran, Consul General to the United States in Los Angeles.

■ Abdullah Ahmad Al-Salem, Consul General to the People's Republic of Chi-

na in Guangzhou.

■ Abdulaziz Amash Al-Ajmi, Consul General to the Republic of Iraq in Basra.

■ Khalid Bader Al-Khalifa, Consul General to the Republic of Turkey in Istanbul.

Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who likewise introduced the newly appointed Kuwaiti diplomatic chiefs.

The reception was attended by Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, President of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan, along with senior officials.

CREW SAFE AFTER KUWAIT TANKER ATTACK, BLAZE QUELLED



Opinion

■ Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

The Persian peacock flaunts its colorful feathers

WHEN you fight with Artificial Intelligence, you may win every battle, but you change nothing in reality. You are defeated regardless of how much you pretend to be intelligent, especially as your people witness firsthand the calamities you have caused.

This truth applies to Iran, which is trying to deceive its own citizens, as well as some of its supporters in Arab countries, into believing it is victorious in this war.

In reality, Iran is now searching for a way out that could spare the regime's surviving leaders from total disgrace after the deaths of most top-level and mid-level officials.

Unfortunately, fools do not learn from the lessons of others. The Tehran regime failed to learn from the lesson of Gaza.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas leaders celebrated what they called a victory, ignoring the suffering of the people of Gaza and the thousands of innocent victims.

In that war, more than 75,000 people in Gaza were killed, hundreds of thousands were injured, and the Gaza Strip was left in complete devastation.

Israel regained control of 53 percent of Gaza's territory, while nearly two million Palestinians were confined to a small area. Israel has also expanded its presence in the West Bank, making life extremely difficult for Palestinians.

Despite this, the surviving leaders of the Palestinian factions continue to promote what they describe as a divine victory.

Can such tragedy be considered a victory? Isn't it, instead, the fulfillment of Israel's strategic goals?

Lebanon is a stark example, where 1.1 million Lebanese were forced to flee southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and Beirut due to

Hezbollah's terrorist actions and its support for Iran.

Most of the southern Lebanese villages and cities have been devastated. What kind of divine victory are they claiming?

The bitter reality cannot be ignored. It is a tragedy in every sense for Palestinians, Lebanese, and some Arabs who were blinded by the illusions of the Persian peacock, and captivated by its colorful plumage.

The Persian peacock failed to realize that the world would not be deceived by its feathers. It has trapped itself in a predicament that is obvious to everyone.

Today, Iran is suffering from thousands of dead and wounded, along with widespread destruction of its infrastructure.

During this war, we have seen many fake AI-generated videos, some of them almost comical. The Iranian regime and its proxies are trying to promote fabricated victories through AI, just as Hezbollah did in Lebanon during the last war.

It later became clear that Hezbollah leaders died in underground bunkers, along with approximately five thousand fighters in just a few minutes during what was called Operation Beigers.

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Iran owes Kuwait for oil woes, say experts

Food supplies stable, monitoring runs 24/7

By Najeh Bilal and Marwa Al-Bahravi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Kuwait Ministry of Defense announced Tuesday that it intercepted five hostile ballistic missiles and seven hostile drones in the last 24 hours.

In a media briefing about the current regional developments amid the Iranian aggression on Kuwait, spokesman of the ministry Colonel Saud Al-Atwan stressed that the Kuwaiti Armed Forces were on high alert and performing

their duties with utmost efficiency and vigilance in order to ensure the safety of citizens and residents.

He prayed for Kuwait's perpetual security and stability under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah – the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior said Tuesday that the explosive ordnance disposal teams dealt with 10 reports about falling debris resulting from defensive interception operations over the past 24 hours.

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Al-Sharji presents credentials

Kuwait reaffirms strong ties, backs Lebanon amid tensions

BEIRUT, March 31, (KUNA): Lebanese President Joseph Aoun received Tuesday the credentials of the Ambassador of Kuwait to Lebanon, Mohammad Sultan Al-Sharji.

The Kuwaiti Embassy said in a statement that Ambassador Al-Sharji conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the

Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the political leadership of Kuwait to the President of Lebanon.

Al-Sharji emphasized the deep fraternal ties between the two brotherly countries, noting that the Lebanese community in Kuwait represents "a role model in abiding by the law and contributing effectively to strengthening the brotherly relations between the two countries."

He affirmed Kuwait's support for the sisterly Lebanese Republic during this sensitive phase, renewing its backing for all steps and decisions taken by the Lebanese government in a way that strengthens state sovereignty, preserves its independence, and safeguards the unity of its territory.

Ambassador Al-Sharji also reiterated Kuwait's condemnation of the ongoing aggression by the Zionist entity against Lebanon, stressing the importance of adhering to the ceasefire and relevant international resolutions, particularly Resolution 1701.

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KUNA photo
Lebanese President Joseph Aoun with the Ambassador of Kuwait to Lebanon, Mohammad Sultan Al-Sharji.

Final day to turn in illegal firearms

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The exceptional grace period granted by the Ministry of Interior for surrendering unlicensed weapons and ammunition ends Wednesday.

The ministry is now focusing on the level of response to this important initiative, which aimed to enhance community security and reinforce the rule of law.

Last week, the ministry announced an exceptional opportunity for citizens and residents to surrender unlicensed firearms, ammunition or explosives in their possession to the police stations without facing any legal repercussions. This step is a clear shift towards preventative measures and encouraged voluntary compliance.

It is part of the ministry's efforts to reduce the risks associated with illegal weapons possession and provide a safer environment by opening channels of direct cooperation with the community.

This strengthens security partnerships and reduces the negative phenomena linked with unlicensed weapons.



Zain's 2026 brand valuation increases 16% to reach a record high of \$4 billion

Desalination disruption could trigger cascading credit effects in Gulf countries

Teams hit markets to monitor prices

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Competition Protection Agency announced the formation of specialized field teams to conduct intensive surveys in various sectors and markets in response to the current events, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

These surveys aim to ensure the availability of goods, monitor prices, and investigate any practices that could negatively affect competition.

In a press release on Tuesday, the Competition Protection Authority explained that this measure follows the monitoring and analysis of several market patterns and indicators that may impact market efficiency and the integrity of competition. These efforts are part of an integrated system combining economic monitoring and analysis with field follow-up, which supports a rapid response to any indicators requiring investigation.

The agency emphasized that its role focuses on monitoring anti-competitive behavior, and called on all market participants to comply with relevant laws, regulations, and bylaws, cooperate with the specialized teams, and provide the required information.

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Deficit dilemma grows as Kuwait oil lifeline falters

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The State of Kuwait will start its 2026/2027 fiscal budget this

April amidst the escalating regional conflict and its economic repercussions – particularly the halt of Kuwaiti oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz.

Official data revealed that the new budget estimates total revenues at around KD16.3 billion, comprising KD12.8 billion in oil revenues (79 percent) and KD3.5 billion in non-oil revenues, while expenditures are projected at

KD 26.1 billion – 6.2 percent increase compared to the previous year. The anticipated budget deficit stands at KD9.8 billion.

Many questions were raised regarding the most effective scenarios to mitigate this widening deficit should the current hostilities persist for several months. There are also ongoing discussions concerning whether the time has come to rely on the sovereign wealth fund.

In an exclusive statement to the newspaper, Dr. Manal Al-Kandari, economist and former Secretary of the Transparency Association, shared her analytical perspective on managing the commencement of the new budget and adapting to potential long-term tensions between regional powers.

Dr. Al-Kandari explained that under such exceptional circumstances, oil revenues become volatile due to market instability

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Dr. Al-Kandari

Headaches, colds set to rise as Kuwait ushers in Sarayat

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Al-Ojeiri Scientific Center confirmed that Kuwait is approaching the Sarayat season, specifically the Al-Dhar'an season, which begins with Al-Muqaddam on April 3, 2026, and lasts for 13 days, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the center explained that Al-Muqaddam is characterized by higher-than-usual temperatures and coincides with the planting and harvesting of rice, wheat, and barley. The season is also associated with the spread of headaches, colds, and dust storms.

The center noted that this season is characterized by high temperatures and continued instability, known as the Sarayat phenomenon, during which the sun is at a high angle and a cool breeze blows at night.

It affirmed that the Al-Dhar'an season coincides with the spring migration of geese, and is marked by active winds of varying speed and direction, making them difficult to predict, along with fluctuations in weather and temperature.

The center indicated that the Al-Dhar'an season lasts for 26 days and is divided into two periods.

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Two new projects on anvil to modernize road access

CAPT nods tender for Routes 604, 605

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Ministry of Public Works has obtained approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to float a tender for the construction, completion and maintenance of roads, bridges, stormwater drainage, sewage networks and related services along the Kabad-Sulaibiya Road (Route 604), as well as a section of Kabad-Sulaibiya Industrial Area connecting road along the Ring Road (Route 605).

The agency set June 21 as the deadline for submission of bids. This project falls within the ongoing efforts of the ministry to develop and modernize the road network and to guarantee safety and security, in line with the development objectives. It aims to upgrade the existing and proposed road networks, and ensure connectivity between all accessible

points linking the industrial and residential areas. The tender includes the implementation of traffic and engineering studies related to economic and environmental safety, in addition to other essential studies for the proposed road works. It also covers the preparation of conceptual and detailed engineering designs for expressways, bridges and infrastructure works, along with the provision of construction supervision services.

The project scope includes the Kabad and Sulaibiya Expressway, as well as the extension of 6.5 Ring Road surrounding the West Abdullah Al-Mubarak residential area.

The ministry will refer the tender to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) upon obtaining approval for contract award, while the bureau review the tender and carry out pre-audit procedures before granting approval, unless it records any observations.

Meanwhile, Statistics from the National Charitable Platform for Supporting the Government's Role, launched this month by the Ministry of Social Affairs to enhance integration between the State and the charitable sector, showed a strong level of response from charitable associations and foundations in terms of meeting the needs of government entities under the current circumstances

in the country.

Data published on the platform indicated that charitable organizations contributed more than KD1.8 million to address the needs of government entities.

While the government initially targeted 500 requests, associations surpassed this figure by committing to fulfill 620 requests.

The data indicated that requests submitted by 22 government entities were referred to the associations for the provision of shelters and other essential requirements. These services benefit about 12,000 individuals in various entities, with around 40 charitable organizations undertaking logistical support operations.

The efforts included shelters and supplying basic necessities such as beds, mattresses and related items, in addition to providing water, food and emergency supplies like first-aid kits, as well as operational equipment like lamps and power generators.

Iman Al-Enezi, Assistant Undersecretary for the Social Welfare and Development Sector at the Ministry of Social Affairs, stated that the platform aims to unify the efforts of charitable associations and foundations in addressing needs in light of the current situation in the country.



Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate photo
Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer and acting Governor of Hawally Sheikh Sabah Al-Bader meet senior security officials.

Governors meet KRCS officials, discuss readiness of shelters

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer and acting Governor of Hawally Sheikh Sabah Al-Bader held a meeting in his office at the headquarters of the governorate with Supervisor of the Emergency Team at Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dhari Al-Meer, Deputy Head of the Governorates Unit at KRCS Faisal Al-Jarallah and Director of the Hawally Governorate Unit at KRCS

Anwar Al-Ali, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

They discussed shelter readiness, operational mechanisms and coordination among the relevant authorities under the current circumstances.

During the meeting, it was emphasized that all centers are fully prepared to deal with emergency cases, ensure rapid response and efficient handling of various situations.

Bid to meet electricity demand

MEWRE gets SAB nod to buy KD58m power from GCC grid

By **Mohammad Ghanem**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEWRE) has obtained approval from the State Audit Bureau (SAB) to purchase electricity from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) interconnection grid at a total cost of KD58.841 million over a four-month period -- KD43.540 million for January, February and March, and KD15.301 million for April.

The ministry imports electricity from the GCC interconnection grid to ensure the stability of the national grid and meet the electricity demands of various residential sectors during the aforementioned period.

This will continue until the comple-

tion of ongoing power generation projects, including the Subiya project (900 megawatts), Nuwaiseeb Phase One (3,600 megawatts) and North Zour Phases Two and Three (2,700 megawatts), in addition to other projects to be implemented by the ministry and Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP).

One of the key objectives of importing electricity through the GCC interconnection grid is to provide the ministry with sufficient time to carry out maintenance works in power generation units and water desalination plants, ensuring their readiness to meet the challenges of the upcoming summer season.

The ministry is currently implementing maintenance contracts for production units at several power stations.

Envoy lauds role in peace promotion

Pakistan grateful to Kuwait for jet fuel supply

ISLAMABAD, March 31, (KUNA): Pakistan's Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik on Monday expressed gratitude to the State of Kuwait to assure full facilitation for diesel, jet fuel supply to Pakistani vessels despite global and regional challenges.

A statement issued by Pakistan's Ministry of Energy after a meeting between Malik with Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan Nasser Abdulrahman Jasser Al-Mutairi said that the Minister acknowledged Kuwait's continued support for Pakistan despite global and regional challenges and expressed deep appreciation for Kuwait's contribution toward Pakistan's energy security.



Al-Mutairi

not only longstanding but also "connected by hearts."

He noted that for the past five decades, Pakistan has been purchasing petroleum products, particularly diesel, from Kuwait, reflecting the

enduring trust and partnership between the two nations, the statement added.

Speaking on regional peace and stability, the minister stated that Pakistan wishes to see all brotherly countries remain peaceful and secure.

He requested the Ambassador to convey his fondest regards to Kuwait's Minister of Oil, Tariq Al-Roumi, and the CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Sheikh Nawaf Al Sabah.

Meanwhile, the Ambassador of Kuwait expressed his sincerest gratitude for Pakistan's constructive role in promoting peace.

He appreciated the efforts of the

people, Government, and armed forces of Pakistan, noting that Pakistan has demonstrated leadership in rejecting the use of force and in promoting peaceful solutions during difficult times.

Al-Mutairi indicated that Kuwait is proud of Pakistan's efforts and prays for their success. He underscored Kuwait's commitment for supporting Pakistan. "Pakistan and Kuwait reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen bilateral relations, particularly in the energy sector, and agreed to remain closely engaged to expand cooperation in areas of mutual interest and shared benefit," the statement concluded.

PAM clarifies its position in workers union election row

By **Najeh Bilal**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has clarified its position regarding the controversy surrounding the Kuwait Oil Company Workers Union elections.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the certificate issued by PAM, stating that the current Board of Directors of the union is a temporary body tasked to manage its affairs. The certificate also specified the names of the interim board members. This is due to the suspension of general assembly meetings and postponement of union elections, in line with the instructions that PAM issued on March 10 due to the current circumstances.

This measure is in accordance with Chapter 13 of Private Sector Labor Law No. 38/1964, as published by the Ministry of Social Affairs and La-

bor under Resolution No. Four dated Nov 21, 1964.

The circular affirmed that the chairman of the board serves as the legal representative of the union in dealing with third parties.

It stated that the issuance of the certificate aims to clarify the current legal status and to enable the board to represent the union, as well as to manage urgent and necessary matters to ensure the continuity of administrative and organizational operations, without any legal liability on the part of the authority. The certificate is valid for a period of two months from the date of issuance.

During this period, the board is required to call for elections once directives are issued by the competent authorities to lift the existing conditions, in accordance with the constitution of the union and the laws and regulations governing union activities.

April 30 deadline set to submit job applications

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Abdullah Al-Salem University has announced the extension of the application period for the Teaching Assistant scholarship program for the 2026/2027 academic year.

This is in line with the goal of the university to attract and develop national talent to contribute to the advancement of the higher education system in the country.

The university disclosed that the extension gives more applicants a chance to pursue master's and doctoral degrees through specialized scholarships in several colleges that serve as the foundation of the development plan of the country. These colleges include the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, College of Engineering and Petroleum, College of Computer and Systems Engineering, and College of Business Administration and Entrepreneurship.

The university emphasized that the Teaching Assistant program is aligned with its objective to prepare qualified academic personnel in accordance with the highest international standards.

Such efforts aim to enable graduates to contribute effectively to the development of the educational and research process and to promote innovation in various scientific and applied fields.

The university stated that the final deadline for submitting applications is on April 30, urging interested candidates to take advantage of the extension and complete all required procedures through the official channels.

It also reaffirmed its commitment to provide an advanced educational and research environment that improves the quality of its academic outputs and supports the State's direction toward achieving sustainable development goals.

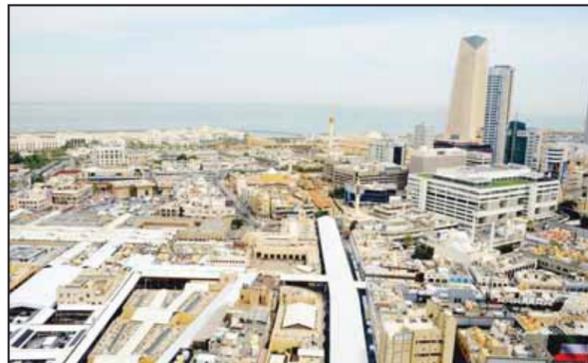


Photo by Samer Shaqir

Bright and sunny day after intermittent rain showers overnight in Kuwait.

Kuwaiti wins 'refund' in land dispute with real estate firm

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: In a commercial case, the Court of First Instance annulled the preliminary sale contract and ordered a real estate company to refund KD75,000 to a citizen.

The ruling is about the contractual dispute between the company and the citizen. The court also ordered the company to pay KD2,000 in moral damages.

A citizen, represented by his lawyer -- Attorney Omar Al-Hammadi -- filed a lawsuit at the Commercial Court, requesting the referral of the case to the Experts Department in the Ministry of Justice for the appointment of a specialist to assess the contractual relationship between the

parties and determine the extent of each party's compliance with the contract terms. This assessment would pave the way for a judgment annulling the sale contract, obligating the company to refund the amounts paid, and compensating the citizen for damages.

Al-Hammadi disclosed that his client entered into a sale contract with the defendant company to purchase a residential unit for KD75,000. He affirmed that his client fulfilled all his obligations and paid the full value of the unit in accordance with the agreed schedule. However, the company failed to fulfill its obligation to transfer ownership of the unit and to secure the title deed in his name from the Real Estate Registration Department to date, he added.

Online graduate entrance exams from April 5 to 14

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The College of Graduate Studies at Kuwait University announced that the entrance examinations for graduate programs for the 2026/2027 academic year will be conducted online through the testing platforms of the university.

In a press statement, the university explained that this decision was taken in light of the current circumstances and as part of efforts to ensure the safety of applicants, while maintaining the continuity of the admissions process.

It stated that the online entrance examinations will be conducted on April 5-14 in accordance with the schedule for each program.

It added that this step is in line with the commitment to implement precautionary measures and ensure the smooth and efficient conduct of examinations.

The university also indicated that applicants will be contacted by graduate program committees to provide full details regarding examination procedures and instructions. It urged all applicants to follow official communication channels and adhere strictly to the guidelines.

Quit home in case of fire, call 112, shut door: KFF

By **Munif Naif**
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) underscored the importance of following proper procedures in case of a fire incident at home in order to protect lives and properties.

Lieutenant Colonel Ali Mohammad from the Public Relations and Media Department at KFF stated that the first step when fire breaks out is to immediately contact emergency number 112, while maintaining composure and avoiding panic. He emphasized the importance of providing precise and clear details regarding the location and nature of fire to ensure rapid response and timely arrival of firefighting teams. He also stressed that upon discovering fire inside the home, all occupants must evacuate immediately and proceed to a safe location. He advised closing the door behind them to help contain the fire and prevent it from spreading to other parts of the house.

Other Voices

Rights and new nationality law

By **Ahmad alsarraf**

The UN Human Rights Council recently issued a resolution condemning Iran's attacks on the Gulf states and Jordan, and called for an immediate halt to the attacks and full compensation for the victims.

For this resolution to be meaningful and ensure our right to full material and moral compensation, we must engage with human rights organizations in our countries. Extensive discussions should follow, with follow-up sessions of the Human Rights Council addressing the matter further.

Humanity has never produced a more remarkable human rights document than the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Perhaps its earliest predecessor, though in a rudimentary form, was the Cyrus Charter, written more than 2,550 years ago.

These principles were inscribed on what is known as the Cyrus Cylinder, a collection of decrees recorded on a clay cylinder following the conquest of Babylon. The Cyrus Cylinder included provisions for respecting religions and customs, the return of displaced persons, and the easing of slavery. The greatest beneficiaries were the Jews of Babylon and other vulnerable or enslaved people, whom Cyrus the Great granted protection.

At its 2025 conference, UNESCO endorsed the inclusion of the "Cyrus Charter" as one of the oldest human rights charters in the world.

Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not legally binding on any state, it laid the foundation for binding international agreements that protect the rights of minorities, children, and women, and combat the slave trade.

These agreements include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and conventions against discrimination, racial discrimination, and discrimination against women. However, most, if not all, Islamic countries have expressed reservations regarding several of their provisions.

In this context, a draft of the new Nationality Law was recently issued. It will be reviewed by the Cabinet, approved, and subsequently submitted to the high political leadership.

The draft includes several im-

portant and significant provisions, addressing many shortcomings of previous laws. Its most notable proposal is the division of Kuwaiti citizens into two permanent categories - the first includes the founders who resided in Kuwait before 1920, along with their children and grandchildren, and the second includes those who acquired Kuwaiti citizenship through naturalization, and their children and grandchildren.

The first category, which I believe constitutes approximately 80 percent or more of citizens, has been granted full political and administrative rights. However, naturalized citizens, along with their children and grandchildren, representing roughly 20 percent, would be denied the right to run for office, vote, or participate in the political process, and consequently barred from holding certain senior positions.

While a few countries do discriminate between citizens regarding the right to political participation, both in terms of candidacy and voting, such practices are limited and well-known.

Preventing certain categories of citizens from holding specific positions is practiced in some countries for known reasons. However, in Kuwait, if the current amendment is approved, it may be considered unconstitutional, and this could be addressed.

What is difficult to address is the expectation of complete and sincere loyalty from this group. They are citizens, yet in practice, they are not fully regarded as such. How can their absolute loyalty to the homeland be assumed? Is preventing them from holding sensitive positions sufficient to ensure the required loyalty? When does a Kuwaiti citizen truly become a full citizen?

Therefore, I hope to see this clause amended so that the prohibition is lifted after a specified period.

It is unwise for this article to remain in effect indefinitely, especially since the draft law already allows for the revocation of citizenship of a naturalized citizen if they violate certain conditions, including proving loyalty to another country, committing a crime involving moral turpitude, being dismissed from their job for breach of trust, or joining any organization hostile to the state.

Footnote:
I have recently received requests from a friend and from a reader to acknowledge and commend the efforts of Sheikh Turki Mishal Al-Sabah, who is known for keeping his office door always open, thanks to his affable nature and his role in facilitating matters for citizens.

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diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Iranians seek change of regime in new scenario

"A POLITICAL analysis, the source of which we prefer to keep confidential, indicates that many Iranians yearn for the collapse of their regime. They live under a system marked by oppression, suffering, and corruption," columnist Ahmad Al-Dawas wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"Millions of Iranians view the current American-Israeli attacks on their country as an opportunity for liberation, self-determination, and the chance to live as free individuals. Many see the weakness of the ruling regime not as a tragedy, but as a long-awaited turning point. They aspire to end a system that has deprived them of dignity, freedom, and even the most basic necessities for a decent life, taking everything from them.

"In a previous article, we anticipated the possibility of the Houthis in Yemen joining the ongoing war. Indeed, they did so recently, following what is known as Iran's "ring of fire" strategy. The Houthis acted at Iran's behest, signaling that Iran intends to strategically expand the scope of the conflict. Threatening navigation in the Red Sea is intended to stir fears in the global economy. In this way, Iran deploys the Houthis when military pressure against it intensifies.

"The Kurds in Iran have also been active. This group has long aspired to establish Kurdish national autonomy, similar to that enjoyed by the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan. With the weakening position of Iran's leadership, the Kurds see an opportunity. Amid the current war, Kurdish leaders are reaffirming their alliance with the United States. Terrorism is used as a tool of Iran's foreign policy to instill fear among the regime's adversaries, including Iranian and Israeli dissidents, Jews, and diplomats from Europe, the Gulf states, and the United States.

"Following the assassination of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps issued a warning on Iranian television, stating that "the enemy should know that its happy days are over, and that it will not be safe anywhere in the world, not even in its own home." Since then, Iran has been inciting its agents to carry out acts of sabotage in Azerbaijan, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom.

"Iran has consistently used terrorism against its adversaries. In the weeks following the outbreak of the current war, Emirati authorities foiled two separate assassination attempts targeting diplomats, while Qatari authorities announced the arrest of two cells accused of gathering intelligence on "vital and military infrastructure" and "carrying out acts of sabotage."

"Kuwait foiled a terrorist plot targeting state symbols and leaders, aimed at harming the country's vital interests. The plot involved recruiting individuals who were found in possession of weapons, explosives, and equipment. The accused confessed to receiving foreign training and maintaining ties with the Hezbollah terrorist organization. One might ask - Why doesn't Iran surrender despite its significant military losses? Analysts suggest that Tehran is not fighting for victory, but to prevent its adversaries from achieving their political objectives. Iran understands that any major disruption to oil markets or threat to vital maritime routes could quickly impact the global economy, creating international pressure to end or de-escalate the war.

"From this perspective, Tehran's primary aim is not to achieve military victories, but to maintain a level of tension that sustains the war, which is costly for everyone involved, and, in my view, undeniably shortsighted. The priority should be focusing on developing Iran, protecting it from dangers, and opening a new chapter with the world, rather than pursuing destruction and risking the country's annihilation.

"The situation in the region is dangerous if the war expands, threatening navigation in both the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea, and if Iran continues launching drones against the peaceful Gulf states. We hope that the Lebanese army avoids clashes with Hezbollah elements, to prevent the outbreak of a civil war in Lebanon."

Also:

"A person risks everything they have when pursuing an important goal or seeking a fundamental transformation in their character. They give their absolute best in a single attempt, overcoming obstacles or breaking through barriers that have held them back," Kuwaiti writer Dr. Khaled Al-Janfawi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"A brave individual takes risks, sometimes metaphorically, sometimes literally, when the opportunity arises, using all their intellectual energy, psychological strength, and material resources. They may even risk their wealth, particularly when it becomes clear that past inaction was driven by excessive fear and chronic hesitation in making crucial decisions that are now needed before golden opportunities slip away.

"Some of the situations or goals for which a person should risk everything to overcome or achieve include the following:

- Destroying a bitter enemy - Every wise and experienced person knows who their most intense and hostile enemy is. A malicious opponent will seize



Ahmad Al-Dawas

any chance to strike at someone they deeply resent. Therefore, anyone with reason and authority must act decisively to confront such an adversary, neutralizing them mentally, emotionally, and spiritually until their chronic hatred is extinguished and their evil influence is removed from themselves and those they care about.

- Taking risks to protect your family - A truly courageous man, in word and deed, will never hesitate, even for a moment, to sacrifice himself to protect those he loves. He must not fall short in this duty. What is the value of manhood if a man is unwilling to risk everything he owns to defend his family, honor, and wealth?

- Taking risks to achieve self-sufficiency - There are no "calculated" risks when pursuing true self-sufficiency in today's turbulent world. Leave no stone unturned when pursuing this vital goal. Be bold, fearless, and determined."

□ □ □

"The Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait, Mohammad Tootounji, used a Kuwaiti newspaper to spread Khomeini's ideology and revive its presence on Kuwaiti soil through a local media platform," columnist Khaled Ahmad Al-Tarrah wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"In his article, Ambassador Tootounji conveyed his message to the Kuwaiti public, and flexed his diplomatic muscles before Tehran while echoing Khomeini-style rhetoric. On June 4, 2025, the Iranian ambassador pursued his Persian objectives on Kuwaiti pages. Today, however, we are witnessing a war affecting Kuwait and the Gulf states, targeting not only civilian sites and facilities but also the Sultanate of Oman, which has served as a mediator with the United States against Iranian aggression.

"In weighing national interests, which must take precedence over all other considerations, is it not appropriate to offer an apology to the Kuwaiti people, accompanied by a clear and unequivocal statement to the Iranian ambassador, affirming the error of publishing and providing a platform for disseminating Khomeini's ideology? This is not intended to reopen old wounds or dwell on the past, but rather to seize an opportunity created when a Kuwaiti newspaper, perhaps unintentionally, gave the Iranian ambassador a platform in support of him.

"The importance of this opportunity lies in the clear message it can send to the Iranian ambassador and the followers of the Supreme Leader - the Kuwaiti national state is unified and unequivocal. The goal is not to criticize the publication itself or the misjudgment in giving space to an Iranian perspective on Khomeini, whose ideas, visions, and objectives led to a bloody revolution.

"It is too late for criticism, and it is too late to discuss the matter with the newspaper's owner or editorial board. However, the issue is significant from a purely national perspective. We do not believe the Kuwaiti newspaper holds a position different from the National Front, but we hope this alignment will lead to full candor and transparency, thwarting the Iranian ambassador and his supporters, and preventing Kuwaiti media platforms from being exploited to achieve Persian objectives.

"Unfortunately, the newspaper overlooked a simple question - Could a critical, insightful, or scholarly opinion be published in an Iranian newspaper, through the mediation of the Iranian ambassador to Kuwait, by a Kuwaiti figure seeking an objective discussion of the Khomeini revolution? And could the owner or editorial board of the Kuwaiti newspaper today publish an objective analysis in the Iranian press regarding the serious strategic error Tehran committed by launching missiles and drones at Kuwait and the Gulf states?"

"We do not need to wait for a response from the owner of the Kuwaiti newspaper or from the Iranian ambassador. The matter is beyond speculation, as the Iranian ambassador has already achieved his ignoble goal. Publishing a Kuwaiti opinion in the Iranian press is, under the system of the Supreme Leader's regime, almost certainly a professional and political impossibility.

"Mistakes may be repeated, but lessons are not, and opportunities do not return. Our options are limited, so we hope the Kuwaiti newspaper will take the initiative, with transparency and responsibility, to send a decisive and firm message to the Iranian ambassador on behalf of Kuwait, its nation, and its citizens. This is not merely an article to be published and forgotten, but it is a test of national awareness and responsibility that allows no hesitation.

"Media platforms are not neutral spaces when used against the nation, and silence in this context is not neutrality but a void that others will fill. Protecting Kuwait's position requires more than timid reactions; it demands a clear stance that prevents any attempt to infiltrate public consciousness or exploit media platforms.

"The message today must be unmistakable - Kuwait is not an open arena for promoting hostile rhetoric or religious delusions, nor a platform for whitewashing projects that threaten its security and stability. Here, positions are tested, not intentions... and boundaries are drawn, not words."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

Nod to new rules

Minister stresses need to save kids from strife

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Minister of Social, Family, and Childhood Affairs and Head of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila approved on Monday the regulations governing the receipt of reports of violence against children and the procedures for sheltering and protecting them from all forms of violence and abuse, reports Al-Seyassah daily.



Dr Al-Huwaila

In a press statement, Dr. Al-Huwaila explained that this step is based on Child Rights Law No. 21/2015, reinforcing national efforts to protect children from all forms of violence, neglect, and exploitation. The regulations provide a comprehensive framework outlining the mechanisms for handling cases of violence against children through monitoring, reporting, intervention, and protection.

She emphasized that the regulations clearly define the responsibilities of the relevant authorities in coordination with the Supreme Council for Family Affairs.

Decree 51 to expedite high-end terror cases

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Decree-Law No. 51/2026 on the establishment of specialized criminal courts to handle State Security crimes, both external and internal, in addition to acts of terrorism, was published in the official gazette, 'Kuwait Al-Youm'.

This is considered a legislative step with advanced security and judicial dimensions, in line with the approach of the State to expedite the resolution of sensitive cases and achieve swift justice without compromising the guarantees of a fair trial.

The decree stipulates the establishment of a specialized judicial system to deal with these types of crimes, which affect the State's structure and the stability of society through the creation of courts with exclusive jurisdiction. This will reduce the fragmentation of cases and raise the efficiency of judicial procedures.

Article One of the decree states the establishment of one or more criminal circuits within the Court of First Instance, each presided over by a judge and composed of two Kuwaiti judges. These circuits shall have exclusive jurisdiction over felonies and misdemeanors related to crimes against the external and internal security of the State and crimes of terrorism, as defined in Law No. 31/1970 and Decree-Law No. 47/2026.

The decree also grants these circuits the powers of the chief justice regarding pretrial detention orders, in accordance with Article 69 of the Criminal Procedures and Trials Law, with the aim of expediting decisions concerning the freedom of defendants in these cases.

Regarding the second level of litigation, Article Two stipulates the establishment of one or more criminal circuits within the Court of Appeals, each presided over by a judge and composed of two judges, at least one of whom must hold the rank of Court of Appeals judge. These circuits shall have exclusive jurisdiction over appeals against the rulings of the competent circuits in the Court of First Instance.

The decree affirmed that judgments issued by these appellate courts are final and not subject to appeal by any means -- a clear legislative direction to streamline litigation processes and expedite the resolution of security-related cases.

Article Three mandates the competent courts to expedite the resolution of cases, while prohibiting the acceptance of civil claims. This reflects the nature of these cases, which require quick resolution without the need for extensive and prolonged civil litigation.

Article Four indicates that the courts of First Instance and Appeals are obligated to transfer all cases falling within the jurisdiction of the new courts to them, in their current state and free of charge, thus, ensuring a smooth transfer of jurisdiction without procedural delays.

In the context of preserving the existing legal positions, Article Five states that the provisions of the decree do not apply to appeals submitted to the courts before it took effect. This ensures that the rights of litigants, who already pursued appeals under the previous rules, are neither prejudiced nor affected by the new regulations.

Article Six stipulates the repeal of any provision that conflicts with the provisions of this decree-law, while Article Seven mandates the Prime Minister and the ministers -- each within their respective jurisdictions -- to implement the decree-law, which takes effect from the date of its publication in the official gazette.

The accompanying explanatory memorandum clarifies that this regulation is in accordance with the nature of State security crimes and terrorist acts that affect national security and necessitate swift resolution, while achieving a delicate balance between guaranteeing the right to defense and ensuring the stability of judgments.

It added that limiting litigation to two levels, without the possibility of further appeal, aims to prevent prolonging disputes in cases that, by their nature, require rapid and final ruling.

Comfort, hug kids in times of crises, cautions expert

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Dr. Fatima Al-Mousawi, an expert in child psychology, emphasized the importance of simplifying events to help children remain calm and emotionally secure in times of crises, reports Al-Anba daily.

In times of uncertainty, Dr. Al-Mousawi advised parents to explain events in simple language appropriate to their child's age, enabling them to understand what is happening and feel reassured.

She stressed the importance of listening to children, allowing them to express their feelings, and providing comfort through hugs and reassurance that they are safe and supported.

Dr. Al-Mousawi said, "Explaining the event helps reduce children's fears, as they do not yet have the capacity to fully understand complex situations or regulate their emotions. Children are deeply affected by crises, and parental guidance plays a critical role in helping them cope."

She also recommended maintaining emotional security, family stability, and daily routines, which reinforce a child's sense of safety.

Dr. Al-Mousawi also suggested using play and drawing as constructive outlets for emotional expression.



Jahra Governorate photo
Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi visits Captain Falah Mohammad Falah to check on his welfare. Captain Falah was injured at work.

Jahra Gov. lauds dedication in check on injured fireman

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi visited Captain Falah Mohammad Falah, a member of the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) to check on Captain Falah's health after he sustained an injury while on duty.

According to a press release issued by Jahra Governorate, the governor affirmed his commitment to monitor-

ing the well-being of firefighters, and highlighted the leadership's dedication to supporting them and providing the necessary care.

Governor Al-Habashi also praised the dedication and commitment of KFF personnel in carrying out their national duties, and wished the injured officer a speedy recovery and a quick return to work.

Terror spirals 500% in 2026

Kuwait raps Bahrain plot

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): Terrorism and state security cases recorded a rise of more than 500 percent during the first three months of 2026 compared to previous years, Kuwaiti Minister of Justice (MoJ) Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait said on Monday.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement, Al-Sumait added that the number of these cases reached 209 in the first quarter of this year, showing the sensitivity of this type of crimes, the importance of institutional readiness, and the heightened level of vigilance in monitoring and addressing them.

He stressed that the recently issued decree-law on designating specialized criminal circuits to look into cases of external and internal state security crimes and terrorist offenses constitutes a pivotal step in developing the judicial handling of this type of crime, achieving a balance between swift adjudication and ensuring due process guarantees.

The minister pointed out that Public Prosecutor's decision on establishing a specialized prosecution for terrorism and state security crimes, alongside the existing state security apparatus at the Ministry of Interior, boosts the integration of national system

concerned and provides a more specialized and coherent pathway for handling and adjudicating these cases.

Earlier today, Public Prosecutor Counselor Saad Al-Safran issued a decision to establish a prosecution office for state security crimes, terrorism, and its financing, as part of efforts aiming to develop the criminal justice system and bolster the efficiency of addressing crimes that threaten the country's security.

Bahrain plot slammed

The State of Kuwait strongly condemned and denounced the malicious terrorist plot that aimed to carry out attacks in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

In a statement, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that investigations revealing external links to Hezbollah in the plot represent an attempt to undermine security and stability and threaten the safety of societies.

Kuwait commended the efficiency and vigilance of Bahrain's security authorities in thwarting the plot and preserving the country's security.

The ministry reaffirmed Kuwait's full solidarity with Bahrain and its support for all measures taken to safeguard its security and stability, stressing its firm rejection of terrorism in all its forms.

It also underscored Kuwait's support for efforts aimed at maintaining security and stability across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

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MoE presses ahead with home textbook delivery

Three districts complete; rollout continues

By Inaas Awadh
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Ministry of Education continues to implement its initiative to deliver textbooks to the students' homes as part of its efforts to ensure the continuity of the educational process and provide flexible services under all circumstances.

In a statement to Al-Akbar TV on Monday, Direc-



MoE photo

Ministry teams sort and prepare textbooks for home delivery, as part of the nationwide distribution initiative ensuring timely access for students across all districts.

tor of the Educational Support Services Department Maryam Al-Enezi confirmed the completion of book distribution in the Capital, Hawally and Mubarak Al-Kabeer educational districts.

She added that book distribution is underway in Farwaniya Educational District, with expectations that distribution will be completed in all districts by the end of this week.

She explained that the initiative ensures the books reach all students, even those registered in educational districts other than their place of residence, through prior coordination with the field teams.

The initiative, implemented for the first time in Kuwait, has been approved by students and parents who expressed their satisfaction over this measure, reflecting trust in educational institutions and strengthening the sense of belonging.

The initiative relies on an integrated operational system that begins with the Information Systems Department in terms of preparing the lists of students, including any necessary information. These lists were distributed to field teams of four to seven messengers per educational district, depending on population density to guarantee speed and comprehensive coverage.

The central committees supervised the classification and preparation of books based on educational stages, while the teams of messengers, in cooperation with scout teams, deliver the books using the allocated buses under the supervision of scout leaders to ensure the accuracy of implementation and the smoothness of procedures, with Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei closely following up the distribution process.

KU faculty member Dr Salwa Al-Jassar joins Arab Women Academics Association Board

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 30: Dr. Salwa Al-Jassar, a faculty member in the College of Education at Kuwait University, confirmed her election to the Board of Directors of the Arab Women Academics Association, representing the State of Kuwait.

Al-Jassar attributed this achievement to the support and trust of her colleagues and an appreciation of her academic



Dr. Al-Jassar

career. She expressed deep gratitude for this trust, stressing that she strives to meet expectations and will exert tremendous effort to work diligently toward fulfilling the aspirations of women aca-

demics in the Arab world and enhancing the role of women in academia in various scientific and educational fields.

She affirmed that this is the real movement toward achieving the association's goals, contributing to supporting scientific research, developing the academic environment, and strengthening cooperation among Arab women academics.

She underscored the importance of collaborative work to achieve sustainable development in the higher education sector.



MoSA photo

Minister of Social Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, chairs the fourth meeting dedicated to the award, in the presence of members of the Higher Committee.

Higher Committee forms main oversight panels

MoSA approves guidelines for Kuwait Creativity Award for Disabled Persons

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila announced on Monday the adoption of the guidelines for the Kuwait Award for Creativity for Disabled Persons and the formation of the main committees to oversee its work, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Dr. Al-Huwaila said this in a press statement following her chairing of the fourth meeting dedicated to the award, in the presence of members of the Higher Committee to discuss the latest developments.

Dr. Al-Huwaila highlighted that the adopted guidelines include organizational frameworks, standards, and evalua-

tion mechanisms, helping to ensure transparency and good governance at all stages of implementation.

She revealed that the committee, during the meeting, reviewed efforts to enhance the award's categories to align with its objectives of supporting and empowering persons with disabilities and showcasing their creative potential in various fields.

Dr. Al-Huwaila emphasized the Higher Committee's commitment to supporting Kuwaiti talented disabled individuals, integrating them into society, and highlighting their achievements.

KU postpones April 4 academic aptitude test

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

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Office of the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs for Assessment and Measurement at Kuwait University an-

nounced the postponement of the academic aptitude test scheduled for April 4 due to the current circumstances.

In a press statement, the university clarified that all registered students will retain their right to take the test and it will not be included in their total

number of attempts to do so. It confirmed that students can take the test during future testing periods without paying the fee again. It indicated that the test dates will be announced later, so the students can register accordingly.

Bids due April 7 for KD22 mln project

Cloud Data Center tender extended

By Mohammad Ghanem
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) extended the deadline for submitting bids for the tender to supply and install three main 11/132 kV substations—along with their feeders and accessories—for the Cloud Data Center project until April 7.

This postponement concerns the bid opening process—provided no further delays occur—after which the bids will be referred to the relevant ministry for review and the preparation of a technical recommendation for awarding the contract.

The tender is important as it will provide electricity to the cloud data centers from the production substations, which serve as the link between the production and secondary substations to be installed later as part of the infrastructure at the planned sites in Sulaibiya, North Saad Al-Abdullah City and Al-Mutlaa.

The estimated cost of the three main substations stands at KD22 million.

This tender is connected to a key infrastructure project supporting one of the most significant contracts being implemented by the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA).

In December, CITRA signed a land lease agreement with Google to establish data centers dedicated to cloud computing services.

This is a major advancement in strengthening the country's digital infrastructure and supporting digital transformation efforts in the public and private sectors through the provision of advanced and secure cloud services.

It also reinforces the position of Kuwait as a reliable regional hub for data and cloud computing services.

Furthermore, the project offers flexible solutions that foster innovation and entrepreneurship by enabling startups and entrepreneurs to rely on a robust and advanced digital infrastructure.



MoE photos

Students and faculty engage in an online physics workshop at Kuwait University, part of the Ministry of Education's initiative to enhance scientific skills and explore space science applications.

Initiative aligns with future STEM goals

MoE organizes physics workshops for outstanding Kuwaiti students

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The Director of the Science Technical Guidance Department at the Ministry of Education, Dalal Al-Masoud, affirmed the ministry's commitment to strengthening community and scientific partnerships by organizing specialized physics training workshops for outstanding Kuwaiti students in the field.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Education, the workshops are being conducted in cooperation with the Regional Office for Asia (MILSET Asia) and the Physics Department of Kuwait University's Faculty of Science, in preparation for the annual scientific conference titled "Space Science and Sustain-

able Development: A Kuwaiti Student Perspective."

Al-Masoud emphasized that the goal is to enable students to keep pace with the latest developments in physics, and to strengthen their connection with the academic and research environment.

She stressed that the training workshop was held online in the university's physics laboratories, with the participation of 104 outstanding high school students representing all educational zones, in addition to students from private schools.

Al-Masoud said the choice of space science and sustainable development as the workshop topic reflects advanced scientific awareness.




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LOCAL

Kuwait forms committee to review resumption of sports

Minister Al-Jalahma emphasizes safety as clubs prep for tourneys

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Minister of State for Youth and Sports Dr. Tariq Al-Jalahma formed a committee comprising representatives from the ministry, Kuwait Olympic Committee and Public Authority for Sports (PAS).

This committee will study the resumption of sports activities and will operate according to a plan that prioritizes the public interest. Its tasks included submitting a weekly plan to assess the feasibility of resuming sports activities, including training and competitions, taking into consideration the importance of cooperation by all parties involved in the upcoming phase.

This announcement followed a coordination meeting convened by Kuwait Olympic Committee two days ago, with the minister and representatives of sports clubs and federations in attendance. They exchanged views regarding the suspended sports activities and agreed to form the aforementioned committee.

Al-Jalahma pointed out that the suspension of sports training will continue to ensure the safety of Kuwaiti athletes until conditions allow for the resumption of activities. He also affirmed Kuwait's support for any national team or club participating in international events.

On Feb 28, the minister announced the suspension of all sports activities and events in the country to safeguard the health of athletes, fans and all members of the sports sector.

In a press statement at the time, he explained that the decision to suspend sports activities and events is part of the precautionary measures being taken by the State to maintain public safety and security. He disclosed that the suspension included official competitions, tournaments and public events in various sports until further notice.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Olympic Committee Chairman Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser confirmed



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq
Minister of Youth and Sports, Dr. Tariq Al-Jalahma, and President of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah, after the meeting concluded.

recently that the committee is studying the possibility of resuming sports activities, indicating it "will operate according to an approach that takes into account public interest," especially given the exceptional circumstances in the country and the region.

He emphasized that "suspending training this time is in line with national responsibility and due to concern for the safety of athletes and there is no intention to cancel sports activities."

He explained that the coordination meeting was held to hear the opinions and observations of clubs and federations and to exchange views on the current situation. He affirmed that the committee will study the situation weekly based on a precise and well-considered assessment that takes the public interest into account.

He stressed that "maintaining the safety of athletes, technical and administrative staff, and fans is a priority for everyone."

He expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the minister and the sports authorities for accepting the invitation and participating in the meeting, reflecting the spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility among various components of the sports community.

President of Kuwait Football Association Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousef indicated that his attendance at the meeting aimed to develop plans

and discuss the clubs' proposals.

He expressed his gratitude to the minister, Kuwait Olympic Committee and PAS for holding the meeting, stating that the federations are awaiting weekly reports to determine when activities can resume, should permission be granted.

He added "the suspension remains in place, and we are here to convey a message to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, the wise government, and the frontline workers, affirming our solidarity with them."

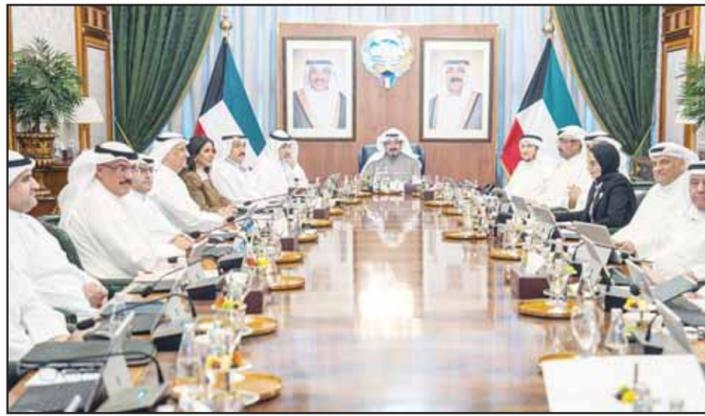
He pointed out that sporting activities were suspended during the brutal invasion and the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating that the most important thing is the safety of the Kuwaiti people and residents of this blessed land.

Regarding Kuwait and Al-Qadisia sports clubs, he revealed that he discussed the matter with the minister, requesting permission for the two clubs to hold training camps in a Gulf country to prepare for the Asian and Gulf competitions. "We have no objection to any club wishing to hold an overseas training camp at its own expense. It is premature to decide whether to continue, cancel or crown the league champions. We adhere to international regulations and bylaws," he asserted.

President of Kuwait Sports Club Khaled Al-Ghanim, expressed his sincere gratitude to the minister and Kuwait Olympic Committee chairman for the kind invitation extended to sports bodies to attend this meeting.

He indicated that the minister's message is clear -- weekly assessment of the current situation will be conducted, and based on this assessment, the appropriate decision regarding sports activities will be made. If the situation improves, activities will resume, if it continues as is, tournaments will be postponed until a later date, whenever the political leadership deems it appropriate.

He continued "we thank the minister for taking into consideration the participation of Kuwaiti teams in international competitions and for arranging an overseas training camp for them. The White Team's camp will be held in Dammam. The Kuwait Sports Club professional players are currently in the country."



PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

Aviation and commercial links set to expand

Kuwait Airways eyes growth through Indian partnerships

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): Chairman of Kuwait Airways Corporation Abdulmohsen Al-Fuqaan stated on Monday that the long-standing bilateral relations between Kuwait Airways and Indian companies represent a distinguished model of constructive cooperation.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Fuqaan explained that he held talks with the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, Paramita Tripathi, concerning ways to enhance joint commercial cooperation in the aviation sector. They also discussed opportunities for collaboration in the commercial field that serve common goals, as well as ways to develop and strengthen them to achieve mutual benefits.

He affirmed Kuwait Airways' support in various areas, particularly regarding passenger transport to and from India, and enhancing air cargo to boost trade between the two countries.

Al-Fuqaan highlighted that the meeting reflects the company's commitment to strengthening its relations with representatives of friendly embassies in Kuwait.

He emphasized the importance of enhancing cooperation with the Indian Embassy in the commercial sector to serve mutual interests and support Kuwait Airways' growth and expansion



KUNA photo
Chairman of Kuwait Airways during talks with the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait.

plans.

Al-Fuqaan praised the Indian Embassy's role in promoting cooperation between the two sides in various fields, and stressed the importance of continued coordination with foreign companies to strengthen the aviation sector and provide exceptional services to passengers.

The meeting was attended by Acting CEO of Kuwait Airways, Abdulwahab Al-Shatti, along with several other officials

Continued from Page 1

The Persian

Despite this, Hezbollah leaders emerged to claim a divine victory, while the reality is that they had allowed Israel to re-enter Lebanon.

This also applies to Iran. Since 1979, the regime in Tehran has claimed it is capable of crushing its enemies, while in reality, its stubbornness has brought defeat after defeat upon the Iranian people.

Over five decades, a large percentage of Iranians have lived in poverty and suffered isolation from the world.

This is the natural consequence when folly prevails and a leader squanders a nation's wealth, no matter how vast. How could a country like Iran, with an area of 1.6 million square kilometers, a population of approximately 95 million, vast natural resources, and a highly educated elite, stay in such a deplorable state and transform itself into an outcast entity?

Today, Iran is devastated due to its regime's recklessness in dealing with critical challenges.

Nevertheless, Iranian leaders attempt to deceive the world by producing Alfabricated images and footage.

Iran's situation perfectly fits what the poet Abu alTayyib alMutanabbi described when he said, "For every ailment there is a cure... except for folly, which defies all remedies."

Teams hit

It urged business owners and consumers to report any violations of competition rules, stressing that reports received through its official channels will be handled in accordance with established legal procedures.

The agency noted that these measures support the state's efforts to maintain market stability and promote an economic environment based on fairness and equal opportunities.

Deficit dilemma

and production disruptions, while government obligations often surge due to higher subsidies and emergency spending, naturally leading to a deficit that exceeds initial projections.

Regarding the suggestion to utilize sovereign wealth funds, she emphasized that these reserves must remain a "strategic option" given their sensitivity. She argued that they should be used with extreme caution, serving as the most important guarantee for future generations and a last line of defense in protracted crises, rather than a tool for managing short-term fluctuations.

She underscored the importance of safeguarding these funds, which entails protection against major, unforeseen economic shocks. While suggesting that annual investment returns could be utilized if necessary without touching the capital, she stated that preserving these reserves is a vital message of confidence to

international markets and investors.

She pointed out that the fundamental challenge lies in managing the deficit through a balanced strategy that maintains economic stability without compromising long-term financial sustainability. She said the priority is to prevent the deficit from becoming a permanent structural issue.

Asked about her vision for managing the anticipated deficit, she indicated that the country should rely on diversified financing tools, such as reprioritizing expenditures and developing non-oil revenue streams, in addition to utilizing structured medium and long-term borrowing to distribute the financial impact of the crisis over several years.

She suggested selectively postponing projects with low economic impact, while affirming the necessity of protecting sectors vital to national development like education, infrastructure and digital transformation.

She believes that the crisis can be transformed into a "structural opportunity" for reform, especially since the best time for implementing difficult changes is during challenging periods. She said these reforms include increasing labor market productivity, linking government spending to clear performance indicators, and encouraging public-private partnerships.

She added that while postponing some projects is a logical economic option during unstable times, it must be done thoughtfully and selectively. She pointed out that the core principle is to continue with initiatives, which protect the economy and provide the government with the necessary flexibility to handle emergencies in light of oil price volatility and global inflation.

She then specified the vital infrastructure projects, including energy, water and transportation, as priorities that must not be delayed. She also emphasized the importance of continuing housing projects linked to local demand, along with programs supporting digital transformation, government services and attracting foreign investment.

Iran owes

According to spokesman of the ministry Brigadier Nasser Bousalaib, the total number of such reports has reached 616 since the start of the Iranian attacks, adding that the air raid sirens were activated once over the past 24 hours, increasing the total to 159.

On the heightened security presence throughout the country, he explained this measures aims to ensure public security and safety, calling for maximum cooperation with police officers and full compliance with their instructions.

Earlier on Monday, the ministry announced an update to the notification mechanism of the national alert system on smart devices to enhance alert efficiency and taking rest periods into account, while ensuring that warning notifications are effectively delivered when needed.

In a press statement, the ministry

said that notifications will be sent simultaneously with the activation of warning sirens. It added that alerts will be issued with a loud notification tone from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm, and with a message tone from 10:00 pm to 8:00 am.

Moreover, Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) affirmed that the crew of the giant crude oil tanker, 'Al-Salmi', efficiently handled the fire caused by an Iranian attack, immediately initiating emergency procedures in accordance with the response plans while ensuring the safety of all crew members.

Official spokesperson of KOTC Captain Badr Al-Mutairi revealed that the crew fully extinguished the fire at 4:26 am Kuwait time, under the direct supervision of the crisis management team of the company, in coordination with the relevant authorities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to assess damages and ensure stability.

Al-Mutairi said the tanker owned by KOTC (a subsidiary of KPC), was subjected to what he described as a "malicious Iranian attack" that directly targeted the vessel at 11:30 pm Monday (Kuwait time) while it was in the anchorage area in the UAE, outside Dubai Port. He added that this occurred amid escalating regional challenges and maritime risks, resulting in a breach in the ship's hull and a fire in one of its tanks.

He confirmed that no human injuries were recorded among the 24 crew members, proving the high level of readiness, effectiveness of training and qualification programs, and their strict adherence to safety procedures.

He also indicated that no oil spill or marine pollution was detected, highlighting the effectiveness of protection systems and the good design and operation of the tanker under such emergency conditions.

He asserted that the company, in coordination with the relevant authorities, continues to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the damage sustained by the tanker, including structural and operational inspections, in preparation for taking the necessary corrective measures in accordance with the highest technical standards and international regulations, thereby, ensuring the vessel's safety and continuous operational readiness.

He emphasized that the company is closely monitoring regional developments and working hard to intensify precautionary measures and enhance the readiness of its fleet in line with best international practices and risk management standards to guarantee the protection of its assets, safety of its crews, and sustainability of its operations.

He added that the protection of lives and the marine environment remain the company's top priority, and that it spares no effort in taking the necessary measures to preserve them in coordination with its partners and relevant authorities, praying to Allah Almighty to protect Kuwait and its people from all forms of harm.

In addition, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced that the 'Al-Salmi' crew extinguished the fire that broke out early Tuesday, fol-

lowing a direct Iranian attack while the vessel was anchored in offshore waters in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) -- outside Dubai Port.

In a press statement on Tuesday, KPC disclosed that the crew responded immediately to the incident and doused the fire at 4:26 am (Kuwait time), in accordance with directives of the management and crisis team of the corporation, and in coordination with UAE authorities.

KPC confirmed that none of the 24 crew members were injured, adding that no oil spill or marine environmental pollution was recorded.

It stressed that it is continuing coordination with the relevant authorities to accurately assess the extent of damages and take the necessary measures as per the standards

Earlier, KPC disclosed that the vessel was fully laden at the time of the incident. It unveiled that preliminary assessments indicate structural damage to the ship's hull, which triggered the onboard fire.

In a related development, considering the 'Al-Salmi' fire is the result of the latest of the repeated Iranian attacks on the Kuwaiti oil sector, starting with the fuel tanks at Kuwait International Airport on more than one occasion, followed by attacks on the Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-Ahmadi refineries, Al-Seyassah daily asked the oil and legal experts who will bear the cost of the successive losses of the Kuwaiti oil sector, the latest of which was the attack on 'Al-Salmi'.

Economist and legal expert Athbi Al-Tahnoon affirmed to the newspaper that the international law obligates Iran to pay compensation for losses incurred by Kuwaiti oil facilities, not to mention the damage it caused to the 'Al-Salmi' tanker in Dubai waters.

He clarified that compensation is not limited to countries, as it includes companies, private properties and all damages suffered by citizens and residents, as well as compensation for deaths resulting from these attacks.

He stressed that Kuwait has the right to hold Iran accountable for the damage it caused to the Kuwaiti oil sector and others, in accordance with international agreements. He said international courts recognize the principle of compensation for nations that cause destruction, death and other forms of harm, indicating these courts are authorized to impose double compensation, including international sanctions.

Oil expert Haitham Al-Azmi believes that repairing the oil and gas infrastructure in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which Iran has targeted with drones and other means during the current conflict, will exceed Rystad Energy's estimate of \$25 billion. He stated that the cost of repair and restoring previous production levels could exceed \$100 billion if the war lasts for two months, but if it continues for three months, the cost will be more than \$150 billion due to the rise in global oil prices resulting from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. He said this will lead to higher prices for repair equipment and spare parts, as

well as increased travel cost for the companies undertaking the repairs to the Gulf oil infrastructure. He stressed that these estimates should be factored into future compensation provisions.

International Law Professor at Kuwait University Dr. Madous Al-Rashidi disclosed that the cost of repairing the damage inflicted by Iran on the Kuwaiti and Gulf oil sectors continues to rise.

He affirmed Kuwait's right to resort to international courts to seek compensation from Iran once the war ends, especially since Iran has been defiant and obstinate, and has violated international law by targeting oil refineries and airport fuel storage tanks. He added that all Gulf states will demand compensation for damages incurred, considering Iran violated laws and norms without regard for the principle of good neighborliness. He said the United Nations charters, international agreements and international law criminalize aggression against neighbors unless there is justification for it.

He went on to say that Iran will be required to pay compensation for all damages, including the cessation of Gulf oil exports, damage to public and private properties, and damage to the electricity grid two days ago, which resulted in the death of an Indian employee of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy.

He thinks the scenario of compensation paid by Iraq to Kuwait following Saddam Hussein's brutal invasion in the early 1990s will be repeated with Iran, which targeted Gulf states that have not fired even a single shot at Iran and these nations have done nothing but intercept the atrocious attacks.

Furthermore, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) has intensified its monitoring efforts to an unprecedented degree through a comprehensive field plan for markets, food establishments and vital outlets to ensure food security, continuity of supplies and protection of consumer health in light of the current circumstances.

These efforts include conducting intensive inspection tours in various governorates, where the inspection teams covered hundreds of food establishments, including 379 in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate this month. These tours resulted in the issuance of 63 violation citations, 49 of which were in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate.

Five complaints were addressed immediately and 431 kilograms of spoiled fish, meat and shrimp were destroyed, including 18.275 kilograms in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate. Inspection teams seized 111 kilograms of spoiled fish from the stalls, along with 83 kilograms of frozen shrimp being sold as fresh -- a violation of health regulations. The inspectors also confiscated and disposed 92 kilograms of fish found unfit for human consumption in the Capital Governorate.

As part of joint inspections, the emergency team, in cooperation with the ministries of Commerce and Interior, conducted a campaign that re-

sulted in the seizure of 127 kilograms of adulterated food and meat of unknown origin from a restaurant. The adulterated food was destroyed and the establishment was closed, while a fish shop was found selling products unfit for human consumption.

The inspection teams also discovered 1,350 eggs unfit for use in confectionery production, reflecting the vigilance and extensive scope of the inspection process.

The inspections resulted in the closure of 10 food establishments in Hawally and Capital governorates (five in each governorate) due to violations like selling spoiled food, distributing adulterated products, thawing frozen meat for sale as fresh, and failing to comply with sanitation and health licensing regulations.

PAFN issued 14 violation citations to food establishments found to be employing workers without health certificates and transporting food in unlicensed vehicles. Its oversight efforts extended to factories, production sites, food warehouses and borders.

Inspection tours were conducted at the Sulabiya border and laboratory to ensure the safety of imported food and that testing procedures met the standards.

PAFN officials conducted field visits to slaughterhouses and food production companies, such as the National United Poultry Company, to ensure compliance with health regulations and product safety standards. Veterinary inspections continued before and after slaughter.

The authority reassured consumers that the food stocks of the country are sufficient to cover local market needs, emphasizing that supplies are at normal levels under round-the-clock monitoring.

During field visits, Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Dr. Reem Al-Falej confirmed that the situation is under control, thanks to the proactive measures. She commended the authority's efforts in securing and storing food supplies and ensuring their availability.

Kuwait reaffirms

He also reviewed the impact of what he described as the "blatant Iranian attacks" on Kuwait and the GCC countries.

The Lebanese Presidency had earlier stated that President Aoun received the credentials of the ambassadors of Kuwait, Azerbaijan, and Australia in the presence of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Youssef Rajji, Secretary-General of the Ministry Ambassador Abdelsattar Issa, Director-General of Protocol at the Presidential Palace Dr. Nabil Shadeed, and Director of Protocol at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Rola Nour Al-Dine.

The Lebanese Presidency said that President Aoun asked the ambassadors to convey his greetings to the leaders of their countries, wishing them success in their diplomatic missions and expressing appreciation for their supportive positions toward Lebanon, its rights, and its just causes, as well as for hosting Lebanese communities in their countries.

Sanford makes last-minute bid to return to Congress – again – in S.Carolina

Schumer had plan to win back Senate, but some Dems aren't on board

WASHINGTON, March 31, (AP) — Democrats' hopes of reclaiming the US Senate are colliding with a fight within their own party.

In Maine, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer has thrown his weight behind Gov. Janet Mills in a crucial race, but some of his Senate colleagues are backing insurgent candidate Graham Plater in a rebuke of his strategic vision. A similar dynamic is playing out in other battlegrounds, including Michigan and Minnesota, where progressive senators are endorsing non-establishment candidates.

At stake is more than any single race. Democrats are fighting over whether the party's traditional playbook still works in a country that elected Donald Trump for a second time - and whether leaders like Schumer should remain in charge.

"Clearly there's a disagreement of strategy here," said New Mexico Sen. Martin Heinrich, who has endorsed Plater.

He added that "the business-as-usual calculation for what is going to be successful in a given election cycle does not necessarily, in my view, meet the moment."

The divide reflects a Democratic base frustrated after the last presidential election, when President Joe Biden ran for a second term despite widespread concerns about his age. He dropped out and endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris, who lost to Trump.

Nan Whaley, a Democratic strategist in Ohio who ran for governor four years ago, said the debate is no longer about progressive or moderate.

"It's really about, who do you trust? Establishment or not establishment," she said. "And frankly, the establishment hasn't given us a lot to trust these past few years."

In Maine, Schumer and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, or DSCC, have backed Mills, a 78-year-old moderate in her second term.

Plater, a veteran and oyster farmer, quickly won the backing of Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt, just days after launching his campaign. His bid has since gained momentum despite scrutiny over past controversial comments and a tattoo resembling a Nazi symbol.

In recent weeks, Heinrich, Arizona Sen. Ruben Gallego and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren have endorsed Plater as he builds support on Capitol Hill. Heinrich and Rhode Island Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse held a fundraiser for him, too.

Gallego, a first-term senator who won a battleground race in 2024, downplayed the endorsements as a broader critique of party leadership.

"Senate leadership didn't back me at the beginning. So I didn't take that as a critique," Gallego said.

Michigan also has a contentious primary, with three high-profile candidates. State Sen. Mallory McMorrow has said she would not support Schu-



US Sen Chuck Schumer, D-NY, speaks at an event marking the installation of a plaque commemorating Jan 6 at the US Capitol on March 25 in Washington. (AP)

er as the caucus leader if Democrats regain the majority, and she's been endorsed by four senators.

Abdul El-Sayed, running further to the left, has been endorsed by Sanders and has also run on an anti-establishment platform.

US Rep Haley Stevens has aligned with establishment figures, working with a former DSCC executive director and securing support from two senators.

Democratic strategist Lis Smith said the endorsements in races like Maine

and Michigan are "as much as a rebuke of Schumer as it is an endorsement of these candidates."

"It's pretty uncommon for sitting senators to endorse against the Senate leader," Smith said. "Senators are reading the tea leaves and are getting feedback from the grassroots that they are dissatisfied with Schumer's performance as leader."

Also:
COLUMBIA, SC: Mark Sanford, the former South Carolina congressman

and governor whose political ascendency was stalled by a 2009 affair, wants to return to Congress - again.

An outsider with almost no name recognition when he launched his first congressional campaign for the 1994 contest, Sanford - a real estate investor - navigated a primary for the open seat, finishing second before winning the runoff. He served for six years before his outside run at governor, again pushing his way through a crowded primary, then knocking off the last Democrat to hold the office.

Just hours ahead of the deadline to do so, Sanford filed candidacy paperwork with state officials on Monday to run in the June 9 GOP primary for South Carolina's 1st District seat, which he has held twice before.

Sanford's eight years as governor were overshadowed by the Appalachian Trail, which became shorthand for his disappearance to go to Argentina to see his lover. Sanford's wife, family and his staff didn't know where he was.

Beating back both an impeachment inquiry and calls to resign, Sanford held fast, leaving office on his own terms. **Jenny Sanford** moved out of the governor's mansion in Columbia, relocated with their four sons into the family's beachfront home near Charleston and later sued Sanford for divorce.

In a 2013 special election - a vacancy created when then-Gov **Nikki Haley** appointed Tim Scott to the US Senate - Sanford won back his old seat,

beating 15 other candidates in a primary and runoff. He won two more full terms before falling in 2018 to a GOP challenger who had President Donald Trump's backing.

The seat would go on to flip to Democratic hands that fall for the first time in decades, then was won back by GOP Rep. **Nancy Mace** in 2020. Mace is running for governor this year.

Sanford, 65, also briefly ran for president in 2020, challenging Trump for the nomination in what he characterized as a "long shot" effort around warnings about the national debt. Some, including Sanford's former gubernatorial staffers, initially questioned whether the effort was a serious one, positing that it might be an effort to stay relevant after the 2018 defeat.

Sanford dropped out of the contest just ahead of the New Hampshire primary. Sanford's home state would ultimately opt not to hold a 2020 GOP presidential primary, clearing the way for Trump's nomination in South Carolina.

Since leaving the US House, Sanford has hung onto more than \$1.3 million in a federal campaign account, funds that he can now use in a primary crowded with 10 other Republicans, 7 Democrats and a number of third-party contenders.

In his state campaign account, Sanford still has more than \$1 million, funds that could now be transferred to an outside group supportive of his bid.

Student shoots teacher at Texas school before fatally shooting self: authorities

AUSTIN, Texas, March 31, (AP) — A 15-year-old student shot a teacher at a Texas high school and then fatally shot himself Monday, according to authorities, who were still investigating what led to the early morning attack.

No other injuries were reported at Hill Country College Preparatory High School in Bulverde, a small but growing city near San Antonio.

The teacher was taken to a nearby hospital. Comal County Sheriff Mark Reynolds said hours after the shooting that he did not know her condition.

"What happened today is something no community ever wants to face, but we prepare for something that we hope never occurs," Reynolds said.

He said the student shot the teacher before turning the gun on himself. Reynolds said investigators were working to understand the relationship between the student and the teacher and looking into how the firearm was obtained.

The small campus of roughly 250 students was placed on lockdown shortly after 8:30 a.m., according to the school. One student told San Antonio television station KSAT that they heard loud bangs coming from a room on the second floor and then heard screaming.

Another student told the TV station that she heard five shots and yelling before her debate teacher told students to get inside a classroom.



This image taken from video provided by KSAT shows parents waiting in line outside Bulverde Middle School to be reunited with their children after a teacher was shot by a student at Hill Country College Preparatory High School on March 30, in Bulverde, Texas. (AP)

Students were bused to a nearby middle school, where parents stood in long lines, some praying, as they waited to be reunited. Reynolds said the family members of the shooter had also gone into reunification line.

"We're trying to collect as much information as we can from witnesses," Reynolds said.

Jesse Lopez, a parent, told KSAT that it will be difficult to tell his daughter that she has to eventually go back to class.

"For one, she has autism, and she'll be afraid to go back, she'll be real afraid to go back," Lopez said. The school canceled classes for

Tuesday but counselors would still be made available for students and families, principal Julie Wiley said in a statement. She did not provide details about the teacher's condition.

"Our hearts are with everyone impacted, especially that teacher, their family, and our school community," Wiley said. "We know this has been a difficult day."

The high school, which is part of the Comal Independent School District, focuses on academics and skills to prepare students for college, according to the district's website.

Georgia proposal could take DNA swabs from immigrants in custody for minor offenses

ATLANTA, March 31, (AP) — Over the past three decades, the collection of DNA from convicted criminals has become standard in the U.S. justice system, and many states now also swab people arrested for serious crimes.

Legislation awaiting a final vote in Georgia would take that a step further by collecting DNA from people charged with less serious misdemeanors - but only if federal immigration authorities want them detained. That could include immigrants not ultimately deported.

If enacted, Georgia's measure would make it the third state to single out immigrants believed to be in the US illegally for the collection of genetic material that wouldn't be taken from others. Florida passed a similar law in 2023. And Oklahoma in 2009 authorized DNA collection from immigrants in the US illegally, though it remains subject to funding.

The new legislation comes as President Donald Trump's administration seeks to expand its use of DNA and biometrics in immigration enforcement as it carries out a plan to deport millions of people from the US.

"It is one example of something we are seeing across the landscape, which is government actors at all levels vacuuming up DNA in all available contexts," said Stevie Glaberson, director



Federal immigration agents are seen at the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport on March 23, in Atlanta. (AP)

of research and advocacy at the Center on Privacy and Technology at Georgetown University law school.

The FBI launched the National DNA Index System in 1998 to compile DNA samples submitted by federal, state and local authorities. It's grown in size and scope and now contains more than 26 million DNA profiles, many from people convicted of crimes. A federal law enacted 20 years

ago allowed the attorney general to expand DNA collection to people arrested and to noncitizens detained under federal authority. But because of exceptions authorized by federal officials, few immigrants had their DNA collected.

That changed in 2020, during Trump's first term, when a new Department of Justice rule took away much of that discretion.

Int'l observers urge violence-free elections after clashes at Serbia vote

BELGRADE, Serbia, March 31, (AP) — International observers at a local election in European Union candidate Serbia said Monday they had witnessed violence and irregularities during the vote.

"Yesterday, the delegation observed procedures inside polling stations often largely in line with provisions but was alarmed by the situation outside the premises," the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe said in a statement.

"Congress observers witnessed acts of violence ... and in all but one of the municipalities visited, saw heated arguments and the threatening presence of large groups of people, often unidentified and sometimes masked," they added.

The vote in Serbia on Sunday was held in 10 towns throughout the country. It was seen as a test for autocratic President Aleksandar Vucic following more than a year of youth-led street protests that shook his tight grip on power.

Vucic has declared victory for his right-wing populist Serbian Progressive Party in all 10 municipalities. The Serbian president has led the campaign himself, as he sought to reaffirm his



People clash with Serbian police officers during a local election, in Crvenka, a small town located in the municipality of Kula, Serbia on March 29. (AP)

rule after the protests that first started in November 2024, triggered by a train station tragedy in the country's north.

Violent incidents erupted in at least three towns on Sunday. Student activists and some observers said they were attacked by Vucic's supporters, some of whom were masked. The president

and his party accused the other side of stirring incidents.

"Violence and coercion are unacceptable barriers to the free expression of the will of all voters," the Congress monitors said. "No voter should feel threatened when exercising his or her democratic right."



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry Press Office, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas, (center left), Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha, (center right), and EU foreign ministers attend a commemorative ceremony in Bucha, Ukraine on March 31. (AP)

European diplomats steer attention to Ukraine with visit on Russian atrocities anniversary

KYIV, Ukraine, March 31, (AP) — European foreign ministers visited Ukraine on Tuesday to mark the fourth anniversary of atrocities committed in a town near Kyiv by Russia's invading forces.

With US-led efforts to end the war on hold and Washington's attention gripped by the conflict in the Middle East, European governments are keen to keep a spotlight on the continent's biggest land war in decades, now in its fifth year.

A group of 12 European foreign ministers, as well as numerous lower-ranking officials, arrived by train in Kyiv where they were welcomed by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha, who noted the "grim anniversary" of the shocking atrocities in Bucha.

Russian troops quickly occupied the town after invading Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. They stayed for about a month. When Ukrainian troops retook Bucha they found more than 400 bod-

ies left by Russia's cleansing operation.

"Such a strong European presence (in Ukraine) on this day demonstrates that justice for this and other Russian atrocities is inevitable," Sybiha said in a post on X. "Comprehensive accountability for Russian crimes is vital to restore justice in Europe."

At the Church of Saint Andrew in Bucha, after viewing dozens of graphic photographs and a video display of the massacres with his EU counterparts, Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski was grim.

"Anybody who claims that (Russian President) Vladimir Putin is not a war criminal should come and see for themselves," Sikorski told The Associated Press.

Authorities say that many of the victims were gunned down in the street. Some had their hands tied behind their

backs, and others showed signs of torture or rape.

The United Nations has documented more than 70 summary executions.

Part of Tuesday's meeting between the EU officials and their Ukrainian counterparts was to focus on reassuring Kyiv of continued European efforts to hold Russia to account for its invasion.

On the way to Kyiv, European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas underlined the importance of ensuring that those who gave the orders to kill in places like Bucha are held to account, as much as those who carried the atrocities out.

"One of the things that is really necessary is accountability. Otherwise, you have revenge and retaliation," Kallas said. "If you don't see people doing this to your family held accountable, you will want revenge."

Europe

5 held over foiled attack on BofA: French authorities are investigating a suspected link to Iran after thwarting a bomb attack outside a Bank of America (BoFA) building in Paris, the interior minister said Monday. Five people are in custody.

Authorities suspect a link due to similarities with other recent attempted attacks in Europe for which a pro-Iran group claimed responsibility, Interior Minister **Laurent Nuñez** said.

On Saturday morning, Paris police officers spotted two suspects carrying a shopping bag near the Bank of America office in the 8th arrondissement of the French capital. The national anti-terrorism prosecutor's office is looking into alleged terrorism-related offenses.

The "modus operandi is in every respect similar to actions that have been carried out in the Netherlands and in Belgium," Nuñez said on French radio RTL. In those cases, there were claims by a pro-Iranian group that "linked them to the conflict" in the Middle-East.

The group, known on Telegram as Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia, which translates as the Islamic Move-



Nuñez

ment of the Companions of the Right, also claimed responsibility for an attack last week in London, where four ambulances belonging to a Jewish charity were set on fire.

Nuñez said French authorities have stepped up security around key personalities and sites since the United States and Israel launched their war against Iran on Feb. 28, including personal protection for some people from the Iranian opposition.

Bank of America spokesperson Bill Halldin told The Associated Press the bank is "communicating with the French authorities" about the investigation. He did not elaborate.

The bank has hundreds of employees in France. Staff returned to work Monday at the targeted office, which is about 600 meters (yards) from the French presidential palace. (AP)

Teen critically injured in Hamburg stabbing: A 13-year-old teenager was seriously injured in a knife stabbing near a school in Hamburg, Germany, on Monday, local authorities said, adding that police had detained two 15-year-old suspects.

According to preliminary findings, the victim was attacked and suffered multiple stab wounds. He was taken to hospital with life-threatening injuries under the care of an emergency doctor, and his condition remained critical.

The suspects fled the scene after the attack. Police said an extensive search operation involving around two dozen patrol cars, a helicopter, and a specialist support unit led to the provisional arrest of two suspects. (Xinhua)

INTERNATIONAL

All crew members rescued after boat sinks in Indonesia's N.Maluku waters

JAKARTA, March 31, (Xinhua) — All 21 crew members of the motor vessel Nazila 05 were rescued alive by a joint search and rescue (SAR) team after the boat sank in waters north of Taliabu Island in Indonesia's North Maluku province, local authorities said on Tuesday.

The survivors were found drifting on a raft in the waters of South Bolaang Mongondow, North Sulawesi, at around 08:24 am local time by a SAR team from the Palu Search and Rescue Office in coordination with the Gorontalo SAR Office.

"The total number is 21 people, consisting of one captain, one chief engineer, and 19 crew members. This is a fishing vessel," said Head of the Palu SAR Office Muh Rizal, adding that the SAR operation has been officially closed after all members were found safe.

Rizal added that all people have been evacuated and are being transported to the nearby city of Gorontalo before being taken to a local hospital for medical examination.

Also:
JAKARTA: Mount Dukono in In-



In this photo released by the Indonesian National Search and Rescue Agency (BASARNAS), crew look on as a rescue ship approaches a raft to evacuate the survivors boat that sank on Monday, in the waters off Taliabu Island, Indonesia on March 31. (AP)

Indonesia's North Maluku province erupted on Tuesday morning, sending a column of volcanic ash up to 900 meters above its peak, Indonesia's geological agency reported.

The eruption occurred at 06:48 am local time, with the ash plume observed at around 1,987 meters above sea level, drifting eastward with thick white-to-gray emissions.

Asia

Thai King endorses new cabinet: Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn has endorsed a new cabinet under the leadership of Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, a royal command said on Tuesday.

According to the official Royal Gazette, the king appointed the 35-member cabinet as selected by Anutin, including seven deputy prime ministers and other ministers, following his re-election for a second term earlier this month.

The Bhumjaithai Party, whose leader, Anutin, also serves as interior minister, will lead the coalition government, holding the majority of cabinet seats. Its main coalition partner, the Pheu Thai Party, will command eight ministerial posts.

Key ministers from the previous administration remain in place, including Finance Minister Ekniti Nitithanprapas, Commerce Minister Suphaje Suthumpun, and Foreign Affairs Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow.

The endorsement paves the way for the new cabinet to take an oath of allegiance before the king and present its policy statement to parliament, a final step required before a new administration officially takes office. (Xinhua)

U Nyo Saw elected Myanmar's VP: U Nyo Saw was elected vice president by the group of military representatives from both houses of Myanmar's Union Parliament on Tuesday, according to the Information Team of the National Defense and Security Council.



Anutin

Elected representatives from Myanmar's Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) on the same day elected a vice president each from among their respective candidates.

Min Aung Hlaing was elected vice president by the Pyithu Hluttaw group with a majority of votes, while Nan Ni Ni Aye was elected by the Amyotha Hluttaw group.

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

Quake hits Kermadec Islands, NZ: An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.2 jolted Kermadec Islands, New Zealand, at 1522 GMT on Monday, the GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences said.

The epicenter, with a depth of 39.7 km, was initially determined to be at 29.36 degrees south latitude and 177.27 degrees west longitude. (Xinhua)

3 critically injured after Sydney altercation: Three men have been hospitalized with critical injuries sustained during an altercation in western Sydney on Monday afternoon.

Emergency services were called to the altercation involving three men in Girraween, 25 km west of central Sydney, around 3:30 p.m. on Monday.

All men, aged 30, 37, and 56, were treated at the scene by ambulance paramedics before being taken to the hospital in critical condition.

The 30-year-old and 56-year-old men suffered several stab wounds to their torsos, while the 37-year-old sustained injuries to his arms.

Police said all three men were known to each other, and local media reported that the altercation stemmed from a dispute between neighbors. (Xinhua)

Tokyo-Kyiv military cooperation undermines Ukraine peace prospects: Russia

Japan deploys long-range counterstrike missiles for first time despite opposition

TOKYO, March 31, (Xinhua) — Japan's Defense Ministry said Tuesday that long-range missiles with counterstrike capabilities have been brought into service for the first time at two Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) bases in the country, a move that has sparked domestic opposition.

The deployment of the missiles at Camp Kengun in Kumamoto Prefecture, southwestern Japan, and Camp Fuji in Shizuoka Prefecture, central Japan, marks a significant shift from the country's long-standing exclusively defense-oriented policy under its war-renouncing Constitution, Kyodo News reported.

Camp Kengun has been equipped with a ground-launched version of the upgraded Type 12 land-to-ship guided missile that can fly about 1,000 kilometers, far exceeding Japan's territorial boundaries and widely seen as having clear offensive capabilities.

Meanwhile, hyper velocity gliding projectiles have been equipped at a training unit at Camp Fuji. Designed for island defense, the deployed model has a range of several hundred kilometers, with the ministry working to upgrade it to around 2,000 kilometers.

Kyodo News noted that "enemy base strike capability" refers to Japan's ability to launch counterstrikes against adversary bases before actual damage occurs, if it determines that an attack is imminent. However, analysts warn that misjudgments could risk violating international law by constituting a preemptive strike.

Atsushi Koketsu, emeritus professor at Yamaguchi University in Japan, told Xinhua that while the government frames the capability as a means of strengthening deterrence, it "clearly goes beyond the scope of self-defense."

On Tuesday, local residents in Kumamoto staged protests near Camp Kengun, holding placards reading "Oppose deployment" and "No missiles needed," Kyodo News reported.

Protesters expressed concern that the deployment could turn the area into a potential military target, and have repeatedly called on the defense ministry to hold public briefings, which have yet to take place, the report said.

Separately, more than a dozen citizen representatives met with defense ministry



The Type-12 land-to-ship missile launcher is shown at the Camp Kengun in the Kumamoto Prefecture, western Japan, on March 17. (AP)

officials in Tokyo on Monday, urging the government to halt its military expansion measures, including the missile deployment in Kumamoto. Participants criticized officials for providing vague responses and frequently avoiding transparency.

Citizen representative Kujirai said after the meeting that the government's replies followed a "routine pattern," increasingly citing "confidentiality" as a pretext when declining to answer specific questions. He also criticized Prime

Minister Sanae Takaichi's push to "make Japan strong and wealthy," arguing it amounts to large-scale military expansion without adequate public accountability. "This is a misinterpretation of the citizens' demands and a very dangerous stance," he said.

Another representative, Akira Saito, told Xinhua that the government officials' response remained very limited. Going forward, in addition to directly questioning Takaichi at the parliamentary level, "it is crucial to continuously expand and amplify our voices through civic movements," he said.

Also:

MOSCOW: Japan's involvement in supplying weapons to Ukraine undermines prospects for a peaceful resolution of the conflict and will be regarded by Moscow as hostile actions, a Russian spokesperson has said.

Commenting on reports about Japan's possible procurement of drones from Ukraine, Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said such reports "once again confirm the fact that Tokyo is becoming increasingly deeply involved in military cooperation with the Kyiv regime, which openly demands weapons for the Armed Forces of Ukraine in exchange for drones."

"It is clear that all this increasingly pushes back the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine," Zakharova said.

She noted that Moscow regards any attempts by Tokyo to organize the supply of lethal weapons and military equipment to Kyiv as hostile acts against Russia.

"Such steps will not go unnoticed and will entail harsh retaliatory measures," Zakharova warned.

On March 14, Japan's Kyodo News reported that the country is considering providing lethal weapons to Ukraine in exchange for Ukrainian drones.

On March 20, Ukraine's Ambassador to Japan, Yuriy Lutovinov, said Ukraine is ready to share with Japan its experience in modern warfare and drone production technologies.



Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman and the head of the United Russia party Dmitry Medvedev, (right), and Chairman of Mongolian People's Party and Chairman of the State Great Khural Nyam-Osoryn Uchral pose for a photo during their meeting at the Gorki state residence outside Moscow, on Feb 10. (AP)

Mongolia names new PM

Mongolia's parliament has confirmed Nyam-Osoryn Uchral as the third prime minister in a year in a bid to end a deadlock in the legislature at a time of mounting economic pressures for the landlocked, resource-dependent country.

Uchral called for political unity, saying internal disputes have compounded external challenges. "As others unite to confront crises, we cannot afford political infighting that weakens our economy," he told lawmakers.

A total of 107 of the body's 126 lawmakers voted Monday night, with 88 supporting Uchral - or 82.2% - clearing the way for the 39-year-old leader to take office.

Uchral is a former minister of digital development and communications, where he promoted transparency reforms and digital governance initiatives. Before entering politics, Uchral got public attention as a hip-hop artist under the stage name "Timon." (AP)

Former Suriname president Santokhi dies at age of 67

PARAMARIBO, Suriname, March 31, (AP) — Former Suriname president **Chandrikapersad Santokhi**, an ex-police commissioner who investigated the 1982 killings of more than a dozen political opponents that deeply scarred the South American country, has died. He was 67.



Santokhi

Santokhi, who was also known as "Chan," led the country as president from 2020 to 2025, and previously served as minister of justice and police from 2005 to 2010.

Suriname President Jennifer Geerlings-Simons confirmed Santokhi's death in a statement on social media, writing that "his years of service in various public functions will be remembered."

The cause of death was not immediately known.

Rob Jetten, the prime minister of the Netherlands, wrote on X that he was "grieved and shocked by

the sudden passing" of Santokhi: "As president, and in his other roles, he meant a great deal to Suriname. He also tirelessly worked to strengthen the ties between the Netherlands and Suriname."

Suriname is a former Dutch colony. Also mourning Santokhi's death was Caricom, a Caribbean trade bloc that saw him as chairman from July to December 2022: "The community has lost a dedicated regionalist."

Irfaan Ali, president of neighboring Guyana, described Santokhi as a "man of quiet strength" who served his people and country "with dedication and conviction."

"The region has lost a fine statesman, one who carried the mantle of leadership with grace and humility," he wrote on X.

Santokhi took over a bankrupt Suriname from his predecessor, former dictator Desi Bouterse, and led the country to economic stability, partly supported by an International Monetary Fund program. However, austere measures implemented to comply with the program translated into big sacrifices for the Surinamese people, including the phasing out of fuel, water and electricity subsidies.



Central African Republic President Faustin Archange Touadera attends a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia on March 5. (AP)

Touadera sworn in as CAR president

The president of the Central African Republic (CAR), Faustin-Archange Touadera, was sworn in for a third term on Monday three months after a disputed general election.

Touadera will be serving a new seven-year term. He was declared the winner of the vote in December, which was boycotted by the coalition opposition party following a 2023 constitutional referendum that removed term limits and increased the presidential term from five to seven years.

"We aspire to build a sovereign economy and ensure transparent management of our natural resources," Touadera said at the swearing-in ceremony in Bangui, attended by the presidents of Congo-Brazzaville and Comoros. Opposition parties and civil society rejected the results of the election, which the Constitutional Council said that Touadera won with 77.9% of the vote.

"You have to be a fool to believe that," said Frédéric Godoba, a civil society activist. (AP)

Lat/Am

US reopens embassy in Venezuela: The United States has formally reopened its embassy in Caracas, Venezuela, after the restoration of full diplomatic relations with the South American country following the Trump administration's ouster of then-President Nicolas Maduro in early January.

The State Department announced Monday that it had resumed normal operations at the embassy in Caracas - which had been in need of significant repair, including remediation from mold - after a seven-year closure that began during President Donald Trump's first term.

A small team of US diplomats, based in neighboring Colombia, has been working in Caracas for more than a month and hosted a flag-raising ceremony on March 14, but the embassy itself had not yet been reopened until Monday. (AP)

30 dead in Haiti gang attacks: At least 30 people were dead and dozens more missing on Monday after a gang renewed its attack on a town in central Haiti, according to human rights activists.

Gran Griff attacked Petite-Rivière de l'Artibonite early Sunday, burning homes and leaving bodies strewn on the streets. The gang attacked again on Monday, said Bertide Horace, spokesperson for the Commission for Dialogue, Reconciliation and Awareness to Save the Artibonite, an activist group.

She told The Associated Press that the gang remained in control of the Jean-Denis neighborhood and set up roadblocks.

"The area is completely deserted," she said by phone. "Only the gangs have control."

She said her organization has collected at least 30 bodies and was investigating reports of people missing.

"Communication is very bad over there," she noted. (AP)

Africa

Gunmen kill 20 in Nigeria: A night attack on a community in Nigeria's north-central region left at least 20 people dead, residents and authorities said.

The attack occurred on Sunday night in Gari Ya Waye community in the Jos North area of Plateau state, Joyce Lohya Ramnap, the state commissioner for information, said in a statement. She did not give the number of casualties, but said there was "loss of lives" and injured.

The state government imposed a 48-hour curfew to prevent further attacks, Ramnap said.

No group has claimed responsibility but residents told The Associated Press that many gunmen on bikes shot sporadically into the community.

Ibukun Falodun, a resident, said that 20 people were confirmed dead.

Attacks in Plateau State are part of a long-running cycle of violence in north-central Nigeria, where disputes over land and grazing between mostly Muslim Fulani herders and largely Christian farming communities frequently escalate into deadly clashes. Criminal gangs are also active. (AP)

Death toll from Kenya floods hits 110: The death toll from floods triggered by recent heavy rains across several parts of Kenya has risen to 110, authorities have confirmed.

The Ministry of Interior and National Administration said that more than 30 counties have experienced flooding and other hazards associated with heavy rains, leaving communities in distress and critical infrastructure severely affected.

"Nairobi has the highest number of deaths at 37, followed by the Eastern region with 26 and the Rift Valley region with 14, among others," the ministry said in a statement issued Sunday in Nairobi, the Kenyan capital. (Xinhua)

Stabbing and firearms incidents up

Chile's Kast vows tougher school security

SANTIAGO, Chile, March 31, (AP) — President José Antonio Kast said Monday that his administration will tighten security measures at Chile's schools, following two incidents involving weapons and amid growing concern about school violence in the South American country.

The announcement follows a deadly attack Friday that left one dead and four wounded. The pledge also came on the same day that another student was detained while attempting to enter a school with a loaded firearm.

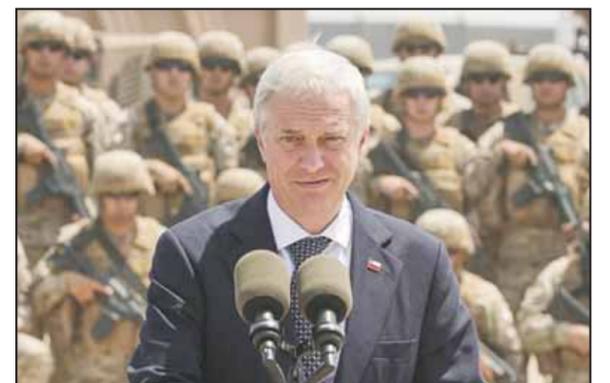
"We are going to have to take certain measures to protect our students," Kast said at an event at a school in the capital, Santiago. "These measures, which were previously met with strong resistance, now need to be viewed differently. Society has changed."

Last Friday, an 18-year-old student carried out a knife attack at a school in northern Chile, killing a 59-year-old school inspector and stabbing four other people, including another staff member and three students.

One of the victims remains hospitalized in critical condition, while the attacker remains in custody.

The attack is considered one of the worst cases of school violence in Chile.

Kast, leader of the Chilean far right who took office in early March, said



Chilean President Jose Antonio Kast gives a press conference at the military base 'Solo de Zaldivar,' near the Chacalluta border crossing, in Arica, Chile on March 16, after signing a decree to deter irregular migration along the northern border with Peru and Bolivia. (AP)

that "the events that shock us all continue to occur," referring to Monday's incident, when a 15-year-old tried to enter a school carrying a loaded gun.

"Today, once again, a student was found in a school with an object capable of harming other children," he said.

Kast announced that his government will seek to implement "measures for

greater control over access to schools," without providing further details.

Education Minister María Paz Arzola said that her office is drafting a bill that would allow teachers to inspect students' backpacks. She also said that the government will work to expedite the implementation of metal detectors at schools.

Oil barrel price down \$5.76 to \$113.17

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti oil price went down USD 5.76 to reach USD 113.17 per barrel (pb) on Monday, compared with USD 124.15 pb the previous day, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday. In international markets, Brent crude oil price went up by 21 cents to USD 112.78 pb, and West Texas crude rose by USD 3.24 to USD 102.88 pb.

Business

Zain's 2026 brand valuation increases 16% to reach a record high of \$4 billion

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative ICT and digital lifestyle communications (TechCo) operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, has seen its brand valuation increase by 16.1% in 2026 to reach a record-high USD 4.039 billion. This marks the highest brand value in the company's history and a year-on-year increase of US\$560 million from US\$3.479 billion in 2025, reinforcing Zain's standing among the world's leading telecom brands.

In the Brand Finance Telecoms 150 ranking for 2026, Zain attained a Brand Strength Index score of 83.3 out of 100 with an AAA- brand strength rating and was named the 25th strongest telecom brand globally reflecting the strength of its regional footprint and the continued momentum of its evolution into a TechCo.

The record valuation is supported by a year of strong operational and financial delivery across the business. In 2025, Zain recorded its highest revenues in 16 years, significantly increased its CAPEX investment (a 40% increase to total USD 1.5 billion) in network and technology infrastructure, and continued to strengthen the contribution of its growth verticals, including Fintech, ZainTECH, and ZOI. At the same time, the Group maintained regional leadership in 5G across four markets, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Bahrain, with Kuwait among the first globally to launch 5G-Advanced services, reinforcing the direct link between strategic investment, innovation leadership, and brand value creation.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO said: "As one of the region's most admired and recognizable brands, this milestone reaffirms Zain's four decades of leadership in mobile and ICT innovation. Nearly two decades after the launch of the Zain brand in September 2007, our continued rise in brand value reflects the passion, creativity and



Bader Al-Kharafi

■ Bader Al-Kharafi: "4WARD strategy propelling the business and brand to new heights"
 ■ Brand Finance ranks Zain among the top 25 strongest telecom brands globally with an AAA- rating and Brand Strength Index score of 83.3/100

ZAIN'S HISTORIC BRAND VALUE AND BRAND STRENGTH INDEX TREND



- Brand value has grown steadily from \$2.2bn (2021) to \$4.0bn (2026). This is an 84% increase.
- BSI improved from 73 to 83, showing stronger brand strength year-on-year.

strategic investment that have shaped a bold and progressive identity built on compelling customer experiences."

He continued: "Our '4WARD-Progress with Purpose' corporate strategy, anchored in innovation and digital transformation, has inspired a multitude of award-winning campaigns and industry-leading initiatives across Sustainability, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity. These efforts have fostered deep trust and affinity among our customers and employees alike."

"Our ranking as the number one telecom company and among the top three employers across the MENA region on Forbes' annual World's Best Employers list for 2025 reflects our commitment to building a thriving, diverse and inclusive workplace comprised of 8,000 talents."

Mr Al-Kharafi concluded: "Today, Zain connects and empowers 50.9 million customers across its eight markets and engages over 35.5 million followers on social media. The 4 billion views and 1.5 billion interactions achieved during 2025 reaffirm the strength of our advertising and marketing investments, positioning Zain as one of the region's most loved brands."

investment and quality, digital innovation, venture-building activity, brand health, customer engagement, advertising effectiveness, social media performance, talent and inclusion initiatives, and the continued growth of the Group's diversified digital ecosystem.

The achievement also highlights the contribution of Zain's strategic growth platforms and affiliated businesses, including fintech, ICT, digital infrastructure, enterprise solutions, digital lifestyle services, and innovation-led ventures operating across the Group. Together, these efforts continue to strengthen Zain's market relevance, expand its engagement across customer segments, and reinforce its evolution into a purpose-driven TechCo.

Looking ahead, Zain will continue to build on the early momentum of 4WARD by scaling digital infrastructure, expanding AI-driven and enterprise solutions, advancing fintech and digital lifestyle services, and further strengthening the consistency and appeal of the Zain brand across markets. Backed by disciplined execution, purpose-led engagement, and a diversified digital ecosystem, the Group remains focused on creating sustainable value for shareholders, deepening customer trust, and enabling digital progress across the region.

General Index up 0.52%

Boursa Kuwait ends higher

KUWAIT CITY, March 31, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed trading on Tuesday with solid gains, as the general index climbed 43.88 points, or 0.52 percent, to finish at 8,416.47 points. Market activity was brisk, with 251.2 million shares changing hands in 19,203 cash transactions valued at KD 81.9 million (approximately USD 251.4 million).

The Main Market Index recorded a notable rise of 84.70 points, or 1.11 percent, settling at 7,683.50 points. Trading volume reached 117 million shares through 7,885 transactions, generating a turnover of KD 16.5 million

(about USD 50.6 million).

The Premier Market Index also advanced, adding 37.36 points, or 0.42 percent, to close at 9,009.16 points. It saw 134.2 million shares traded across 11,318 transactions, with a total value of KD 65.4 million (roughly USD 200.7 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index climbed 81.39 points, or 1.03 percent, ending the session at 7,989.71 points. Trading volume for this index stood at 108.2 million shares executed in 6,331 transactions worth KD 14.6 million (around USD 44.8 million).

'Conflict disrupts supply chains'

IMF warns Middle East war threatens global economy

WASHINGTON, March 31, (KUNA): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Monday that the US-Israeli occupation war on Iran and its impacts have negative influence on global economy through the rise in energy prices and the disruption of supply chains.

"The world faces yet another shock. The war in the Middle East is upending lives and livelihoods in the region and beyond. It is also dimming the outlook for many economies that had only just shown signs of a sustained recovery from previous crises," the IMF said in an economic analysis.

Energy prices, supply chains, and financial markets are the main transmission channels, but the regional effects will vary significantly, it added.

"The shock is global, yet asymmetric. Energy importers are more exposed than exporters, poorer countries more than richer ones, and those with meager buffers more than those with ample reserves.

"Beyond its painful human toll, the war has caused serious disruption to the economies of the most directly affected countries, including damage to their infrastructure and industries that could become long-lasting. Although these countries are resilient, their short-term growth prospects will be negatively affected," it said.

Meanwhile, large energy importers in Asia and Europe are bearing the brunt of higher fuel and input costs: about 25 to 30 percent of global oil and 20 percent

of liquefied natural gas pass through the Strait of Hormuz, feeding demand not only in Asia but also in parts of Europe. Economies heavily dependent on oil imports in Africa and Asia are finding it increasingly hard to access the supplies they need, even at inflated prices.

Parts of the Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America face the added strain of higher food and fertilizer prices and tighter financial conditions. Low-income countries are especially at risk of food insecurity; some may need more external support - even as such assistance has been declining, it noted.

Although the war could shape the global economy in different ways, all roads lead to higher prices and slower growth.

A short conflict might send oil and gas prices soaring before markets adjust, while a long one could keep energy expensive and strain countries that rely on imports. Or the world may settle somewhere in between - tensions linger, energy stays costly, and inflation proves hard to tame - with ongoing uncertainty and geopolitical risk.

Much depends on how long the conflict lasts, how far it spreads, and how much damage it inflicts on infrastructure and supply chains, it said.

"We are closely monitoring these developments and will provide a fuller assessment in our World Economic Outlook and Global Financial Stability Report, to be published on April 14, followed by our Fiscal Monitor on April 15," it concluded.

Trump's mixed messages undermine confidence amid economic turbulence

Oil prices surge, stocks slide

WASHINGTON, March 31, (AP): As the Iran war intensifies, President Donald Trump has prioritized efforts to calm the financial markets - trying to keep oil prices from exploding upward, stocks from cratering and interest rates from surging.

When the markets have flashed danger, Trump has been quick with a social media post or a remark to claim the war he launched last month could soon end. He's publicly declared that the markets are doing better than he expected, even with the S&P 500 stock index declining over the past five weeks and the global oil benchmark up roughly 60%.

"I thought oil prices were going to go up higher than they are now," Trump said at a Friday investor summit. "And I thought that we would see a bigger drop in stock. It hasn't been that bad."

With the Iran war, the White House has largely refrained from messaging more aggressively to voters about the economic consequences - choosing instead to try to contain any damage in the financial markets, which have swung wildly on the prospects of ceasefire or escalation in what has become a high-stakes guessing game about Trump's next moves.

The Republican president showed the extremes of his messaging Monday before the U.S. stock market opened, writing in a social media post that great progress had been achieved on peace talks with Iran while also threatening civilian infrastructure such as desalination plants if a deal wasn't reached "shortly."

The White House sees the stock, energy and bond markets as a way to indirectly reach voters. Trump has staked his economic agenda on cheap prices at the pump, robust gains in 401(k) accounts and cheaper mortgage rates.

But that messaging appears to be wearing thin as the president's various pronouncements have done little to change the reality that a large chunk of the world's energy supplies is stranded by the conflict. Just 38% of U.S. adults approve

of how he's handling the economy and only 35% support him on Iran, according to a March survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Gene Sperling, a top economic adviser in the Democratic Clinton, Obama and Biden administrations, said voters can make a direct connection between prices at the pump and Trump's choice to attack Iran. He said "simplistic jawboning" to the markets is insufficient for a public that is stuck paying the price as gasoline soars past \$4 a gallon nationwide.

"Most advisers would say the president has to speak directly to the American people and fully acknowledge the economic pain that his policy has so directly caused in a short amount of time and make the case for why the national security concerns justify it," Sperling said. "Instead, you have a strategy of not recognizing or even dismissing people's economic pain."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt on Monday called the oil price increases a "short-term fluctuation."

Trump's strategy of giving mixed messages has started to work against him, said Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, a professor at the Yale University School of Management and co-author of the new book "Trump's Ten Commandments: Strategic Lessons from the Trump Leadership Toolbox."

"The uncertainty is now soaring," Sonnenfeld said. "As the messaging to calm markets with false reassurances is having diminishing credibility in financial markets, so, too, has Trump diminished public confidence."

Trump has embraced having flexibility in how he chooses to conduct the war, even though this has muddled his stated objectives.

During a Cabinet meeting Thursday, he said Iran was "begging" for a deal even as he threatened further military action - all the while maintaining that any economic damage to the U.S. would reverse itself.

On Friday after the markets closed, he extended his deadline for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for the flow of oil, saying he would hold off on bombing Iran's energy plants in the meantime.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Monday on Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends" that Iran was letting some tankers through the

Strait of Hormuz and that the "market is well supplied" because countries are releasing their strategic petroleum reserves and sanctions have been removed for Russian and Iranian oil already on tankers.

"We are seeing more and more ships go through on a daily basis as individual countries cut deals with the Iranian regime for the time being," Bessent said. "But over time, the U.S. is going to retake control of the straits, and there will be freedom of navigation, whether it is through U.S. escorts or a multinational escort."

Graham Steele, a Biden-era Treasury official, said Trump's messaging techniques "can work temporarily, but they have diminishing returns, over time," if they're detached from actual policies and results.

"We saw a lot of the volatile market reactions initially, when he kept announcing these things and then walking them back," Steele said. "The market reaction now is just a steady trend upward in prices," he noted, adding that markets are "not responding to it in the same way anymore."

The University of Michigan's Index of Consumer Sentiment on Friday fell to a reading of 53.3 in March, its lowest level since December. Joanne Hsu, director of the surveys of consumers, pointed to the financial market volatility "in the wake of the Iran conflict" as reducing confidence in the economy for households with middle and higher incomes.

Hsu noted that the survey indicated that people do not expect the higher energy costs and stock market declines to persist, but that could change if the war "becomes protracted or if higher energy prices pass through to overall inflation."

Gus Faucher, the chief economist at PNC Financial Services, stressed that low levels of consumer sentiment do not automatically signal a recession. But he said consumers would have to see lower gas prices, a steady stock market and decreased mortgage rates to feel better about the economy, which likely means a definitive resolution to the conflict rather than a series of pronouncements by Trump.

"The proof is in the pudding," Faucher said. "People need to see some substantive improvements before they feel better about conditions."

'AI pressure on young workers'

Chair Powell says Fed watching oil-driven inflation spike

CAMBRIDGE, March 31, (AP): Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Monday that it is important to closely monitor inflation amid a spike in energy prices from the Iran war.

Powell, who spoke before nearly 400 students at Harvard University as gas prices inched toward an average of \$4 per gallon in the U.S., said there wasn't a lot Fed policymakers could do since energy shocks "tend to come and go pretty quickly" and monetary maneuvers work over the longer-term. But a series of energy shocks, nevertheless, could be concerning.

"You have to carefully monitor inflation expectations because you could have a series of big supply shocks and that can lead, you know, the public generally, businesses, price setters, households ... to start expecting higher inflation over time. Why wouldn't it?" Powell said.

In wide-ranging remarks, Powell acknowledged young graduates were entering a challenging job market. He noted the role of artificial intelligence and that while

employment is historically low, there is very little job creation right now.

The U.S. job market has been lackluster for the past year. Employers added fewer than 10,000 jobs a month in 2025 - the weakest hiring outside a recession since 2002. This year began with a strong 126,000 new jobs in January, but the United States whipsawed to 92,000 job losses the following month.

Economists refer to a low-hire, low-fire job market in which companies are hesitant to add staff but don't want to let go of the workers that they have. That's made it especially hard for young people to find employment. There's some concern that artificial intelligence is taking over entry-level work that previously would have gone to young jobseekers, or that companies are reluctant to make hiring decisions until they better understand how they are going to use AI.

Powell said he was optimistic over the medium- to long-term, noting that history has shown that technological innovations have repeatedly raised living standards and increased production. Large-language models, he said, make people,

including himself, more productive.

"You're in a situation where you need to really invest the time to master the use of these new technologies," Powell said. "There's no denying it's a challenging time to enter the labor market. It may take some patience and all that, but in the longer term, this economy is going to give you great opportunities. Just be a little optimistic."

In a question-and-answer session, neither Powell nor the students mentioned President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly criticized the Fed chair. But Powell did stress the importance of the Fed's independence.

"It's very hard to build great democratic institutions and much easier to bring them down," Powell said.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly urged Powell and the Fed to cut interest rates, which would lower the costs to borrow for households, businesses and the U.S. government. Powell's caution has infuriated Trump.

Desalination disruption could trigger cascading credit effects in Gulf countries

By Moody's Ratings

Desalination dependence among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is often framed as a water scarcity issue. It is better viewed as a vital security risk, given how any impairment to water access would quickly transmit credit pressure across sovereign, utility and industrial debt issuers. The conflict in the Middle East brings this long-standing structural vulnerability into sharper focus. Any major disruption of desalination operations would require emergency and resilience spending and worsen operating stress already heightened by the severe disruption of marine traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

Heavy desalination dependence and coastal concentration heighten risks to water access and supply continuity. The GCC countries, which are located in one of the most water-scarce regions in the world, rely on desalination for most of their potable water. Much of their water production is concentrated in coastal plants and transmission systems with limited near-term substitutes at scale. Coastal concentration increases credit risk exposure by tying water security to a relatively limited set of production, storage and transmission assets.

Credit impact would spread quickly across tightly linked water, power and industrial systems. Desalination in the Gulf supports not only households and public services, but also power generation, industrial operations and commercial activity. Disruptions in the supply of power or fuel could impair desalination, while water outages could in turn constrain utility and industrial operations that depend on stable cooling and process water.

Sovereigns, utilities and strategic industries would be first to absorb credit impact. Any threat to potable water continuity would likely require rapid government intervention in the form of emergency supply measures, remediation and other actions. For utilities, immediate risks include service-delivery strain, higher operating costs and potentially accelerated capital spending. For industrial and infrastructure issuers, any water shock would likely compound logistics and trade disruptions related to the military conflict.

Storage, operational flexibility and state capacity can mitigate credit risk. Qatar (Aa2 stable), Saudi Arabia (Aa3 stable), United Arab Emirates (UAE, Aa2 stable) and Kuwait (A1 stable) are generally better positioned because of stronger state capacity and robust fiscal buffers, as well as more effective policy execution in UAE and Saudi Arabia. Oman (Baa3 stable) has less fiscal headroom than higher-rated peers, while Bahrain's (B2 stable) very weak public-finance metrics increase its sensitivity to prolonged disruption, even with the prospect of external support. During periods of acute geopolitical tensions, simultaneous strains on desalination assets, power-linked infrastructure and repair logistics could weaken these buffers.

Heavy desalination dependence and coastal concentration heighten risks to water access and supply continuity

The GCC countries' exposure to water-security risk reflects structural dependence on desalination in some of the world's most water-stressed economies. The World Resource Institute cites Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE as being among the countries facing extremely high water stress, with GCC countries accounting for nearly half of the world's desalination output. This combination of severe natural scarcity and heavy reliance on nonconventional (desalinated or recycled) water supplies makes desalination a core infrastructure dependency across much of the region, rather than a supplementary source of water (see Exhibit 1). Desalination is not only a utility service, but also a strategic infrastructure input supporting urban resilience, industrial continuity and economic concentration along the coast. Based on the assumptions in our baseline scenario for the conflict in the Middle East, we are not forecasting a material disruption at this time. But any targeting of desalination assets has the potential to trigger significant credit implications across multiple sectors.

Exposure is highest in systems where desalination is the dominant source of potable water and natural freshwater alternatives are minimal. In some Gulf countries, including Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, desalinated seawater and other nonconventional sources account for most of the potable water supply. As a result, the key credit vulnerability lies not only in high reliance on desalination, but in the concentration of water production across a relatively limited number of coastal assets and interconnected systems (see Exhibit 2).

Bahrain and Oman are also materially exposed, although the structure of that exposure differs. In Bahrain, potable water supply is concentrated across a limited number of desalination assets, resulting in high system-level reliance on a small coastal footprint. In Oman, recent investment in transmission, storage and interconnection has strengthened links across multiple desalination plants and extended supply to key population centers, logistics zones and industrial areas. As a result, exposure in Oman appears less nationally concentrated than in some smaller Gulf systems, although desalination remains central to coastal and urban supply networks. More broadly, smaller systems may exhibit higher proportional exposure, while larger systems may face greater absolute disruption risk given the scale of urban populations and industrial demand they support, with limited scope for cross-border substitution.

Coastal concentration increases credit exposure by tying water security to a relatively limited set of production, storage and transmission assets. In certain Gulf states, large desalination plants are located near coastal cities, industrial clusters and integrated power-water facilities, supporting scale and operating efficiency but increasing reliance on uninterrupted network performance. Where these assets also serve industrial zones, ports and power-linked infrastructure, the impact of a localized disruption can quickly reach beyond the water system and affect multiple parts of the same economic corridor.

This concentration is particularly relevant from a market convergence perspective, as desalination underpins households, industrial production, ports and logistics networks, while remaining dependent on power supply, chemicals, maintenance inputs and transmission infrastructure. Systems with more diversified plant footprints, larger storage buffers and stronger interconnections are therefore likely to be better positioned to manage localized disruption than those with more concentrated asset bases and fewer near-term substitutes.

All GCC countries have credit impact scores and environmental issuer profile scores that reflect high or very high credit exposure to carbon transition risk because of their economic and fiscal dependence on the hydrocarbon sector. But despite their location in a region with high water and heat stress and a heavy dependence on desalination, most have only moderate credit exposure to physical climate risks and water management risk (see Exhibit 3). Long-standing public spending on desalination, storage and wastewater reuse and network resilience have helped Gulf countries mitigate the economic and fiscal effects of chronic water stress.

Credit impact could spread quickly across tightly linked water, power and industrial systems

Desalination in the Gulf supports not only households and public services, but broader economic activity as well. As a result, desalination functions as a strategic operating input rather than a standalone utility service. Credit risk arises from the water-energy nexus: power is required to sustain water production, while water is essential to utilities, industry and wider economic systems.

In Gulf countries, desalination, pumping, distribution and treatment consume significant energy resources, while power generation and industrial systems are themselves dependent on reliable water supply. The IEA notes that the region relies heavily on fossil fuel-based thermal desalination and cogeneration facilities, reinforcing the operational linkage between water and energy infrastructure. In some Gulf systems, desalination, power genera-

Exhibit 1
Desalination production is high relative to municipal and industrial water withdrawals in most Gulf systems
Country comparison of municipal and industrial water withdrawals and desalination output relative to municipal + industrial withdrawals

Issuer	Long-term rating	Population (billions)	Total daily municipal + industrial water withdrawal (millions of cubic meters per day)	Desalination output (millions of cubic meters per day)	Desalination output as percentage of municipal + industrial water withdrawal (%)
Bahrain	B2	1.53	0.79	0.66	84%
Kuwait	A1	4.59	1.29	1.15	89%
Oman	Baa3	4.73	1.01	0.9	90%
Qatar	Aa2	2.89	1.71	1.83	107%
Saudi Arabia	Aa3	32.18	13.13	5.85	45%
United Arab Emirates	Aa2	10.24	6.44	5.81	90%

Note: AQUASTAT reports municipal and industrial water as sector withdrawals, while "desalinated water production" is reported separately as nonconventional water production and is estimated on the basis of installed capacity. The figures shown based on the latest AQUASTAT data currently available, for 2022. Municipal and industrial withdrawals and desalinated water produced are reported by AQUASTAT as km³/year and have been converted to MCM/day for presentation. The ratio shown is therefore an indicative measure of desalination production relative to municipal and industrial withdrawals, rather than a direct measure of the share of demand served by desalination. Ratios above 100% may reflect differences in variable definitions, estimation methods, timing, storage, or losses.
Sources: Food and Agriculture Organization, AQUASTAT

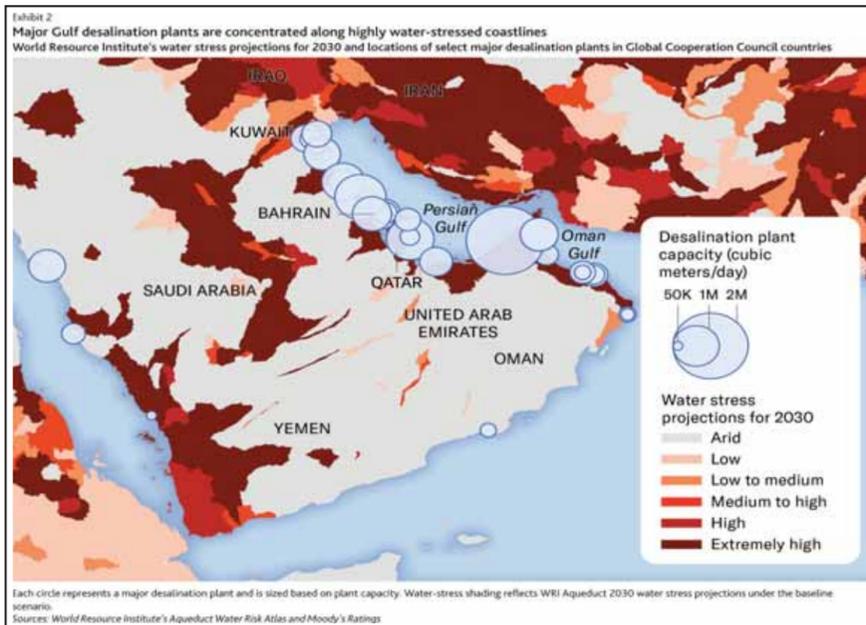


Exhibit 3
Significant government investment mitigates credit exposure to physical climate risks and water management risk
Gulf Cooperation Council sovereigns' credit impact scores, environmental issuer profile scores and category scores for physical climate risks and water management

Issuer	Long-term rating	Credit impact score	Environmental issuer profile score	Physical climate risks category score	Water management category score
Bahrain	B2	CIS-4	E-4	4	3
Kuwait	A1	CIS-3	E-4	3	3
Oman	Baa3	CIS-4	E-5	3	3
Qatar	Aa2	CIS-3	E-4	3	3
Saudi Arabia	Aa3	CIS-3	E-4	3	3
United Arab Emirates	Aa2	CIS-3	E-4	3	3

Credit impact scores, issuer profile scores and the underlying environmental, social and governance category scores are expressed on a five-point scale. For issuer profile scores and category scores, 5 indicates the highest credit exposure to environmental, governance or social risks (after mitigants specific to environmental, social or governance considerations), while 1 indicates a material credit benefit. For more information about our scores, refer to our [cross-sector rating methodology for assessing environmental, social and governance risks](#). Scores as of 20 March 2026.
Source: Moody's Ratings

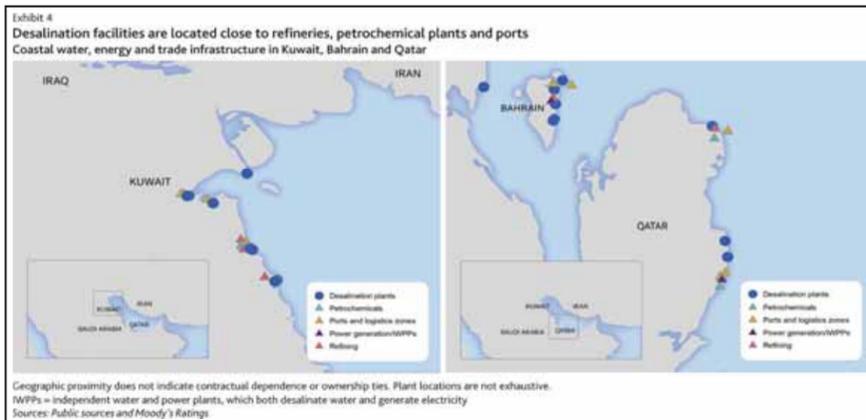


Exhibit 5
Disruption risk can be material despite strong baseline social service provision
Gulf Cooperation Council sovereigns' social issuer profile scores and category scores for access to basic services and health and safety

Issuer	Social issuer profile score	Access to basic services category score	Health and safety category score
Bahrain	S-3	2	2
Kuwait	S-3	2	2
Oman	S-3	2	2
Qatar	S-2	2	2
Saudi Arabia	S-3	2	2
United Arab Emirates	S-2	2	2

Issuer profile scores and the underlying category scores are expressed on a five-point scale, with 5 indicating the highest credit exposure to environmental, governance or social risks (after mitigants specific to environmental, social or governance considerations), and 1 indicating a material credit benefit. For more information about our scores, refer to our [cross-sector rating methodology for assessing environmental, social and governance risks](#). Scores as of 20 March 2026.
Source: Moody's Ratings

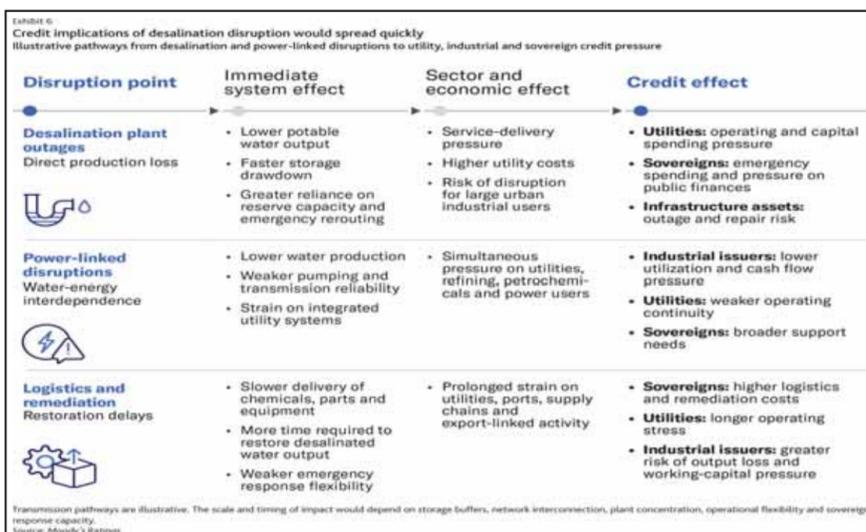


Exhibit 7
Capacity to fund and execute emergency responses varies by country
Gulf Cooperation Council sovereigns' governance issuer profile scores and category scores for policy credibility and effectiveness and budget management

Issuer	Governance issuer profile score	Policy credibility and effectiveness category score	Budget management category score
Bahrain	G-3	3	5
Kuwait	G-3	2	3
Oman	G-2	3	3
Qatar	G-2	1	2
Saudi Arabia	G-2	1	2
United Arab Emirates	G-2	1	1

Issuer profile scores and the underlying category scores are expressed on a five-point scale, with 5 indicating the highest credit exposure to environmental, governance or social risks (after mitigants specific to environmental, social or governance considerations), and 1 indicating a material credit benefit. For more information about our scores, refer to our [cross-sector rating methodology for assessing environmental, social and governance risks](#). Scores as of 20 March 2026.
Source: Moody's Ratings

tion, industrial production and urban service delivery are supported by the same coastal infrastructure clusters, increasing the risk that localized disruption could affect multiple sectors simultaneously. Exhibit 4 illustrates this clustering in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, where major desalination assets sit alongside refining, petrochemical, power and port infrastructure.

Disruptions in the supply of power or fuel could impair desalination, while water outages could in turn constrain utility and industrial operations that depend on stable cooling and process water. The proximity of these facilities, which does not necessarily imply direct contractual dependence, highlights why disruption to desalination assets can quickly pose significant operating challenges in concentrated coastal systems.

Sovereigns, utilities and strategic industries would be first to absorb credit impact

For sovereigns, any threat to potable water continuity would first create pressure on essential service delivery by impairing access to basic services and then, if rationing, distribution bottlenecks and localized service outages emerge, through broader social pressures by endangering public health and safety. As shown in Exhibit 5, GCC sovereigns generally have strong social-service provisions, as is reflected in their social issuer profile scores of 2 or 3 and their category scores of 2 for access to basic services and for health and safety.

Fiscal pressures would likely build quickly as disruptions to potable water supplies require rapid public sector intervention through emergency supply measures, remediation, enhanced security, logistics support and potentially accelerated resilience investment. This is credit relevant because desalination underpins essential public services across the Gulf and, in some systems, has limited near-term substitutes at scale.

Severe disruption to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz could further complicate remediation by slowing the movement of equipment, chemicals and specialized inputs required to restore operations. In this context, the key credit question is often not whether the state would intervene, but how quickly the costs of disruption would migrate to government balance sheets. This dynamic is particularly relevant where utilities operate under regulated or subsidized tariffs, constraining the extent to which emergency costs can be passed through to end users.

For water utilities and related public-sector entities, first-round credit effects would likely be operational. Immediate risks include, service-delivery strain, higher operating costs and potentially accelerated capital spending to strengthen storage, interconnection and reserve capacity. The scale of pressure would depend on the duration of disruption, available storage buffers, the ability to reroute supply across networks and the degree of operational flexibility embedded in the system.

Utilities with more concentrated production footprints, thinner reserve margins or weaker interconnection are likely to be more exposed than systems with broader plant diversification and stronger contingency arrangements. For utilities, storage and network flexibility will determine whether disruption remains an operational challenge or escalates into a broader service-delivery and capital spending event.

Strategic industries would likely face the next layer of credit pressure through weaker operating continuity and higher contingency costs. Refining, petrochemicals, power generation, ports and other industrial users depend directly or indirectly on reliable water supply for cooling, processing and workforce continuity, while many desalination systems also rely on stable power inputs. The region's data centers, some of which have been damaged by recent drone strikes, also rely on a steady source of water, which is needed to cool their servers and prevent them from overheating.

As a result, water disruption could amplify broader infrastructure and logistics stress already affecting Gulf countries, reducing industrial output and cash flow while, in some cases, increasing pressure on public finances. As Exhibit 6 shows, credit pressures could arise not only through direct loss of water output, but also through power-linked disruptions and delays in restoring operations.

Storage, operational flexibility and state capacity can mitigate credit risk

Credit exposure varies across Gulf water systems because resilience differs materially. Exposure and resilience are not the same: countries with similar reliance on desalination may face different credit outcomes depending on how much disruption their systems can absorb. Key credit risk mitigants include storage, operational flexibility and sovereign capacity to mobilize support. In highly engineered water systems, the credit impact can be nonlinear: disruption is often containable, while buffers are intact, but can propagate quickly once storage and operational flexibility are exhausted.

Storage: The ability to store water is the first line of defense because it determines how long utilities can sustain essential supply while it restores or reallocates production. Public disclosures suggest meaningful cross-country variation in storage buffers, although reported figures are not fully comparable across systems. Qatar's strategic reservoir program was designed to provide about seven days of potable-water storage, while Saudi Arabia has articulated a seven-day strategic target by 2030. This suggests that storage can materially strengthen resilience, but buffers are most informative when assessed relative to system size and the ability to restore or, reallocate supply. But even when storage is significant, its effectiveness may be tested differently during periods of acute geopolitical tensions, while simultaneous strain on critical water assets, power linked infrastructure and repair logistics can reduce the time and flexibility available to preserve supply continuity.

Operational flexibility: Systems with multiple plants, broader geographic dispersion, stronger bulk water transmission interconnection and some spare capacity are better positioned to reroute supply during disruptions than systems reliant on a small number of large coastal assets. Operational flexibility includes the ability to reallocate supply, draw on spare capacity, rely on network interconnection and preserve potable water for priority uses through reuse and demand management measures. Wastewater reuse can also ease pressure at the margin by preserving higher quality potable water for essential uses. In Oman, official utility reporting highlights recent investments to strengthen bulk water transmission networks between major desalination plants and demand centers, while official UAE reporting indicates that nonconventional resources, including treated wastewater, already play an important role in the national water mix. From a credit perspective, these features enhance resilience by supporting service continuity and slowing the transmission of localized disruption across the wider system.

State capacity: Sovereigns with greater fiscal flexibility, stronger execution capacity and an established record of infrastructure investment are better positioned to absorb repair costs, mobilize temporary supply and accelerate resilience spending. Those governments with the proven ability to develop and implement clearly articulated fiscal, monetary, economic and social policies are well-positioned to mobilize funding, reallocate spending and execute effective policy measures when shocks occur. The ability to execute and fund emergency measures varies among GCC sovereigns, as is reflected in their governance issuer profile scores and their category scores for policy credibility and effectiveness and budget management (see Exhibit 7). Oman and Bahrain have moderate credit exposure to policy credibility and effectiveness risks, while UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar all derive material credit benefits from their track record of implementing effective policy responses. UAE also derives a material credit benefit from its sound budget management practices, while Bahrain's persistently high off-budget spending leaves it with very high credit exposure to budget management risks.

Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam signal new interest in Russian oil

Oil-thirsty Asian nations seek Russian crude as Iran war strains supplies

BANGKOK, March 31, (AP): Asian nations are increasingly competing for Russian crude oil as an energy crisis mounts amid the month-old war by the U.S. and Israel against Iran, which has choked off roughly a fifth of the world's oil supply.

Much of the oil from the mostly shut Strait of Hormuz was headed for Asia, hit hardest by recent energy shocks. Over the weekend, Iran-backed Houthi rebels entered the conflict, further threatening shipping.

To shore up global crude oil supplies, the U.S. has temporarily eased sanctions on Russian oil shipments already at sea - first for India, then for the rest of the world.

Demand is rising in Asia while Russia is raking in billions of dollars. But experts say there is a limit to how much Moscow can boost its exports of crude oil, which is unrefined petroleum needed to make fuels like gasoline and diesel, and it is already exporting at a level close to its previous peak.

In addition, Russia's 4-year-old full-scale invasion of Ukraine and recent drone attacks on its energy facilities by Kyiv are hurting its export capabilities.

For desperate countries in Asia the opportunity is short-lived and shrinking, said Muyu Xu, a senior crude oil analyst at the global trade data firm Kpler.

"The real problem is how much cargo is still available in this market," she said.

Before the Iran war, China, India and Turkey were the main importers of Russian oil, flouting Western sanctions for a healthy discount.

U.S. and European Union sanctions were meant to economically hinder Russia after its invasion of Ukraine.

But the U.S. sanction waiver sent energy-hungry Southeast Asia into a flurry. This month, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam signaled new interest in Russian oil.

Manila, a long-time U.S. ally, imported Russian crude for the first time in five years - days after it declared an energy emergency.

Others may follow, but will compete with China and India for roughly 126 million barrels still at sea, according to Kpler.

India alone typically needs 5.5 million to 6 million barrels of oil per day.

Analysts say Russia is unlikely to boost exports sharply. In March, flows were about 3.8 million barrels a day, above February's 3.2 million but still below the mid-2023 peak of 3.9 million.

Xu said the crisis was a reminder of how quickly geopolitics can shift - sometimes driven by just a few decision-makers - making it hard for countries to plan ahead. She said "right now, really the priority is to ensure your supply and all the other considerations are secondary."

Southeast Asian countries competing for the dwindling amount of Russian crude oil at sea are likely hoping the U.S. extends its sanction waiver beyond April, Xu added.

The options are limited for these nations, and safer bets - like crude oil from the U.S., South America or West Africa - are too far for Asia, meaning shipments won't arrive for months. That leaves poorer nations



Liberia-flagged tanker Shenlong Suezmax, carrying crude oil from Saudi Arabia, that arrived clearing the Strait of Hormuz, is seen at the Mumbai Port in Mumbai, India, Thursday, March 12, 2026. (AP)

scrambling.

Airlines in the Philippines are weighing fuel rationing. Cash handouts are being rushed to those hit hardest, like transportation workers. On most days, lines at gas stations stretch for blocks.

The nation of 117 million is an early warning for Southeast Asia.

Before the war, the Philippines relied on the Middle East for nearly 97% of its total seaborne oil imports, according to Kpler data. The energy emergency declaration is a "new frontier" in its scale and magnitude, said Kairos Dela Cruz of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities.

"It will definitely drive people down even further in the poverty line," he said.

To ease energy shortfalls, the Philippines imported crude oil, a first since 2021. Other Southeast Asian nations are weighing similar options.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh's March 23 visit to Russia included agreements on oil and gas cooperation, alongside nuclear energy, as rising diesel prices begin to squeeze Vietnam's manufacturing sector.

In Indonesia, officials said "all countries are possible" partners as they shore up reserves. This includes Russia and the tiny oil and gas sultanate of Brunei, said Indonesian Energy Minister Bahlil Lahadalia.

"When you don't have any other options, all options are on the table," said Putra Adhiguna of the Jakarta-based Energy Shift Institute.

While weighing similar moves, Thailand is not as desperate as the Philippines, said Jitsai Santaputra of the energy consultancy The Lantau

Group in Bangkok. She added that Thailand will likely wait and see so long as the impact is limited.

But it's growing.

Fuel prices in Thailand jumped on March 26 after caps and subsidies were lifted, with most fuels rising about 20 U.S. cents per liter, with diesel up roughly 18% - a hit to industry and transportation that risks pushing up the price of other goods.

Defying Western sanctions, China and India were major Russian crude oil customers before the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28.

An additional advantage for India was having U.S. sanctions on Russian crude oil removed about a week before other countries.

"They took that chance and snapped up quite many cargoes," Xu said. By the time U.S. President Donald Trump allowed everybody else to buy, she said it was "already a bit too late because most of the cargo had already been ordered" by China and India.

Even with the head start, Kpler data shows India's crude oil imports from Russia probably aren't enough to offset the lack of supplies from the Middle East.

Its oil imports from Russia jumped to roughly 1.9 million barrels a day in March, from about 1 million barrels before the Iran war. Before that conflict, India imported around 2.6 million barrels per day of crude oil from the Middle East.

That may not be enough, with the approach of peak summer energy demand - driven by travel, agriculture and freight needs - especially as emergency oil stockpiles run down, said Duttatreya Das of the think tank Ember. He added that short-term buys cover only a few days of supply, leaving any gap hard to fill without extra shipments from the U.S. or Canada.

"I don't know how the shortfall will be met," he said.

Despite being the fifth-largest crude producer and pushing clean energy, China still has strong oil demand from its 1.4 billion people. But it also has built a vast oil stockpile.

It has approximately 1.2 billion barrels of onshore crude inventories, Kpler estimates. That is nearly four months of its overall seaborne crude imports, which cushion short term impacts from the war.

China sourced about 13% of its seaborne crude from Iran, according to Kpler, and roughly 20% from Russia, said financial data group LSEG.

With ample reserves and deep pockets, analysts say some Russian shipments bound for China could be diverted to more desperate countries.

"Russia emerges as a major winner from the entire conflict," said Sam Reynolds of the U.S.-based Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. Given the energy crisis, speed of delivery and temporarily lower prices, he said Asia has "a much larger incentive to import Russian oil."

"We can argue whether there's a moral dilemma there, but I think it's a reflection of the fact that countries are going to do whatever they need to to protect their energy security," he said.

PMI rises as energy risks cloud outlook

China factory activity expands as war risks loom

HONG KONG, March 31, (AP): China's factory activity expanded in March, ending two months of contraction, the government said Tuesday, but analysts say prolonged impacts of the Iran war could weigh on growth.

The official manufacturing purchasing managers index rose to 50.4 from 49 in February, the National Bureau of Statistics reported, beating economists' expectations and notching the strongest reading in a year. PMI is measured on a scale of 0 to 100 and a reading above 50 indicates expansion.

While the latest official data covered a period after the Iran war began on Feb. 28, analysts say the impacts of surging energy costs have not yet been fully seen. "So far supply disruptions have not occurred in a material way," said Jacqueline Rong, Chief China Economist, BNP Paribas, a French bank.

A years-long property sector slump in China has also weighed on economic growth and weakened domestic consumption and investment demand in China, the world's second-largest econ-

omy after the U.S. To help drive its economy, China has been reliant on growing exports, especially to regions such as Southeast Asia and Europe, which propelled its trade surplus last year to a record \$1.2 trillion despite higher U.S. tariffs.

China's export engine could hit headwinds as the Iran war drive up energy costs and disrupts supply chains, with most maritime traffic blocked from passing the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil normally passes.

The extent of the impact will depend on how long the energy flows from the Middle East are cut off, said BNP Paribas' Rong. "If it is months, rather than weeks, then the supply disruptions, not just from oil, but also from the shortage of many chemical products - such as rare gases - would manifest itself in disrupting industrial production and services," she said.

China's exports could also suffer if overall global growth takes a serious hit from the energy crisis, Rong said. Analysts say, for example, higher global inflation could weaken consump-

tion demand for Chinese goods.

Chinese leaders in early March unveiled an economic growth target of 4.5% to 5% for this year, a slightly lower goal than the "around 5%" last year and the lowest growth target since 1991.

For now, China's economy "appears to have weathered" the energy shock from the Iran war well, wrote Zichun Huang, China economist at Capital Economics, in a recent research note, although she also cautioned it is "likely that the fallout from the Iran war will grow over the coming months."

With China's exports to the U.S., its largest trading partner, in decline over the past months, economists are closely watching for positive signs in trade relations between Washington and Beijing as U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in May.

Some analysts say lower U.S. tariffs following a recent Supreme Court ruling against Trump's wide-reaching global tariffs could give China a small boost to exports and factory activity.

Inflation hits 2.5%

Euro Zone inflation rises as fuel costs jump

FRANKFURT, March 31, (AP): Europe's inflation rate rose to 2.5% in March as the Iran war sent fuel prices sharply higher, official figures showed Tuesday. And that is leading analysts to pencil in interest rate increases by the European Central Bank later this year.

The annual rate for the 21 European Union member countries using the euro currency compared to 1.9% for February before the war started and blocked supplies of oil and gas from the Persian Gulf.

Energy prices increased 4.9% percent in March compared to a 3.1% decline in February, Eurostat figures showed.

The war's impact on prices has already hit home at the vast Trionfale indoor market in Rome just north of the Vatican, where vegetable stand owner Anna Caruso said the higher cost of fuel was being reflected in prices for zucchini, eggplant and fruit.

"If the price of fuel increases, those who

transport will increase the general price," she said. "With many items, they say, I can't afford this ... and shift toward the cheaper items."

Some prices were higher due to some produce not being in season, said stand owner Paola Ianzi, "but the increase is also partially due to the war because diesel and fuel increased and those who transport fruit and vegetables need to compensate that."

Food price inflation came in at a relatively moderate 2.4% while services, a broad category ranging from medical care to haircuts, rose 3.2%.

European Central Bank head Christine Lagarde has said that businesses may be quicker to raise prices during this outbreak of inflation due to bitter memories of the last episode of higher prices in 2022, when inflation rose to double digits. Russia cut off most supplies of natural gas to Europe and oil prices rose, sending energy costs through the roof.

Iran has blocked most of the tanker traf-

fic through the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway through which some 20% of the world's oil and gas typically passes. That is raising the prospect of sharply tighter markets for fuel in the coming weeks and months.

The expected further rise in inflation beyond the ECB's 2% target is leading analysts to predict the ECB will raise interest rates in the coming months to keep inflation from becoming ingrained in the economy through expectations of higher wages and prices for other goods. "We expect the ECB to raise rates already at the April and June governing council meetings... in order to pre-empt any de-anchoring of inflation expectations," said Bill Diviney, head of macro research at ABM AMRO bank. Analysts at Oxford Economics also expect two interest rate hikes this year.

The ECB left its key rate unchanged at 2% at its last meeting on March 19. Higher interest rates are the chief central bank tool against inflation.

Trump lets Russian oil shipment reach Cuba

Cuba gets first oil cargo in three months

HAVANA, March 31, (AP): A Russian tanker docked Tuesday at the Cuban port of Matanzas laden with 730,000 barrels of oil, marking the first time in three months that an oil tanker reached the island.

The administration of President Donald Trump had allowed the Anatoly Kolodkin to proceed despite an ongoing U.S. energy blockade.

Cubans including Energy and Mines Minister Vicente de la O Levy cheered the ship's arrival. A shortage of petroleum has exacerbated a deep economic crisis that has left the population mired in long blackouts and facing a severe shortage of food and medicine.

"Our gratitude to the Government and People of Russia for all the support we are receiving. A valuable shipment that arrives amidst the complex energy situation we are facing," de la O Levy wrote on X.

Cuba produces barely 40% of its required fuel and relies on imports to sustain its energy grid. Experts say the anticipated shipment could produce about 180,000 barrels of diesel, enough to feed Cuba's daily demand for nine or 10 days.

"The arrival of an oil tanker to a country has

likely never generated so much news as the Russian one to Cuba," wrote Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío on X. "It's a sign of the brutal siege Cubans endure with heroism and stoicism. It's a demonstration of the criminal cruelty of imperialism against a nation that refuses to be dominated."

The vessel's arrival was watched by some fishermen as it docked under the early morning sun.

"We've been waiting for the ship to arrive because it's been some time since any ship entered," said 50-year-old Armando Ramirez. "And it is needed here for the people, for Cuba."

Cuba used to receive most of its oil from Venezuela, but those shipments were halted ever since the U.S. attacked the South American country and arrested its leader in early January.

Since then, Mexico also has halted its oil shipments to Cuba as Trump threatened in late January to impose tariffs on any country that sells or provides oil to the island.

On Sunday night, Trump had said he had "no problem" with a Russian oil tanker off the coast of

Cuba delivering relief to the island.

"We don't mind having somebody get a boatload because they need ... they have to survive," Trump told reporters as he flew back to Washington.

"Cuba's finished," he added. "They have a bad regime. They have very bad and corrupt leadership and whether or not they get a boat of oil, it's not going to matter."

The vessel is sanctioned by the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom following the war in Ukraine.

On Monday, when asked about Trump's decision to allow the Russian oil tanker and not ones from other countries, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt called it "a decision that will continue to be made on a case-by-case basis for humanitarian reasons or otherwise," adding that "there's been no firm change in our sanctions policy."

Trump and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio have been pressuring for major changes in Cuba's policies and governance, all while both sides acknowledged talks as the island's economic and energetic crises deepen.

US gas climbs \$4 as Iran war hits supply

NEW YORK, March 31, (AP): U.S. gas prices jumped past an average of \$4 a gallon for the first time since 2022 on Tuesday as the Iran war pushed fuel prices to soar worldwide.

According to motor club AAA, the national average for a gallon of regular gasoline is now \$4.02 - over a dollar more than before the war began. The last time U.S. drivers were collectively paying this much at the pump was nearly four years ago, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The price is a national average, meaning drivers in some states have been paying well over \$4 a gallon for a while now. Prices vary from state to state due to factors ranging from nearby supply to differing tax rates.

Since the U.S. and Israel launched a joint war against Iran on Feb. 28, the cost of crude oil - the main ingredient in gasoline - has spiked and swung rapidly. That's because the conflict has caused deep supply chain disruptions and cuts from major oil producers across the Middle East.

Motorists around the world are also coping with higher gas prices due to the war. In Paris, for example, gas is at 2.34 euros per liter (\$2.68), which is about \$10.27 a gallon.

Higher gas prices are impacting consumers and businesses as many households continue to face wider cost of living strains. And as drivers pay more to cover necessities like gas, many may be forced to cut their budgets in other places.

More expensive fuel can also push up other spending, from utility bills to the price of many goods consumers buy each day.

Consumer prices and the cost of living already have become flashpoints in this midterm election year, with Democrats especially hammering Trump and Republicans as the GOP tries to hold majorities on Capitol Hill. A recent AP-NORC poll found that 45% of U.S. adults are "extremely" or "very" concerned about being able to afford gas in the next few months, up from 30% shortly after Trump won the 2024 presidential election with promises to lower costs.

In the immediate future, analysts point to groceries, which have to be restocked frequently and could also see price hikes as businesses' transportation costs pile up.

But hauling other cargo and packages has also been impacted. The United Postal Service, for example, is seeking a temporary 8% added charge on some of its popular products including Priority Mail.

U.S. diesel prices - the fuel used for many freight and delivery trucks - is now going for an average of \$5.45 a gallon, up from about \$3.76 a gallon before the war began, per AAA.

If the war drags on, it's possible that those prices could tick up even higher. Most tanker movement in the key Strait of Hormuz, where roughly one-fifth of the world's oil typically sails through, remains at a halt. That's led to cuts from major producers in the region who have no way of getting their crude to market. Meanwhile, Iran, Israel and the U.S. have all struck oil and gas facilities, worsening supply concerns.

In a search for some relief, the International Energy Agency pledged to release 400 million barrels of oil from emergency stockpiles of member nations. That includes the U.S., despite Trump initially downplaying the need for reserve oil.

The Trump administration has also eased sanctions to free up some oil from Venezuela, and temporarily Russia. The White House also says it's waiving maritime shipping requirements under a more than century-old law, known as the Jones Act, for 60 days.

It's not yet clear if those efforts will bring relief for consumers. A lot of factors contribute to gas prices.

Refineries buy crude oil in advance, meaning some could be work with more expensive oil for a while, and it will take time for any new supply to trickle down to consumers.

And while steep crude prices are a leading driver behind today's surge, U.S. gas prices typically tick up a bit at this time of year. More drivers are hitting the road and trying to fuel up while they can, so there's higher demand. Warming weather also brings a shift to summer blend fuel, which is more expensive to produce than winter blend.

The U.S., which is a net oil exporter, hasn't seen as stark a shock as other parts of the world that rely more heavily on fuel imports from the Middle East, notably Asia. But that doesn't mean America is immune to price spikes.

Oil is a globally-traded commodity. And most of what the U.S. produces is light, sweet crude - but refineries on the East and West coasts are primarily designed to process heavier, sour product. As a result, the country also needs imports.

Escalating geopolitical conflicts have disrupted oil flows and contributed to a surge in gas prices in the past. The U.S. average for regular gasoline climbed to its highest level of more than \$5 a gallon in June 2022, nearly four months after the Ukraine war began and world leaders imposed sanctions against Russia, a leading oil producer.

Prices at the pump later fell from that record. Before Tuesday, per AAA data, the national average had stayed below the \$4 mark since mid-August of 2022.



Zendaya arrives at the premiere of 'The Drama' on Tuesday, March 17, at DGA Theater Complex in Los Angeles. (AP)

Actress' looks reflect 'The Drama' wedding theme

Zendaya teases bridal fashion with old, new, borrowed

LOS ANGELES, March 31, (AP) — Zendaya has a few more days to wear something blue.

The actor, promoting "The Drama" with co-star Robert Pattinson around the globe, has - wink wink - worn something old, something new and something borrowed.

It all fits with the wedding theme of "The Drama," opening Friday, about a Boston couple whose impending nuptials are thrown into chaos by a dark revelation.

Of course, it also dovetails with the bridal theme of Zendaya's own life, with unconfirmed speculation flying - fed in part by rings she's been wearing - that she's

already married to Tom Holland.

But back to the fashion: Something old came in Los Angeles on March 17, where the actor wore the same off-the-shoulder Vivienne Westwood Bridal gown - in white, of course - that she wore to the 2015 Oscars. "Our Something Old," her stylist, Law Roach, posted on Instagram.

At the movie's March 24 Paris premiere it was time for something new - a white custom Louis Vuitton gown with a very, well, dramatic black bow and train cascading down the back.

Two days later for the Italian premiere in Rome, Zendaya sported a borrowed black Armani Privé dress with a plunging neckline framed with stones, earlier worn by Cate Blanchett at the Venice Film Festival. ("somethingborrowed," Roach posted.)

As for something blue - the color may have been subtly referenced by her flowing, multi-hued floral Alexander McQueen dress worn on Jimmy Kimmel's show March 16. But that was a little TOO subtle.

Which is why many expect the star to soon be singing the blues.

Variety

YINCHUAN: For Anna Lucia Tempesta, an Italian museum curator, an exhibition is never merely a display of ancient objects, but rather serves as an open invitation to an intercultural dialogue.

This philosophy is currently coming to life in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, northwest China, where an ongoing showcase of ancient Mediterranean pottery has evolved into a profound exchange between European and Chinese heritage professionals.

The catalyst for this exchange is the "Myth on Pottery" exhibition, which opened last week at the Ningxia Museum. Featuring 115 precious ceramics, sculptures and glassware from Italy's Puglia region, the event uses the myths of ancient Greek deities to illustrate Mediterranean culture and history.

However, as the exhibition settles into its three-month run, the spotlight has shifted beyond the artifacts to the deep, collaborative ties being forged behind the scenes.

Tempesta, the Italian chief curator of the exhibition and a promotion officer of Puglia's Department of Tourism and Culture, noted that the true triumph of the event lies in mutual discovery.

"These items are not merely vessels. Their patterns and motifs tell stories of ancient customs, earthly harvests and the relationships between peoples," Tempesta said after extensive discussions with her Chinese counterparts.

"These images are meaningful to us, and they hold meaning for you. If we converse, we explain and you listen, you interpret and we understand -- this is true exchange. We are both enriched by it," she added.

This shared understanding is vividly captured in the exhibition hall itself.

Chinese and Italian curators deliberately placed a 400 B.C. Greek krater from Puglia alongside a Chinese national treasure, namely a gilt silver ewer unearthed from a local tomb dating back to the Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581). Made in the ancient Bactria region, which is in present-day northern Afghanistan, the ewer features Persian and Roman decorative elements.

Remarkably, both artifacts depict scenes from the Trojan War. Placed adjacent to each other, they create a vivid, cross-continental resonance spanning thousands of miles, underscoring Ningxia's historical role as a vital crossroads on the ancient Silk Road.

The cultural synergy has extended well beyond display cabinets. During their stay in Yinchuan, capital city of Ningxia, the Italian delegation toured the Ningxia Museum's cultural relic conservation center to observe Chinese preservation practices. (Xinhua)



CONGO: Congolese rapper Clem Clépâtre took to the stage on the last day of a three-day music festival organized by women in Goma, firing up the crowd with rapid, punchy lyrics about social cohesion, peace, and unity.

Nearly 3,000 people attended "Musika na Kipaji," according to organizers. The event, now in its seventh year, aims to campaign against gender-based violence and showcase women's talents in music and dance.

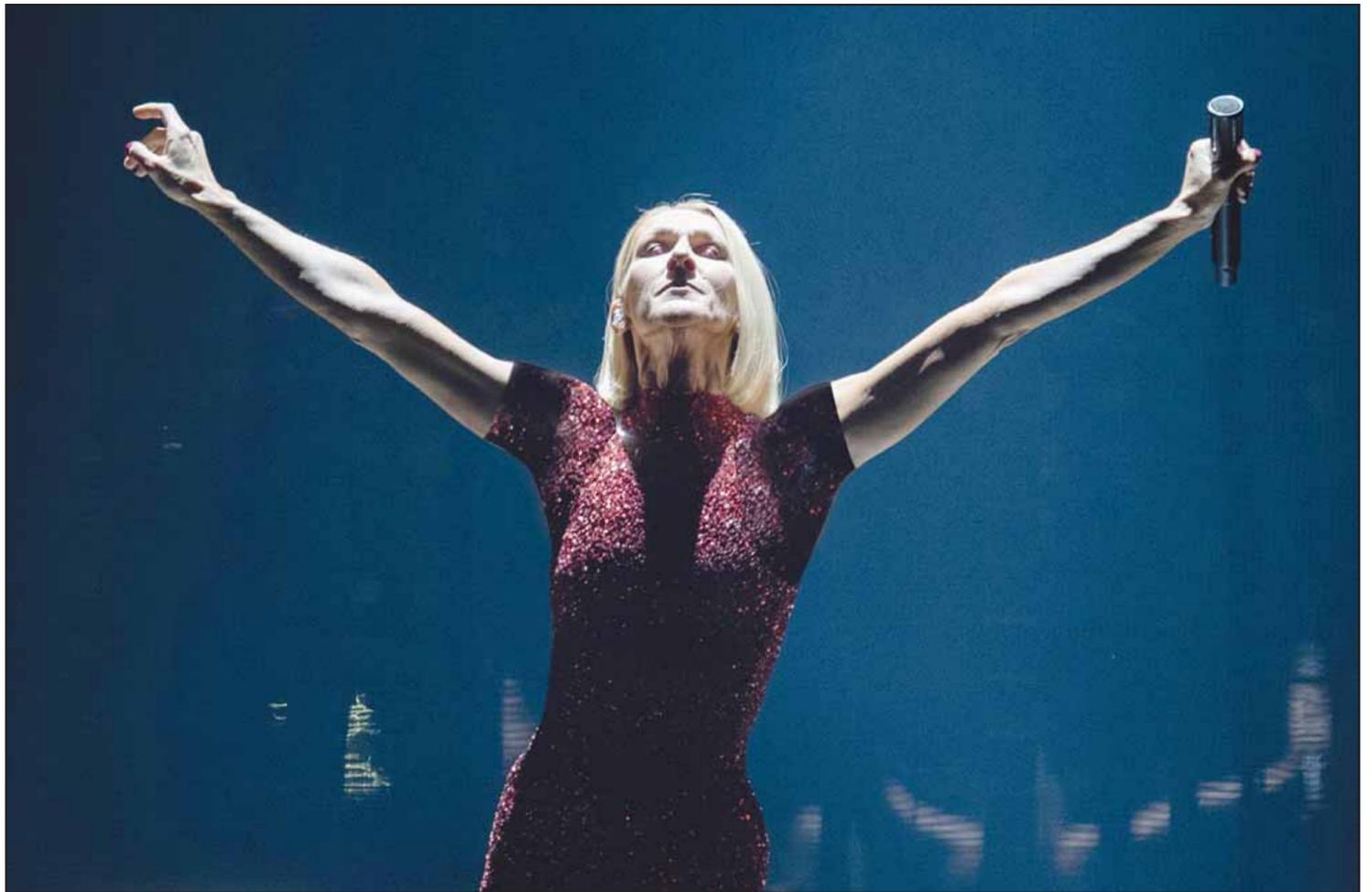
People swayed to Clépâtre's music on Sunday, with some singing along and blowing her kisses, while performers in colorful clothes danced on stage.

Goma, a prized city in mineral-rich eastern Congo, has been under the rule of the Rwanda-led M23 rebel group since January 2025, when the group took over key cities in the eastern region in a blitz. A long, heavy conflict has since broken out between the group and the Congolese military. Despite a peace deal, led by US President Donald Trump, to end the decades-long conflict, it has continued to flare up with the use of heavy artillery, according to the United Nations.

Sexual violence has surged with the conflict and festival organizers say the event is a way for women to combat violence and push for peace.

The conflict has sparked one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, displacing at least 7 million people in eastern Congo, but the people still feel hopeful. (AP)

Music



Singer Celine Dion performs during her first World Tour called Courage in Quebec City, Montreal, Canada on Sept. 18, 2019. (AP)

Celine Dion announces stage comeback with Paris residency

Celine Dion will return to the stage this fall with her first series of concerts since revealing her diagnosis with stiff-person syndrome, announcing a five-week limited engagement in Paris.

The Grammy-winning star said Monday that she will perform 10 shows at Paris La Défense Arena from Sept. 12 through Oct. 14, marking a major milestone after years away from touring due to the rare neurological disorder she disclosed in 2022.

In an emotional video message delivered from beneath the Eiffel Tower on her 58th birthday, Dion thanked fans for

their support during her health challenges and said she feels "strong" and "excited" to return to the stage.

"Over the last few years, every day that's gone by, I've felt your prayers and support," she said. "This year, I'm getting the chance to see you, to perform for you once again in Paris."

The shows, titled "Celine Dion Paris 2026," will feature her catalog of hits in English and French. The production is being developed with creative director Willo Perron.

Dion has largely stepped back from performing since canceling her Courage World Tour as her condition progressed. She made a brief but widely watched return at the opening

ceremony of the 2024 Paris Olympics, performing atop the Eiffel Tower.

With nearly 260 million albums sold worldwide, Dion remains one of the bestselling and most decorated artists in pop music history, known for hits including "My Heart Will Go On" and "Because You Loved Me."

Artist presale registration for the Paris shows runs through April 2, with ticket access beginning April 7.

The La Defense Arena has a capacity of 40,000 spectators and was one of the venues used for the Olympics. (AP)

Bruce Springsteen launches political US tour

The Boss brings 'Streets of Minneapolis' home

MINNEAPOLIS, March 31, (AP) — Bruce Springsteen returns Tuesday to the "Streets of Minneapolis." After honoring its residents in song for their courage in standing up against the federal immigration crackdown, he's using the city to launch his latest US tour.

The New Jersey rocker released "Streets of Minneapolis" in late January amid the nationwide outcry over the shooting deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal officers. On Tuesday night, the Boss and the E Street Band are expected to perform it when they take the stage at Target Center to kick off the "Land of Hope & Dreams American Tour."

"This tour is going to be political and very topical about what's going on in the country," Springsteen told the Minnesota Star Tribune in an interview published Wednesday. "Minneapolis and St. Paul, that was the place that I wanted to begin it, and I wanted to end it in Washington."

Springsteen told a New York City audience on March 23, during a 30th anniversary celebration for the independent news program "Democracy Now!," that his tour will head next to Portland, Oregon, and Los Angeles, "two other cities where they had to



Bruce Springsteen performs during the 'No Kings' march in St. Paul, Minn., on Saturday, March 28. (AP)

deal with ICE, ICE's terror." It ends May 27 in Washington, D.C., where he said he'll have a few choice words for the White House.

"Streets of Minneapolis" was one in a series of tributes released by international artists and countless local performers as thousands of Minnesotans took to the streets. Springsteen played

a solo version Saturday during the national flagship "No Kings" rally at the state Capitol in St. Paul.

"This past winter, federal troops brought death and terror to the streets of Minneapolis," Springsteen told a crowd estimated by the Minnesota State Patrol to be 100,000 people. "Well, they picked the wrong city.

The power and the solidarity of the people of Minneapolis, of Minnesota, was an inspiration to the entire country. Your strength and your commitment told us that this is still America, and this reactionary nightmare, and these invasions of American cities will not stand."

The gritty video that Springsteen released for "Streets of Minneapolis" captured a city under siege by 3,000 federal officers, which President Donald Trump's administration called its largest immigration enforcement action anywhere in the country.

"We'll take our stand for this land/ And the stranger in our midst/ We'll remember the names of those who died/ On the streets of Minneapolis," Springsteen sang.

The video shows masked and armed agents in tactical gear, including the face of the operation, Greg Bovino, who was pulled out of Minneapolis amid the backlash and is preparing to retire. It also shows 5-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos, wearing a bunny hat and Spider-Man backpack, surrounded by immigration officers, whose photo stirred outrage around the world.

And it also showed the makeshift memorials that sprang up where Good

and Pretti were killed, interspersed with clips of the final moments of the two as they confronted officers. It climaxes with video of thousands of residents who filled the streets of Minneapolis as they chanted "ICE Out!"

There's no love lost between Springsteen and Trump, who have long feuded. During his European tour last year, Springsteen slammed the Trump administration as "corrupt, incompetent and treasonous," and denounced Trump as an "unfit president" leading a "rogue government" of people who have "no concern or idea for what it means to be deeply American."

Trump, in turn, has called Springsteen a "dried out prune of a rocker." In a social media post, the president once wrote, "Never liked him, never liked his music or his Radical Left Politics and, importantly, he's not a talented guy - just a pushy, obnoxious jerk," he wrote on social media.

Springsteen has long emphasized socially conscious music, which brings up another Minnesota connection. In 1984, when he released his album "Born in the U.S.A.," with its title cut, an often-misunderstood lament of a disillusioned Vietnam veteran, he kicked off his tour in St. Paul.

Bangkok to host inaugural contest

Eurovision Song Contest expanding with an Asian edition

BANGKOK, March 31, (AP) — The music spectacle Eurovision is holding its first Asian edition in Bangkok later this year.

The Eurovision Song Contest Asia 2026 has confirmed artists from at least 10 countries across Asia competing: Thailand, South Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. More are expected to join before the finale in November.

"As we mark the 70th anniversary of the Eurovision Song Contest, it feels especially meaningful to open this next chapter with Asia, a region rich in culture, creativity and talent,"

Martin Green, the director of the contest, said in the announcement Tuesday.

Bangkok is the perfect city to host the contest because it "has always been a place where cultures come together, where music fills the air, and where celebration is part of everyday life," said Chuwit Sirivajjakul, a representative of the Thailand Tourism Authority.

The main gala, run by the European Broadcasting Union, draws more than 100 million viewers every year. This year's main competition with 35 competing countries is scheduled to be held in

Vienna in May. Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain are boycotting due to discord over Israel's participation.

The contest strives to put pop music before politics but has repeatedly been embroiled in world events. Russia was expelled in 2022 after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

It also has been roiled by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, stirring protests outside the venues and forcing organizers to clamp down on political flag-waving.

Similar tensions could emerge in Asia. Thailand and Cambodia engaged in deadly border clashes twice last year.



JJ from Austria stands on the stage with the trophy after winning the Grand Final of the 69th Eurovision Song Contest, in Basel, Switzerland, May 18, 2025. (AP)

Gulf film industry needs support and new direction

Talented filmmakers strive to build on Kuwait's legacy

By Mufreh Hijab

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: The film industry worldwide has become an important language that speaks to people, keeps pace with their aspirations for entertainment and development, and addresses their issues and ambitions.

It constantly strives to connect with the people in one way or another, linking them to what is actually happening in society and the world.

Most developed countries consider cinema an important social platform and a gateway to progress. The proof is that the most involved in film production are Hollywood in the United States and Bollywood in India. This confirms that the film industry always reinforces and spreads cultures, because it is an important human and social tool before it is an artistic one.

Cinema in Kuwait and the Gulf region remains far from achieving a global presence, despite the availability of highly qualified and knowledgeable personnel, as well as a large number of experienced stars skilled in the art of filmmaking.

The real problem lies with those in charge of the industry and production. They are always preoccupied with profit and loss. This perspective



Behind the scenes photo of the film 'A White Lie and a Honeymoon'

has negative repercussions on the quality of film productions.

In Kuwait, the focus has been on

theatrical productions and television drama, while cinematic endeavors have been sporadic and often poor,

not in content but in the way they are handled. This is due to reliance on individuals with limited experience,

seemingly unaware that Kuwait, long ago, when it sought to develop its cinematic landscape, produced the film "Bas Ya Bahar" (Enough, O Sea), which achieved widespread acclaim and was nominated for numerous film festivals.

Similarly, the film "Al-Samt" (Silence) and other Kuwaiti cinematic works have been produced. It must be acknowledged that there is a constellation of young people constantly striving to reach filmmakers, but they always face challenges in production, funding and other areas. Their difficulties must be understood.

Artist and director Sadiq Bahbani has been in numerous international festivals and presented distinguished works such as "Let Me Be Silent" and "The Carpet."

Abdulaziz Al-Nassar, Abdullah Al-Khader and a group of young stars presented films like "Message" and "A White Lie and a Honeymoon," among others, though these works did not achieve the desired impact.

Tariq Al-Ali presented a collection of films that achieved considerable success, including "Hello Cairo," "Ma'touq in Bangkok," "Adnan," "Khamis and Juma," "Coma," "Danger with Them," and "An Hour's Time." However, Al-Ali attempted to present these films as an experi-

enced producer, so they achieved box office numbers, although these works still need further development.

The real problem of the film industry in Kuwait and the Gulf countries is the failure to convince the private sector, companies and banks to benefit from and support cinema as required. Many of these institutions need promotion and marketing for their products, but they have not found a vision from those in charge of the film industry. Supporting the film industry could be a major gateway to a mutually beneficial and significant process for the private sector, but the problem is the lack of connection and persuasion between both parties.

Nevertheless, companies specializing in such partnerships should be employed so that matters are more clearly calculated for everyone.

Also, those in charge of the industry must work hard to move to a new stage of production, away from drama production and not simplifying cinematic scenes, because the difference will be very clear.

Stars and technicians must also exert efforts through a real cultural understanding of the film industry, moving away from randomness and focusing on the important task to present a new cinema culture in the Gulf.

Technology

Personal touch matters

How AI English and human English differ

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

By Laura Aull

University of Michigan

Suspicion and affection. Apprehension and excitement. Most people have mixed feelings about AI English, whether or not they always recognize it. When reading text generated by AI, people feel it sounds off, or fake. When reading English by a human, people are more likely to feel it has a characteristic voice or a personal touch.

What exactly makes English sound human, or sound like AI? And does it matter if AI English never truly achieves a human feel?

I research the institutionalization of English. There is a long, problematic history of people feeling positively or negatively toward different kinds of English, rewarding how it is spoken or written by some sectors of society and devaluing how it is used by others.

When generative AI language tools came along, they scaled up these problems. English-based large language models are trained on text from the public internet. Human instructions tell the models to sound like formal English. Because of that, large language models end up trained on all the bias baked into standardized human texts and ideas.

In my work, I encounter people who would never trust the internet to tell them what is right and wrong, yet they trust generative AI to tell them how to write.

The first step to becoming a more informed user of AI English is to try to understand what people mean when they say writing sounds human. This understanding will improve your AI literacy. Most importantly, it will allow you to learn to recognize two qualities that make human English different from AI English: variation and readability.

Human English contains persistent, if subtle, linguistic patterns of variation and readability. By contrast, AI uses what I call exam English - a rather formal, dense English that is favored in academic tests and papers. It is less varied and less readable. People perceive it as robotic, but they also perceive it as smart.

Here's a quick test: Read the two text messages below and guess which one is by a human and which one is by ChatGPT.

"I'm not sure how to break this to you, there's no easy way to put it...I can't make the Friday-night fun, sorry, however, feel free to text me during the evening if there are any lulls in conversation. Anyway, hope ur exotic trip goes well. see u next term."

"Hey! I'm really sorry, but I won't be able to make it Friday night. I hope you all have a great time, and I'll see you next term!"

A human reader would probably notice several patterns right away. The first message has more "textese": It defaults to lowercase and includes phonetic spellings "ur" and "u." The second text has exam English capital letters, commas and spelling.

People are likely to have other impressions, too. Perhaps the first text feels more personal, and less sure of itself. Maybe the second text feels stiff, like it was written by an acquaintance. The first text contains different kinds of phrases and clauses, while the second text repeats the same clause structure four times.

On some level, human readers pick up on such patterns. Most people would say that the first text is by a human and the second is by AI. Indeed, the second passage was generated by ChatGPT.

Even this basic illustration shows that human English includes variation in word usage and grammatical structures that breaks up information and conveys personal meaning. AI English has less variation and more dense noun phrases. In research studies, these patterns appear repeatedly across genres and registers.

AI writing tools evolve, and large language models vary. GPT 5 was infamously cold-sounding compared with its predecessor GPT 4, for example.

But the patterns I am talking about are likely to persist. AI English favors what exam English has always rewarded: homogeneity and information density. And thus far, instructional tuning - training AI models to follow human instruction - only makes AI English less like human English. It doesn't help that AI writing is part of what AI bots train on.

The net effect today is that AI English has been trained on English that is much more narrow than actual, collective human English in practice. Humans, by contrast, don't just use language that is probable, but language that is possible - based on the varied language use they have observed, their creative capacity for new utterances and their propensity to blend personal and impersonal language patterns. (AP)

Music



Sarah McLachlan performs at the 2026 Juno Awards in Hamilton, on Sunday, March 29. (AP)

Voices bridge cultures

Old melodies strike a chord in China-US ties

GUIYANG/CHONGQING, March 31. (Xinhua): Set within the natural amphitheater of the Tianshengqiao Bridge -- a centuries-old limestone arch in southwest China's Guizhou Province -- the resonant harmonies of traditional Dong ethnic songs intertwined with the crisp melodies of an American a cappella group, their unamplified voices blending beneath the stone.

The scene unfolded during a visit by the Whiffenpoofs a cappella choir of Yale University to Liping County in the Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture of Guizhou.

The Whiffenpoofs is the world's most renowned and historic collegiate a cappella group, spearheading and innovating a cappella music since 1909. The group has performed across the United States and around the world, captivating audiences with a diverse repertoire of a cappella music.

The performance on March 24 was part of a cultural exchange tour organized by the Beijing Enlai Foundation. Running from March 19 to April 3, the tour brings the Whiffenpoofs to universities and choirs across Chongqing, Chengdu, Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, Tianjin and Beijing, using songs as a bridge to foster people-to-people ties between China and the United States.

The musical evening opened with "Eternal Love for the World," a Dong Grand Song performed by a local Dong chorus. The Whiffenpoofs then took the stage, delivering renditions of traditional Czech folk songs that drew cheers from the audience.

Collaborative performances by the American choir and Guizhou village song troupes followed, featuring songs such as "I'll Wait for You in Guizhou,"

"Jasmine Flower," and "Let the World Be Filled with Love," bringing the crowd to its feet in applause.

The Whiffenpoofs arrived at Zhaoxing Dong Village in Liping on March 23. The members of the choir have toured the rural community, immersed themselves in local ethnic culture, and performed alongside several Dong Grand Song troupes and other local musical groups.

Recognized for its conductorless, instrument-free polyphonic harmonies, the Dong Grand Song was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009. Its signature "low chorus and solo high" vocal structure, along with nature-inspired harmonies, creates a striking parallel with the pure vocal tradition of the century-old a cappella form.

"I may not understand the words, but it's beautiful and heavenly music," said Gu Biao, a 73-year-old local Miao villager who performed in the musical evening.

"It was the most incredible event," said Ben Jimenez, a 21-year-old member of the Whiffenpoofs from California. "The Whiffenpoofs has over 200 performances every year. So we have a lot of practice just by ourselves, but it's extra special when we get to sing with different choirs and performance groups. I learned a lot about honoring history through singing, as well as honoring culture and community. What was so incredible is that the performances we saw today were rooted in incredible history and culture."

Lucas Oland, 22, a member of the Whiffenpoofs visiting China for the first time, discovered a sense of cross-cultural musical resonance while learning

to play the Dong ethnic pipa at a drum tower in the Dong village.

"It's very cool that people from around the world in different cultures are so united by the music and these instruments that function the exact same way, no matter where you are. It's really beautiful," Oland said.

"Through music, young Americans can experience China's long history and deep cultural roots," said Zhang Yixiao, the China tour manager. "Instead of only seeing modern, high-tech cities, they are able to explore minority villages and cultures with centuries of tradition. Having them experience a real, multifaceted China is especially meaningful."

Before they visited Guizhou, the choir members visited southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, winding through its iconic landmarks and ancient alleyways to soak up the energy of the mountain metropolis and its distinctive culture.

Chongqing's three-dimensional urban landscape has gained popularity on overseas social media in recent years. The choir members wanted to see for themselves the unique scenes where the city's transportation and daily life intertwine.

"The architecture is incredible. I didn't quite understand what people meant when I heard that it was an 8D city, but now I completely understand. It's been wonderful walking around today and getting to see everything," said Quincy Rosenzweig, the American choir group's associate financial director. "So I'd say I'm most impressed probably with just how beautiful the city is and how lovely everyone has been to us so far."

Turkish puppeteer revives Karagoz shadow play

ISTANBUL, March 31. (Xinhua): Behind a glowing screen in Istanbul, 61-year-old puppeteer Cengiz Ozek brings the centuries-old Karagoz shadow play to life, marking World Theatre Day with flickering figures that bridge tradition and imagination.

Recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Karagoz, an art form rooted in the ancient traditions of East Asia and refined during the Ottoman Empire, continues to evolve while preserving its deep-rooted Eurasian character.

For Ozek, a master of Ottoman miniature painting turned puppeteer, the journey to the shadow screen was a natural progression. Having spent a lifetime immersed in classical aesthetics, he sees the flickering shadows of Karagoz as a rhythmic extension of a much older "silent" art.

"My starting point wasn't actually Karagoz; it was the silent art of Ottoman palace miniatures," Ozek told

Xinhua. Traditionally static, these hand-painted illustrations gain movement, sound, and a sense of time through shadow play.

As the founder of the Istanbul Karagoz Puppet Foundation, Ozek is working to establish the Istanbul Puppet Museum and Theatre, a project aimed at creating a permanent home for this ancient craft.

To keep this shadow play alive, Ozek confronts modern "monsters." Among his creations is the Garbage Monster, a figure symbolizing environmental degradation and the pressures of megacities. "The audience laughs, but they also think," Ozek noted. "This is the modern adaptation of traditional satire."

Beyond Istanbul, Ozek views Karagoz as a vessel for cultural memory. He draws a fascinating parallel between the mythical "Vakvak tree" of Islamic lore and the "Ginseng Fruit" from the Chinese classical masterpiece Journey to the West.

In Karagoz performances, the Vakvak tree, a mythical plant bearing human-headed fruits, appears as a decorative set piece that greets the audience, signaling that the stage is a gateway to a mystical universe.

For Ozek, the Vakvak tree represents the "strangeness of the outer world" and the mystery of the unknown, while the Chinese ginseng fruit reflects the "infinity of the inner world" and the search for eternal life. "I feel as if two different worlds are intersecting in the same dream," Ozek said.

"If I were to paint these two trees, I would place one on a misty, dark island and the other in a silent, light-filled garden. Between them stands the human being, looking toward the unknown while searching for eternity," he said. This connection is also visible in the design of the puppets themselves. A common pattern in Karagoz costumes is the "Chinese Cloud," a stylized, curling motif that traveled from East Asia to Anatolia centuries ago.



Puppeteer Cengiz Ozek poses for photos with a shadow puppet in Istanbul, Türkiye, March 26. (Xinhua)

Late motherhood raises health risks for moms and babies

How to have a healthy pregnancy in your late 30s

NEW YORK, March 31, (AP): Dr. Jacquelyn Means knew that being pregnant in her late 30s would be challenging.

"It is definitely harder on your body. You just feel a lot more fatigued. There are certain complications to watch out for," said Means, a Texas OB-GYN who had her first child at 37 and her second at 39. "It's usually going to be fine, but there are things to be aware of."

Like Means, more and more women are having babies later in life. A federal report showed that 21% of all births in the US were to women 35 and older in 2023, up from 9% in 1990. And this "advanced maternal age" raises risks for both moms and babies.

Older pregnant women are more likely to have conditions like high blood pressure and obesity, for example, and are more prone to developing pregnancy complications. They're more likely to undergo cesarean sections and give birth to twins or babies with some genetic abnormalities.

But don't be too worried. Risks are generally low; they're just higher than average. And while most older moms have normal pregnancies, doctors say there are ways lower risk and prevent



A pregnant woman stands for a portrait in Dallas, May 18, 2023. (AP)

problems before, during and after pregnancy.

"Moms over 35 can still have a healthy pregnancy and a happy baby," said Dr. Michael Warren, chief medical and health officer for the March of Dimes, a nonprofit that works to improve the health of mothers and babies.

Dr. Ashley Zink, a maternal-fetal specialist at the University of Texas Southwestern, said optimizing your health is like "building your baby's first home."

That involves following the time-honored advice of eating a well-balanced diet, staying active and avoiding

risky behaviors like smoking.

"Make sure those good health habits that you've established over the course of your life are still in place," Warren added. "If you have chronic diseases, make sure those are well-managed. Make sure you're getting regular preventive medical care."

Being as healthy as possible is important, Zink said, because pregnancy can be as rigorous as a marathon.

"Your volume of blood expands; it's harder work for your heart," she said. "And just the discomforts of pregnancy - all kinds of things - are a little bit better tolerated if you're in good physical condition."

A checkup before trying to conceive can be helpful, doctors said, allowing you to discuss health concerns, get treated for any conditions that might affect your pregnancy and make sure you're up to date on vaccinations.

Doctors suggest getting a first-trimester ultrasound, which can measure the size of the fetus, help confirm the due date and check for multiple fetuses.

Women over 35 tend to produce more of the hormone that stimulates the ovaries to produce eggs, and they also may use in vitro fertilization to get pregnant. Both of these things increase

the likelihood of twins or triplets, which puts you at a higher risk of complications such as premature birth.

Older women may also want to consider having blood drawn for noninvasive prenatal testing, which can screen for chromosomal abnormalities in a fetus such as Down syndrome and trisomy 13 or 18. According to Stanford Medicine Children's Health, the risk of Down syndrome is about 1 in 1,250 for a woman who conceives at age 25 and rises to about 1 in 100 for a woman who conceives at 40.

If the screening suggests the fetus is at risk, a doctor may recommend more invasive diagnostic tests. These include amniocentesis, in which a small amount of amniotic fluid is taken from the uterus; or chorionic villus sampling, in which cells are taken from the placenta.

Zink said older women can also ask about a "growth ultrasound" at around 32 or 34 weeks of pregnancy.

"It shows us if the placenta is still doing a good job," she said. "Do you have normal fluid? Do you have normal growth?"

Ultrasounds late in pregnancy may also spot problems with the fetus.

"We know that when women are

pregnant later in life, there's an increased risk of birth defects," particularly cardiac defects, Warren said.

There's also a higher risk of stillbirth, although the risk is still very small.

"As the delivery date gets closer," Warren said, "it's so important to be mindful for those cues like fetal movement. Can you still feel the baby moving and kicking?"

The percentage of babies delivered by C-section rises with maternal age, averaging 48% of live births for women 40 and older, according to the March of Dimes, which looked at the years 2022-2024. Women who undergo C-sections have a significantly higher risk of maternal complications such as infection and bleeding than those who deliver vaginally.

Medical reasons for C-sections include having chronic health conditions that may make vaginal birth risky, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, the March of Dimes said. Other reasons include complications during labor, such as having a very large baby, which can happen when a mom has gestational diabetes, which is diabetes you develop during pregnancy and can affect your and your baby's health.

Obesity drives cancer risk

Vaping likely to cause cancer, study warns

SYDNEY, March 31, (Xinhua): Nicotine-based vapes, or e-cigarettes, are likely to cause cancers of the lung and oral cavity, according to a comprehensive review led by Australian cancer researchers.

This carcinogenicity review argues vaping may cause cancer independently, beyond its role as a gateway to smoking, according to a statement from Australia's University of New South Wales (UNSW) on Tuesday.

The multi-institutional team, led by UNSW Adjunct Professor Bernard Stewart, comprises pharmacists, epidemiologists, thoracic surgeons, and public health experts.

They analyzed clinical studies, animal experiments and lab data from 2017-2025 on e-cigarette chemicals, finding consistent evidence of DNA damage, oxidative stress, tissue inflammation and lung tumors in mice exposed to vape aerosols.

The team identified numerous carcinogenic compounds in e-cigarette aerosols, including volatile organic chemicals and metals released from heating coils, according to the study published in Carcinogenesis.

"Most of those who use e-cigarettes to quit smoking end up in 'dual-use-limbo', unable to shake off either habit," said the study's co-author, UNSW Associate Professor Freddy Sitas.

"What we do know from recent epidemiological evidence from the USA is that those who both vape and smoke are at an additional four-fold increased risk of developing lung cancer," Sitas said.

However, Stewart said the exact number of attributable cancer cas-

es remains unclear. The qualitative review does not involve numerical estimates, awaiting long-term human data.

"E-cigarettes were introduced about 20 years ago. We should not wait another 80 years to decide what to do," Sitas said, urging regulators not to repeat cigarettes' century-long delay before smoking was officially recognized as a cause of lung cancer.

In another development, Singapore's Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) detected 42 cases of travelers found in possession of e-vaporizers, as well as those who voluntarily disposed of them, amid stepped-up inspections at the city-state's air, land, and sea checkpoints.

Between March 24 and 27, the agency seized more than 240 e-vaporizers and related components, the ICA said in a Sunday post.

About 52 percent of the cases involved short-term visitors, while 48 percent involved Singapore residents, including citizens, permanent residents, and long-term pass holders.

Short-term visitors who re-offend will be banned from re-entering Singapore. Long-term pass holders who commit a third offense may have their passes revoked, and could be deported and banned from re-entry, the agency said.

Singapore has enforced a strict ban on the importation, sale, distribution, possession, use, and purchase of e-cigarettes, vaporizers, and other imitation tobacco products to protect public health.

Meanwhile, an Australian study has found that obesity and alcohol use significantly raise the risk of breast cancer in women as they age.

CSPM offers lasting results

New wearable tech tracks blood pressure accurately

BEIJING, March 31, (Xinhua): A team of researchers has developed a conformal and stretchable piezoelectric microsystem (CSPM) that integrates device design with algorithmic optimization, offering a new approach for long-term, precise monitoring of cardiovascular health.

The achievement was recently published in the journal Nature Communications.

Frequent recalibration poses a major challenge to the accuracy and reliability of current cuffless blood pressure monitoring devices, particularly during long-term use, the study noted.

The CSPM, developed by researchers from Tianjin University, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, City University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Centre for Cerebro-cardiovascular Health Engineering (COCHE), features two core sensing modules and achieves much higher sensitivity than conventional designs. It can accurately capture pulse wave signals and measure vascular diameter and its dynamic changes in real time, with a resolution of up to 4.928 micrometers.

The two sensing modules can operate simultaneously in the same localized vascular area, enabling precise, synchronous measurement of pulse wave velocity and vascular diameter, according to a report by China Science Daily.

This provides comprehensive hemodynamic parameters to support accurate blood pressure calculation.

The CSPM also offers excellent wearability. Measuring less than 450 micrometers in thickness and weighing under one gram, it is encapsulated in low-stiffness silicone rubber and can stretch up to 40 percent, allowing it to conform closely to curved skin surfaces such as the wrist.

Thanks to its hydrophobic, sweat-resistant properties and outstanding biocompatibility, the microsystem can maintain a stable temperature during continuous operation for up to three hours, meeting the demands of long-term, uninterrupted monitoring.



A Lijian-2 Y1 carrier rocket with three satellites onboard blasts off from the Dongfeng commercial space innovation pilot zone in northwest China, March 30. (Xinhua)



This photo provided by NASA shows NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Artemis II commander, (from left), Victor Glover, Artemis II pilot, Christina Koch, Artemis II mission specialist, and CSA (Canadian Space Agency) astronaut Jeremy Hansen, Artemis II mission specialist, right, in a group photograph as they visit NASA's Artemis II SLS (Space Launch System) rocket and Orion spacecraft, Monday, March 30, 2026, at Launch Complex 39B of NASA's Kennedy Space Center, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP)

Apollo veterans rooting for Artemis II launch

NASA begins countdown for first crewed mission to moon in 53 yrs

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., March 31, (AP): NASA began the countdown Monday for humanity's first launch to the moon in 53 years.

The 32-story Space Launch System rocket is poised to blast off Wednesday evening with four astronauts. After a day in orbit around Earth, their Orion capsule will propel them to the moon and back. There are no stops - just a quick U-turn around the moon. The nearly 10-day flight will end with a splashdown in the Pacific.

"Our team has worked extremely hard to get us to this moment," said launch director Charlie Blackwell-Thompson. "Certainly all indications are right now we are in excellent, excellent shape."

Managers said the rocket is doing well following the latest round of repairs. Forecasters said the weather should cooperate.

NASA's Artemis II mission should have soared in February, but was grounded by hydrogen fuel leaks. The leaks were fixed, but then a helium pressurization line became clogged, forcing a return to the hangar late last month. The rocket returned to the pad 1 1/2 weeks ago, and its US-Canadian crew arrived at the launch site on Friday.

Unlike Apollo, which sent only men to the moon from 1968 through 1972, Artemis' debut crew includes a woman, person of color and a non-U.S. citizen.

Artemis II's pilot Victor Glover said over the weekend that he wants young people to see them and think, "Girl power and that's awesome, and that young brown boys and girls can look at me and go 'Hey, he looks like me and he's doing what?'"

At the same time, Glover, who is

Black, looks forward to when "one day we don't have to talk about these firsts" and exploring the cosmos becomes an all-encompassing "human history."

NASA has the first six days of April to launch Artemis II before standing down until the end of the month.

Meanwhile, the people who toiled night and day to put astronauts on the moon during Apollo are thrilled that NASA is finally going back. They just wish these Artemis moonshots had happened sooner while more of Apollo's workforce was still alive.

Now in their 80s and 90s, the dwindling survivors of NASA's greatest generation would also like to see more enthusiasm for Artemis.

So few of them are left from the original 400,000 that no reunion is planned to celebrate the upcoming Artemis II flight around the moon by four astronauts as soon as April 1. Those living near Florida's Kennedy Space Center will watch the launch from their backyards.

"Because it was the first time, there was an energy. There was a passion that probably is not exactly the same today and hasn't been for a while," said Charlie Mars, 90, who worked on Apollo's command and lunar modules and helped establish the American Space Museum in nearby Titusville.

Retired engineer JoAnn Morgan is still fuming that the last three Apollo moon landings were canceled under President Richard Nixon's watch because of budget cuts, risk concerns and shifting priorities. She was the lone woman inside launch control when Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins rocketed to the moon in 1969. Three years later, Apollo 17 closed out the grand era.

"I'm just trying to stay alive so I can

see us actually get back and step foot on the moon," she said. "I'm 85 and still feeling cheated after 53 years."

Morgan isn't the only one frustrated with NASA's - and the nation's - dawdling.

"It's a good thing I'm not in charge," Mars said, "because I would be out there beating the bushes and whipping up on people to get moving."

One big difference this time are all the women in key roles.

NASA's Artemis launch director is Charlie Blackwell-Thompson. The Artemis II crew includes Christina Koch, who holds the record for the longest single spaceflight by a woman - 328 consecutive days in orbit.

"It will be even greater when they actually have a woman who plants her boots on the moon," Morgan said.

Apollo 16's Charlie Duke points out that half the world's population was not yet born when he walked on the moon in 1972.

NASA's new administrator Jared Isaacman, a tech billionaire who paid his own way to space twice, is one of them.

Apollo's old-timers are heartened that the 43-year-old Isaacman is accelerating the pace of Artemis launches to more closely match Apollo's speed and safety record. Artemis has been trudging along at a once-every-three-years flight rate, which Isaacman deems unacceptable.

He's added a test flight in orbit around Earth to practice docking with lunar landers before they're used to put astronauts on the moon. And last week, he released a blueprint for a moon base that, along with a battalion of lunar drones and rovers, is expected to cost \$20 billion over the next seven years.

Co-infections up

Pakistan to roll out polio shots

ISLAMABAD, March 31, (Xinhua): Pakistan will vaccinate more than 45 million children during its second nationwide polio eradication campaign of 2026, scheduled to run from April 13 to April 19, the National Emergency Operations Center (EOC) said on Monday.

The week-long drive will be conducted across the country, with health teams administering oral polio vaccine drops to children under the age of five.

In addition to polio vaccination, children will also receive supplementary doses of Vitamin A to boost immunity and support overall health, the EOC said.

Over 413,000 polio workers will take part in the campaign, carrying out door-to-door vaccination and related activities nationwide.

Health authorities described polio eradication as a shared national responsibility and urged parents to fully cooperate with vaccination teams to ensure that all eligible children receive the vaccine.

□ □ □

TB-HIV: Health experts in Fiji are sounding an alarm over a sharp rise in co-infections of Tuberculosis (TB) and HIV, warning that the trend is emerging as a serious and escalating public health concern.

New figures released in conjunction with World Tuberculosis Day highlight a worrying surge in co-infection rates.

Individuals living with HIV are significantly more vulnerable to developing active tuberculosis due to weakened immune systems, making the dual burden particularly dangerous if not detected and treated early, local media reported on Thursday.

Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services Penioni Ravunawa said the latest national data reveals a steep upward trajectory in TB-HIV co-infections, from 7 percent in 2022 to 13 percent in 2023, 28 percent in 2024, and 41 percent last year.

UN chief calls

Zero-waste food systems urged

UNITED NATIONS, March 31, (Xinhua): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday called on the international community to build zero-waste food systems that "we need to nourish both people and planet."

"The world wastes far too much food," Guterres said in his message on the International Day of Zero Waste, observed annually on March 30.

He said that every day, people across the globe throw away food enough to prepare 1 billion meals while letting 9 percent of humanity go hungry, putting the climate, ecosystems and health at risk, and threatening the ability to feed ourselves in the future.

Guterres urged consumers to make a big impact with small changes in their shopping and cooking habits, retailers to optimize their operations and redistribute surplus food, cities to scale organic waste separation and strengthen procurement for schools and hospitals, and national governments to drive systemic change by addressing food waste in their climate action and biodiversity plans and forging public-private partnerships.

Through initiatives like the Food Waste Breakthrough and No Organic Waste, the international community can halve food waste by 2030, cut the methane emissions by up to 7 percent, and build circular, resilient food systems, he said.

These efforts, beyond protecting our planet, will create green jobs, reduce food insecurity and climate impacts, and prevent up to 1 trillion U.S. dollars in economic losses each year, according to the secretary-general.

China launches Lijian-2 Y1 carrier rocket with 3 sats

JIUQUAN, March 31, (Xinhua): China on Monday launched a Lijian-2 Y1 carrier rocket with three satellites onboard.

The rocket blasted off at 7:00 p.m. (Beijing Time) from a commercial aerospace innovation pilot zone in northwest China and successfully sent the satellites into the planned orbit.

Among the satellites was the Qingzhou Cargo Spacecraft Test Vehicle, developed by the Innovation Academy for Microsatellites of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The test flight carried 27 projects with a total payload

of 1.02 tonnes and will conduct in-orbit tests at altitudes ranging from 200 to 600 kilometers.

The launch marked the first flight of the Lijian-2 rocket. According to the developers, it is China's first launch vehicle using a "common booster core" design. The rocket stands 53 meters tall, with a liftoff weight of 625 tonnes and a thrust of 753 tonnes. It has a carrying capacity of 8 tonnes to a 500-kilometer sun-synchronous orbit and 12 tonnes for low Earth orbit.

"The Lijian-2 rocket marks a new milestone in the development of Chi-

na's next-generation space cargo transportation system," said Yang Haoliang, commander of the Lijian-2 rocket. He noted that this marks a shift from reliance on a single rocket type or approach to a more systematic framework supported by multiple launch vehicles, enabling mutual backup and flexible deployment.

This systematic capability, he added, is fundamentally important for ensuring the long-term stable operation of the space station and for enhancing the safety and reliability of cargo transportation.

Rising demand reshaping the sport

China curbs marathon surge with fewer events and stricter qualification criteria

WUHAN, March 31, (Xinhua): China's marathon boom is entering a new phase, with fewer races, tougher entry rules and rising demand reshaping the sport.

As the spring racing season gets underway, the contrast is clear: fewer races, but surging demand and higher standards. According to the Chinese Athletics Association, 39 marathons were held nationwide over the past two weekends, down from 57 during the same period last year.

Yet enthusiasm has not cooled. Instead, participation has intensified, with major races drawing record numbers of applications and increasingly slim odds of entry.

The shift follows a series of policy changes issued since late 2025, including stricter guidelines on race organization and a pilot framework for mass road-running events. The measures aim to rein in years of rapid, sometimes unordered expansion.

Fewer Races, Higher Standards
Marathons spread quickly across China in recent years, often driven by local governments eager to boost tourism and visibility. But the surge also exposed gaps in organization, safety and resource allocation.

Under the new rules, accountability has been tightened. Organizers must now operate under a clearer responsibility structure led by local authorities, reinforcing the principle that "whoever hosts is responsible." The impact is already visible. In central China's Hubei Province, the



In this file photo, participants start during the 2026 Wuxi Marathon. (Xinhua)

number of approved races is expected to fall to 22 this year, down from 31 in 2025. "Most of the cuts are at the county level," said Zhang Hua, head of the provincial athletics association. "Events without sufficient financial or organizational capacity have been scaled back." For runners, however, fewer races have not dampened interest. The 2026 Wuxi Marathon drew nearly 500,000 applicants, underscoring the surge in demand, with the half-marathon entry rate as low as 2.9 percent. The

Wuhan Marathon recorded more than 450,000 registrations, while several other races, including those in Lanzhou, Chongqing and Xiamen, also saw more than 200,000 applicants.

Behind the reduction in race numbers lies a broader goal: improving quality.

"The core of the new policies is not to limit races, but to improve them," said sports consultant Zhang Qing. "They address long-standing issues and aim to make events fairer,

safer and more professional." Fairness begins with entry systems. In the past, a portion of entries was reserved for invited runners, sponsors and other stakeholders, reducing the number of spots available through the public lottery. Now, regulations require that at least 90 percent of entries be allocated to the public.

At the Wuxi Marathon, known for its cherry blossoms, elite and invited runners accounted for just over nine percent of total slots, the lowest share in five years.

Safety has become a central focus under the new rules. Organizers are required to strengthen risk management, while runners are encouraged to adopt a more measured approach and prioritize completion over performance.

Under the new entry thresholds, full marathon participants are generally required to be at least 20 years old, and some events ask runners to provide proof of prior race experience, such as one full marathon or two half marathons completed within the past two years. Half-marathon entrants may also need certified results from at least two races of 10 kilometers or longer.

"Raising the bar is about protecting runners' lives," Zhang Hua noted. "For amateur runners, the purpose of running a marathon is keeping fit, not blindly chasing personal bests or pushing limits." Speaking of the new policies, veteran runner Chen Weixin said, "These rules offer necessary protection to beginners." The 56-year-old recalled collapsing during his first marathon a decade ago due to a lack of proper training.

"I fainted during the race and was transferred to hospital for emergency treatment," he said. "Without proper training, beginners are at high risk of accidents. Stricter rules can push participants to take the sport more seriously."

Road Running Shifts To New Phase
Industry observers say the new

framework marks the transition of China's marathon boom from rapid expansion to more structured growth.

Top-tier races remain powerful economic drivers. The Wuxi Marathon attracted more than 90 percent of its participants from outside the city, generating an estimated 510 million yuan (73.7 million U.S. dollars) in spending across tourism, hospitality and transportation.

"Reducing quantity is about breaking the cycle of low-quality, repetitive events," said Wang Xiangfei, a professor at Wuhan Sports University. "Poorly organized races and low-standard participation would ultimately harm the entire industry." Meanwhile, opportunities are emerging for smaller and more specialized events. Shorter-distance races, once bundled into major marathon events, are now being separated and encouraged as standalone competitions, a move aimed at better matching supply with different levels of demand.

In Wuxi, the Yangshan Half Marathon, known for its peach blossoms, has been restructured into a 10-kilometer elite race while maintaining high certification standards. Organizers said the shift allowed them to refine the event while continuing to promote local tourism.

"I believe more people will take part in road running events in a safer manner in the future. Meanwhile, better regulated road races will also better showcase Chinese cities on the global stage," Zhang Hua said.

LA28 ticket sales set for April 9 as Oly buzz builds

LOS ANGELES, March 31, (Xinhua): Organizers announced that tickets for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games will go on sale to the public on April 9, with a presale for local residents in Los Angeles and Oklahoma City set to begin on April 2.

According to the ticketing plan released by LA28, fans who have registered for the ticket draw will receive email notifications on a rolling basis from March 31 to April 7.

Locals in Los Angeles and Oklahoma City will receive pre-sale time-slot notifications from March 31 to April 4. On April 7, randomly selected registrants from the remaining ticket-draw pool will receive notifications of their assigned purchase windows for the first ticket drop.

"This week marks the first opportunity for fans to claim a seat at the LA28 Olympic Games," said LA28 CEO Reynold Hoover. "We've been thrilled to see the outpouring of enthusiasm from fans all around the world, and we're counting down the final days to people being able to se-

cure their tickets to history." Tickets will be sold by price category, while specific seats will be assigned closer to the Games, in line with standard Olympic and Paralympic ticketing practice.

Fans selected for a purchase window will be able to buy up to 12 tickets across for Olympic events and up to 12 additional tickets for football tournament matches, which will not count toward the general maximum for Olympic events. Tickets for the opening and closing ceremonies will be limited to four per person and will count toward the overall Olympic ticket allotment. According to the plan, this round of sales will cover all sports.

The organizing committee also announced that a verified multi-platform ticket resale program will launch in 2027.

Registrants who do not receive a purchase window in either the local presale or the first ticket drop will automatically be entered into future ticket draws.

Paralympic tickets are scheduled to go on sale in 2027.

Tigers keep Sichuan winless

Shanghai, Beijing continue streaks

BEIJING, March 31, (Xinhua): The league-leading Shanghai Sharks extended their winning streak to 13 games with a 100-96 victory over the Shanxi Loongs, while the Beijing Ducks edged the Nanjing Monkey Kings 90-88 in the 32nd round of the 2025-26 Chinese Basketball Association regular season.

Last Sunday, Shanghai had secured a hard-fought road win over Shanxi, who were without starting center Liu Chuanying, but the win did not come easily. Liu Dong and Kyle Guy combined for 14 points in the second quarter to help the hosts take the lead into halftime, keeping the pressure firmly on Shanghai.

In a tightly contested fourth quarter, **Brandon Goodwin** and Li Hongquan repeatedly went for the basket to swing momentum back in Shanghai's favor, before Zhang Zhenlin sealed the victory with a decisive dunk.



Goodwin

Goodwin finished with a game-high 31 points and seven assists, while Li added 16. For Shanxi, Guy scored 30 points, and Jia Mingru contributed 12.

In a Monday matchup, Zhao Rui scored 24 points to lead the Ducks to their third straight win. He knocked down five three-pointers and added four rebounds and six assists, while backcourt partner Eugene German contributed 18 points.

Nanjing hit 16 three-pointers but was out-rebounded 41-32. Zhu Mingzhen led the team with 19 points, and Zhao Baiqing added 17.

In other action, the Shenzhen Aviators cruised past the Jilin Northeast Tigers 111-86, the Guangdong Southern Tigers smashed the winless Sichuan Blue Whales 102-54, the Zhejiang Lions thrashed the Jiangsu Dragons 91-53, the Liaoning Flying Leopards beat the Fujian Sturgeons 102-94, the Qingdao Eagles trounced the Beijing Royal Fighters 105-80, the Shandong Heroes defeated the Tianjin Pioneers 111-103, the Zhejiang Golden Bulls routed the Guangzhou Loong Lions 87-70, and the Ningbo Rockets edged the Xinjiang Flying Tigers 73-70.

Best of the Rest

Bayern to part ways with Guerreiro: Bayern Munich and Portugal international Raphael Guerreiro have agreed to part ways at the end of the current campaign, with the defender's contract set to expire, the Bundesliga club confirmed.

Guerreiro will bring his three-year spell at Bayern to a close after joining on a free transfer from Borussia Dortmund in the summer of 2023. Since his arrival, the 32-year-old has made 89 appearances in all competitions, contributing 12 goals and eight assists while establishing himself as a versatile option in defense and midfield.

Guerreiro helped Bayern win the Bundesliga title and the German Super Cup. He has earned 65 caps for Portugal.

Bayern board member for sport Max Eberl praised Guerreiro's contribution, highlighting both his reliability and character within the squad. "We would like to thank Rapha warmly for the time we have spent together. You could always rely on Rapha on the pitch, and players of his caliber enrich any dressing room," Eberl said.

He added that discussions between the two sides had been conducted in a positive and respectful manner. "Our discussions with him have been positive, based on trust and mutual understanding. Now, together with him, we are focusing on our goals until the summer, together we still want to achieve a great deal." With a nine-point lead at the top of the standings, Bayern looks well placed to challenge for another Bundesliga title. It will visit Freiburg in the 28th round on Saturday. (Xinhua)

Sheinbaum meets Infantino to review Mexico's 2026 World Cup preparations

'Everything is going to be wonderful'

MEXICO CITY, March 31, (AP): Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum met on Monday with FIFA's President Gianni Infantino to assess preparations for the 2026 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by Mexico, the United States and Canada in June and July.

Sheinbaum said on her social media account that she had breakfast with Infantino at the National Palace "because we are evaluating everything for the upcoming World Cup," adding that "everything is going to be wonderful."

The tournament kicks off on June 11 at the iconic Azteca Stadium in Mexico City with a match between the hosts and South Africa.

A friendly match between Mexico and Portugal was held at the Mexico City stadium last Saturday as part of the World Cup preparations. The event was marred by the death of a fan who fell from the second tier to the ground floor in the VIP box area.

"This inauguration is going to be historic, exceptional," said Sheinbaum while holding a FIFA pennant alongside Infantino.

The FIFA president echoed Sheinbaum's sentiments, assuring that the World Cup will be "a success for Mexico."

Infantino has been in Mexico since last week when he attended two Intercontinental Cup playoff matches



FIFA President Gianni Infantino, center, watches a World Cup playoff semifinal soccer match between New Caledonia and Jamaica in Guadalajara, Mexico. (AP)

in Guadalajara and Monterrey. He was also in Mexico City over the weekend for events with the Mexican Football Federation.

Concerns arose following the violent events that occurred on Feb. 22 in several Mexican cities after the capture and death of drug lord Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, "El Mencho," leader of the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), in

southern Jalisco state.

Among the cities hit by the wave of violence was Guadalajara, the capital of Jalisco, which will be one of the three Mexican host cities for the World Cup, along with Mexico City and Monterrey, the capital of Nuevo Leon state.

Mexico is scheduled to host 13 World Cup matches.

In early March, Mexican authori-

ties presented their security plan for the World Cup, called "Plan Kukulcán," which will involve some 100,000 members of the military and police forces, both federal and local.

The plan includes specialized training for officials, planning and operational exercises, early warning systems, security measures around stadiums, airports, roads, and hotels.

I want to see him in his best: Coach

Antonee Robinson worried whether US national team would see a return of Jedi lineup.

MARIETTA, Ga., March 31, (AP): Antonee Robinson worried whether the U.S. would see a return of Jedi.

Self-nicknamed the "Star Wars" character by himself as a kid, Robinson had not played for the national team from November 2024 until Saturday's 5-2 loss to Belgium because of lingering pain following right knee surgery last May 27.

"It just seemed like there was kind of no light at the end of the tunnel," he said on the eve of his return.

A 28-year-old left back, Robinson is a key player for Fulham in the Premier League and when healthy a first-choice starter for the U.S. Robinson assisted on Weston McKennie's opening goal against Belgium with the first corner kick Robinson ever took for the Americans.

"He needs to build," U.S. coach Mauricio Pochettino said. "I want to see him in his best. And that is the challenge from here to the World Cup to arrive with all the players in their best performance, to perform in the way we believe they can perform."

Robinson was raised in Liverpool. His father, Marlon, was born in England, grew up in White Plains, New York, and was on Duke's soccer team from 1981-84. Antonee was a



United States' Antonee Robinson, left, and Folarin Balogun listen during a news conference in Marietta, Ga. (AP)

member of Everton's youth academy, made his professional debut in 2017 in the League Cup in August 2017 while on loan to Bolton and his Premier League debut in 2020 with Fulham.

His first appearance for the U.S. was in 2018. A chess player and a pianist, he strikes his own chord in the U.S. locker room.

"He's into a lot of different things, that's for sure," American captain Tim Ream said. "His brain works

very differently to a lot of ours."

Robinson didn't dress for Fulham's opener on Aug. 18 and was a second-half sub in the Cottagers' second and third games. He had a 23-day layoff, went the distance in a League Cup match on Sept. 23 and had a Premier League substitute appearance five days later. He then sat out until Dec. 13, losing his starting spot to Ryan Sessegnon.

Sessegnon's hamstring injury allowed Robinson back into the start-

ing lineup.

"I've been able to get myself in pretty good shape back at the club," Robinson said. "I've been available for everything. I haven't missed any training sessions and I've been sort of progressing with how I feel in myself and then translating that to playing games and getting back up to, you know, being sharp and being ready."

As his rehab kept extending in the fall, Robinson was aware that the World Cup was nearing and he might run out of time.

"No sort of certainty on my end that I was going to be fit and available," he recalled, explaining how he widened his search for advice.

"Seeking outside help for my rehab and different opinions and stuff on how I could change up what I was doing to get my physical condition a lot better," he said. "A series of injections and things like that to try and let it heal."

His preparation has expanded, too. "I'm the first person at the training ground because I know I need to do a lot in the gym before I train," he said. "In the evening when I put the kids to bed I'm doing more stuff to try and get myself in good shape so, yeah, it's been a long road but I'm feeling really good."

SPORTS

Rajasthan thumps Chennai

Young Sooryavanshi hits 15-ball fifty

GUWAHATI, India, March 31, (AP): Young sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi smashed a 15-ball half-century as Rajasthan Royals thrashed Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets in the Indian Premier League.

On a pitch which was under covers for most of the last two days due to wet weather, Chennai was put in and crumbled to 127 all out in 19.4 overs. All six Rajasthan bowlers shared the wickets.

The 15-year-old Sooryavanshi was dropped on the first ball he faced then powered the chase with 52 off 17 balls - raising the third fastest fifty in the IPL - as Rajasthan cruised to 128-2 in only 12.1 overs.

Five-time champion Chennai has undergone a youth movement in order to make a long-term rebound from finishing in last place last year. But it made an inauspicious start thanks to the youngest player in the league.

Sooryavanshi's miscued pull shot against Matt Henry in the first over was dropped by debutant Kartik Sharma, a tough two-handed catch over his shoulders while running backward from midwicket. Sharma failed to chase the ball and it dribbled over the boundary, the first of Sooryavanshi's four boundaries plus five sixes.

Sooryavanshi gave Rajasthan a blazing start of 74-0 in the powerplay. He clobbered wrist-spinner Noor Ahmad for successive sixes and raised his half-century off just 15 balls before he holed out to Sarfaraz Khan at sweeper cover in the seventh over.

Fellow opener Yashasvi Jaiswal had a front row seat to Sooryavanshi's artistry. He was dropped on 26 before finishing 38 not out off 36 balls.

"The plan was to decide the game in the powerplay as we'd restricted them to a low score," Sooryavanshi said. "After every ball Jaiswal doesn't tell me to take a single. He tells me that the ball's going off the bat nicely and to keep going."

New Rajasthan skipper Riyan Parag's decision to bowl first in favorable conditions was vindicated when Chennai slumped to 38-4 against the express pace of Jofra Archer (2-19) and Nandre Burger (2-26).



Rajasthan Royals' Vaibhav Sooryavanshi plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati, India. (AP)

Former Rajasthan skipper Sanju Samson (6) had a forgetful first game for his new franchise Chennai when Burger flattened his off stump with a 140 kph delivery.

Samson was hired to fix the top order batting issues for Chennai but captain Rituraj Gaikwad also

made only 6 when he exposed his stumps against Archer's pace and was clean bowled.

Left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja (2-18), playing for Rajasthan after 17 seasons with Chennai, struck twice in his first over to reduce Chennai further to 57-6.

With Mahendra Singh Dhoni not available for the first two weeks due to a calf injury, Chennai was in danger of opening its campaign with less than 100 runs. But Jamie Overton top-scored with 43 off 36 balls before he was run out in the last over.

Lahore fines Afridi \$3500

Zaman found guilty of ball tampering and suspended for two PSL games

LAHORE, Pakistan, March 31, (AP): Batter Fakhar Zaman of Lahore Qalandars was suspended for two matches on Tuesday for ball tampering in the Pakistan Super League.

The Pakistan Cricket Board said Zaman breached the code of conduct relating to changing the condition of the ball. Zaman denied wrongdoing but his first Level 3 offense earned him the maximum suspension from match referee Roshan Mahanama of Sri Lanka.

The controversy erupted on Sunday when Haris Rauf was due to bowl the final over and the Karachi Kings needed 14 runs for victory.

Lahore captain Shaheen Shah Afridi, Zaman and Rauf gathered at the top of the bowler's run-up and all three handled the ball during their discussion. Umpire Faisal Afridi requested the ball, inspected it and had a long talk with the second on-field umpire Shahid Saikat of Bangladesh.

Both umpires decided the ball was deliberately altered and awarded five penalty runs to Karachi, which now needed nine runs off the last six balls. The umpires also changed the ball. Abbas Afridi smashed a four and a six to earn a four-wicket win for Karachi in 19.3 overs.

Zaman can appeal. Meanwhile, Fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi was fined \$3,500 by Lahore Qalandars for breaching security protocol at the team hotel during the Pakistan Super League.

In a letter to the Pakistan Cricket Board, Punjab police accused Lahore captain Afridi and teammate Sikandar Raza of disregarding directives and forcefully escorting four visitors to Raza's room despite resistance from on-duty security personnel on Saturday night.

"In the interest of maintaining discipline and demonstrating accountability, the franchise has taken a voluntary and



In this file photo, Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman plays a shot during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in Pallekele, Sri Lanka. (AP)

proactive step by imposing a fine of rupees 1 million (\$3,500) on Shaheen Shah Afridi for his involvement," Lahore said in a statement on Monday.

The franchise didn't elaborate on Raza's part in the incident.

But Raza, the Zimbabwe allrounder who was born in Pakistan, said on Sunday he had always met with family members and friends in the team hotel during the last four PSLs and he wasn't aware of the security protocols for this season which bar players from such hotel meetings.

Raza said he took four friends to his room in order to choose the cricket bats which they brought with them.

Lahore, which has won three of the last four PSL titles, said there was a misunderstanding rather than "any deliberate attempt to violate" established security protocols.

"The organization (Lahore) emphasized that the matter was unnecessarily escalated, affecting the league's image at both domestic and international levels," Lahore said.

Infantino insists Iran must play at World Cup despite tensions

MEXICO CITY, March 30: Gianni Infantino, head of FIFA, has stressed that Iran will take part in the FIFA World Cup 2026, scheduled to be hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico, despite ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Speaking to a Mexican TV channel, Infantino said there is no alternative scenario, emphasizing: "We want Iran to play, and Iran will play in the World Cup."

He noted that Iran represents its people both at home and abroad, underlining the importance of its participation on the global stage.

Reports indicate that the Iranian national team prefers not to play its group-stage matches in the United States, and instead hopes to stage them in Mexico due to rising tensions in the Middle East.

FIFA has yet to clarify whether it will

approve such a request, with Infantino acknowledging that the situation remains "very complicated," while reaffirming the organization's commitment to ensuring Iran's participation under the best possible conditions.

According to Iran's official news agency IRNA, Mehdi Taj, president of the Iranian Football Federation, said the team would boycott matches in the United States but would not withdraw from the World Cup.

Iranian media also reported, citing the Ministry of Sports, that national teams and clubs have been banned from traveling to countries considered "hostile" until further notice, citing safety concerns for athletes.

The ministry added that federations and clubs must coordinate with the Asian football authorities to seek changes in match venues if necessary.

Newcastle says manager Howe's job is safe 'at the moment'

FIFA takes 'daylight offside' trials to Canadian League

ZURICH, March 31, (AP): FIFA's proposal to change the offside law hugely in favor of the attacking team starts trials in the Canadian Premier League this weekend after failing to win support from European soccer officials.

The so-called "daylight offside" idea pushed by Arsene Wenger in recent years gives a big advantage to attackers - too much, according to critics who say it will force teams to drop back and defend more cautiously.

The Canadian game trials starting on Saturday will judge attackers to be offside if any part of their body that can score a goal is level with the relevant defender. In effect, offside is called only when there is clear daylight between the attacker and defender.

Currently, attackers in top-tier games are judged offside by a slew of cameras in the stadium for the tiniest margin, often derisively called "armpit" or "toenail" offsides by fans.

"This is about positioning the Canadian Premier League at the forefront of innovation and contributing meaningfully to the global evolution of the game," Canadian league commissioner James Johnson said in a statement.

Wenger, FIFA's chief of global football development, has promoted the daylight idea for several years at soccer's rule-making panel known as IFAB, which agreed in February to

upgrade trials to the Canadian league.

The former England and Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher, now a CBS and Sky Sports pundit, suggested in 2024 that daylight offside "will be terrible for the game" and lead teams to be more negative rather than produce more goals.

Wenger's daylight plan can be written into The Laws of The Game only if voted for by at least two of the four British soccer federations who sit with FIFA officials at the annual IFAB meeting.

That support was not yet won and a compromise option has already been aired that would judge an attacker offside only if their torso is beyond the defender.



Eddie Howe's job as Newcastle manager was safe "at the moment," chief executive David Hopkinson said.

The Saudi-owned Premier League team also released its latest financial figures showing the club effectively sold St James' Park to its parent company.

Hopkinson stopped short of giving assurances that Howe, who has been manager since November 2021, will remain in charge beyond the end of this season.

Newcastle is in 12th place in the 20-team Premier League, has just been eliminated from the Champions League in humiliating fashion by Barcelona in the round of 16, and is sure to finish the season without a trophy.

Newcastle's most recent

match was a 2-1 loss at home to fierce rival Sunderland, which ramped up the pressure on Howe.

"Eddie's our manager," Hopkinson said. "I expect to have a great run to the end of the season here and we'll talk about the future when it's time."

Asked to clarify his comments, Hopkinson said: "We are not looking to make a change at the moment. We are not having those conversations. We are still in the midst of the season. Right now, we are focused on the seven matches we have remaining and not distracting ourselves with speculation about what we may or may not do in the summer."

In a group strategic report released by Newcastle covering the 12 months to June 2025, the club said it made a profit after tax of 34.7 million pounds (\$45.9 million). That was driven in part by a 44% increase in commercial revenue as turnover rose by 15 million pounds (\$20 million) to a record 335.3 million pounds (\$444 million) - around half that of England's biggest teams.

The report also said the decision to effectively sell St James' Park - Newcastle's storied stadium close to the city center - to immediate parent company PZ Newco Limited and lease it back was part of a "reorganisation of its property holdings and group structure to facilitate future infrastructure investment."



In this file photo, Manchester City's Rayan Ait-Nouri scored an offside goal that was cancelled during the Champions League round of 16 second leg soccer match between Manchester City and Real Madrid in Manchester. (AP)

CAF considering Africa Cup of Nations expansion

JOHANNESBURG, March 31, (Xinhua): Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Patrice Motsepe has said that the Africa Cup of Nations could be expanded from 24 to 28 teams.

Motsepe made the remarks at a press conference following a CAF executive committee meeting, but did not specify how the tournament structure would change or when the expansion might take effect.

The Africa Cup of Nations was expanded from 16 to 24 teams in 2019.

Motsepe also confirmed that the 2027 tournament will go ahead as planned in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. After an additional edition in 2028, the competition is expected to move to a four-year cycle.

He added that CAF plans to launch a new national league competition in 2029, to be played annually, with a 16-team finals tournament

staged every two years.

"The adjustments reflect CAF's commitment to developing world-class football with the best African players from all over the world returning to compete on the continent," Motsepe said.

Motsepe, who was elected CAF president in 2021 and re-elected in 2025, is the first South African to lead the continental soccer governing body.



Gianni Infantino holds the World Cup trophy during a tour in Mexico.

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Los Angeles Lakers center Jaxson Hayes celebrates after drawing a one-and-one foul during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Washington Wizards in Los Angeles. (AP)

Sports

OKC reaches 60 wins as SGA explodes for 47

James' triple-double powers Lakers past Wizards

OKLAHOMA CITY, March 31, (AP): Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 47 points and Oklahoma City defeated Detroit 114-110 in overtime.

The reigning league MVP, and strong candidate to repeat, made 12 of 19 field goals and 21 of 25 free throws. He extended his NBA record for consecutive games with at least 20 points to 136.

The Thunder became the first team in the league to win 60 games this season, and it's the first time Oklahoma City has won at least that many in back-to-back seasons. The Thunder's 15th win in 16 games kept them two games ahead of the San Antonio Spurs atop the Western Conference standings.

Oklahoma City, which defeated the New York Knicks on Sunday night, looked sluggish against the Eastern Conference-leading Pistons, who were missing four of their five regular starters.

Lakers 120, Wizards 101

In Los Angeles, LeBron James had 21 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds, Austin Reaves added 19 points and nine assists, and Los Angeles rolled to a win over Washington.

It was James' 1,228th career victory, including the playoffs, to tie Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for most in NBA history.

Heat 119, 76ers 109

In Miami, Tyler Herro scored 30 points, Bam Adebayo finished with 23 points and 16 rebounds, and the Miami Heat used a 14-0 run in the final moments to rally past the Philadelphia 76ers.

Pelle Larsson added 20 points and a career-high 10 rebounds for Miami (40-36), which kept some realistic hope of getting out of the play-in tournament range - or at least getting into one of the top two spots and therefore assuring itself two chances of making the playoffs - alive with



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) drives against Detroit Pistons forward Ronald Holland II (5) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City. (AP)

the win. The Heat are ninth in the Eastern Conference, in a virtual tie with No. 8 Orlando.

Hawks 112, Celtics 102

In Atlanta, Onyeka Okongwu and Jalen Johnson each scored 20 points, and three days after losing to the Celtics on the road, the Hawks responded with a win over Boston. It was Atlanta's

13th consecutive home win.

Okongwu (20 points, 10 rebounds) and Johnson each had double-doubles. It was Johnson's (20 points, 12 rebounds) 45th of the season.

Suns 131, Grizzlies 105

In Memphis, Devin Booker scored 36 points on 16-of-24 shooting, Jalen Green added 21 points, and Phoenix

beat Memphis.

Collin Gillespie had 11 points - all in the fourth quarter - and 10 assists for the Suns. Oso Ighodaro and Rasheer Fleming also scored 11 points.

Booker banked in a straight-away 3-pointer at the buzzer in the third quarter to give Phoenix a two-point

lead. GG Jackson threw down a dunk to open the fourth that made it 91-all, but Fleming grabbed an offensive rebound and his putback with 11:14 left in the game gave Phoenix the lead for good.

Spurs 129, Bulls 114

In San Antonio, Victor Wembanyama had a season-high 41

points and 16 rebounds while collecting the fastest double-double in NBA history, and San Antonio won their ninth straight, defeating Chicago.

Wembanyama had 10 points and 10 rebounds in his first 8 minutes, 31 seconds on the court, collecting his 10th rebound 1:55 into the second quarter. Jim Washington of the St. Louis Hawks had a double-double in nine minutes against the New York Knicks on March 6, 1966.

Timberwolves 124, Mavericks 94

In Dallas, Dallas native Julius Randle scored 24 points, Anthony Edwards had 17 points off the bench in his return following a six-game absence, and Minnesota beat Dallas.

Edwards was announced as a starter but was late to the court and replaced in the lineup by Mike Conley. Edwards checked in after 2:01 elapsed.

Edwards went in needing to play in every remaining Wolves game to meet the NBA's 65-game minimum for eligibility for all-NBA consideration.

Ayo Dosunmu had 16 points, 15 rebounds and 12 assists for his first triple-double since being acquired from Chicago at the trade deadline.

Cavaliers 122, Jazz 113

In Salt Lake City, Evan Mobley and Donovan Mitchell each scored 34 points and Cleveland used a late fourth-quarter surge to beat Utah.

Mobley set a season-high for points, including eight dunks, and also had 16 rebounds and three blocks. The 7-footer capped the decisive 14-1 run with a three-point play that made it 117-106 with 3:14 remaining.

James Harden had 13 points and 14 assists for the Cavaliers, who have won five straight road games and six of their last seven overall.

Cody Williams scored 26 points, Kyle Filipowski had 20 and Ace Bailey added 19 for Utah. The Jazz have lost six straight and 10 of their last 11.

Hayat hails Kuwait equestrian team's strong showing in Qatar

KUWAIT CITY, March 31: Kuwait Equestrian Federation President Masoud Jawhar Hayat commended the national team's impressive results at the Al Shaqab Show Jumping Cup in Qatar.

In a press statement, Hayat highlighted the depth of talent within Kuwait's equestrian ranks, noting the presence of skilled riders across all levels, from beginners to elite competitors. He emphasized the federation's focus on developing youth categories, describing them as the cornerstone of the sport's future in Kuwait.

Hayat added that Kuwaiti riders continue to prove their capabilities on the international stage, whether competing at home or abroad.

Among the key results, Hussein Al-Kharafi claimed first place in the 140cm (three-star) class, while Asian champion Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi secured third place in the 155cm (five-star) event. Rider Yara Al-Hunaidi also finished third in the 140cm class.

Madi Al-Khamis delivered a strong performance, taking third place in the 125cm event and fourth in the 130cm class, while Fawaz Al-Rashed earned third place in the 145cm competition.



Kuwait Equestrian Federation President, Masoud Jawhar Hayat

Kuwait was represented by 17 riders: Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi, Ali Ahmed Al-Kharafi, Hussein Al-Kharafi, Abdullah Al-Aiban, Alaa Al-Sultan, Al-Jood Al-Sabah, Anaz Al-Anaz, Bandar Juma, Dhari Al-Mutairi, Fawaz Al-Rashed, Ghazi Al-Fulaij, Ghazlan Al-Khaldi, Madi Al-Khamis, Mohammed Al-Mulaifi, Moudhi Al-Jabri, Sharifa Al-Awadhi, and Yara Al-Hunaidi.

Best of the Rest

Lin wins first bout at Asian titles: Lin Yu-ting comfortably won her first international bout since the 2024 Paris Olympics at the Asian championships on Tuesday after World Boxing said she passed a gene test.

Taiwan's first Olympic boxing champion beat Thananya Somnuek of Thailand 5-0 in the round of 16 in the 60-kilogram division. That earned Lin a quarterfinal against division favorite Ayaka Taguchi of Japan.

The 30-year-old Lin wasn't cleared to compete at the Asian titles until less than two weeks ago.

World Boxing took over as the sport's Olympic-level governing body last year, and it implemented a sex eligibility policy last August requiring all fighters to take a one-time genetic test designed to identify the presence of a Y chromosome.

Two-time world champion Lin qualified for the Asian championships in December by defeating compatriot Wu Shih-yi, a 60kg bronze medalist at the Paris Olympics.

But World Boxing didn't confirm Lin's eligibility until March 19, and the statement referred to her competing in only World Boxing competitions.

It is not clear whether Lin will have to undergo further gene testing if she wants to compete again at the Olympics. The International Olympic Committee announced last week new rules banning transgender athletes and a mandatory gene test once in an athlete's career.

Lin and Imane Khelif of Algeria won gold medals at Paris amid international scrutiny and misconceptions over both boxers' sex. While both met the eligibility rules followed at the time by the IOC, which ran the Paris tournament, the two fighters' success sparked a politically charged debate over those standards. (AP)

World Cup-bound Black Stars fire Addo after 4 straight losses

Germany edges Ghana, Undav makes strong WC case

STUTTGART, Germany, March 31, (AP): Deniz Undav turned up the pressure on Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann to select him for the World Cup after he scored the 2-1 winner against Ghana to back up strong club form.

Undav hadn't played for Germany since June but seven goals in his last six Bundesliga games helped him earn a recall. Germany was playing the friendly at the home stadium of his club Stuttgart and fans chanted for Undav long before he came off the bench.

The game seemed to be fizzling out to a draw when he flicked the ball over Ghana's goalkeeper in the 88th minute to give Germany a seventh successive win.

Ghana's Abdul Fatuwu earlier scored on the counter to cancel out Kai Havertz's penalty for Germany.

After Florian Wirtz's spectacular attacking display in Germany's 4-3 win against Switzerland, Germany was expected to score high against an opponent coming off a 5-1 loss to Austria. It ended up being a subdued win in constant driving rain.

Nick Woltemade started in one of four German changes but his main impact was heading against the bar in the second half.

Havertz put Germany ahead with his penalty just before halftime after Jonas Adjetey blocked a shot with his arm. Ghana leveled on the counter in the 70th when Germany-born Derrick Kohn surged down the left flank, beat defender Joshua Vagnoman and crossed low for Fatuwu to score.

Ghana defender Kojo Peprah Opong of Nice had to be helped off the field after injuring his left leg challenging Woltemade.

Germany has further pre-World Cup friendlies against Finland in May and co-host the United States in



Kai Havertz of Germany is fouled by Jonas Adjetey of Ghana during an international friendly soccer match between Germany and Ghana in Stuttgart, Germany. (AP)

June before facing Curacao, the Ivory Coast and Ecuador in Group E of the tournament.

Ghana has lost four friendlies in a row. It's in Group L with Panama, England and Croatia.

Otto Addo has been released from his contract as head soccer coach of Ghana, just 2-2 months before the team plays its first match at the World Cup.

"The Ghana Football Association (GFA) have parted ways with the head coach of the senior men's national team (Black Stars), Otto

Addo effective immediately," it said in a statement Monday on its website.

It gave no further details on a replacement for Addo, or the reasons for the termination.

The firing came after a 2-1 loss to Germany in Stuttgart on Monday. Ghana also lost 5-1 in Austria last Friday and has lost four friendlies in a row.

Addo was on his second spell as coach of the team after Borussia Dortmund agreed to release him from his role in talent development at the end

of the season in March 2024. Addo already coached Ghana on an interim basis for much of 2022, including at the World Cup in Qatar, when Ghana beat South Korea but was still eliminated in the group stage.

During his playing career, the Hamburg, Germany-born Addo won the Bundesliga with Dortmund and played for Ghana at the 2006 World Cup.

Ghana, which reached the World Cup for the fifth time, is in Group L with Croatia, England and Panama. It plays its first match on June 17 against Panama at Toronto.

Kenya confirms \$30 mln hosting fee paid for 2027 AFCON

NAIROBI, March 31, (Xinhua): Kenya confirmed on Tuesday that it has paid the 30 million U.S. dollar hosting fee to the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to co-host the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations.

Salim Mvurya, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Sports, Salim Mvurya said the government had also met all other conditions set by CAF to stage the tournament alongside Uganda and Tanzania.

Mvurya said a restructured multi-agency local organizing committee has been established, bringing together stakeholders from the public and private sectors across key areas of delivery.

"This multi-sectoral approach is deliberate, ensuring that our institutional capacity is fully aligned with the scale, complexity and urgency of preparations required to host a tournament of AFCON's magnitude," he said in a statement.

"Following the CAF inspection report, we will embark on accelerated implementation of all infrastructure and operational compliance requirements. These include the fast-tracked construction and upgrading of match venues, training facilities, transport and logistics systems, as well as safety, security and broadcast standards," he continued, adding that

Kenya is addressing recommendations with urgency and accountability.

The 2027 AFCON is scheduled to take place from June 19 to July 18 across venues in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Kampala, marking the first time the tournament will be co-hosted by three countries.

CAF announced in January that the 2027 edition will be the last held under the current two-year cycle, with the competition expected to switch to a four-year cycle from 2028. The host of the 2028 tournament has yet to be decided.