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PM, ministers review strategy to improve infrastructure, logistics Page 2

## 'IRANIAN ATTACKS ON G.C.C. STATES VIOLATE INTERNATIONAL LAWS'



### Opinion

**Ahmed Al-Jarallah**

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

## Iran has fallen, and its arrogance has crumbled

WHEN you read the Iranian threats, you might erroneously imagine the Revolutionary Guard stationed at the gates of the White House in Washington, and that Donald Trump is begging the world to sit at the negotiating table with Tehran, surrendering unconditionally.

As previously noted, this arrogance is a Persian trait, but it is merely a facade for imminent ruin and a resounding defeat. Consequently, the war is destined to conclude solely on international terms, primarily dictated by America. These terms are based on changing the aggressive and terrorist behavior that has plagued the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and their peoples for five decades, while hindering development in the region as a whole.

There are many indications that the regime currently lacks a true leader, following the assassination of former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Thus, while the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Tehran denies any talks with Washington, the Foreign Affairs Minister himself announced receiving communications from American negotiator Steve Witkoff. This contradiction began with the hollow apology of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to the Gulf Arab states, only for the Revolutionary Guard to bomb the GCC countries within hours, as if to say, "I am in charge."

We witnessed a similar situation, even worse, during the Iran-Iraq War. Iranian suicide attacks on the Iraqi border were almost daily occurrences. Despite this, the first Supreme Leader of the Khomeini regime ultimately had to swallow the bitter pill, admitting defeat after eight years of stubborn resistance. The war claimed more than two million lives on both sides, displaced about five million and cost \$600 billion, not to mention the destruction of the infrastructure of the two countries.

In spite of this, it is true that the fascist regime methodically sought to destabilize all Arab countries, turning Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and Syria into havens for terrorist gangs that wreaked havoc. However, with the end of the

current war, all these arms will cease to exist. If Syria has rid itself of that regime, thanks to its revolution, then Lebanon is on the same path, followed by Iraq, and then Yemen. At that point, the region will be much more stable.

In the current stubbornness of the regime, the situation is not really different from the past, albeit the difference is that the war will not last as long as the Iran-Iraq War. The end is very near. All indicators confirm that Tehran is now powerless and incapable of resistance. It will likely need 30 years to recover, with radical changes to the regime, which is now much weaker than before this round of fighting. This outcome is clear. Notwithstanding the decision and statements made by American President Donald Trump about the consequences of the conflict in his recent speech, the GCC states remain the major stakeholders in the post-war scenario. These nations have been the first to suffer from Iranian terrorist activities for five decades. They have received a significant number of missiles and drones, whether from Iran or from militias supported by it in Iraq, during the current conflict. Therefore, they have more right than any other party to set the conditions for the next phase and the coming 50 years, at the very least, by engaging with a civilized Iranian regime that honors the principles of good neighborliness and understands the meaning of international relations.

Furthermore, the enormous direct and indirect losses suffered by our nations must be positioned at the heart of any Gulf negotiations with Tehran, irrespective of the decisions made by the United States of America.

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# Kuwait airport fuel tank targeted again



National Guard photo of KNG Undersecretary Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas during a visit to the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Center for Chemical Defense and Radiation Monitoring.

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (Agencies): The Ministry of Defense announced Wednesday that the Kuwait Armed Forces intercepted three cruise missiles and 15 hostile drones within the airspace of the country over the past 24 hours.**

Official spokesperson of the ministry Colonel Saud Al-Atwan revealed in a media briefing that the Iranian aggression targeted a fuel tank at Kuwait International Airport and the specialized teams dealt with the incident.

He added that debris fell on a house without causing injuries. Al-Atwan indicated as well that the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team at the Land Force Engineering Corps, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, safely neutralized a military object at the site.

He confirmed that the Armed Forces continue to carry out their duties with high efficiency, reiterating their firm resolve to defend the homeland, deal with the aggression, and thwart threats to the sovereignty, security and stability of the country, thereby, ensuring the safety of citizens and residents.

He prayed to Allah Almighty for the continuous security and stability of the nation under the 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, and to bestow mercy upon the martyrs.

On the other hand, Director General of the Public Relations and Security Media Department at the Interior Ministry and its official

- Kuwait intercepts 3 missiles, 15 hostile UAV
- Shrapnel from air defenses hits house
- KNG confirms radiation levels normal
- Kuwait confirms six-month food stock in NGO warehouses

spokesperson Brigadier General Nasser Bouslaib said the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team at the ministry and that of the Kuwait Army and Kuwait National Guard (KNG) handled 13 reports about shrapnel falling from defensive interception operations over the past 24 hours. He disclosed that the total number of such reports since the beginning of the Iranian aggression on Kuwait has reached 629.

In addition, KNG Undersecretary Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas on Wednesday visited the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Center for Chemical Defense and Radiation Monitoring.

In a press statement, KNG revealed that Al-Barjas was briefed on the role of the center in supporting other State institutions, while affirming that radiation levels in the airspace and territorial waters of the country remain normal and are continuously monitored. It added that no environmental pollutants have been detected since the start of the Iranian attacks.

Also, the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) revealed that it has dealt with 90 non-routine reports since the beginning of the Iranian aggression, including fires resulting from shrapnel or direct attacks, in addition to performing preparedness duties and securing sites throughout the country.

Director for Public Relations and Media at KFF and its official spokesperson Brigadier General Mohammad Al-Gharib affirmed that in the last 24 hours, KFF dealt with fires caused by direct drone or missile attacks, or as a result of shrapnel falling from the interceptions by air defenses.

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## Kuwait Amir receives written message from British King reaffirming solidarity

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA):** His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a written message from King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The message reaffirmed the United Kingdom's support for the State of Kuwait amid the current circumstances resulting from what it described as heinous

Iranian attacks, stressing its commitment to Kuwait's security and safety and its support in confronting any aggression targeting its sovereignty, security, and stability.

The message was delivered to Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed.

## UK strengthens defensive support to Kuwait, calls for regional de-escalation

**John C. Fernandes**  
Online Media Manager

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1:** The United Kingdom has deployed counter-drone and air defence capabilities to Kuwait while reaffirming that its role in the escalating regional conflict remains strictly defensive, British Ambassador to Kuwait, H.E. Qudsi Rasheed said during a press briefing at the British Embassy.

The Ambassador praised Kuwait's response to recent attacks, commending the professionalism and courage of the Kuwaiti's armed forces and frontline responders, including the National Guard, fire services, and medical teams. "They are working tirelessly to protect lives and maintain essential services," the official said, adding that their efforts have been "extremely impressive" under difficult circumstances.

Condolences were also extended to the families of those killed and injured in the recent Iranian attacks on Kuwait, including both citizens and expatriates.

**UK condemns Iran, stresses non-involvement in offensive action**

The UK has "unequivocally condemned" Iran's drone and missile strikes across the region, de-

scribing them as "reckless" and destabilizing. However, the Ambassador stressed that Britain was not involved in the initial strikes against Iran and is not participating in offensive military operations.

"This is not the UK's war," the envoy said, noting that the decision to avoid direct military involvement was deliberate and aligned with national interests.

Despite this, the UK has taken "specific and limited" defensive measures to protect British nationals, safeguard its regional interests, and support Gulf allies, including Kuwait.

**Three-pronged support to Kuwait**

The British official outlined three key areas of support currently being provided to Kuwait:

■ **Deployment of 'Rapid Sentry' System:**

The UK has sent a counter-drone system known as Rapid Sentry, designed to protect Kuwait's airspace from incoming threats. The system is being operated by British personnel and is part of broader efforts to counter missile and drone attacks.

■ **Royal Air Force Advisory Role:**

British Royal Air Force specialists have been

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## Saudi opens two additional routes for Kuwait travelers

**RIYADH, April 1, (KUNA):** Travelers by bus from Kuwait to Saudi Arabia can use Nuwaiseeb-Khafji or Salmi-Raqi border crossings before flying to a third country.

Nuwaiseeb-Khafji route leads to King Fahd International Airport in Dammam city while Salmi-Raqi route leads to Qaisumah International Airport in Hafar Al-Batin Governorate, the Saudi public authority for transport noted in a press release on Tuesday.

Travellers to Kuwait can also utilize any of both routes, according to the statement.

Six trips are scheduled on each route in both directions on a daily basis to serve passengers to and from the two airports located in the Eastern Province, it added.

## Yemeni, Sudanese added to terror list

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

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a circular to all companies and financial institutions in the country about adding two individuals -- one Yemeni and one Sudanese -- to the national terrorism list.

This measure is part of efforts to strengthen the system for combating the financing of terrorism and to cut off its sources.

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## Embassy thanks Kuwait

## Australians urged to prep for disruptions

**By Fares Ghaleb**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1:** The Australian Embassy in Kuwait expressed gratitude to the Kuwaiti government, particularly the essential service providers, for their efforts in maintaining the safety and security of everyone during this challenging period.

On its Instagram account, the embassy emphasized that the situation remains fluid, urging Australian citizens in Kuwait to take simple steps to prepare for disruptions to vital services. It pointed out that proactive planning and discussing contingency plans can significantly improve responses to emergencies.

While affirming that its consular team is ready to provide assistance, the embassy urged those seeking consular support to contact the team by email or call the 24/7 Consular Emergency Center.

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## 5 Cabinet convenes amid diplomatic drive to counter Iranian aggression



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## NBK resumes Al Jawhara Prize draws

## Day by Day

**CHARLIE** Chaplin once said, "Nothing in life is permanent, not even our troubles."

He also shared that he loved walking in the rain so no one could see his tears.

He believed the saddest day in life is a day without laughter. A genuine smile can soothe the heart, mind, and body. Well-being is a beautiful part of life, but it requires awareness and care to sustain.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

## NewsWatch

**KUWAIT CITY:** Kuwait's Social Affairs Minister **Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah** on Wednesday dissolved six non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as part of a sweeping transparency drive.

The decision comes after "meticulous assessments" found multiple infractions that required immediate legal measures to protect the "rights of beneficiaries" and ensure institutional stability, the minister said in a statement.

Such a measure aims to "boost performance" and improve the quality of services provided to the public, added the minister, underlining that no one is above the rule of law. (KUNA)

**LONDON:** British Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** announced on Wednesday that London will host an international meeting this week bringing together 35 countries to discuss ways to restore maritime navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

Starmer said in a press conference that the meeting, which will be held at the foreign ministers' level, aims to find diplomatic and political solutions to the crisis in the **Middle East**, particularly the closure of the strait by Iran and its impact on global trade. (KUNA)

## HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

## The King told the Queen, 'If the nightingale sings three times, you will give birth to a son'

Queen Nazli said King Fuad was certain the boy would be a symbol of stability for the country

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Amiri Diwan photo

Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah received on Wednesday Ambassador of the UAE to Kuwait, Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi, accompanied by Emirati citizen Adel Al-Hammadi.

## UAE feelings for Kuwait, people hailed

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah received on Wednesday Ambassador of the UAE to Kuwait, Dr. Matar Al-Neyadi, accompanied by Emirati citizen Adel Al-Hammadi.

The Minister expressed appreciation to Al-Hammadi for his kind sentiments toward Kuwait and its people, affirming they reflect Kuwait's high regard among GCC states, and praised these gestures as evidence of deep fraternal ties and

shared Gulf values.

The Minister noted that the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah has emphasized strengthening national cohesion, confidence, readiness, and coordination among state institutions amid current circumstances, reflecting Kuwait's firm approach to safeguarding security and stability.

## Mourners thanked over 'royal's' demise

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): On behalf of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Al-Sabah family, the Amiri Diwan extended its

sincere thanks and appreciation to all citizens and residents who offered condolences on the passing of the late Sheikhha Khazna Ahmad Sabah Al-Salman Al-Sabah.

### Power lines repair nearing completion

## Loss of lives in Iran attacks regretted

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamil inspected the final touches in the repair of the remaining overhead power lines damaged by drone debris.

Al-Zamil, along with Director of the Overhead and Underground Cable Maintenance Department Eng. Athari Mohammad and several specialists, assessed the repair work.

He conveyed the appreciation of Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Subaih Al-Mukhaizeem to the workers at the repair and maintenance site for their efforts in maintaining the stability of the electrical grid.

In a press statement, Al-Zamil revealed "the technical teams started their work immediately after the damaged lines went out of service. Today, we are witnessing the completion of repairs of the remaining damaged lines. Work is underway to repair some of the associated infrastructure."

Regarding the recent incident at a service building in a



Dr. Al-Zamil

power station, which resulted in the death of an Indian worker, Al-Zamil confirmed that the incident did not affect production operations at the station.

He expressed regret for the loss of innocent lives due to the heinous Iranian attack and expressed condolences to the family and loved ones of the deceased.

He indicated that emergency teams immediately began work according to the emergency plans to address the aftermath of the incident, while ensuring continuous operational efficiency and coordinating fully with relevant authorities to secure the affected site.

He added that the recent attacks on infrastructure sites, including those belonging to the ministry, affected its routine maintenance programs in preparation for the summer season.

He emphasized that coordination with partners and international manufacturers continues to complete maintenance work and overcome any obstacles before the season begins.

He pointed out that these developments demonstrated the great responsibility placed on the ministry to ensure the continuous delivery of electricity and water services to customers.

He also appreciated the efforts of the employees in various sectors of the ministry, proving their sense of responsibility and national motivation to serve Kuwait.

ship of nearly 60 years by working toward a more secure, strong, and stable shared future.

Their cooperation is developed through six main working groups under the strategic dialogue: defense and security, education, economy, consular affairs, customs and border security, in addition to cooperation on global issues.

Kuwait is widely recognized for its important roles over decades in reconciliation efforts and constructive diplomatic mediation between many countries, as well as its commitment to maintaining the security and stability of the Gulf region, the Middle East, and the world, and assisting countries during famines, crises, conflicts, wars, and natural disasters.

Relations between Kuwait and NATO have steadily developed since Kuwait joined the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) in June 2004 as its first member.

In 2006, Kuwait hosted, as the first non-member country, a meeting of the North Atlantic Council on "NATO and the Gulf Countries: Facing Common Challenges through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative."

In 2012, Kuwait proposed hosting and operating the regional center for the ICI during a North Atlantic Council meeting in Brussels. In 2014, it joined the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme.

Kuwait hosted meetings of NATO's Political Advisory Group in 2015 and 2018, as well as a North Atlantic Council meeting marking the 15th anniversary of the initiative in December 2019.

In 2016, Kuwait and NATO signed a Military Transit Agreement, and in January 2017, the NATO Regional Center in Kuwait was inaugurated.

In July 2024, former Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya visited Washington to attend the 75th anniversary celebrations of NATO on the sidelines of the alliance's summit.

## Kuwait marks 22 years as major US-designated non-NATO ally

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): It has been 22 years since the US designated Kuwait as a major strategic ally outside the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in recognition of its pivotal role in supporting and maintaining security, peace, and stability in the region and the world.

This step represented a qualitative leap in the strategic partnership between the two countries and reinforced a legacy of close diplomatic relations dating back to 1951, when the US opened its first consulate in Kuwait City.

Designating Kuwait as a major non-NATO ally allows the country to acquire advanced military technology, along with other economic and scientific benefits, including preferential status and a long-term partnership with the US.

The US granted Kuwait this status on April 1, 2004, following the visit of the late Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, to the US in September 2003.

Kuwait has since become a strategic ally and key partner of the US due to its efforts in enhancing security and stability, resolving crises, and its leading role in mediation, bridging viewpoints, and reconciliation in several regional and international conflicts.

NATO consists of 32 member states, while the US designates 20 countries as major non-NATO allies, granting them special treatment across various fields.

This designation reflects Kuwait's central role in maintaining peace and supporting security at both regional and international levels, as well as its joint efforts and intelligence coordination with the US.

It also highlights Kuwait's humanitarian and relief efforts, which culminated in its designation as a global humanitarian center in 2014, reinforcing its role as a promoter of world peace.

Kuwait and the US continue to strengthen their relation-

## Jail, deportation for illegal blogger

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Nasser Salem Al-Haid, with Judges Mutaib Al-Aradhi and Saud Al-Sanea as members, upheld the two-year prison sentence with hard labor, followed by deportation, imposed on an illegal resident who was behind a fake X platform account.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendant with insulting HH the Amir and the Amiri entity, and disseminating false information and malicious rumors about the internal situation in the country.

The investigation of a State Security officer revealed that the defendant was the actual user of the X account. He was apprehended after the officer obtained a warrant from the prosecution, while the search of his residence led to the discovery of the telephone used in the incident.

Meanwhile, the same court upheld the ruling of a lower court that sentenced an artistic work producer to four years in prison with hard labor for the possession of hashish for personal consumption, while it refrained from sentencing another defendant, a television director, obligating the latter to post KD300 bail and sign a pledge of good conduct for two years.

The prosecution presented facts regarding the case, indicating

that the defendants were apprehended when officers from the Drug Control General Department raided the house of one of them. Narcotics were found in their possession and the drug test results confirmed their consumption of the substance.

The Criminal Court previously sentenced the producer to four years in prison and fined him KD500, while refraining from punishing the director. This decision was upheld by the Court of Appeals.

Furthermore, the court commuted the prison sentence imposed on a citizen from 10 years to five years for joining and financing the ISIS and insulting HH the Amir, while it upheld the fine of KD1,554 and ordered the destruction of the confiscated items.

The prosecution charged the defendant with joining and pledging allegiance to a banned terrorist organization, promoting its ideology, financing it through bank transfers and cryptocurrencies, and insulting HH the Amir.

State Security investigations affirmed his communication with members of the organization abroad and his use of electronic means for this purpose. He was arrested and devices used for promotion and communication were found in his possession.

During the investigation, the defendant confessed to joining the organization in 2024, adopting its ideology, and allocating a portion of his salary to financially support it.



PM Diwan photo

HH the PM chairs a meeting to boost infrastructure and logistics and review the provision of suitable land for establishing strategic warehouses.

## PM, ministers review strategy to improve infrastructure, logistics

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired a meeting on Wednesday to discuss ways to enhance infrastructure and logistics and review the provision of suitable land for establishing strategic warehouses.

The move aims to strengthen Kuwait's capabilities in managing supplies, improve storage efficiency, and meet the future needs of all vital sectors.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan, Minister of State for Municipal Af-

fairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdullah Al-Meshari, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulaziz Al-Marzouq, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Chief of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Deputy Chairman of the Kuwait Investment Authority Sheikh Saud Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, and Chairman of the Board of the Kuwait Warehousing Company Hazem Al-Essa.

## Kuwait raps Israeli law to murder Palestinians

### Restraints on worship freedom condemned

GENEVA, April 1, (KUNA): Kuwait on Tuesday strongly condemned the approval by the Israeli occupation Knesset of a law mandating the execution of Palestinian hostages, describing it as a new link in a series of measures targeting unarmed civilians and exacerbating the suffering of the Palestinian people.

This came in a statement delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen before the United Nations Human Rights Council, which concludes its 61st session on Tuesday.

Al-Hayen reiterated Kuwait's firm condemnation of the continued violations of the occupation forces of international law and United Nations charter, stressing that what the international community is witnessing reflects a clear disregard for international laws and conventions.

Ambassador Al-Hayen also called on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities and take the necessary measures to halt these violations and ensure the implementation of relevant UN resolutions.

He expressed Kuwait's welcome of the Human Rights Council's adoption today of two resolutions submitted by the OIC Group concerning "Israeli settlements in the oc-

cupied Palestinian territory including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination."

He described the adoption of these two resolutions as the minimum response to the daily violations suffered by the Palestinian people emphasizing the need to sustain international efforts to protect civilians.

Al-Hayen expressed regret that issues related to right of Palestinian people continue to be subjected to voting in international forums despite being at the core of the Human Rights Councils mandate which requires condemning such practices and working to bring them to an end stressing that the Palestinian peoples right to self-determination is non-negotiable.

The United Nations Human Rights Council also adopted resolutions reaffirming the illegality of Israeli occupation settlements and the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

The resolutions further underscored the responsibility of states to provide protection to the Palestinian people not to recognize or provide any form of support to Israeli occupation and called for concerted international efforts to put an end to the serious and ongoing violations against the Palestinian people.

Earlier, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry condemned and rejected the Israeli occupation's continued restrictions on freedom of worship in the occupied Jerusalem, and on access to Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In a press release, the ministry also condemned Israeli occupation forces for blocking the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Custodian of the Holy Land from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in an obvious breach of relevant international conventions and charters that ensure the freedom of worship for all religions.



Al-Hayen

### Other Voices

## More dangerous than Iran and Israel

By Ahmad alsarraf

WE are living in a highly sensitive period due to the repercussions of the recent war waged by Israel and the United States against Iran. In response, Iran chose to retaliate by launching missiles and drones at the Gulf states, causing destruction to our homes, seaports, airports, oil refineries, and petroleum storage facilities.

Iran showed no regard for the lives of innocent people, nor for the bonds of neighborliness, brotherhood, and kinship, treating us as if we were its fiercest enemies.

The number of missiles and drones that struck Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf states far exceeds those launched at Israel.

This brutal aggression against us may negatively impact the relationships among members of society and weaken the multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian social fabric that has existed since Kuwait's founding.

In this context, Al-Qabas shared the following on one of its social media platforms - "Whoever chooses neutrality in critical moments will not escape the stigma that follows, nor the shame that history will forever remember. Steadfastness when nations are tested is not a virtue, but a national and moral failing whose consequences will endure, no matter how much time passes."

Before responding to this lapse by Al-Qabas, I feel it is my duty to clarify two points:

First, I am a devoted reader of Al-Qabas daily, and my loyalty to it is well-known. I have repeatedly declined all financial offers to move and write for newspapers that compete with Al-Qabas daily.

Second, I am among the very few who maintain true neutrality in this country. Despite all my journalistic battles, business interests, and the attacks, accusations, and both genuine and malicious lawsuits I have faced, I have maintained my neutrality, and refused to align with any political, sectarian, or social movement.

Therefore, I write with complete objectivity in criticizing and rejecting the meaning behind the opinion piece published by Al-Qabas daily and referenced

above.

This opinion, as I understand it, is unhelpful, harsh, and contains clear criticism of a fundamental pillar of this good society.

I urge Al-Qabas not to be drawn into this course of action. I also ask the pardon of Al-Qabas daily for using this quote to respond to those who have attempted to cast doubt on the newspaper and level various accusations of treason, publicly questioning its loyalty without facing any consequences. Some insist that everyone must publicly prove their loyalty to the nation, or risk being accused of treason.

According to legal, jurisprudential, logical, and humanitarian principles, every citizen is presumed loyal to their country until proven otherwise through a court conviction.

Consequently, no citizen is required to repeatedly declare or reaffirm their loyalty to their homeland, especially since such loyalty cannot be measured by a social media post, a paragraph, an article, or even by writing a poem, composing a melody, or performing a patriotic song. The heart may be in one place while the tongue speaks from another entirely.

I urge everyone to stop these accusations, as our geographic location, size, and the dangers surrounding us do not allow the luxury of disputes over loyalty to the nation.

Those who are ungrateful to their homeland will face the consequences of their actions. We must prove to our enemies that this nation is stronger than all their despicable attempts. Our unity as a people reinforces the strength and cohesion of our army.

As my colleague Iqbal Al-Ahmad says, "In moments of great tension, the strength of nations is not measured solely by their weaponry, but also by the steadfastness and awareness of their people."

What Kuwait recently experienced was not merely a passing security incident, but a true test that proved this nation is stronger than some may imagine, and that its people stand united in defense of their land and the dignity of their homeland.

We must all uphold national unity and not hold everyone accountable for the actions of a misguided few.

□ □ □

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## HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



# The King told the Queen, 'If the nightingale sings three times, you will give birth to a son'

SOME beliefs become so ingrained in a person's memory that they remain with them until they turn into unshakable convictions.

The following lines recount an incident that the former King of Egypt, Fuad I, regarded as an omen. If it came true, it would signal a positive future.

In the second part, another incident offers a lesson for anyone striving for self-improvement. It tells the story of the millionaire Onassis and a poor cake vendor who could not rise to the seemingly simple challenge posed by Onassis.

Onassis responded to the man with his famous words: "You will live and die a poor cake vendor."

## The story of King Farouk's birth

Farouk, the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Egypt, was born on February 11, 1920. On this occasion, the Royal Court announced the news to the Egyptian people, the Cabinet declared a holiday, and several prisoners were pardoned. A 21-gun salute was fired in celebration.

On the thirtieth anniversary of King Farouk's birth, his mother, Queen Nazli, recounted the story of his birth, which was published on the front page of the Akhbar Al-Youm newspaper in its February 11, 1950 issue.

Akhbar Al-Youm quoted Queen Nazli as saying, "King Fuad longed for a son to be his heir. He was so preoccupied with this matter that astrologers sent us many letters and prophecies predicting that the child would be a boy. But King Fuad was anxious. I often heard him pray to God to grant him a son. He was certain that this boy would be a symbol of stability for the country. King Fuad used to say that a son from his own line and the lines of Khedive Ismail, Ibrahim Pasha, and Muhammad Ali Pasha would be a great king.

While King Fuad I was sitting with me in the

Queen Nazli said King Fuad was certain the boy would be a symbol of stability for the country

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The Queen asked King Fuad how he knew she would have a boy

The doctors couldn't anesthetize him before removing the bullet

As I lay in my bed, despairing of life, I saw a white nightingale perched on the windowpane

Onassis told the cake vendor, "If I win, you can keep all the cash and cheques in my pockets. If I lose, you must give me all your cakes."

The vendor said, "I am a poor man... If I lose, I won't be able to feed my family today."

palace, a white bulbul came and perched on the windowpane. The king turned to me and said that I would give birth to a son if this bulbul sang three times. Indeed, the bulbul sang three times, and King Fuad rejoiced, his eyes shining with happiness.

I then asked King Fuad how he knew she would have a boy, and he replied, 'It was when Prince Ahmed Seif El-Din accidentally shot me, severely wounding me. The doctors couldn't anesthetize me before removing the bullet, so they operated while I was awake. The surgery was painful and dangerous. Even my mother, may God have mercy on her, fainted from the horror of it.

I lay in my bed, despairing of life. Everything around me reminded me of death - my mother's pale face, the doctors' anxious expressions, and the nurse's impassive look. I saw a white nightingale perched on the windowpane and said to myself, 'If it sings three times, I will survive.' I vowed that if I survived, I would dedicate my life to my country. Indeed, the nightingale sang three times, and I survived. I know that I owe every hour of my life to my country.'

On Wednesday, February 11, 1920, King Fuad was in a room next to mine. He paced anxiously until God blessed us with Farouk. Madame Robert rushed to inform King Fuad in Arabic, 'Congratulations, a boy... a boy!'

At that moment, the King sat down on the nearest chair, his eyes brimming with tears. He came to my room, took the newborn Farouk in his arms, kissed him, and said, 'Thank you, Lord. He will be a great king.' And then, above my window, I saw a white nightingale, and it sang three times."

## Onassis and the cake vendor

A poor cake vendor approached the famous Greek millionaire Onassis, nicknamed the "King of Tankers" in reference to his oil tankers.

Onassis asked to buy some cakes, then took out a coin, tossed it, and told the vendor, "If I win, you can keep all the cash and cheques in my pockets. If I lose, you must give me all your cakes."

The vendor replied, "Sir, I am a poor man. If I lose my cakes, I won't be able to feed my family today."

Onassis turned his back on the vendor and said, "You were born a cake vendor, and you will die a cake vendor. If you don't take risks, you will never learn how to do business."

Now, Iran must put the position of Supreme Leader up for public bidding, after many have fled from the post and others have been killed. The world has changed, and we do not know where it is headed. Let us leave judgment to God.



Ten million Egyptians work in the Gulf states. We do not doubt their loyalty, their dedication to their work, or their integrity. Disagreement does not have to ruin a friendship.



Friendship is meaningless without a friend.

Reading is meaningless without understanding.

Words are meaningless without meaning.

A smile is meaningless without pure intentions.

Friendship is meaningless without keeping secrets.

Morality is meaningless without modesty.

Conscience is meaningless without honor.

Love is meaningless without care.

A promise is meaningless without loyalty.



Iran's stubbornness is dangerous. The Persians are known for procrastination and for not making quick decisions. Stubbornness is deeply ingrained in their culture.



Farwaniya Governor photo  
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with the visiting officials.

## Focus on public hygiene and roads management

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received on Wednesday morning the Deputy Director General for Municipal Affairs of Farwaniya and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorates Eng. Nawaf Al-Kandari, Director of Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy Department at Farwaniya Municipality Mohammed Al-Jab'a, and the Rapporteur of the Bachelors Committee and member of the Central Operations Team for Farwaniya and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorates Eng. Mohammed Al-Jalawi.

According to a press release, several service and field-related issues were discussed during the meeting, particularly those concerning public hygiene and road occupancy, as well as mechanisms to enhance oversight and improve performance efficiency.

The governor emphasized the importance of integrated efforts among the relevant agencies, stressing the need to intensify fieldwork and respond promptly to address any issues.

At the end of the meeting, the attendees expressed their gratitude to the governor for his support and continued commitment to following up on various service-related matters, affirming their dedication to achieving the desired goals.

## PAAET workshop bid to improve exams quality

Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) organized a remote training workshop for faculty members to improve the quality of online exams.

The workshop, conducted through the Microsoft Teams and Moodle platforms, is in line with the commitment of PAAET to develop its digital education system and keep pace with the latest global practices in e-assessment.

The workshop focused on the mechanisms for preparing online exams according to quality standards and ensuring accurate measurement of student learning outcomes. It also reviewed the best practices for designing and diversifying question banks to suit the nature of subjects, as well as addressed the technical aspects of managing exams on educational platforms.

The participants were trained on creating exams, adjusting their settings, scheduling them, monitoring student performance, and overcoming technical challenges that may arise during the exam.

During the workshop, PAAET emphasized the importance of adhering to academic integrity standards and utilizing digital tools to eliminate cheating and ensure the credibility of results. It added that developing the skills of faculty members in this field is vital for guaranteeing the success of the e-learning system.

# Quick solution of terror cases

Top judges to tackle anti-State crimes

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Vice President of the Court of First Instance Judge Khaled Al-Othman on Tuesday issued Decision No. 20/2026 regarding the establishment of a specialized criminal circuit to handle crimes against external and internal State security and acts of terrorism.

The decision states that the new circuit, named State Security and Acts of Terrorism Circuit No. One, will be headed by Judge Nasser Al-Bader, with Judge Omar Al-Mulaifi and Judge Abdullah Al-Faleh as members, and Court Counsel Hamad Al-Wazzan and Judge Salem Al-Zayed as alternates.

The decision defined the jurisdiction

of the new circuit as encompassing all felonies and misdemeanors related to internal and external State security crimes, in addition to terrorist acts stipulated in Law No. 31/1979 amending the Penal Code and Decree-Law No. 47/2026 concerning combating terrorism crimes, including all jurisdictions stipulated in Decree-Law No. 51/2026.

The decision stipulated the immediate transfer of all cases pending before the Court of First Instance that fall within the new circuit's jurisdiction to this new circuit, effective from the date of its issuance.

The director of the Court of First Instance's clerical department is tasked with taking the necessary measures for its implementation.

Al-Othman affirmed that forming this circuit improves judicial procedures to ensure the swift adjudication of sensitive cases related to State security and terrorist acts, thereby, achieving the highest levels of due diligence and legal oversight.

## Huge number gave up weapons

No intention to extend deadline for surrendering arms: official

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Director of the Public Relations and Security Media Department at the Ministry of Interior Colonel Othman Al-Mansouri confirmed the end of the exceptional grace period for surrendering unlicensed weapons and ammunition, which was granted last week.



Al Mansouri

In a televised interview, Al-Mansouri announced that there is no plan to extend the grace period or open a new window for violators. He said the grace period -- from March 23 to April 1 -- was a special humanitarian gesture for citizens, who were

given the opportunity to voluntarily surrender unlicensed weapons in order to avoid legal repercussions and support efforts to maintain national security and safety, especially since the current circumstances necessitate the highest level of vigilance.

He pointed out that Law No. 6/2015 on the collection of unlicensed weapons and ammunition has been in effect for several years, indicating the initiative was a chance to benefit from the amnesty before legal action is taken against violators.

He praised the positive response to the initiative, stressing that the high turnout in surrendering unlicensed weapons and ammunition proved the high level of awareness, security consciousness and national responsibility within the community, given its role in reducing risks and enhancing stability. He warned that the end of the deadline signals the start of the strict enforcement of the law.

## 35 shop owners issued citations

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ministry of Commerce and Industry conducted Tuesday an inspection campaign at several shops, uncovering 35 violations.

In a statement to KUNA, the ministry said that the emergency teams in Asimah and Hawalli governorates carried out the campaign, which found violations including failing to use Arabic on invoices and offering promotional campaigns without prior approval.

Other violations included not specifying

the type of meat used on menus and others, the statement noted.

The ministry affirmed that it would continue its efforts to enhance market oversight and protect consumer rights by making sure of commitment to approved laws and regulations, the statement noted.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait Municipality continues its intensified efforts to develop the urban landscape and protect the environment, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

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# Kuwait songs spark debate over quality and patriotism

Ministry sets strict frameworks for media content

By Fahel Al-Anzi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1:** With the start of the Iranian aggression against Kuwait and the continuation of attacks on the land of love and peace, artists rushed to present and record patriotic songs.

Over the past few weeks, there have been many initiatives, including individual efforts by some artists, and projects undertaken by production companies, TV channels, and even digital platforms.

Despite the absolute belief in the good intentions of those behind these projects, some works lacked the quality needed to properly handle national songs.

This led to some art works facing harsh criticism due to the mediocrity of their content in terms of lyrics, melodies, and execution, as was the case with the song "My Heartbeat is Kuwaiti" performed by artists Zahra Al-Kharji, Mohammed Akbar, and Jana.

The song's producers, especially the singer Mohammed Akbar, faced days of intense criticism and online bullying on social media, with the work being described as lacking meaningful content and value.

This prompted Mohammed Akbar to respond to criticisms that targeted his appearance. The song "My Heartbeat is Kuwaiti" sparked outrage among those who had contributed to past and present national songs, leading the Ministry of Information to issue an official statement affirming its vigilance in monitoring all works presented publicly.

The ministry stated that it encourages initiatives motivated by patriotism, but emphasized that when it comes to national works and songs, measures must be taken to ensure the quality of content.

## Diverse Works

Over the past few weeks, several artists, including Sanaa Al-Kharraz, Abdulaziz Al-Muslim, Tariq Al-Ali, Hassan Al-Balam, Abdullah Bahman, Bader Al-Shuaibi, Mishari Al-Awadhi, Zahra Al-Kharji, Mubarak Al-Mana, and others, have released solo or collaborative songs, along with short videos praising and encouraging those on the front lines.

## Strict frameworks for media content

To prevent valuable artistic works from being overshadowed by substandard ones, the Ministry of Information issued a decision to act as the expert and reliable censor. The decision aims to protect recently released songs and art works in terms of lyrics, melodies, and execution, using artificial intelligence technology effectively.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Information affirmed that all media content broadcast or published through its official television and radio channels and approved digital platforms is subject to strict professional and procedural frameworks that ensure quality and alignment with national principles and the state's media policy.

It said this reflects its national responsibility to safeguard identity and promote positive values in society.

The ministry also commended individual and institutional initiatives aimed at producing national media that strengthens the spirit of belonging while

fully adhering to professional and technical standards.

It stressed the necessity of prior coordination with it when producing, implementing, or publishing any national media product to ensure integrated efforts, a unified media message, and compliance with approved regulations. This coordination is essential to benefit from institutional support and guidance within the established frameworks.

The ministry emphasized that these regulations are part of its commitment to organizing and developing the media and artistic field, raising the quality of media content, and enhancing its positive impact.

Meanwhile, the prominent songs released in recent weeks include:

■ "This Homeland Is Mine" - Lyrics and music by Abdulaziz Al-Abkal, performed by Nabil Shuaib.

■ "May God Protect You, Kuwait" - Lyrics by Nayef Al-Rashidi, music by Fahad Al-Nasser, performed by Omar.

■ "The Kuwaiti's Heart Is (as strong as) Iron" - Lyrics and music by Fahad Jamal, performed by Abdullah Bahman.

■ "Our Homeland" - Lyrics and music by Abdullah Al-Omani, performed by Dr. Tariq Al-Ali.

■ "Kuwait Above All" (Operetta) - Lyrics by Mohammed Al-Shuraida, music by Bader Al-Shuaibi, featuring Khalid Mudhaffar.

■ "Rest Easy, Don't Be Humiliated" - Lyrics by Abdullah Shabkhouh, music and performance by Mishari Al-Awadhi.

■ "Kuwait Remains Forever" - Lyrics and music by Yousef Al-Omani, sung by Mohammed Al-Balushi, Yousef Al-Omani, Bader Nouri, and Saud Al-Fayez, with the poem recited by Khaled Amin.

## Defense ministry requests cleared

Arifjan Motor Sports City changes, cable routes allocations approved

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1:** The Technical Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Munira Al-Amir, held its 25th meeting on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the committee approved the following:

■ Request of the Amiri Diwan to amend the decision of the council on the allocation of the site designated for the Ku-



Al-Amir

wait Motor Sports City project in Arifjan. The amendment is related to the establishment, completion, maintenance and operation of the project in accordance with Cabinet Resolution No. 907/2019.

■ Requests of the Ministry of Public Works including the allocation of cable routes in several areas -- Dhali' Al-Zunaif, East Ahmadi, South Sabahiyah and Shuaiba -- for the sewage treatment plants and reservoirs, as well as additional routes in Ali Sabah Al-Salem and Arifjan to link primary and secondary pumping stations with reservoirs.

■ Request of the Ministry of Defense listed on the agenda.

The committee was also briefed on a letter from the Ministry of Interior regarding an invitation to attend the 21st meeting of the committee during its fourth session.

## Energy-saving LEDs enter next phase

**MEWRE returns KD5.7m KOC water supply contract to SAB**

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1:** The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy returned the contract, valued at KD5.775 million, for the operation and supply of seawater from the Subiya power generation and water desalination plant to the Kuwait Oil Company's water treatment plant in Subiya to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) on Tuesday for review, auditing and approval before signing it.

The ministry submitted the contract to SAB on Dec 22, 2025 for review and auditing, but the bureau returned the documents to the ministry on Jan 15.

This contract is within the framework of cooperation between the ministry and its oil counterpart.

As per the contract, the Ministry of Elec-

tricity, Water and Renewable Energy will supply water for the operations of KOC, as drilling and exploration for oil and gas require large quantities of water for injection into oil wells.

On the other hand, the ministry is currently finalizing procedures for implementing the tender to supply, install and replace energy-saving LED lights in the governorates (Phase Two).

It is coordinating with the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to issue the tender to specialized companies.

This aligns with the plan to completely replace the lighting network with an energy-saving LED system, achieving 50 to 60 percent efficiency increase and being environmentally friendly, in addition to expanding the installation of decorative poles throughout the country.

## IFAC lauds global standards alignment

**Kuwait Accountants Association unveils new CPE program guide**

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1:** The Kuwait Association of Accountants and Auditors has finalized its Continuing Professional Education (CPE) program guide, as per the professional standards and criteria.

This step is a manifestation of the commitment of the association to advance the profession and its practitioners, as well as strengthen cooperation with the stakeholders in professional development, in accordance with Law No. 103/2019, which regulates the auditing profession.

Sabah Mubarak Al-Jalawi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the association, announced that the association received a letter of thanks and appreciation from the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC).

In a press statement, Al-Jalawi revealed that IFAC praised the association's efforts in developing the CPE guide, affirming its alignment with international accounting standards and its role in enhancing the performance of auditors.

He underscored the importance of the



Al-Jalawi

guide in improving the business environment and strengthening the professional competence of auditors through adherence to its provisions. He also cited its role in promoting constructive and effective cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in various sectors.

He added that the program is a mandatory training system designed to develop the skills of accountants and auditors, keep pace with professional and legislative developments, and improve the quality of professional performance in the market.

He said the program operates within a comprehensive professional framework that obligates practitioners to enroll in accordance with applicable laws.

Meanwhile, Dr. Fahad Mutlaq Al-Jafour, Board Member, Treasurer and Head of the Guide Preparation Team, stated that IFAC's commendation of the guide is significant, as it incorporates measures reflecting a high level of professionalism and reinforces the commitment of the association to activate the role of practitioners within the business environment in line with regional and international developments in the profession.

He added that the guide activates the role of the association in developing the professional and intellectual standards of accountants in Kuwait, stressing that it was prepared in accordance with international professional standards. He said this includes provisions related to the calculation of training hours, mechanisms for such calculations, registration process and exceptions.

## Robotics speed prescriptions, cut errors

**Kuwait hospitals enhance patient safety with pharmacy automation**

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1:** In recent years, some healthcare facilities in the country have witnessed a significant advancement in the preparation and dispensing of medications through the introduction of advanced automated systems based on robotics and intelligent software, reports Al-Rai daily.

These automated systems have not only accelerated operational processes but have also directly contributed to raising the level of accuracy and reduced the likelihood of errors, particularly in medication dispensing. This transformation represents a strategic step toward achieving the highest standards of medication safety, especially given the growing number of patients and the increasing complexity of medical conditions.

Amid rapidly evolving regional challenges and the resulting pressures on healthcare systems, the importance of these proactive measures to adopt the latest technologies has become increasingly clear. They ensure the continued provision of medical services with high efficiency and reliability, particularly in pharmaceutical supply management.

Automation devices are among the most prominent modern technologies that have contributed to improving healthcare quality. These devices rely on programmed systems capable of performing tasks automatically according to precise standards, thus reducing the need for human intervention and minimizing potential errors. Their significance is particularly evident in hospital pharmacies, where storage, preparation, and dispensing processes require high levels of accuracy and organization.

In this context, Fatima Al-Khader, Head of the Pharmacy Department at Amiri Hospital, told Kuwait TV that modern automation devices have significantly improved pharmaceutical services for patients.

She said, "The robotic device in use can handle approximately 25,000 medi-

cine boxes, with each box identified by its unique barcode.

The 'pharmacy robot' is among the most prominent automation applications in this field, representing a major advancement in pharmaceutical operations. It organizes medications efficiently and links them to an integrated electronic system that automatically selects the correct medicine upon prescription entry and prepares it within seconds, thus improving performance efficiency and saving time.

Meanwhile, pharmacist Noura Jamal told Kuwait TV that outpatient clinics are equipped with advanced automated dispensing machines.

She explained that these machines can handle more than 350 types of medication and over 25,000 medicine boxes. This technology accelerates the prescription preparation process, with dispensing times ranging from 30 seconds to one minute, while also generating medication labels containing all the information patients need to use their medications correctly.

These devices play a vital role in improving pharmaceutical inventory management. Accurate tracking systems allow continuous monitoring of available stock and provide alerts when quantities are low or medications are approaching expiration. This helps reduce waste and ensures the timely availability of essential medications, particularly during emergencies.

Automation also reduces the workload on medical staff by minimizing routine tasks, allowing pharmacists to focus on more critical duties, such as providing medication consultations, thereby enhancing the quality of healthcare. Automation is not limited to pharmacies, but it also extends to internal hospital transport systems, most notably pneumatic tube systems, which quickly transfer medications and samples between departments using specialized capsules.

# PAAET issues guidelines for online exams

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 1:** The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) has adopted regulations and guidelines for the online exams of its students.

This is part of its commitment to guarantee the efficient operation of the educational process and

promote academic integrity in the digital learning environment.

In its awareness guidelines for students, PAAET underscored the importance of confirming the exact exam date and duration with the course instructor. This allows for advance preparation and helps avoid issues that might hinder student performance during the exam.

PAAET also stressed the need to choose a suit-

able location that provides privacy and silence, which is conducive for concentration and to achieve the best results.

Students are advised to use appropriate devices and a stable internet connection to ensure smooth access to the exam, in addition to making sure that their devices are charged or connected to a power source throughout the exam period to be ready for unexpected power outages.



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## LOCAL

## Kuwait, Japan FMs discuss rising Iran-linked tensions

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on Wednesday a phone call from Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

During the call, the two sides discussed recent developments amid rising military escalation in the region, due to Iran's aggression against countries of the region, and the serious repercussions on regional and international security and stability.

Geneva talks mobilize global support

## Kuwait affirms Gulf efforts to halt Iranian attacks: Al Hayen

GENEVA, April 1, (KUNA): Kuwait stressed Tuesday that the Gulf Group in Geneva would continue its intensive efforts to stop Iran's strikes to mobilize international support so as to hold those responsible for these violations accountable.

Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva Ambassador Nasser Al Hayen made the statement to KUNA following the conclusion of the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council.

The session witnessed a huge debate about Iranian attacks especially during the urgent session on Iran's strikes against neighboring countries and the Council's adoption of a resolution condemning these actions.

Ambassador Al Hayen stressed that Iran's continued hostile behavior reflects "premeditated intentions to spread chaos destabilize the region and undermine the foundations of security and development for its peoples," warning of catastrophic repercussions that could extend beyond the region.

He also commended the wisdom of the political leadership in the State of Kuwait and in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, praising their balanced approach based on restraint prioritizing reason and calling for de-escalation and political solutions.

Al Hayen cautioned that the persistence of this aggressive approach of Iran constitutes a grave disregard for the international community and a blatant violation of all international laws and conventions.

He added that the deliberate targeting of civilians and vital infrastructure embodies a systematic, aggressive policy and exposes a strategy based on terror in flagrant violation of the most basic rules of international humanitarian law and human rights principles.

He emphasized that the ongoing situation represents an existential threat to regional and international peace and described Iran's actions as a system-



KUNA photo

Ambassador Nasser Al Hayen, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva.

atic form of economic hostility that extends beyond targeting countries in the region to undermining global food supply chains.

Al Hayen referred to recent United Nations reports warning of an additional 45 million people facing hunger by the end of June if tensions in Middle East continue and highlighted the impact of potential disruptions in the Strait of (Hormuz) on countries already facing severe humanitarian crises such as Gaza, Somalia and Sudan.

During the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council unanimously adopted a resolution submitted by the Gulf and Arab groups and Jordan strongly condemning the Iranian attacks targeting several countries in the region calling for an immediate and unconditional cessation of these acts and demanding full and prompt compensation for all those affected.

The resolution affirmed that the attacks targeting Kuwait and other neighbouring countries constitute a flagrant violation of international law and underscored the inherent right of these states to self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter.

## Cabinet convenes amid diplomatic drive to counter Iranian aggression

Ministers stress sovereignty, reparations and int'l accountability

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet convened its weekly meeting on Tuesday mainly to discuss efforts and contacts to address the impacts of the ongoing regional military escalation.

At the onset of its customary meeting, the Cabinet was briefed on the recent phone call received by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah from Latvian President Edgars Rinkevics, who strongly condemned the blatant Iranian attacks on Kuwaiti territory as a blatant violation of sovereignty and international law.

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

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

The Cabinet was then apprised of the contact received by His Highness the Crown Prince from Bahraini Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, who expressed Bahrain's strong condemnation and denunciation of the brutal Iranian aggressions that targeted Kuwait's territories and wounded 10 army personnel.

Sheikh Salman also affirmed the Kingdom of Bahrain's full solidarity with the State of Kuwait and its support for all measures taken to preserve its sovereignty, security, stability, and its territorial integrity.

He further wished a speedy recovery to the injured and continued security and prosperity for the State of Kuwait, both its leadership and its people.

For his part, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled stressed the need to maintain shared security and full rejection of everything that harms Bahrain during security tensions in the region.

His Highness the Crown Prince considered that the aggression against the Gulf countries is an aggression against the State of Kuwait, voicing his sincere thanks for this fraternal and genuine



PM Diwan photo

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, chaired the Cabinet weekly meeting on Tuesday.

initiative, which shows deep historical relations between the two countries and their brotherly peoples.

Afterwards, the Cabinet was kept posted on the contact between His Highness the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the friendly Islamic Republic of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

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

His Highness the Crown Prince commended Pakistan's role in supporting efforts in maintaining the pillars of regional security and peace, restating Kuwait's welcome and absolute support for these efforts exerted to find a peaceful settlement that could lead to regional and international stability.

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

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

In the meantime, Minister of For-

eign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah gave a briefing on his ministry's political and diplomatic efforts to cope with the heinous Iranian aggressions on Kuwait.

In this context, the minister briefed the Cabinet on the outcomes of the recent 165th meeting of Arab foreign ministers, who reaffirmed their full condemnation of the brutal and deliberate Iranian attacks on several Arab countries, considering them an escalation and a blatant violation of the sovereignty, as well as an act that targets civilians and threatens security and stability.

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

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

The minister kept the ministers posted on the outcomes of the GCC-Russia-Jordan vide conference, which denounced the heinous Iranian attacks

on the region's countries and relevant reflections on regional and international security and stability.

He then briefed the Cabinet on the recent summoning of Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Tou-touchi for the third time since Iran launched its attacks on the Kuwaiti territory on February 28, handing him a memo of protest over the continued Iranian aggressions on Kuwait.

He also elaborated how the Foreign Ministry summoned the Charge d'Affaires of the Iraq Embassy in Kuwait, Zaid Shanshol, handing him a second official protest note over the continued attacks carried out by Iraqi armed groups targeting Kuwaiti territory.

Furthermore, the Cabinet welcomed United Nations Human Rights Council's recent resolution strongly condemning egregious Iranian attacks against Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Jordan and calling on Iran to provide full adequate effective and prompt reparations to all victims.

It commended the resolution as representing the international will to reject the heinous Iranian attacks and condemn the targeting of sovereign countries' territories as a serious violation of basic human rights and a direct threat to regional and international peace and security.

It commended the resolution's explicit condemnation of the aggression targeting civilians and vital infrastructure, which resulted in casualties and extensive material damage.

The cabinet also appreciated the international consensus calling on Iran to honor its international legal obligations, primarily respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of regional countries, immediately ceasing hostilities and guaranteeing non-recurrence.

It further underlined Iran's responsibility to compensate for the resulting damage and stressed the need for the international community to establish diligent follow-up mechanisms to ensure the implementation of this resolution, thus upholding the rule of law and the principles of the UN Charter.

Finally, the Cabinet decided to be in permanent session to follow up on the latest regional and international developments amid the rapidly evolving regional situation.

## Multi-phase plan targets 40,000 teachers under two-year rollout

## MoE advances AI integration with phased training program

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: In line with the directives of the Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei on advancing the educational process and promoting digital transformation, the Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs Eng. Hamad Al-Hamad held a comprehensive meeting with the General Directorate of Technical Guidance, Research, and Curricula to review the latest developments in the project to integrate artificial intelligence tools into education.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Education, the meeting focused on the project's implementation mechanisms according to a detailed phased plan.

The first phase involves training 54 technical supervisors and department heads as trainers of trainers. The second phase targets 3,488 educational staff members, and the third phase will include all teachers and department heads in secondary schools in all subjects, as part of the project's gradual expansion.

Training programs and their implementation mechanisms were also discussed. The launch of specialized workshops on using Google's AI-based educational tools, including NotebookLM, Google Videos, and Gemini, was reviewed, along with plans to expand remote training in certain phases to ensure flexible implementation and broad participation.

The meeting also discussed organizing training programs according to a clear mechanism and timetable for ensuring equitable access to training opportunities. Emphasis was placed on the importance of continuous monitoring to guarantee quality implementation and achieve a sustainable educational impact.

The ministry explained that the project is part of a strategic cooperation agree-



MoE photo

Officials and education specialists meet to review Kuwait's phased plan to integrate artificial intelligence tools into classrooms and train thousands of educators under a nationwide digital transformation initiative.

ment with Google and aims to enhance educational practices and improve the efficiency of teaching staff by systematically and thoughtfully integrating artificial intelligence tools into the educational environment. The project will be implemented during the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 academic years, targeting the training of approximately 40,000 teaching staff in various disciplines through applied programs focused on the effective and responsible use of artificial intelligence tools and their application in classrooms to support the objectives of the educational process.

The project is being implemented under the supervision of the Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs, Engineer Hamad Al-Hamad, ensuring that the training programs align with approved curricula and integrate both technical and educational aspects in practice.

The ministry affirmed that the project aims to empower educators to effectively and responsibly use artificial intelligence tools, support the transition to modern digital learning environments, and create a culture of innovation and digital literacy, thereby contributing to the development of educators capable of meeting future demands.

The ministry concluded by explaining that the project represents a significant step forward, and reflects a commitment to global technological partnerships that support education. It contributes to building a modern educational system focused on the quality of learning and its outcomes, and to preparing a generation aware of artificial intelligence technologies and capable of using them positively in their educational journey.

## Continued from Page 1

## Kuwait airport

He stated that the firefighters extinguished the fire that broke out in the fuel tanks at the airport following a drone strike linked to the Iranian aggression, emphasizing that the damage was limited to material losses and no injuries were reported.

He added that the firefighting teams dealt with another fire incident caused by shrapnel that fell on a house.

He urged the citizens and residents to exercise caution and avoid approaching or attempting to handle fires or foreign objects resulting from falling shrapnel due to the potential risk to lives, especially since such objects may contain highly flammable or hazardous materials.

He underscored the importance of immediately reporting such incidents through the emergency hotline 112 to ensure public safety.

Moreover, in its recent session, the Cabinet expressed its strong condemnation of the Iranian attack on a service building at a power and water desalination plant, which resulted in the death of an Indian worker and caused material damage.

It also condemned the attack by Iranian cruise missiles and drones on the infrastructure of Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Shuwaikh ports.

During the session, Minister of Oil and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Petroleum Cooperation (KPC) Tareq Al-Roumi briefed the Cabinet about the attack on the Kuwaiti tanker in the United Arab Emirates.

Furthermore, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah asserted Wednesday that the Iranian attacks on Gulf Cooperation Council

(GCC) countries and some Arab states is a blatant violation of all international laws, norms and principles of good neighborliness.

In his opening speech at the 43rd session of the Arab Interior Ministers Council held via videoconference in Tunis, Sheikh Fahad Yousef pointed out that the meeting is held amid the rapid transformations and mounting challenges in the Arab region. He stressed that Arab security is indivisible and that maintaining security throughout the Arab world is a shared responsibility.

He considers the meeting an opportunity for consultation and coordination in order to reach unified decisions that serve Arab security and ensure stability for Arab peoples. He pointed out that safe residential areas and civilian facilities, including airports and infrastructure, had been targeted, resulting in casualties among innocent citizens and residents.

He stated that the current regional situation requires intensified Arab and international efforts to prevent militias and terrorist groups from acquiring drones used in terrorist operations.

He also warned that cyberspace, despite its benefits, has become a fertile ground for extremist groups to recruit new members, underscoring the need to intensify efforts to combat cyber-crime and cross-border crimes, including the establishment of specialized platforms to detect fake content and enable public reporting.

He stressed that the spread of narcotics and psychotropic substances is not less dangerous than terrorism, calling for continuous Arab cooperation to combat it, particularly due to its link to financing terrorism, militias and armed groups targeting the youths.

In related news, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial, Ad-

ministrative and Cooperative Affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr. Sayed Issa revealed that the inventory of warehouses belonging to 76 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is monitored daily, indicating that "the strategic food reserves in these warehouses are enough for six months."

Regarding the inventory of goods in cooperative societies, Issa confirmed in a statement to Kuwait TV that 13 cooperatives are currently conducting inventory operations with strict instructions to ensure no empty shelves remain during the process. He said this aims to reassure consumers, as stockpiling is unjustified given the abundance of supply.

He added that 95 shelters have been prepared in cooperation with the General Directorate of Civil Defense.

He stated that the cooperative societies provided food supplies, while charitable organizations ensured the availability of essential commodities and are ready for use when the need arises.

## Australians urged

Meanwhile, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium in Kuwait resumed its visa services on Wednesday, implementing the same visa application procedures in place prior to the suspension.

In a statement Wednesday, the embassy urged those wishing to obtain a visa to start their application online through the official VFS Global website where they can book an appointment at the visa application center to complete the remaining procedures. It added that applicants may submit their visa applications up to six months before their travel date.

## UK strengthens

deployed to assist Kuwait authorities in managing airspace, reducing risks of miscommunication between aircraft and air defense systems, and providing counter-drone training to Kuwaiti fighter pilots.

**Ongoing British Military Mission:**

The UK's long-standing military mission in Kuwait, in place for over three decades, continues to support and advise Kuwait armed forces. More than 30 British personnel are currently integrated into Kuwait's defense structure.

In addition, British defense companies are in discussions with Kuwait authorities to support future capability development.

**Call for de-escalation**  
The Ambassador reiterated his commitment to Gulf security while urging restraint. "Iran must stop its attacks on neighboring countries," the envoy said, calling for de-escalation and a return to diplomatic solutions.

"The UK's priority remains reducing tensions, restoring regional stability, and pursuing negotiations," the official added.

The British government said it will continue to review its regional posture in coordination with allies, tailoring its support based on operational needs in each country.

**Q&A with Ambassador Qudsi Rasheed**

**Question:** What does the UK's military deployment to Kuwait and the Gulf signify?

**Answer:** The UK has committed to a regional defense posture that includes Kuwait as a key partner. The deployment consists of air defense systems and fighter aircraft (notably

Typhoons) to protect strategic Gulf countries. This deployment demonstrates the UK's ongoing commitment to regional security in the face of evolving threats, particularly in the air domain. The explicit inclusion of Kuwait alongside Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the Emirates highlights the strategic importance of Kuwait in the broader defense framework.

**Q:** How is the UK-Kuwait defense agreement being implemented operationally?

**A:** The deployment is backed by formal agreements between Kuwait and the UK, which have already been executed. The operational capability includes three core aspects: deployment of counter-drone and counter-missile equipment, on-the-ground British personnel supporting Kuwaiti forces, and integration of UK defense personnel into the Kuwaiti military structure. This multi-layered approach ensures that the technology is effectively utilized and that Kuwaiti forces are supported by experienced British operators.

**Q:** What are the key capabilities of the Rapid Sentry system?

**A:** It is a "hard kill" system capable of actively destroying drones rather than simply tracking or jamming them electronically. This hard kill approach is essential in countering increasingly sophisticated drone threats that may evade passive defenses. Rapid Sentry System is a world-leading UK Counter-Uncrewed Aerial System (C-UAS) arrived in Kuwait 25-29 March, including Rapid Sentry and Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM), significantly strengthening Kuwait's counter-drone posture. ORCUS+, a fully operational C-UAS capability, which enables the detect, track, identify and defeat (DTID) of uncrewed aerial systems. ORCUS is the RAF's in-service

designation for Leonardo UK's Falcon Shield.

A recently deployed RAPID SENTRY system, a highly effective hard kill-counter drone capability designed to mitigate the threat from drones. This utilizes Thales UK's LMM.

## Yemeni, Sudanese

The circular is based on Ministerial Resolution No. 176/2025 about the executive regulations of the committee tasked to implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions issued under Chapter VII, which are related to combating terrorism and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The circular stressed the need for immediate and inclusive implementation of the listing decision, in accordance with articles 21, 22 and 23 of the executive regulations. These articles stipulate immediate asset freeze covering all funds and economic resources belonging to the two individuals, whether under their direct or indirect management, without delay or prior notification to ensure the effectiveness of the measure. All forms of financial dealings with them or with entities under their control are prohibited as well.

The ministry affirmed that the scope of the freeze extends to any funds or proceeds derived from the frozen assets in order to address the issue of financing prohibited activities.

The relevant authorities are obligated to notify the competent committee within 24 hours of implementing the freezing procedures and provide detailed statements regarding the nature of the funds and the actions taken in this regard, thus, expediting follow up and ensuring accuracy of compliance.

## INTERNATIONAL

Alabama Gov Ivey hospitalized

## Mamdani puts NYC government back on TikTok

NEW YORK, April 1, (AP): Almost three years ago, New York City joined governments across the country in banning TikTok from its phones over security concerns about the Chinese social media site.

On Tuesday, Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a bona fide social media star, took to the app to announce a reversal: "TikTok, we're back."

The city will now allow agencies to start posting again on the short-form social media site as long as departments follow a set of security precautions, according to a memo from city cybersecurity officials provided by the mayor's office.

The prohibition was established by Eric Adams, Mamdani's predecessor, in 2023 as the federal government and many U.S. states restricted the app from government-owned devices over concerns that its parent company, ByteDance, could share data with the Chinese government.

TikTok had waved off the governments' worries as unfounded. Since then it has reached an agreement to spin off its U.S. operation in a move to alleviate those concerns and avoid a wider ban in the country.

In a memo Tuesday, NYC Cyber Command, which is in charge of safe-



New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani shakes hand with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres prior to their meeting at U.N. headquarters on March 31. (AP)

guarding city systems against cyber threats, wrote that the change was about broadening the city's communications reach.

"The Mamdani administration is committed to using every tool in our toolbox to communicate with New Yorkers," NYC Cyber Command

wrote. "At a moment when people are turning to city government for information about free services, emergency situations, upcoming events, and more, we want to open up new avenues of communication with the public and help deliver the information New Yorkers need."

## Also:

**MONTGOMERY, Ala:** Alabama Gov Kay Ivey was hospitalized Tuesday after undergoing what her office described as a minor procedure to remove fluid that was pressing on her lung.

The 81-year-old Republican governor will be monitored at Baptist Medical Center South in Montgomery "in the coming days" out of an abundance of caution, Ivey spokeswoman Gina Maiola said in a statement.

The fluid was discovered after Ivey went to her doctor because she was feeling discomfort in her left side and had recently experienced some shortness of breath.

"While it was not emergent, Governor Ivey wanted to get the procedure done as soon as possible so she can quickly get back to 100% to wrap up the 2026 Regular Session," Maiola said. The legislative session is in its final days.

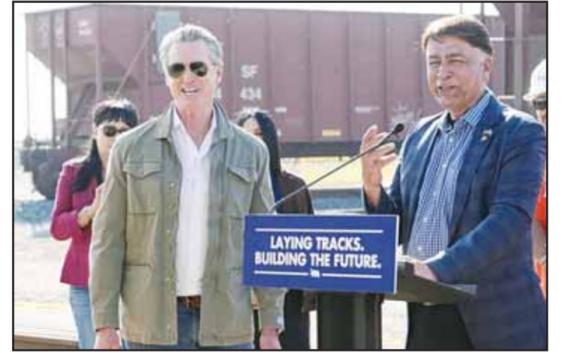
## Messy California governor's race raises Democratic fears of potential loss

LOS ANGELES, April 1, (AP): Democrats have run California for years, but in a nationally critical election the party is being confronted by the limits of its own power: the race for governor is out of control.

Barely a month before the start of mail-in voting, Democratic leaders are openly dreading the possible loss of a statewide election for the first time in two decades. As candidates jockey in a crowded field, the contest has degenerated into finger-pointing over debate eligibility, identity politics and 2025 ballot counting, issues distant from voters struggling with the soaring cost of gas and groceries.

"Squabbles about debates or other inside baseball politics are likely under the radar for most voters and seem almost absurd, given what's facing us," Kim Nader, director of the Project for an Informed Electorate at California State University, Sacramento, said in an email.

Candidates agree that a large number of voters remain undecided on the question of who should take charge of the nation's most popu-



High-Speed Rail Authority CEO Ian Choudri, (right), speaks during a news conference accompanied by California Gov Gavin Newsom, (left), at the California High-Speed Rail Authority 150-acre Southern Railhead site in the Wasco/Shafter area as the first step in bringing in materials, starting track installation between Merced and Bakersfield, in Wasco, Calif on Feb 3. (AP)

lous state that, by itself, represents the world's fourth-largest economy. There are more than 50 candidates on the ballot - including eight established Democrats and two leading Republicans.

For the first time in a generation the governor's contest is being defined by uncertainty, not inevitability - former Gov. Jerry Brown and outgoing Gov. Gavin Newsom coasted through their elections.

Some conservatives describe war as a betrayal

## Vance, Rubio's differing postures on Iran war highlight challenges ahead of '28 election

WASHINGTON, April 1, (AP): As President Donald Trump assembled his Cabinet last week, he asked Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Vice President JD Vance to give an update on the Iran war.

Rubio, known for his hawkish views, gave an impassioned defense of the war, calling it "a favor" to the United States and the world.

Vance, who has long pushed for restraint in US military intervention overseas, was more sedate. He said that the US now has "options" it didn't have a year ago and that it is important Iran does not get a nuclear weapon - before redirecting his remarks toward wishing the troops a happy Easter.

The exchange was a distillation of their diverging postures toward the war that their boss has launched in Iran. And it comes as some would-be Republican presidential candidates begin quietly courting officials in key states like New Hampshire in the early stages of the GOP's next nomination fight.

With Vance and Rubio seen as the party's strongest potential candidates in a 2028 primary, the two have to balance their roles in the Trump administration with their future political plans.

"It's very obvious from the way that Rubio talks about Iran and the way that Vance talks about Iran that they are of different casts of mind," said Curt Mills, the executive director of "The American Conservative" magazine and a vocal critic of the war. The Cabinet meeting episode was telling,

he said, because it seemed as though Vance, discussing Easter, was "literally trying to talk about anything else other than the war."

Vance's office declined to comment. The State Department declined to comment but pointed to Rubio's remarks last year during a Fox News Channel interview where he said he hopes Vance intends to run for president and wouldn't rule out anything for himself.

It's too soon to forecast how Republican voters might feel about the war next spring, when the 2028 contest is expected to begin in earnest, but the risks for both Vance and Rubio are acute. Rubio's full-throated support for the war could come back to haunt him depending on how the conflict develops. Vance, meanwhile, would risk accusations of disloyalty if he were to stray too far from Trump, but struggles to square an appearance of support for the war with his past comments.

Vance, who served in the Iraq war, has said that Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon, but he's long been skeptical of foreign military interventions.

Trump seemed to allude that Vance may have held onto that position in private discussions about Iran, telling reporters that Vance was "philosophically a little bit different than me" at the outset of the conflict.

"I think he was maybe less enthusiastic about going, but he was quite enthusiastic," Trump said.

Though Vance has been careful in how he speaks about the war, what he's not saying has been conspicuous. On



US Vice President JD Vance, (left), and Secretary of State Marco Rubio attend a meeting in the Oval Office at the White House on March 3, in Washington. (AP)

a March 13 trip to North Carolina, he was twice asked by reporters if he had concerns about the conflict. Each time, he said it was important that Trump could have conversations with advisers "without his team then running their mouths to the American media."

A few days later at the White House, when Vance was again asked if he had concerns, he accused the reporter of "trying to drive a wedge between members of the administration, between me and the president."

For Rubio, long before he became the country's chief diplomat, he voiced

support for muscular foreign policy and American intervention abroad.

Days into the war, he told reporters that it was "a wise decision" for Trump to launch the operation, that there "absolutely was an imminent threat" from Iran and that the operation "needed to happen."

The apparent split between Rubio and Vance on the Iran war is emblematic of the divide starting to cleave within the Republican Party. A recent survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found some divisions within

the GOP on Iran, with about half of Republicans saying the US military action has been "about right." Relatively few Republicans, about 2 in 10, say military action has not gone far enough, while about one-quarter say it's gone too far.

While some conservatives have described the war as a betrayal, many other Republicans have cheered on the president's actions.

Alice Swanson, a 62-year-old who attended Vance's event in North Carolina, said she wants Vance and Rubio to run together in 2028 but favors the vice president.

"I think he fully believes and supports exactly what his convictions are," Swanson said.

Swanson acknowledged, nonetheless, that Vance has been an outspoken opponent of interventionist policy but has been quieter on the subject since the war. "I can see both sides," Swanson said after expressing full support for Trump's decisions.

Tracy Brill, a 62-year-old from Rocky Mount, spoke highly of Rubio, but declared, "I love JD Vance."

She made it clear she sides with the president, calling the course he's taken "spot on." But she defended the vice president if he seems at odds with his past statements, noting politicians do it frequently. "They've all changed their positions at one point or another," she said.

However, Joe Ropar, attending the Conservative Political Action Conference last week, said Rubio's unequivocal support for the Iran war helped

crystallize his preference for the secretary of state for 2028.

"I'm not looking at JD Vance for president, and it's for stuff like that," said Ropar, a 72-year-old retired military contractor from McKinney, Texas. "I don't 100% trust him."

Benjamin Williams, of Austin, Texas, said at CPAC that both Trump and Vance are "tied to this war." The 25-year-old marketing specialist for Young Americans for Liberty is looking elsewhere for a candidate.

Whether the war becomes a political problem for Vance and Rubio depends on who ultimately enters the GOP's next presidential primary.

While Vance and Rubio are currently considered the overwhelming front-runners, former New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu expects a half dozen high-profile Republicans to enter the contest.

Sununu and former RNC Committeewoman Juliana Bergeron told The Associated Press that multiple Republican presidential prospects have reached out to them in recent weeks to discuss the political landscape in the state that traditionally hosts the opening presidential primary; they declined to name them.

Republican strategist Jim Merrill, a top New Hampshire adviser for Rubio's 2016 presidential bid, predicted that Iran would become a flashpoint in 2028 - just as the Iraq war was for Democrats in 2004 and 2008.

"If for some reason things don't go as anticipated, there will be contrasts drawn," he said.

## Pope Leo XIV urges end to US-Israel war on Iran

VATICAN CITY, April 1, (AP): Pope Leo XIV expressed hope that the US-Israel war on Iran could be finished before Easter in remarks to reporters as he left the papal retreat at Castel Gandolfo outside of Rome on Tuesday.

"I'm told that President Trump has recently stated that he would like to end the war," the US-born pope said. "I hope that he's looking for an off-ramp."

"Hopefully he's looking for a way to decrease the amount of violence, of bombing, which would be a significant contribution to removing the hatred that's being created, that's increasing constantly in the Middle East and elsewhere."

Leo called on all world leaders to return to dialogue and look for "ways to reduce the amount of violence," so that "peace, especially at Easter, might reign in our hearts."

Leo's remarks came during Holy Week, the most sacred period of the year for Christians.

"It should be the holiest time of the year. It is a time of peace, a time of reflection. But as we all know, again, in the world, in many places we are seeing so much suffering, so many deaths, even innocent children," Leo said. "We constantly make the call for peace, but unfortunately, many people want to promote hatred, violence, war."

Leaders on all sides of the Iran war have used religion to justify their actions. US officials, especially Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, have invoked their Christian faith to cast the war as a Christian nation trying to vanquish its foes with military might.



Pope Leo XIV arrives for his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at The Vatican on April 1. (AP)

## Russian military plane crash in Crimea kills 29

MOSCOW, April 1, (Agencies): A Russian military plane crash in annexed Crimea has killed six crew and 23 passengers, Russian news agencies reported in the early hours of Wednesday, citing the Defense Ministry.

The An-26 military transport plane was carrying out a scheduled flight over the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014, the reports said. The military lost contact with the plane around 6 p.m. on Tuesday.

The Soviet-designed military transport turboprop aircraft crashed into a cliff, sources at the scene told state news agencies Tass and RIA Novosti.

Russia's Investigative Committee said a total of seven crew members and 23 passengers were on board. It wasn't immediately clear from official statements if one crew member has survived.

The Investigative Committee said it has launched a criminal probe in connection with flight regulations and a search is underway in a mountainous forested area in the Bakhchisarai district.

The Interfax news agency cited the Defense Ministry as saying a suspected technical malfunction may have caused the crash and that there was no "damaging interference" with the aircraft.



An AN-26 is seen at a base in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam on March 9, 2014. (AP)

Accidents involving Russian military planes have been frequent since the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine.

In December, an An-22 military transport plane crashed in Russia's Ivanovo region, killing seven crew. In October, a MiG-31 fighter jet crashed in the Lipetsk region, while a Tu-22M3 bomber crashed in the Siberian region of Irkutsk in April 2025.

In October 2022, a Su-34 bomber crashed into a residential area of Yeysk, a Russian city on the Azov sea, sparking a massive fire and killing 15 people.

## Also:

**MOSCOW:** Russia does not accept a temporary truce in the conflict in Ukraine and instead calls for lasting peace, Kremlin spokesperson **Dmitry Peskov** said Tuesday.

In response to Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelensky's** proposal for an Easter ceasefire on Monday, Peskov said that Zelensky's proposal did not constitute a clear initiative, noting that Zelensky should immediately pursue a durable peace settlement rather than a ceasefire, as the price of peace for Ukraine will only grow over time.

'Go get your own oil!'

## Trump slams European allies amidst Iran conflict

WASHINGTON, April 1, (AP): President Donald Trump entered his war of choice against Iran without consulting global allies, but as he weighs an exit from the conflict, he is making it clear that he is expecting the world to help him fix the unintended damage that it has caused.

Trump is taking an increasingly annoyed tone toward Europe's lack of support for the US-Israeli war effort. He also is giving short shrift to the fact that his decision contributed to disrupting the flow of oil to global markets through the crucial Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has managed to largely choke off even as Trump insists that Iran has been "decimated."

The president started his Tuesday by fuming on social media at two of America's closest allies - France and Britain - while calling on the world to "Go get your own oil!" and "start learning how to fight for yourself."

"All of those countries that can't get jet fuel because of the Strait of Hormuz, like the United Kingdom, which refused to get involved in the decapitation of Iran, I have a suggestion for you: Number 1, buy from the US, we have plenty, and Number 2, build up some delayed courage, go to the Strait, and just TAKE IT," Trump



US President Donald Trump answers questions from reporters after signing an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House on March 31 in Washington. (AP)

posted.

Minutes later, he went after France, claiming the country was "very unhelpful" as it "wouldn't let planes headed to Israel, loaded up with military supplies, fly over French territory."

As Trump has ratcheted up his criticism, particularly against NATO allies,

for not joining the US and Israel in the war and being slow to respond to its consequences, top members of his administration have followed suit. The dynamic is creating uncertainty and concern over the future of the alliance, whose value Trump has already called into question.

## North America

**Ex-Canadian politician Lewis dies:** Stephen Lewis, Canada's former ambassador to the United Nations and a lifelong social activist and former politician, has died. He was 88.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation announced his death on Tuesday. He had been diagnosed with stomach cancer eight years ago.

Lewis held multiple posts with the UN after his four-year stint as Canada's ambassador, including as a special adviser to then secretary-general Kofi Annan.

He is the father of Avi Lewis, who was elected leader of Canada's leftist federal New Democrat Party on Sunday. Lewis spent a lifetime fighting for causes close to his heart - including human rights, equality for women and the plight of African families decimated by AIDS. His weapons of choice were words.

"Stephen spent the last eight years of his life battling cancer with the same indomitable energy he brought to his lifelong work: the unending struggle for justice and dignity for every human life," his family said in a statement released shortly after his death. (AP)



Lewis

**Captain charged in boat crash:** A tugboat captain has

been charged in a deadly Miami collision that killed three girls from a sailing camp, federal prosecutors said Tuesday.

Yusiel Lopez Insua, 46, of Miami, faces a charge of seaman's manslaughter in the July collision, according to a statement from U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida.

Insua didn't have a clear view as the tugboat pushed a barge full of construction debris in Biscayne Bay, according to the office. There was also no one assigned as lookout as it sailed through the body of water sandwiched between Miami and Miami Beach, the office said.

The sailboat was carrying a counselor and five girls when it stalled in the barge's path, and Insua didn't see it before the collision, according to the statement. The girls were ages 7 to 13, while the counselor was 19, according to the US Coast Guard. The counselor and two girls were dragged under the barge, but were able to escape. The other three became trapped in the wreckage and drowned, according to the office. (AP)

**F-35 fighter jet crashes in Nevada:** A US F-35 fighter jet crashed north of Las Vegas in the western US state of Nevada on Tuesday, with the pilot ejecting safely, local media reported, citing military officials.

The incident occurred about 40 kilometers northeast of Indian Springs, within controlled airspace and the restricted federal property of the Nevada Test and Training Range, according to Nellis Air Force Base's media operations, as cited by local media KSNV News 3. (Xinhua)

The pilot sustained minor injuries and received treatment at the scene. (Xinhua)

## Mine collapse kills 9 workers

## Pakistan and Afghan Taliban resume talks in China as Beijing seeks ceasefire

ISLAMABAD, April 1, (Agencies): Pakistan and Afghanistan's Taliban governments have resumed talks in China, which is mediating between the two sides to broker a durable ceasefire after more than a month of fighting, two Pakistani officials said Wednesday.

A third person who is in a position to know about China's mediation efforts said the talks were aimed at ending the current fighting.

Representatives from both countries are meeting in Urumqi, in northern China, the officials told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

China has not commented.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs neither confirmed nor denied the latest development.

However, the talks in Urumqi are seen as a potential relief for millions of people in Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan, the sources in Pakistan said, adding they may last for days and that they were only the beginning of a peace process between the two.

According to the sources, the latest round of talks began after both sides accepted China's offer to mediate and the two sides will continue their talks on Thursday to end the fighting. China has, since late February, urged both sides to resume dialogue and its special envoy, Yue Xiaoyong, met his Pakistani counterpart, Mohammad Sadiq, last month after visiting Kabul.

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

Pakistan's former special envoy for Afghanistan, Asif Durrani, expressed hope that the talks, if officially confirmed, would lead to substantive progress.

"If both sides reach an agreement as a result of reported talks, the critical issue will be a verification mechanism to ensure Afghan territory is not used for attacks against Pakistan," Durrani said.

The fighting, which erupted in late February, has been the most severe between



Residents and rescue workers inspect the site of an airstrike at a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan on March 17, 2025. (AP)

Afghanistan and Pakistan in decades. Shortly after clashes began, Pakistan declared it was in "open war" with Afghanistan. The fighting has seen repeated cross-border clashes as well as airstrikes inside Afghanistan, including several in the Afghan capital Kabul.

Last month, Afghanistan said a Pakistani airstrike hit a drug-treatment center in Kabul, killing more than 400 people. The toll could not be independently confirmed. Pakistan has disputed the claim and denied targeting civilians, saying it struck an ammunition depot.

The Pakistani Information Minister Attaullah Tarar told the AP at the time that Pakistan had "only targeted terrorist infrastructure" in Kabul, not any hospital, saying: "We have just gone after the Afghan Taliban regime, their military setups, their terrorist infrastructure, and all the setups which are supporting or promoting terrorists."

Although the two sides agreed to a temporary ceasefire during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, fighting later resumed at a lower intensity compared with the heavy clashes seen in February and March, when Pakistan's air force repeatedly targeted what it said were Pakistani Taliban positions and Afghan military sites. Afghanistan has said the airstrikes hit civilian areas.

The two sides have a long history of tense relations, but the latest violence has alarmed the international community, particularly because militant groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group remain present in the region and have sought to regroup.

The latest fighting also undermined a Qatari-mediated ceasefire reached in October, which had halted earlier clashes that killed dozens of civilians, security personnel and militants. The two sides dispute casualty figures. Another recent round of talks in Saudi Arabia remained inconclusive.

## Also:

**ISLAMABAD:** Nine workers were killed and three others injured after a marble mine collapsed in Pakistan's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Tuesday, officials said.

The incident occurred in the Rustam area of Mardan district, where workers were trapped under debris when the mine caved in, a spokesperson for Rescue 1122 said.

Rescue teams recovered 12 workers from the site. Nine were dead, while the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital.

Shafi Jan, special assistant to the chief minister of the province, expressed condolences and said rescue efforts were ongoing under district authorities. Chief Minister Sohail Afridi ordered immediate medical care for the injured and directed an investigation into the incident.

## Asia

**Protests held in Japan over missiles deployment:** Demonstrations were held in Japan on Tuesday evening as citizens voiced strong opposition to the government's decision to deploy long-range missiles in the country.

Earlier on the same day, Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi told reporters that long-range missiles with counterstrike capabilities had been deployed in Kumamoto and Shizuoka prefectures, a move that has sparked domestic opposition.



Koizumi

According to Japanese media reports, the Defense Ministry stationed a ground-launched version of the upgraded Type 12 land-to-ship guided missile at Camp Kengun in Kumamoto and hyper velocity gliding projectiles for island defense at Camp Fuji in Shizuoka Prefecture.

Kyodo News described the move as Japan's first acquisition of a counterstrike capability, signaling a shift from the country's exclusively defense-oriented policy under its war-renouncing Constitution. In Tokyo, large crowds gathered outside the Defense Ministry despite heavy rain, chanting slogans such as "Stop the deployment of long-range missiles!" "Give the public a reasonable explanation!" and "No to preparations for war!" (Xinhua)

**Earthquake strikes Japan's Ibaraki:** A 5.0-magnitude earthquake struck Japan's Ibaraki Prefecture on Wednesday, with the tremors felt in central Tokyo, the country's weather agency said.

The tremor occurred at 10:06 a.m. local time at a depth of 50 km, measuring lower 5 on Japan's seismic scale of 7 in the hardest-hit areas, said the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA).

The quake's epicenter was located in southern Ibaraki Prefecture at a latitude of 36.1 degrees north and a longitude of 140.0 degrees east. (Xinhua)

**Man injured in Australia shooting:** A man has been hospitalized in a critical condition after he was shot by police in the Australian state of Queensland on Wednesday.

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) said that officers were conducting a welfare check at a property in the suburb of Arana Hills, 12 km northwest of central Brisbane, at around 12:30 p.m., when an altercation occurred involving a man armed with a knife. (Xinhua)

## Food assistance slashed for hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees trapped in Bangladesh camps

SYDNEY, April 1, (AP): Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees struggling to survive in Bangladesh's overcrowded camps will see their food assistance slashed starting on Wednesday, raising alarm throughout the increasingly desperate community.

Currently, the 1.2 million Rohingya trapped in the squalid camps receive \$12 a month per person, an amount the persecuted minority from Myanmar has long warned is barely sustainable. Most of the Rohingya in the camps fled brutal attacks by Myanmar's military in 2017 and they are legally barred from working in Bangladesh, leaving them largely reliant upon humanitarian aid to survive.

Under the United Nations' World Food Program's new tiered system, the amount each person receives will vary based on the severity of their family's needs, with around 17% of the population getting as little as \$7 per month. A third of the population that has been classified as "extremely food insecure," such as households headed by children, will continue receiving \$12.

"It is very difficult to understand how we will survive now with only \$7. Our children will suffer the most," said camp resident Mohammed Rahim, who said he and his wife were already struggling to feed their three children



Rohingya refugee women and children walk along a street in the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh on Nov 21, 2025. (AP)

before the reduction. "I am deeply concerned that people may face severe hunger and some may even die due to lack of food."

The WFP has repeatedly warned that rations in the camps could be slashed as a result of last year's steep foreign aid cuts by the United States and other countries, which saw the agency lose a third of its funding. But WFP spokesperson Kun Li said

Wednesday's change in food distribution was unrelated to the funding cuts, and it should not be described as a "ration cut," despite two-thirds of the population receiving fewer rations as a result.

The agency said a ration cut implies food assistance is being reduced below 2,100 calories a day, the recommended minimum standard for emergency food aid. But the WFP said even those who

will now receive just \$7 per month will still be able to meet that threshold.

The plan "ensures that even with differentiated ration sizes, all Rohingya continue meeting their minimum food needs, strengthening fairness, transparency, and equity in food assistance," the agency said in a statement.

But a ration cut is precisely what the change means for the Rohingya, said Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mohammad Mizanur Rahman.

With desperation already running high, Rahman told The Associated Press that the Rohingya will attempt to flee in search of food and work.

"Law and order will be deteriorated," he said.

The same military that attacked the Rohingya in 2017 during what the U.S. declared a genocide overthrew Myanmar's government in 2021 and remains in control of the country. That has made it virtually impossible for the Rohingya to return home safely.

Last year's foreign aid cuts deepened misery across the camps, particularly for children, with the closure of schools contributing to a surge in kidnapping, child marriage and child labor. Programs to support the Rohingya were only around half funded in 2025, and are only 19 percent funded this year.



Indians crowd ticket counters at a railway station in Ahmedabad, India on Oct 23, 2011. (AP)

## 8 dead in stampede

## India begins world's largest population count

NEW DELHI, April 1, (Agencies): India has begun the world's largest national population count, which could reshape welfare programs and political representation across the country.

The previous census in 2011 recorded a population of 1.21 billion. It's now estimated to be more than 1.4 billion, making India the most populous nation.

The new census had been planned for 2021 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and logistical challenges.

Here's how India's census works and why it is significant:

The first phase of the count started Wednesday and will roll out around the country through September. The workers will spend about a month in each area collecting information on homes and available facilities and will document housing stock and living conditions.

The exercise will blend in-person sur-

veys with a digital option where residents can submit information through a multi-lingual smartphone application that integrates satellite-based mapping.

The second phase to be conducted from September to next April 1 will record more detailed information like people's social and economic characteristics, including religion and caste.

More than 3 million government workers are expected to be deployed over the course of the year. In 2011, nearly 2.7 million enumerators surveyed more than 240 million households nationwide.

The second phase of the census will attempt a broader accounting of caste beyond historically marginalized groups.

Caste is an ancient system of social hierarchy in India and is influential in defining social standing and deciding who gets access to resources, education and economic opportunity. There are

hundreds of caste groups based on occupation and economic status across India, particularly among Hindus, but the country has limited or outdated data on how many people belong to them.

## Also:

**NEW DELHI:** At least eight women died, and around 10 people were injured when a stampede occurred at a temple in India's eastern state of Bihar on Tuesday, confirmed a local police officer over the phone.

According to him, the stampede occurred at Sheetla temple in the Deenagar area of Bihar's Nalanda district, at around 10:00 a.m. local time.

Video footage viral on various social media platforms showed the injured women being rushed to a local hospital. The death toll was feared to rise since some of the injured persons were said to be in a critical condition.

In addition, security escorts will be limited to one vehicle in a country where gangs control an estimated 90% of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and swaths of rural areas.

A statement signed by Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé said that the measures will allow the government "to anticipate serious repercussions on the already fragile macro-economic balance and public finances in particular." (AP)

**Colombia military rescues 6 siblings:** Colombia's army rescued six siblings after they spent three days hiding in the rainforest to avoid being captured by a rebel group in the southwestern province of Cauca.

Defense Minister Pedro Sánchez said on X that five children and their adult sister were airlifted from a remote location following a "precise operation" involving helicopters. (AP)

## Lula keeps Alckmin as running mate for Brazil general election in October

SAO PAULO, April 1, (AP): Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said Tuesday that he will once again have his past rival and current Vice President Geraldo Alckmin as his running mate for his reelection bid in October.

Lula, an 80-year-old leftist, had been under pressure to pick a different running mate from a bigger right-wing party, but his loyalty to the former Sao Paulo state governor prevailed. The 73-year-old Alckmin, a center-right politician who ran against Lula for the presidency in 2006 and lost, is also the government's industry minister.

Brazil's president said that Alckmin will leave his ministerial role to be eligible in accordance with the country's electoral law. "Our partner Alckmin will have to leave the Industry Ministry. He will have to leave because he will be candidate for vice president once again," Lula said during a Cabinet meeting in the capital, Brasilia.

Brazil's electoral law states that government ministers need to leave their positions in the Cabinet by April 4 if they are running for office in the October general election. Several other government ministers will also exit to bid for other positions.

Alckmin has conservative and right-leaning roots that served Lula well in his narrow victory against then-Presi-



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, (center), stands next to an F-39E Gripen fighter jet during a ceremony presenting the first supersonic aircraft assembled in Brazil, developed by Saab, at the Embraer plant in Gavião Peixoto, Brazil on March 25. From left are Brazilian Air Force Commander Marcelo Kanitz Damasceno, Embraer CEO Francisco Gomes Neto, Defense Minister Jose Mucio, Lula, Vice President Geraldo Alckmin, and Saab CEO Micael Johansson. (AP)

dent Jair Bolsonaro in 2022. This year, Lula is expected to face Sen. Flávio Bolsonaro, one of the sons of his predecessor.

Dr. Alckmin, as many Brazilians

call him, is a soft-spoken Catholic politician who governed Brazil's wealthiest state three times. In 2006, he lost the presidency to Lula in a runoff by wide margins.

## Fire and explosions cause panic near military camp in Burundi

BUJUMBURA, Burundi, April 1, (AP): Residents of an area near a military camp in Burundi fled on Tuesday night after explosions were heard coming from the camp, due to what the army spokesperson later said was a fire caused an electrical fault at the armory.

A fire caused by a short circuit in the ammunition storage room led to the detonation of explosives at the military camp located in Musaga, in the suburbs of the commercial hub of Bujumbura, said army spokesperson Gaspard Baratuza.

The huge fire was visible from miles away, and residents could be seen fleeing from areas near the camp in videos shared on social media.

"We would like to reassure the public that this is in no way an enemy attack, despite some rumors that have begun to circulate," Baratuza said.

Electricity within the camp and neighboring areas was cut off as civilians moved away from the camp.

"We ask residents of the Gasekebuye, Kanyosha, Kinindo areas and surrounding neighborhoods to remain calm and not give in to panic," Baratuza said.

By Tuesday morning, calm was returning to the area, and the local government administrator said some children who fled during the incident were at the Buhonga Catholic Parish waiting to be reunited with their families.



Photo taken on March 31, 2026, shows smoke rising after explosions followed a fire at a military camp in Bujumbura Province, Burundi. Several blasts were heard in Bujumbura, Burundi's economic capital, on Tuesday, residents told Xinhua. (Xinhua)

## Lat/Am

**Haiti imposes austerity measures:** Haiti's government announced new austerity measures on Tuesday as the war in Iran disrupts critical oil supplies and drives up prices worldwide.

Officials in the troubled Caribbean country imposed a ban on the purchase of any new vehicles, will reduce fuel expenditures for public institutions and said that foreign travel will be limited to essential missions authorized by the prime minister.



Fils-Aimé

## Oil barrel price up \$7.45 to \$120.62

KUWAIT CITY, April 1, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti oil price surged by USD 7.45 to reach USD 120.62 per barrel (pb) on Tuesday compared with USD 113.17 pb the previous day, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

(KPC) on Wednesday.

In international markets, Brent crude oil price rose by USD 5.57 to USD 118.35 pb, while the West Texas crude went down by USD 1.50 to USD 101.38 pb.

# Business

## Al-Mousawi: Digital tools key to reducing emissions, boosting efficiency

### KUFPEC pushes digital solutions for sustainability

CAIRO, April 1, (KUNA): Regional director of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) Abdulaziz Al-Mousawi underscored the importance of digital transformation in mitigating impact of energy on environment.

In statements to KUNA on the sidelines of the ninth Egypt Energy Show (EGYPES 2026) in Cairo on Tuesday, Al-Mousawi suggested encouraging innovation and enhancing operating efficacy in accelerating digital transformation.

"KUFPEC is taking part in the exhibition to showcase a variety of techniques for promoting the efficacy assets and enhancing the production capacity," Al-Mousawi pointed out.

"The corporation is also showcasing innovative digital solutions for supporting decision making, minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and boosting sustainability.

"KUFPEC plays a growing role in providing reliable energy supplies and mitigating the impacts of hydrocarbons on environment in addition to boosting responsible development," he went on.

On KUFPEC operations in Egypt, he said the corporation seeks to improve the sustainability of mature oilfields through leveraging the enhanced extraction techniques and making better use of the technical and financial resources.

Al-Mousawi commended Egypt's role in the energy sector as regional hub. KUFPEC seeks to seize the opportunity of the ongoing exhibition to enhance the existing partnerships and open new horizons for cooperation with industry leaders, he added.

Opened on Monday, EGYPTES 2026 continues until tomorrow Wednesday with representatives of major oil and gas companies and energy experts from around the globe taking part.

## Market capitalization drops 5% in Q1

### Boursa Kuwait reports Q1 declines in several indices & market capitalization

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: The main indices of Boursa Kuwait rose at the close of yesterday's trading.

The Premier Market and General Market indices increased by 0.42 percent and 0.52 percent, respectively, while the Main 50 Index climbed by about 1.03 percent. The Main Market Index rose 1.11 percent compared to the previous day.

Boursa Kuwait recorded a trading volume of KD 81.95 million, distributed across 251.27 million shares, executed through 19,200 transactions.

The prices of 60 stocks rose, led by Tahseel, which surged 28.21 percent following a 226.9 percent jump in its fourth-quarter profits.

The prices of 59 stocks declined, with Muntazahat leading the losses at 6.72 percent. The prices of 14 stocks remained unchanged.

Financial analyst Ayed Al-Dhafaeri confirmed in a press statement that yesterday's market rally was driven by the positive dividends offered by some listed companies, citing the recommendation of the board of directors of Gulf Cables Company as an example, along with anticipated positive results from several other listed companies.

He indicated that these factors helped revitalize the market, along with the recent easing of geopolitical tensions.

Reviewing the first quarter's trading at yesterday's close, Boursa Kuwait's main indices ended in the red for the first quarter of 2020 and for the current month.

The market capitalization of shares declined by 5.09 percent, affected by profit-taking, the escalation of military operations in the region, the targeting of oil and vital facilities, and disruptions to shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

In this regard, Ra'ed Diab, Vice President of Research and Investment Strategies at Kamco Invest, explained that Boursa Kuwait began the year with some profit-taking following the gains recorded in 2025. The decline was further intensified by threats from US President Donald Trump to launch attacks on Iran.

With the onset of the war, Boursa Kuwait declined amid growing fears of its repercussions, including Iranian attacks on Gulf states, disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, and the significant impact on Kuwait's oil exports following the declaration of force majeure and production cuts.

Thanks to a sound assessment of the war's impact, Kuwait's financial strength and its ability to absorb the crisis in the short term, and the strong fundamentals of listed companies along with their annual dividends, Boursa Kuwait recovered some of its losses and managed to hold its ground, ending March with the smallest decline among its

Gulf peers.

The overall investment climate has changed in light of this war, especially as many investors await developments in the crisis, the continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the uncertainty surrounding potential losses, and the war's protracted nature.

Some investors view the decline in leading stock prices as an opportunity for long-term investment, given that the companies' fundamentals are unchanged.

Diab predicted that this stability, though subject to some fluctuations, would continue until new signals emerge.

**Key indicators for March:**

■ The Premier Market Index declined by 5.15 percent during the first quarter, falling 489.2 points compared to the end of December.

■ The General Market Index decreased by 5.51 percent, or 491.1 points, reaching 8,416.47 points.

■ The Main Market Index closed the quarter down 7.45 percent, or 618.9 points, while the Main 50 Index fell by 8.5 percent.

■ Market capitalization decreased by 5.09 percent, reaching KD 50.48 billion compared to KD 53.19 billion.

■ Trading volume on Boursa Kuwait during the first quarter totaled KD 4.19 billion, distributed across 13.74 billion shares.

## Reaffirming its position in the financial services sector

### Markaz wins 'Best Local Investment Bank 2025' and 'Best Asset Manager in Kuwait 2025' Awards from EMEA Finance

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" announced that it has won the "Best Local Investment Bank 2025" and "Best Asset Manager in Kuwait 2025" awards from EMEA Finance at the Middle East Banking Awards 2026 ceremony held recently in Dubai.

The awards reflect Markaz's leading position in the market and its role in providing investment solutions across Asset Management and Investment Banking. Award recipients are selected based on criteria established by industry experts, including the evaluation of institutional performance, the number and size of executed transactions, the ability to adapt to market changes, the level of innovation, and professional reputation.

Markaz was represented at the awards ceremony by Ms. Fay Al Bader-Manager, Investment Banking, and Mr. Basel Al Habib-Assistant Manager, MENA Equities. Their participation represents the key role played by specialized professionals across Markaz's various teams in supporting its presence and enhancing its competitiveness in regional markets.

The recognition underscores Markaz's expertise and established track record in Investment Banking, its MENA Equities platform, and Asset Management operations across public and private asset classes.

Markaz's receipt of an award from EMEA Finance for the 13th year affirms the continuity of its institutional approach centered on developing tailored financial solutions grounded in a deep understanding of clients' needs and investment objectives. This recognition further reinforces Markaz's record of nearly 98 awards received from reputable regional and international platforms, reflecting its established presence and the confidence placed in its performance by international institutions within the financial services sector.

Commenting on the occasion, Amani I. Al-Omani, Managing Director- MENA Equities at Markaz, said: "This award represents the depth of Markaz's investment expertise and its research-driven ap-



Kuwait's Markaz honored at EMEA Finance Middle East Banking Awards 2026.

proach to Asset Management. It also underscores our execution capabilities and our role as a trusted advisor to clients across the region. Ongoing acknowledgement from international institutions demonstrates our team's ability to deliver sustainable performance across market cycles, while providing investment solutions aligned with our clients' long-term objectives."

Ahmed Al Falah, Managing Director - Investment Banking at Markaz, commented:

"Winning the Best Local Investment Bank award is a recognition of the collective effort, expertise and dedication of our investment banking team. It also

highlights the long-standing relationships we have built with our clients over the years and the trust they place in us. This recognition reinforces our continued focus on delivering tailored investment banking solutions that address our clients' evolving needs and support their long-term, sustainable growth.

As Markaz continues to expand its activities across Investment Banking, Asset Management, and MENA Equities, the awards it has received reaffirm its disciplined investment approach and ongoing commitment to delivering specialized financial services and investment strategies, aligned with clients' needs and evolving market conditions.

## Reaffirms commitment to Kuwait's FMCG sector

### Alghanim Industries announces retention and strategic expansion of Gulf Trading and Refrigerating Company

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Alghanim Industries (Kutayba Alghanim Group) announced plans to strengthen its investments in the food and consumer goods sector through the continued development of Gulf Trading and Refrigerating Company (GTRC), one of its subsidiaries.

This direction comes amid ongoing regional and global developments, with markets facing supply chain challenges and fluctuations in production and shipping costs. These conditions underscore the importance of building strong local capabilities to ensure the reliable availability of essential goods and support market stability.

GTRC is one of Kuwait's leading distributors of food and consumer products, representing a portfolio of global brands including Mars Wrigley and Colgate-Palmolive, among others.

In a statement, Alghanim Industries said the

FMCG sector remains a key pillar of economic security, particularly in light of ongoing regional and global challenges. The company added that, with decades of experience navigating complex disruptions - including the COVID-19 pandemic and recent supply chain challenges - it is well positioned to ensure business continuity and deliver reliable service to customers.

GTRC continues to expand its operations and strengthen its partnerships, having recently entered into a number of new agreements. These include Aqua Carpatica, Merlins, and Solan de Cabras in the water category, Samyang in noodles and sauces, and Eti in the snacks category, in addition to Higeen in the personal care and hygiene segment.

Kutayba Y. Alghanim, Executive Chairman of Alghanim Industries, said:

"In light of the developments we have seen in recent months, both regionally and globally, we reaffirm our continued commitment to investing in the food and consumer goods sector - an area in which we have built deep expertise over decades. We have successfully developed GTRC into a leading company in the market, and we see strong opportunities to further grow its business and expand its partnerships, enabling us to continue serving our customers with confidence and continuity."

Following the conclusion of discussions with Mezzan Holding, the sale agreement was not progressed within the agreed timeframe. Alghanim Industries expressed its appreciation for the cooperation shown throughout the evaluation process and wished Mezzan Holding continued success in its future endeavors.

## Leaders race to ease oil shock

### Iran 'war' sends oil markets into chaos

NEW YORK, April 1, (AP): Global leaders have been scrambling to contain the rising cost of oil and gasoline since the start of the Iran war, which took a record amount of oil off the market when tankers full of crude were stranded in the Arabian Gulf and military strikes damaged refineries, pipelines and export terminals.

Hoping to ease some pain for consumers, President Donald Trump and other heads of state have been pulling on various levers, launching more oil on the market in a bid to calm the chaos.

A group of 32 nations that are members of the International Energy Agency began releasing the largest volume of emergency oil reserves in its history: 400 million barrels. Trump is tapping into oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve while lifting sanctions on Russian and Iranian crude and temporarily waiving the Jones Act, a maritime law that requires ships carrying goods between U.S. ports to be U.S.-flagged.

But despite those maneuvers, crude oil surpassed \$100 a barrel and gasoline is selling for \$4.06 a gallon on average in the U.S. While the stopgaps are helping, they're not adding up to enough oil to replace what's stranded, experts say.

"They're all incremental," said Mark Barteau, professor of chemical engineering and chemistry at Texas A&M University. "You're talking about these different patches being at the level of maybe 1 to 2 million barrels a day each, and you've got to get to 20, so it's hard to see those actually adding up to the numbers that are needed. And then the question is, how long can you sustain those?"

Before the war began, roughly 15 million barrels of crude oil and 5 million barrels of oil products passed daily through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Arabian Gulf, amounting to about 20% of global oil consumption, according to the International Energy Agency.

In addition to that loss, some oil producing nations in the Middle East have halted oil production because they can't ship fuel out of the Gulf and their storage tanks are full. That's taken about 10 million more barrels per day off the market, the IEA said.

Then there are the eight countries around the Arabian Gulf that together hold about 50% of global oil reserves. Under normal circumstances, they coordinate closely to raise or lower their output to keep prices steady, said Jim Krane, energy research fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute. Usually Saudi Arabia steps in to bring spare oil to market and calm things down, he said.

"But all of that spare capacity is also bottled up inside the Arabian Gulf right now and it can't get to market either," Krane said. "So the main emergency response system that we have is also blocked."

The IEA said in its recent report that "the resumption of transit through the Strait of Hormuz is the single most important action to return to stable oil and gas flows and reduce the strains on markets and prices."

Barring that, world leaders are grasping for ways to free up more oil.

Some nations have found workarounds to move oil out of the Gulf. Saudi Arabia is using its East-West pipeline, which stretches from the Arabian Gulf to the Red Sea, to transfer about 5 million barrels per day out of the Gulf, said Michael Lynch, distinguished fellow at Energy Policy Research Foundation, a non-partisan institution focused on energy and economics. But the nation was already using that pipeline to transport oil, so it doesn't have a lot of spare room to move oil from stranded tankers.

Trump also temporarily lifted sanctions on approximately 140 million barrels of Iranian oil that was already in transit. But that didn't add oil to the

market - it just widened the pool of potential buyers, said Daniel Sternoff, senior fellow at the Columbia Center on Global Energy Policy.

Typically, most Iranian oil was bought by private refiners in China, who purchased it at a steep discount, Sternoff said. But with sanctions lifted, others could scramble to buy the oil, which in turn raises its price to the benefit of Iran, he said.

"As soon as you are moving to waive sanctions on your adversary with whom you're fighting a military conflict, to do something in their benefit, it just shows you that you are running out of options to try to prevent a rise in the price of oil," Sternoff said.

The decision to lift sanctions on Russian oil could have more impact, because Russia had been storing unpurchased oil in tankers, Sternoff said. "By waiving sanctions, it will allow those barrels to clear."

Trump's temporary waiver of the Jones Act to allow foreign ships to temporarily transport goods between U.S. ports could potentially help ease natural gas prices by enabling companies to more efficiently ship liquefied natural gas from the Gulf Coast to New England.

But experts don't expect the waiver to significantly impact the price of oil or gasoline. "It's helpful, but not a game changer," Lynch said.

The U.S. is a major oil producer, and exports more oil than it imports. But like any other oil producing nation, it can't just ramp up production instantly to fill the void.

"If the U.S. were to try to make up the global shortfall, we would need to nearly double our production," Barteau said. "We couldn't drill wells that fast even if we wanted to."

Increasing domestic production by even 1 million barrels per day, a feat the U.S. accomplished during the shale boom, would be hard to duplicate, Lynch said.

"If we run every drilling rig right now, what happens a week from now when the war is over and the price goes back down \$20?" Lynch asked. "People don't want to develop long-term production based on a short-term price spike."

Halting exports and using that oil within the U.S. wouldn't bring down gasoline prices either, experts say.

For one, oil is traded on a global market, so events happening halfway around the globe impact prices for everyone.

In addition, the U.S. doesn't produce enough of the type of oil its refineries process. It produced about 13.7 million barrels per day of oil at the end of 2025, according to the Energy Information Administration. And refineries processed about 16.3 million barrels per day that year, relying on imports to fill in the gaps, according to the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPMM), a trade association.

That's because nearly 70% of U.S. refineries are set up to process heavy, sour crude, according to AFPMM. But much of the oil produced in the U.S. is light, sweet crude, which was unlocked during the shale revolution.

"They need different crudes than the ones that are being produced right next to them now," Krane said.

As a result, just 60% of the crude oil processed in U.S. refineries is extracted domestically, according to the AFPMM. And retooling domestic refineries would cost billions of dollars, the group said. It also would require shutting down the refinery for a period of time, which generally raises gasoline prices.

"A lot of people like the IEA are making the point that this is the biggest oil crisis ever, which is partly true, partly an exaggeration, depending on how you count things," Lynch said. "A lot of it has to do with how long does this last ... if it goes on for another six weeks we get to be in some serious trouble."

Empowering national talent and leading development

## KFH Capital appoints Abdullah Al-Haddad as CEO



Abdullah Al-Haddad

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: KFH Capital, the investment arm of Kuwait Finance House Group, has announced the appointment of Abdullah Sulaiman Al-Haddad as Chief Executive Officer. The move reinforces the Group's focus on empowering national talent to spearhead development through high professional performance and distinguished expertise.

Prior to his current appointment, Al-Haddad served as KFH Group Chief International Banking Officer. He has over 27 years of leadership experience across in-

vestment banking, finance, real estate, and international investment. His career includes senior roles such as VP-International Investments at Diyar Al-Kuwait Real Estate Company, VP- Investment Department at KFH Investment Company, and Chief Investment Banking Officer at KFH Capital. Furthermore, he has served on the boards of various financial and banking institutions, as well as companies within the oil and gas, aviation, and industrial sectors across the Middle East.

Beyond debt instrument services and Sukuk issu-

ance, KFH Capital provides a comprehensive suite of investment banking solutions. These include IPOs, mergers and acquisitions, capital markets services and products, asset and portfolio management, advisory services, real estate investments management, investment funds, trading and brokerage, alongside other investment products.

The company is distinguished by its highly experienced team, providing a significant competitive edge and ensuring professional excellence.

Deepening its CSR-driven community role

## talabat concludes Ramadan initiatives, strengthening community engagement

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: As the region witnesses collective tensions and local communities grapple with a state of distress, talabat, the leading on-demand online ordering platform in the MENA region, is setting an example for the role of responsible corporate citizenship and successful corporate responsibility. Building on the values and principles of the holy month, the company was present amongst its community throughout Ramadan, engaging them in a series of initiatives designed to support communities, partners, and customers across the country. These efforts build on talabat's year-round commitment to creating meaningful impact, reinforcing its role not only in fulfilling everyday needs, but in contributing to the wider community it serves.

"Ramadan is a time of the year that is synonymous to peace, giving, and solidarity. This year, however, we were tested as a community to go the extra mile to instill those values and ensure they are truly lived and experienced. As we extend our prayers for the safety of our beloved country and its individuals, it was essential to also double down on our on-ground efforts that materialize these values into tangible action," commented Bader Al-Ghanim, Chief International Markets and Managing Director at talabat Kuwait. "During this holy month, we launched a series of diverse initiatives for supporting our community and partners who are the cornerstone for our business.

Our efforts throughout the holy month were also an extension for our commitment to creating meaningful impact across Kuwait."

### Food Basket Distribution

Bringing this commitment to life, talabat led the Food Basket initiative in collaboration with Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company (KFM), Mishref Co-op, and Namaa Charity, providing essential food baskets to families in need across Kuwait throughout the holy month. talabat employees, beginning with senior management, volunteered on-ground to support the food basket packing process, reflecting a shared commitment to community support.

### Supporting Riders' Health and Wellbeing

In a similar effort, talabat doubled down on its commitment to fostering riders' health and wellbeing by distributing more than 14,000 "Break Your Fast" packs throughout the holy month, in addition to distributing more than 2,000 Iftar meals during the last 10 days of Ramadan. Furthermore, the company utilized its vast network of partner restaurants and provided complimentary, co-funded meals for riders picking up orders for delivery, ensuring riders have access to nutritious and healthy Iftar meals while on duty.

### Hosting the Annual Ghabga

talabat also held its annual Ramadan Ghabga event, which brought together

key partners, government stakeholders, media representatives, and collaborators in celebration of Kuwaiti tradition and appreciation of their pivotal role in talabat's success, as well as to strengthen the ties of cooperation binding talabat's network of partners. Honoring its Kuwaiti roots, the company held the Ghabga event in conjunction with the National Day to celebrate the country where it first launched.

### Empowering Partners and Boosting their Reach

Driven by a commitment to partner success, talabat expanded its presence beyond on-ground initiatives through collaborations with leading media outlets and influential figures to spotlight its partners' Ramadan specialties and signature items, amplify their reach, and drive meaningful audience engagement. Through these efforts, it solidified its support for partners, enhancing their growth potential and cementing its position as a key driver of their business success.

Together, these initiatives reflect talabat's active engagement with the communities it serves and its continued commitment to delivering meaningful impact across Kuwait. By combining on-ground support, strategic partnerships, and media collaborations, talabat further reinforced its role as a community-driven, tech-enabled platform that contributes to both everyday needs and meaningful moments.



talabat Ghabga



talabat Iftar distribution



talabat Food Basket initiative

Trump policies curtail renewable energy

## Big Tech struggle to meet climate targets amid data center growth

SAN FRANCISCO, April 1, (AP): Six years ago, Google was confident that by 2030 it would power all operations with electricity generated from clean sources, including wind and solar power, and remove as much pollution as it produced. Today it calls those goals a "moonshot." Microsoft says it's still aiming to remove more carbon than it creates by 2030 but now describes the effort as "a marathon, not a sprint."

The race to deploy artificial intelligence is complicating tech companies' commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, most of which come from the burning of gas, oil and coal and drive climate change. They say they must be flexible as they rush to build sprawling data centers that can consume more power than entire cities.

"Even if they haven't officially revised their goals, they are starting to acknowledge that, 'Yeah, we're maybe not on track,'" said Patrick Huang, a senior analyst at Wood Mackenzie.

Now, Huang said, the companies must use whatever kinds of power they can to stay competitive - and increasingly that is natural gas, which is mostly methane, a planet-warming greenhouse gas.

Tech companies bought record amounts of clean energy in 2024 and 2025, according to the Clean Energy Buyers Association.

But total emissions have gone up over roughly the first five years of their climate commitments, according to companies' sustainability reports. Google's emissions jumped nearly 50%. Amazon's rose by 33%, Microsoft's more than 23% and Meta's more than 60%.

Data centers used about 4.6% of total U.S. electricity in 2024, a share that could nearly triple by 2028, according to government estimates. Some analysts predict nationwide electricity use to rise as much as 20% in the next decade, with data centers a big reason.

Meanwhile, a backlog of proposed projects awaiting permission to connect to power grids and efforts by the Trump administration to sideline renewable energy may affect tech companies' climate goals - and prolong reliance on fossil fuels, experts said.

"Each of these alone could be real challenges," said Julie McNamara, associate policy director at Union of Concerned Scientists' Climate & Energy program. "Together, it's just creating a real near-term crunch on the system."

Tech companies say they've made significant progress on emissions through energy-efficiency measures, buying renewable energy credits and power from sources that don't emit greenhouse gases and requiring suppliers to reduce their own emissions.

Yet natural gas in 2024 accounted for more than 40% of electricity powering U.S. data centers, while coal supplied 30% globally, the International Energy Agency said. And the trend doesn't appear to be slowing. Utilities are planning natural gas plants around the country to help supply data centers, while some tech companies plan on-site gas plants built only to feed a data center.

"Companies are scrambling to try to get as much power as they can as quickly as possible," said Lori Bird, director of the U.S. Energy Program at the World Resources Institute. "It's a mad rush and a lot of competition for resources."

Microsoft President Brad Smith



The Douglas County Google Data Center complex is visible, March 6, 2026, in Lithia Springs, Ga. (AP)

told The Associated Press that he is "confident in our ability" to meet the company's 2030 goal to remove more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than it emits by investing in new sources of carbon-free energy, including nuclear, solar and hydropower.

In Wisconsin, for example, two new natural gas plants to help power a Microsoft data center will be offset by investment in solar elsewhere in the state. Similarly, three natural gas plants will provide electricity to a massive Meta data center in rural Louisiana, while the company invests in solar elsewhere.

Google says it's investing in wind, hydropower, battery storage and advanced nuclear, though it also relies on natural gas. The company plans to buy electricity from a natural gas plant to be built at the Archer Daniels Midland corn processing plant in Decatur, Illinois, where carbon dioxide emissions would be captured and stored underground.

To help meet clean energy goals, tech companies count on such power purchase agreements and buying renewable energy certificates, a tradeable commodity that supports new and existing sources. But that could get more difficult under proposed changes to how greenhouse gases are reported, which would require that sources are in the same region as a company's data center and match hours of operation - for example, solar credits could only be applied to daytime operating hours.

Although some new gas plants will replace dirtier coal plants, it takes about 30 years to recover the investment. That means delaying the overall transition to clean and renewable energy at a time when the United Nations Environment Programme warns that high-emitting countries are unlikely to meet their own targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. AI is blamed in part for a 2.4% uptick in U.S. fossil fuel emissions last year, according to a study by the Rhodium Group, an independent research firm.

And though other sectors of the economy also are electrifying, "it is only because of these data centers that these gas plants are being built," McNamara said. "There are no two ways about it."

Getting enough electricity was challenging even before President Donald Trump took office last year and took aim at renewable energy.

He's canceled grants and permits for solar and wind projects and tax breaks for renewable energy, which advocates say can be built less expensively and more quickly than natural

gas or nuclear plants, while ordering that several coal-fired power plants slated for retirement keep running.

Many companies set goals expecting federal tax credits would support wind and solar deployment, said Rich Powell, chief executive officer of the Clean Energy Buyers Association.

But those credits will end in July, after being eliminated by the Republican-controlled Congress and Trump.

Trump, who has called climate change a "hoax," has argued that green energy is unreliable and expensive and could harm national energy independence.

Powell said his association has "been very, very clear with this Congress and this administration that all technology should be on a level playing field and that we're putting both energy affordability and energy reliability at risk if we don't do that."

Josh Parker, sustainability chief for chipmaker Nvidia, said AI eventually will reduce electricity use because it's more efficient than traditional computing. He said curtailing energy development could cause the U.S. to fall behind on AI.

"Our perspective is that we need an all-of-the-above approach to energy," he said.

Tech companies would have been hard-pressed in 2020, when many set goals, to project current energy needs because much of the technology and equipment used to train machine-learning models - which use most data-center electricity - were just being introduced, said Jay Dietrich, who researches AI sustainability for the Uptime Institute and formerly led emissions goal-setting at IBM.

By 2023, he said, tech companies "had a pretty good idea things were going to get a lot more exciting ... and that the numbers were going to grow quickly."

He expects many will extend the timeline for emissions goals, based on a 2025 Uptime Institute survey that saw a 12% drop in the number of operators saying they'd meet a market-based 2030 carbon-neutral goal. However, even with increasing emissions, the largest companies should be able to afford enough renewable energy and offsets to meet carbon-neutral goals.

McNamara said the surge in electricity demand from data centers turned a challenge into "an outright crisis."

"Tech companies are allowing implicitly or explicitly an enormous increase in fossil fuel dependence under their watch and because of their actions," she said.

## S&P 500 posts worst quarter since 2022 amid war, inflation fears

# War in Iran sends oil above \$100, shaking global markets

NEW YORK, April 1, (AP): Financial markets muddled through the first two months of the year. Then came the war.

The price of a barrel of Brent crude oil is above \$100 for the first time since the summer of 2022 and gasoline prices have soared. That followed an extended period where the price of oil largely stayed between \$60 and \$70.

The biggest concern for global stock markets early in 2026 was artificial intelligence - whether some companies were spending too much on it and whether others would be rendered obsolete by the technology. Now, investors' attention is squarely on how long the Iran war will last, how much inflation could jump and what that could mean for the economy. Dramatic intraday swings in indexes like the S&P 500 have been common.

The uncertainty brought on by the war complicates interest-rate decisions for the Federal Reserve, which has kept rates steady this year after reducing them three times at the end of last year. Cutting rates further would help the economy, but it could also put upward pressure on inflation. Keeping them high would help fight inflation, but also put pressure on economic growth.

Here's a look at the swings in the markets in March: Oil prices have been dictating the U.S. stock market's sharp swings since the Iran war began. Brent crude, the benchmark for about three-quarters of global crude oil, has shot from roughly \$70 per barrel to as high as \$119 at times. Investors have flipped back and forth between hopes for a fairly quick end to the war and worries that a prolonged conflict will keep oil and natural gas from the Persian

Gulf out of global markets, which could create a brutal blast of inflation.

### CHART-OIL

As February came to a close, drivers in many parts of the U.S. were paying under \$3 for a gallon of gas. As of Tuesday, the nationwide average had topped \$4 for the first time since 2022. The jump in diesel, used in many freight and delivery trucks, is more pronounced, with the average for a gallon now \$5.45, up from about \$3.76 a gallon before the war began, according to AAA.

"Americans (are) spending hundreds of millions of dollars more on gasoline every day," said Patrick De Haan, the head of petroleum analysis at fuel-tracking service GasBuddy.

### CHART-GAS

The U.S. stock market came into 2026 coming off three straight years of strong gains. Many international markets outpaced it in 2025 after trailing behind for a few years.

With a drop of nearly 4.6%, the S&P 500 had its worst quarterly performance since 2022. The Nasdaq composite, with a heavy allotment of technology stocks, on Thursday closed down more than 10% from the all-time high it set in October, a steep-enough fall that professional investors call it a "correction."

### CHART-S&P

Not surprisingly, energy stocks have been among the best performers in the S&P 500 for the month and the quarter. Exxon Mobil had its largest quarterly gain, according to FactSet. Other strong performers include Occidental Petroleum and Valero Energy.

Perhaps it's fitting that the stock market ended the month with another outsized move, this time to the upside on renewed hopes the war could end sooner than later. Such hopes, though, have built up and then vanished quickly several times already so far during the war.

### CHART-NASDAQ

Typically investors flock to bonds and other safe-haven assets when a global event threatens the economy. But in this case, the chance of a spike in inflation due to the surge in oil prices has caused a sell-off in bonds and a corresponding jump in their yields.

### CHART-YIELDS+MORTGAGES

The yield on the 10-year Treasury was at just 3.97% in late February but ballooned as high as 4.44% before falling back a bit. That surge has helped push up rates for mortgages and other loans for U.S. households and businesses. Traders now see just a slim chance that the Fed will cut rates even once this year.

What comes next is hard to predict. President Donald Trump has pivoted between talk of ending the war and threats of escalating it to target Iran's energy infrastructure. The Iranians have downplayed Trump's claims of progress in diplomatic talks.

### CHART-VIX

Iran maintains a stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway leading out of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of the world's oil is transported during peacetime. As long as that remains the status quo, analysts expect oil and stock markets to continue to experience heightened volatility.

Over 60 deferred draws will be conducted over five days, with total prizes exceeding KWD 5 million

# NBK resumes Al Jawhara Prize draws

The Bank announced 14 winners of KWD 20,000 each on the first day of the deferred draws



Ali Yousef Al-Mulla, SVP – Branch Network Relations – Consumer Banking Group



Representatives from Grant Thornton and Deloitte oversee the draw process.



Announcing one of the winners.

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has resumed the Al Jawhara and Al Jawhara Junior prize draws programme—the largest of its kind in Kuwait—reaffirming that customers' chances during the deferred period remain fully preserved, with no impact on their eligibility to win.

NBK commenced the deferred draws process on Wednesday, 1 April 2026, announcing the names of 14 winners, each receiving a prize of KWD 20,000, as part of the deferred weekly Al Jawhara draws for the period from 1 April 2025 to 29 July 2025. The Bank will continue conducting the remaining deferred draws for both Al Jawhara and Al Jawhara Junior programmes, exceeding 60 draws with a total value of more than KWD 5 million, over a five-day period. This includes announcing three winners of KWD 1 million each as part of Al Jawhara grand draws for May 2025, September 2025, and January 2026.

To further uphold the highest standards of transparency and integrity, NBK has appointed an additional external auditor, Grant Thornton, to oversee and audit all prize draw processes, regardless of prize value. This complements the continued oversight by Deloitte, ensuring that all draws are conducted in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, while reaffirming the Bank's ongoing commitment to rewarding its customers and reinforcing their trust.

Furthermore, NBK clarified that, as part of enhancing the draw mechanism, any winning customer will be excluded from participating in subsequent



Hisham Al-Nusif

**Al-Nusif:** We remain committed to continuously enhancing draw mechanisms and reinforcing transparency to ensure a fair experience for all our customers

The return of Al Jawhara draws offers genuine opportunities to create new millionaires

The winners of Al Jawhara weekly draws for the period from April 1, 2025 to July 29, 2025:

Draw Date	English Winner Name	Prize Amount
01 April 2025	NASSER MOHAMMAD TAHER MARAFI	KWD 20,000
15 April 2025	SAAD GABER AHMAD EISA	KWD 20,000
22 April 2025	MUAWIA ABDALLAH MOHAMAD QUDEIMAT	KWD 20,000
29 April 2025	FATIMA ALHAITHAM M ABDELGAFFAR	KWD 20,000
06 May 2025	ANFAL MOHAMAD AHMAD ALAWDEE	KWD 20,000
20 May 2025	KAWTHAR HUSSAIN ABDULREDDHA ALI	KWD 20,000
27 May 2025	LINA MOHAMMAD NABEL JAMEL TEMSAH	KWD 20,000
03 June 2025	ALHAWRA ALI HUSSAIN HUSSAIN	KWD 20,000
17 June 2025	JABER HUSSAIN ABDULLAH ASHKANANI	KWD 20,000
24 June 2025	RAED SALEH ZAID ALKHUBAIZI	KWD 20,000
01 July 2025	SHEHAB ELSAYED ABDELSALAM ATTIA	KWD 20,000
15 July 2025	RAMI MOHAMMAD ALKASHAMY	KWD 20,000
22 July 2025	KHALED SHAKER HASAN AMEN ALAWADHI	KWD 20,000
29 July 2025	NASER HUMAIDI FAHAD ALRASHEEDI	KWD 20,000

draws for a minimum of 90 working days from the date of winning. Furthermore, if the value of a single prize or the aggregate prizes won by a customer equals or exceeds KWD 50,000, the customer will

be excluded from all draws for one year from the date of the most recent win, ensuring fairness and equal opportunity for all customers.

On this occasion, Mr. Hisham Al-Nusif, Chief, Consumer Banking at NBK, said: "The resumption of Al Jawhara prize draws marks an important milestone that reflects NBK's commitment to recognizing and rewarding its customers, while continuing the journey of a programme that has long been one of the most prominent drivers of savings."

Al-Nusif emphasized NBK's commitment to continuously enhancing draw mechanisms and strengthening transparency to ensure a fair and equitable experience for all customers, reinforcing the trust that the Bank values and is keen to uphold at all times.

"We look forward to a new phase with a regular draw schedule, offering more genuine opportunities to create new millionaires," He concluded.

Al Jawhara prize draws offer a total annual prize pool of KWD 5 million, featuring weekly prizes of KWD 20,000, monthly prizes of KWD 125,000, and a grand prize of KWD 1 million awarded three times annually.

As for Al Jawhara Junior draws, dedicated to customers under the age of 21, monthly draws offer seven cash prizes (KWD 1,000 for three winners and KWD 500 for four winners), in addition to one winner receiving a KWD 10,000 cash prize with every Al Jawhara grand draw.

## Unemployment rises to 4.4%

## US consumer confidence inches up despite Iran war

WASHINGTON, April 1, (AP): U.S. consumer confidence inched higher in March despite soaring energy prices brought on by the war in Iran.

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index rose modestly to 91.8 in March from 91 in February.

The board said that while rising costs due to tariffs and spiking oil prices induced by the conflict in the Middle East did not affect the topline confidence reading, there was increasing pessimism in other measures of the survey, including expectations of higher inflation.

Respondents' comments about oil, gas and the war spiked and consumers' 12-month inflation expectations surged to levels last seen in August 2025 when anxiety over tariffs peaked.

U.S. gas prices jumped past an average of \$4 a gallon for the first time since 2022 on Tuesday as the war caused fuel prices to soar worldwide.

According to motor club AAA, the national average for a gallon of regular gasoline is now \$4.02 - up more than a dollar 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.

"This is the key concern as the war in Iran enters the second month - will the oil price shock turn into a demand destruction shock?," wrote Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union.

Long said that Navy Federal's credit card data from March showed that consumers were still making purchases across categories even as gas prices rose. But she said that could change in the second quarter "as the worst of the inflation shock hits consumers."

A measure of Americans' short-term expectations for their income, business conditions and the job market fell 1.7 points to 70.9, remaining well below 80, a marker that can signal a recession ahead. It's the 14th consecutive month that reading has come in under 80.

The index for consumers' assessments of their current economic situation rose by 4.6 points to 123.3.

Government data from earlier in March showed that an inflation gauge closely monitored by the Federal Reserve moved 2.8% higher in January in the latest sign that prices were persistently elevated even before the Iran war caused spikes in oil and gas costs.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories - which the Fed pays closer attention to - core prices rose

3.1%, up from 3% in the prior month and the highest in nearly two years.

Consumer prices and prices at the wholesale level also remain elevated.

Those higher prices and the prospect of even higher inflation due to the Iran war makes it unlikely that the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates any time soon.

The Fed cut its benchmark interest rate three times to close 2025 in an attempt to support a flagging labor market. However, because lower rates can exacerbate inflation, which remains above the Fed's 2% target, the Fed has left its overnight lending rate alone at its past two meetings.

While consumers' views of current employment conditions improved slightly, perceptions of the labor market six months from now edged downward.

The Labor Department reported earlier in March that U.S. employers unexpectedly cut 92,000 jobs in February, a sign that the labor market remains under strain. Economists had expected 60,000 new jobs in February. The unemployment rate rose to 4.4%.

Another report Tuesday showed that U.S. job openings fell slightly in February to 6.9 million from 7.2 million in January.

The surprisingly weak employment picture in February adds to the economic uncertainty sparked by the war with Iran, which has caused oil prices to surge and saddled business and consumers with unforeseen costs.

The country's labor market has been stuck in a "low hire, low fire" state, economists say, as businesses stand pat due to uncertainty over President Donald Trump's tariffs and the lingering effects of elevated interest rates.

U.S. economic growth slowed to 1.4% in the final three months of last year, following two surprisingly strong quarters. Growth in the fourth quarter was dragged down by the six-week shutdown of the federal government and a pullback in consumer spending.

According to the Tuesday's survey results, consumers' plans to buy cars continued to rise in March, with used cars remaining the clear preference.

Homebuying expectations fell in March as the spring buying season kicks off in the midst of a yearslong housing market slump.

Expectations that stock prices will be higher a year from now plunged, the board said.

## Inflation in Eurozone jumps to 2.5%

## Germany cuts growth outlook on oil shock

BERLIN, April 1, (AP): German growth forecasts for 2026 and 2027 were cut by experts on Wednesday as governments across Europe implement measures aimed at reducing the price impact of the Iran war.

A group of five economic institutes predict German gross domestic product will expand by 0.6% this year - less than half the 1.3% they forecast in September - and by 0.9% in 2027, down from 1.4%. The economic outlook was below the government's own forecast, issued two months ago, of 1% and 1.3% growth, respectively.

The Iran war has created an unwelcome new obstacle to growth across Europe. The annual inflation rate in the 21-nation euro area sped up to 2.5% in March from 1.9% the previous month. It was powered by a 4.9% increase in energy prices as the war and the blocking of the Strait of Hormuz sent fuel costs higher.

"This energy price shock is hitting a German economy in which a recovery set in last year after a several-year downturn," said Timo Wollmershäuser, an expert with the Munich-based Ifo institute, one of those that issued the joint forecast for Europe's biggest economy.

It "will dampen this recovery in Germany, but should not completely stop it," he added, pointing to planned government spending on defense and infrastructure as one stabilizing factor. Germany's output grew 0.2% last year after shrinking for the two previous years.

Wollmershäuser argued against "short-term activism," in particular a government-mandated cut to fuel prices, which he argued would be "costly, benefit many people who don't need relief, distort the signal of scarcity from the price and keep up demand for crude oil."

Germany's response so far has been relatively cautious. On Wednesday, legislation took effect that allows gas stations to raise prices only once a day, at midday, an attempt to end cost gyrations at the pump. It also gives the national antitrust authority more powers to act against excessive fuel prices.

Some European countries have already gone further, even as the Euro-

pean Union's executive commission urges members to "consider the promotion of demand saving measures" and "refrain from taking measures that may increase fuel consumption."

Poland has this week implemented temporary measures including maximum fuel prices set daily by authorities, with the threat of fines ranging up to 1 million zlotys (\$268,000) for companies that sell above the price cap. It also is temporarily cutting taxes on fuel.

Cuts to taxes on fuel were due to go into effect Wednesday in Austria, reducing prices at the pump. Sweden's government is proposing lower taxes on gasoline and diesel starting May 1. It already took action on another front Wednesday, halving value-added tax on food and drinks in stores or bought to take away from restaurants from 12% to 6%.

Latvia and Lithuania plan to cut duties on diesel. Non-EU Norway on Wednesday implemented temporary cuts in fuel tax that the country's parliament forced in a vote last week.

Still, the EU's energy commissioner warned on Tuesday that oil and gas prices won't return to normal levels soon even if peace comes quickly in the Middle East.

Wollmershäuser said the German forecast was based on an assumption that the Strait of Hormuz will be passable again in the second quarter and energy prices will drop from summer onward, "but without reaching the prewar level."

The disruption comes as Chancellor Friedrich Merz's governing coalition mulls far-reaching reforms to overcome Germany's deeper problems - such as high production costs, lagging private investment and increasingly costly health and pension systems - and boost long-term growth.

Economy Minister Katherina Reiche said the message from the latest growth forecast is clear: "The conflict in the Middle East is increasing the pressure on German politicians to tackle structural reforms forcefully."

## Oil and gas prices won't immediately return to normal even if the Iran war ends, the EU warns

NICOSIA, April 1, (AP): Skyrocketing oil and gas prices in Europe as a result of the ongoing Iran war won't return to normal levels any time soon, even if peace is declared tomorrow, the European Union's energy commissioner warned Tuesday.

Commissioner Dan Jørgensen said although there are no immediate oil and gas supply shortages in the 27-member bloc, there's pressure on diesel and jet fuel supply as well as "increasing constraints" in global gas markets that are resulting in higher electricity prices.

"What I find extremely important is to state as clearly as I can, that even if that peace is here tomorrow, still we will not go back to normal in a foreseeable future," Jørgensen told a news conference after a meeting of EU energy ministers.

He said the EU's executive arm is preparing a string of measures designed to help families and businesses weather the huge spike in oil prices that have resulted in about a 70% price hike for gas and 60% for oil in Europe. Since the start of the war, the EU's bill for imported

fossil fuels has jumped by 14 billion euros, according to Jørgensen.

Closely coordinated action between all EU members is necessary to "avoid fragmented national responses and disruptive signals to the markets," he said.

The "toolbox" of measures now in the works will be unveiled "quite soon" and will include ways to make it easier for states to decouple gas prices from electricity prices, the commissioner said. He added that a tax cut on electricity, as suggested by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is also being weighed.

Jørgensen said although he doesn't foresee a repeat of the 2022 natural gas crisis where companies reaped huge profits from a massive gas price hike, a one-time "windfall tax" on such companies "is a possibility."

There are now "good opportunities" for member states to financially support vulnerable groups or industries now under "extraordinary stress" and that the Commission would make "these possibilities even simpler and wider," said Jørgensen.

Jørgensen also encouraged EU members to consider the International Energy Agency's 10-point plan which includes work from home, reduced highway speeds, encouraging public transport and increasing car sharing.

He said the EU stands by its ban on Russian gas purchases, which is meant to reduce dependence on Russian gas and choke off funding for Russia's war in Ukraine. Reliance on Russian gas dropped from 45% before the war to 10% now and will be reduced to zero once imports from other suppliers ramp up, especially from the U.S. The EU is looking at new energy sources from Azerbaijan, Algeria and Canada as well as smaller producers around the world.

The commissioner warned the EU should never "repeat the mistakes of the past allowing Putin to weaponize energy against us and blackmail member states." He added that "it would be totally unacceptable" for the EU to continue buying energy that would "indirectly help finance the terrible war that Putin is conducting in Ukraine."

## Trademark dispute intensifies over branding

# Swift's 'Showgirl' pose too close to real one, lawsuit says

LOS ANGELES, April 1, (AP) — A lawsuit says Taylor Swift's "The Life of a Showgirl" stole the spotlight from the life of a real one.

Maren Wade says in the trademark infringement lawsuit filed Monday in federal court in California that the glittery branding of Swift's 2025 album comes too close to the aesthetic of her own "Confessions of a Showgirl." That was the name of a column she wrote on backstage Sin City life in the Las Vegas Weekly starting in 2014, which she turned into a live show that she took on a national tour.

"Both share the same structure, the same dominant phrase, and the same overall commercial impression," the lawsuit says. "Both are used in overlapping markets and are directed at the same consumers."

Wade is described as a "singer, songwriter, comedian, and writer" in the lawsuit filed under her legal name, Maren Flagg, and her "Showgirl" brand encompasses performances, writing and digital media.

"The Life of a Showgirl," the stadium-packing superstar's 12th studio album, released in October, sold 4 million copies in its first week. Its cover features her in Las Vegas cabaret garb, submerged in water with her cur-

rent favorite color scheme of orange and mint green. On Tuesday, the morning after the lawsuit was filed, Swift dropped the newest video for the album's track "Elizabeth Taylor," featuring archival footage of the Hollywood luminary who died in 2011.

Wade appeared to embrace Swift's use of the showgirl image initially, sharing Instagram posts that used Swift's music, hashtags related to the album, and the mint green color scheme. But Wade's social media presence has gone silent in recent months.

Also named as defendants in the lawsuit are the company that manages Swift's trademarks, her record label and its merchandising arm.

The lawsuit says the album, its promotion and the products surrounding it caused "textbook reverse confusion: a junior user's overwhelming commercial presence drowns out the senior user's mark, until consumers begin to assume that the original is the imitation. What Plaintiff had built over twelve years, Defendants threatened to swallow in weeks."

A representative for Swift declined comment on the lawsuit.



Taylor Swift appears at the MTV Video Music Awards in Elmont, N.Y., on Sept. 11, 2024. (AP)

Wade and her attorney say that the existence and trademark of "Confessions of a Showgirl" would not have escaped the notice of Swift's team.

The lawsuit says the US Patent and Trademark Office declined to grant a trademark registration to "Life of a Showgirl" over potential confusion with the existing trademark.

"Defendants were therefore placed on actual notice that their chosen designation was likely to be confused with a mark that already belonged to someone," the lawsuit says. "They continued using it anyway."

A letter issued by the office in early March says the application was suspended due to potential confusion with another pending trademark filed earlier, for "Showgirl," by a third party and pertaining to perfume. It also cited a "Likelihood of Confusion Refusal" based on the existing "Confessions" trademark.

The lawsuit seeks an injunction permanently barring Swift and her companies from using the "Life of a Showgirl" name and imagery, and monetary damages to be determined at trial, including profits attributable to the use of the brand.

## Sweeney gets nod

# Cardi B, Curry, Bieber join Webby nominees

NEW YORK, April 1, (AP) — Cardi B, Steph Curry, Dwayne Johnson, Justin Bieber and the use of Sydney Sweeney's bathwater are among the nominees for this year's Webby Awards, which mark their 30th year recognizing the best online content and creators.

The International Academy of Digital Arts & Sciences on Tuesday is announcing the nominees, the result of more than 13,000 entries from over 70 countries. The Associated Press got an early look.

Webby nominations went to social media teams behind such political figures as New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani and California Gov. Gavin Newsom, while Kendall Jenner's Super Bowl tongue-in-cheek Fanatics Sportsbook ad "Bet on Kendall," about her bad luck dating athletes, earned three nods. Jenner will go head-to-head in the category of best viral PR campaigns with Sweeney, who offered her bathwater for fans to lather up with in a limited-edition soap made by Dr. Squatch.

The dozens of Webby awards are broken up into eight big categories, including games, podcasts, website and mobile sites, video and film, apps and software, AI, and advertising, media and PR.

Winners will be announced April 21. An awards ceremony hosted by Josh Johnson, a correspondent and writer for "The Daily Show," will be held May 11 in New York.

The organizations with the most nods include Google with 46, PBS with 29, Apple with 23, The Walt Disney Company with 23, NBCUniversal with 22 and Netflix with 22.

Some of 2025's out-of-left-field products were recognized for their virality, including Absolut's Tabasco-flavored vodka, cough drop maker Ricola offering a limited-edition scarf infused with its "signature Swiss alpine herbs" and two that leaned on a classic French pastry - Panera Bread's Croissant Clutch handbag and Lidl's Eau de Croissant fragrance.

The language-learning app Duolingo once again managed to grab attention with the faked death of its beloved mascot owl, Duo. That campaign - which prompted Dua Lipa to wittily respond on X with "Til' death duo part" - was nominated for best PR campaign and best use of earned media. Lipa, herself, is in the running for her own Webby after Apple chronicled a full day on her Radical Optimism tour.

## Promotion

The finale of "Stranger Things" was a cultural phenomenon last year and its promotion, including a mobile scavenger hunt where users tapped a 20-sided die to enter the Upside Down, earned three nods. Speaking of scavenger hunts, Google Maps and Spotify were used in a nominated campaign for Bad Bunny fans to find track titles from his album "Debi Tirar Más Fotos."

A Los Angeles billboard featuring Curry got a nomination for going viral because it looks like he's shooting the moon, while fellow NBA star LeBron James' commercial for Amazon, showing him considering different post-basketball careers like barber and lounge singer, grabbed a nod for best collaboration.

The awards are selected by the academy, while the Webby People's Voice Award is voted on by fans around the world. Voting for that award is open until April 16.

The music video for "Luther" by Kendrick Lamar and SZA is up against Sabrina Carpenter's "Tears," Rosalía's "Berghain," Little Simz's "Young" and Claude's "C'est La Vie," which competed at the Eurovision Song Contest. Lamar won last year's music video Webby for "Not Like Us."

Two-time Oscar nominee Benedict Cumberbatch nabbed two nominations for delivering dramatic readings of Amazon customer reviews for the second chapter of its "Five Star Theater" campaign. Blackpink's Lisa is also nominated for leading a troupe of professional ballerinas and dancers in an ad for NikeSKIMS, which triggered countless recreations on TikTok. Global girl group Katsyey earned a nod for their Gap "Better in Denim" commercial.

Dwayne Johnson's surprise visit to the Apalachee High School football team after a school shooting got a nomination in the best long-form video category. Lady Gaga answering fan questions on Spotify about the making of her album "Mayhem" was nominated for best events and livestream social campaign.

Food content creator Nick DiGiovanni earned two nominations, for putting MrBeast through culinary boot camp - a post that got more than 71 million views - and for cooking for animals, including a lion. MrBeast earned his own nod with the animated short series "MrBeast Lab."

The folks behind a Timothée Chalamet look-alike contest that attracted thousands of people, including Chalamet himself, were recognized, while Chalamet's ad for Cash App - co-starring a giant prickly-looking tropical fruit - was nominated under the branded entertainment short-form video and film.

Bieber broadcasting the behind-the-scenes preparations for his Coachella headlining set live on Twitch was nominated for community engagement, while Sonic's ad starring Terry Crews teaching acting for athletes earned one for best long-form branded entertainment.

Nominations for best feature podcast host went to "Good Hang with Amy Poehler," "Next Question with Katie Couric," "The Mel Robbins Podcast," "Reclaiming with Monica Lewinsky" and "Baby, This is Keke Palmer."

Palmer's podcast was also nominated in the interview or talk show category for entertainment and culture, alongside "Thanks Dad with Ego Nwodim," "All There Is with Anderson Cooper," "Office Ladies" and "Armchair Expert with Dax Shepard."



This combination of images shows Justin Bieber, (from left), Cardi B, and Stephen Curry. (AP)

## Film



This image released by A24 shows Zendaya in a scene from 'The Drama.' (AP)



This image released by A24 shows Hailey Benton Gates in a scene from 'The Drama.' (AP)

## Star couple fails to spark in rom-com

# 'The Drama' squanders Pattinson and Zendaya with grim set-up

LOS ANGELES, April 1, (AP) — Two couples. Too much party. One loaded question: What's the worst thing you've ever done?

The revelations that tumble from that truth-or-dare-style drinking game badly test a young couple in Kristoffer Borgli's baffling "The Drama," which wastes two of the planet's most gorgeous people and will surely get everyone involved in trouble for using a current American tragedy as a plot point.

Robert Pattinson and Zendaya star as Charlie Thompson and Emma Harwood, a genteel, engaged couple in Boston - he's a museum curator and she's a literary editor - whose relationship is upended when she reveals a dark secret from her past.

That secret shakes Charlie's love for his intended, messes with work, affects his personal life and prompts him to spiral out, overacting at every step. Of course, it dents his desire to get married. Can he ever see his love in the same way again?

"Can we just forget about it?" she asks him. "I don't want you to fixate on this." But he can't help it: He has visions, gets paranoid, watches friends - including a brilliant Alana Haim - run away.

"The Drama" is billed as a "sexy, contemporary romantic comedy" but the only accurate word in that description is "contemporary." The on-screen chemistry between Pattinson and Zendaya is more sibling-like - even before the revelation - and this is nowhere near a ha-ha rom-com like "Anyone But You." Not many romantic comedies have projectile vomiting and bloody wounds.

How well you really know someone is legitimate grounds to explore in a romantic drama, but writer-director Borgli has stumbled by making a wedding satire while putting a finger into a societal raw gash that's never something to use as a relationship test, which here is - spoiler alert - a school shooting.

It turns out Emma, as a bullied 15-year-old, planned a school assault with her dad's shotgun but never went

through with it. She even became an anti-gun advocate, but no matter. "She's obviously not the person you thought she was," says a friend.

The Norwegian Borgli, whose script namechecks French filmmaker Louis Malle and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, could have picked any subject to attempt to unmoor this couple - an affair, some pyromania, a minor felony, even an egregious dine-and-dash - but he picked a planned mass murder. And in a semi-comedy, or at least a cringe-comedy. It's too much to ask of this couple - or this movie.

Zendaya has been promoting "The Drama" by wearing something old, something new and something borrowed. She's trolling us that she might be already married to Tom Holland. But, again, she's also promoting a movie with an attempted school shooting.

Borgli leaves clues that his would-be couple are in trouble right from the beginning. In the first scene, Charlie spots Emma at a coffee shop and fobs about loving the book she's reading, establishing lying at the basis of their relationship. We then watch them navigate the wedding-industrial complex, with visits to photographers and florists, mining humor from the weirdness of freelance wedding DJs and a very aggressive dance instructor. The fact that the couple emitted few sparks when they were in love compounds the lack of investment when that love collapses.

And yet the topic of school shootings - so cavalierly introduced - won't go away. Borgli makes it almost a laugh line - in one scene, Charlie tosses Emma's "Coffee or I'll Shoot" mug into the trash. But the writer-director has miscalculated badly. Maybe he's trolling America but "The Drama" is clearly the worst thing he's ever done.

"The Drama," a A24 release that hits movie theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for "language, sexual content and some violence." Running time: 104 minutes. One star out of four.

## Variety

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump drew applause Tuesday night as he attended the opening of the musical "Chicago" at the Kennedy Center for what could be one of his last visits there for a show before he closes the performing arts institution for a two-year renovation in July.

Trump made the short trip from the White House just after signing an executive order to create a nationwide list of verified eligible voters and to restrict mail-in voting, a move that drew swift legal threats from state Democratic officials.

The president watched the performance alongside his wife, first lady Melania Trump. As the couple entered, some in the crowd booed, but they were drowned out by even louder cheers from the rest of the crowd.

It was the Trumps' first time together at the Kennedy Center since the premiere of the documentary "Melania" in January. The Republican president also attended the opening-night performance of "Les Misérables" last summer, where he was both booed and cheered.

Some of those arriving for the show before Trump didn't know he was planning to be there, despite the extra layers of security. Others said they got a voicemail or email about a special guest being in attendance, but were still surprised to learn it was Trump.

Bobi Jo Swartz, 38, an EMT and paramedic firefighter from the Harpers Ferry area in West Virginia, said she was "definitely shocked" to pull up and see security that included bomb-sniffing dogs checking vehicles. But she also said she "kind of figured" it was either Trump or Vice President JD Vance seeing the show. (AP)



Trump

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.: Reality TV star Joseph Duggar posted a \$600,000 bond Tuesday and is flying home to Arkansas after making a first appearance in Florida on molestation charges involving a child under the age of 12, his attorney said.

Duggar was arrested earlier this month in Arkansas and was transferred to the Bay County Jail in Panama City, Florida, to face charges of lewd and lascivious molestation on a child under 12 and lewd and lascivious contact.

Judge Brantley Clark on Tuesday also barred Duggar, 31, from having unsupervised contact with any person under 18, court documents show.

Duggar, who starred with his parents and siblings in TLC's "19 Kids and Counting," was arrested March 18 in Tontitown, Arkansas, after police officers interviewed a 14-year-old girl who told them Duggar had molested her several times during a family trip to Panama City Beach, Florida, when she was 9.

The girl's father told police in Arkansas that he confronted Duggar about the abuse and Duggar admitted to it, an arrest affidavit said. Police officers in Tontitown had the father call Duggar with a detective on the line, and he again admitted to the actions, according to the affidavit. (AP)

WASHINGTON: A judge has dismissed a lawsuit against Fox News, which was sued by a fired journalist who had accused the network of violating sick leave law and also targeting him for political views.

Jason Donner lost the sick leave claim Monday, the last remaining issue in his lawsuit in federal court in Washington.

Donner was fired in 2022. He was accused of failing to give proper notice when taking a sick day and having a contentious, unflattering phone conversation with his boss about it.

U.S. District Judge Amir Ali ruled in Fox's favor, saying Donner's conduct was not protected by the District of Columbia's sick leave law. The judge noted that Fox requires an ill employee to contact a supervisor as soon as possible and no later than two hours after a start time. (AP)

## 'Analog' assignment helps students learn life lessons

## A college instructor turns to typewriters to fight AI

NEW YORK, April 1, (AP) — The scene is right out of the 1950s with students pecking away at manual typewriters, the machines dinging at the end of each line.

Once each semester, Grit Matthias Phelps, a German language instructor at Cornell University, introduces her students to the raw feeling of typing without online assistance. No screens, online dictionaries, spellcheckers or delete keys.

The exercise started in spring 2023 as Phelps grew frustrated with the reality that students were using generative AI and online translation platforms to churn out grammatically perfect assignments.

"What's the point of me reading it if it's already correct anyway, and you didn't write it yourself? Could you produce it without your computer?" said Phelps.

She wanted students to understand what writing, thinking and classrooms were like before everything turned digital. So, she found a few dozen old manual typewriters in thrift shops and online marketplaces, and created what her syllabus calls an "analog" assignment.

It might be premature to say that typewriters appears making a comeback beyond Cornell's campus. But the revival is part of a national trend toward old-school testing methods like in-class pen-and-paper exams and oral tests to prevent AI use for assignments on laptops.

Students arrived for class on a recent analog day to find typewriters at the desks, some with German and some with QWERTY keyboards.

"I was so confused. I had no idea what was happening. I'd seen typewriters in movies, but they don't tell you how a typewriter works," said Catherine Mong, 19, a freshman in Phelps' Intro to German class. "I didn't know there was a whole science to using a typewriter."

Like a rotary phone, the manual typewriter appears simple but is not intuitive to the smartphone generation. Phelps demonstrated how to feed the paper manually, striking the keys with force but not so hard the letters would smudge. She explained that the ding bell signifies the end of a line and the need to manually return the carriage to start the next line. ("Oh," said one student, "that's why it's called 'return.'")



Students use typewriters to complete a writing assignment in German at Cornell University, Friday, March 20, 2026, in Ithaca, N.Y. Their professor, Grit Matthias Phelps, brings out the typewriters once each semester for students to disconnect from technology and connect with the assignment in a different way. (AP)

"Everything slows down. It's like back in the old days when you really did one thing at a time. And there was joy in doing it," said Phelps, who brings in her two children, aged 7 and 9, to serve as "tech support" and ensure no one has their phones out.

The assignment carries lessons beyond simply how to use a typewriter, which is the whole point.

"It dawned on me that the difference with typing on a typewriter is not just how you interact with the typewriter, but how you interact with the

world around you," said computer science major Ratchaphon Lertdamrongwong, a sophomore, whose class had to write a critique of a German movie they'd watched.

In the absence of screens, there are no notifications to distract you as you write. Without every answer readily available at his fingertips, he asked his classmates for help, which Phelps heartily encouraged.

"While writing the essay, I had to talk a lot more, socialize a lot more, which I guess was normal back then," Lertdamrongwong said, referring to the typewriter era. "But it's drastically different from how we interact within the classroom in modern times. People are always on a laptop, always on the phone."

Without a delete key and the ability to correct every mistake, he paused to think more intentionally about his writing.

"This might sound bad, but I was forced to actually think about the problem on my own instead of delegating to AI or Google search," he said.

Most students found their pinkies weren't strong enough to touch-type, so they typed more slowly, pecking at the keyboard with their index fingers.

Mong, the freshman, faced the added challenge of a recently broken wrist, requiring her to use just one hand. The self-described perfectionist was initially frustrated with how messy her page looked with odd spacing between certain letters and misspellings. (Phelps told students to backspace and type 'X's over errors.)

"This thing I handed in had pencil marks all over it and definitely did not look clean or finished. But it's part of the process of learning that you're going to make mistakes," said Mong, who found the assignment of typing a poem "fun and challenging."

She embraced the odd spacing and played with the visual boundaries of the page to indent and fragment lines in the style of poet E.E. Cummings. It took several sheets of paper and many mistakes, all of which Mong saved.

"I'm probably going to hang them on my wall," Mong said. "I'm kind of fascinated by typewriters. I told all my friends, I did a German test on a typewriter!"

## Lifestyle



Tourists enjoy spring time amid blossoms in Guiyang, southwest China's Guizhou Province, March 29, 2026. (Xinhua)

## China's blooming flower trails draw spring travelers

In Yuncheng City, north China's Shanxi Province, newly launched travel routes along blooming flower fields are gaining steam among tourists, energizing its historical attractions as spring fragrances fill the air.

"My family and I followed the route to visit the cherry blossom garden and the Guanque Tower in Yongji County, as it is the perfect season for flower viewing in Yuncheng," said Zhao Yuxiang, a local resident, adding that he plans to take several road trips

to fully explore the city's spring glamour.

As temperatures rise across China, flowering landscapes in both urban and rural areas are revitalizing the tourism market, creating fresh opportunities for visitor experiences. (Xinhua)

## Australia considers court action

## 'Big Tech ignore child account ban'

MELBOURNE, Australia, April 1, (Agencies): Australia's online safety watchdog said Tuesday it was considering court action against Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube alleging they are not doing enough to keep Australian children younger than 16 off their platforms.

Experts say the Australian courts could decide what steps the platforms can reasonably be expected to take under the laws that took effect on Dec. 10 banning young children from holding accounts.

Julie Inman Grant, who is Australia's eSafety Commissioner, on Tuesday released her first compliance report since those laws took effect demanding 10 platforms remove all Australian account-holders younger than 16.

While 5 million Australian accounts had been deactivated, a substantial number of Australian children continued to retain accounts, create new accounts and pass platforms' age assurance systems, the report said.

Inman Grant said in a statement her office had "significant concerns about the compliance" of half of those 10 platforms. Her office was gathering evidence against the five that they had not taken "reasonable steps" to prevent young children holding accounts.

Courts could order fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars (\$33 million) for systemic failures to comply. eSafety would decide on whether to initiate court action against any platform by midyear.

Age-restricted platforms that aren't under investigation are Reddit, X, Kick, Threads and Twitch.

Communications Minister Anika Wells said the five criticized platforms were deliberately not complying with Australian law.

"Social media platforms are choosing to do the absolute bare minimum because they want these laws to fail," Wells told reporters.

"This is the world-leading law. We're the first in the world to do it. Of course they don't want these laws to work because they want that to be a chilling effect on the dozen countries that have come out since Dec. 10 to follow Australia's step," she added.

eSafety had identified "poor practices" such as platforms allowing unlimited attempts for a user to pass their age assurance methods and prompting the user to try to pass the age assurance method even after they declared themselves underage.

Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, told The Associated Press it

was committed to complying with Australia's social media ban. "We've also been clear that accurately determining age online is a challenge for the whole industry," the statement said.

Snap Inc., the parent company of Snapchat, said it has locked 450,000 accounts in compliance with the law and continued to lock more every day.

"Snapchat remains fully committed to implementing reasonable steps under the legislation and supporting its underlying goal of improving online safety for young Australians," a Snap statement said.

TikTok declined to comment on Tuesday and Alphabet Inc., which owns YouTube and Google, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Lisa Given, an information sciences expert at RMIT University in Melbourne, said she expected the courts will decide whether platforms have taken "reasonable steps" to exclude young children.

"If a tech company has said: look, we put in age assurance, we've done all these steps. That's reasonable. Even though the aged assurance technologies are flawed, whose fault is that? Should they be held accountable for a piece of technology that is not 100% and likely not going to be 100% foolproof any time soon?" Given said.

knowing she is no longer suffering and is reunited with her sisters in peace," she added. (AP)

BEIJING: China has launched a year-long nationwide campaign to reinforce security management of cultural relics, requiring all state-owned museums to conduct an item-by-item inventory of their collections.

According to the National Cultural Heritage Administration (NCHA), the campaign aims to verify the accuracy of collection records, establish routine and standardized inventory mechanisms, and concurrently pilot the second national census of movable cultural relics.

Authorities will also conduct comprehensive inspections of security risks in museum collections, strengthen preventive measures, and enhance emergency response capabilities, the administration said.

The initiative follows a series of recent policy measures. In December 2025, a national museum work conference stressed that collection management should remain a top priority for museums, with systematic efforts in collection, preservation, research and interpretation, which will be incorporated into the 15th Five-Year (2026-2030) Plan for cultural heritage. (Xinhua)

## Variety

NEW YORK: Mary Beth Hurt, a Tony Award-nominated actor who starred on Broadway in "Benefactors" with Glenn Close and reunited with Close for the movie "The World According to Garp," has died. She was 79.

Hurt died Saturday in New Jersey after she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2015, according to her daughter, Molly Schrader. Hurt was the wife of filmmaker Paul Schrader and appeared in his movies "Affliction" and "Light Sleeper." He had moved into Hunt's senior-living facility in 2023 to stay close to her.

"She was an actress, a wife, a sister, a mother, an aunt, a friend," her daughter wrote in an Instagram post, saying Hurt took on those roles "with grace and a kind ferocity." "Although we're grieving there is some comfort in



Hurt

## Stage

## 'Beaches' to hit Broadway

## Iris Rainer Dart returns to tell her epic tale of female bonds

NEW YORK, April 1, (AP) — When Iris Rainer Dart's daughter was in nursery school in the late 1980s, she kept noticing an odd thing happening with her mom and finally confronted her.

"She came to me one day and she said, 'Mommy, why do all the other mothers come up to you and say, 'I cried'?' Dart recalls. "I said, 'Well, Mommy wrote a story that makes people cry.' She didn't think that was so great."

A lot of people, respectfully, disagree. That story was "Beaches," which celebrates the deep bonds of female friendship as it traces the decades-long intertwined lives of two very different women, the messy Cee Cee Bloom and buttoned-up Bertie White.

"Women's friends are the ones who get them through this life," Dart says. "Husbands are great, but they ain't your girlfriend, and they ain't the one who's going to take your call at four o'clock in the morning."

"Beaches" became one of the great all-time cry-inducing stories even as it transcended mediums. It started as a novel, then a movie starring Bette Midler and Barbara Hershey, a TV movie with Idina Menzel and Nia Long, an audiobook and now a Broadway musical.

Dart, 82, co-wrote the musical's story with Thom Thomas and supplied lyrics to songs by Mike Stoller, half the legendary songwriting team of Leiber & Stoller. "Beaches" stars Kelli Barrett as Bertie and Jessica Vosk as Cee Cee and comes to Broadway after a more than 10-year development period. It opens April 22.

Dart, who has been a regular at rehearsals, was buzzing after a recent run-through. She took note of how her husband - who has seen many performances - reacted. "I watched him from a few rows back pull his handkerchief out of his pocket. And I thought, 'OK, we're good. We got him, we got him.'"

Lonny Price, who directs the musical with Matt Cowart, says Dart is not precious about her creation and is always open to changes or fresh ideas.

"She's an endless font for these characters," says Price. "You'd think she would have expressed all there is to say about them, but she keeps finding new ways to express them and in humorous and dramatic and very useful ways for a libretto."

Musical theater was Dart's first love, before she wrote for "The Sonny & Cher Show" and "Cher" and launched a career as a novelist. She started as a child actor in Pittsburgh, twice wrote the varsity musical with "Wicked" creator Stephen Schwartz at Carnegie Mellon University and graduated with a theater degree.



Author Iris Rainer Dart appears during a tech rehearsal for the musical 'Beaches' in New York on March 16, 2026. (AP)

"Beaches" draws on the real-life close friendship Dart developed with her cousin, Sandy, who lived in Miami Beach. Their families would frequently visit each other and meet in Atlantic City or another beach, giving the fictional work its structure. Letters between visits kept the relationship alive.

Sandy married early, moved to Cleveland and had kids right away, following a more conventional path. Dart was an actor rising up through summer stock, then a writer chasing the arts. (There's a bit of Cher in Cee Cee, as there is some Dart.)

"We balanced each other out. What one lacked, the other made up for. So that was what kicked it all off," Dart says. "I felt as though we were one person."

At one point in her own life, Dart called Sandy in a panic - not even saying hello - to ask if she had ever had chickenpox. Her son had it now and Dart was pregnant - so the answer could endanger her unborn daughter. Sandy knew the answer.

"She said, 'You have a pockmark on your left thigh.' I said: 'My husband doesn't know that about me.' And she says, 'Honey, we've been married longer.'"

In the musical, Dart has given Bertie the song "My Best" with the lyrics: "When I am with her, it's as if we share one heart/And if I ever lost her I would fall apart."

The musical, like the beloved film directed by Gary Marshall, traces the friendship sparked in Atlantic City in 1951 that's tested over the years by a love triangle, failed marriages, single parenthood and illness.

Cowart says it is a show that explores the often-intense friendships that women maintain: "I see that very much in the difference between my

male friends and seeing my wife with her friends. It's just a different level of closeness. It's beautiful. It should be celebrated."

The birth of "Beaches" wasn't always smooth, with Dart's literary agent initially finding metaphorical doors slammed in her face. "She tried to tell the story to publishers, and they said, 'It's not commercial. Who cares about two little girls who meet on a beach in Atlantic City?'"

"After the publication of Dart's novel 'The Boys in the Mail Room' in 1980 - a bestseller inspired about a quartet of trainees in a Hollywood studio mailroom who went on to big things - suddenly people wanted to go back to "Beaches."

The Hollywood studio that turned the book into a movie wanted to change things - like some names and the illness that Bertie contracts - and Dart chose not to turn her story into a screenplay, on the advice of her husband, Stephen Dart.

"He said, 'I think you should just write another book or write whatever you want, but don't try and do your version of the story because you'll never be happy.' And he was absolutely right."

The leap to the stage was immeasurably easy since Dart's love of musicals led her to include plenty of music in the novel, including "You'll Never Walk Alone" by Rodgers and Hammerstein and "I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise" by George Gershwin. The movie, of course, famously added the hit song "The Wind Beneath My Wings," which has made the transition to stage.

"Everybody loves that song. They identify it with the piece. So, it's crazy not to use it," she says. "I stay in a place in New York and the doorman said to me, 'How's it going Mrs. Dart? You are using the song, aren't you?'"

## Book to explore life on social media

## Green writing his first novel for adults

LOS ANGELES, April 1, (AP) — John Green's first novel in nearly a decade is also a kind of debut - a work of fiction for adults.

The author of such favorites for young people as "The Fault in Our Stars" and "Looking for Alaska" has written a story about celebrity and the attention economy, "Hollywood, Ending," Dutton Books, a Penguin Random House imprint, will release the novel on Sept. 22.

According to Dutton, "Hollywood, Ending" centers on two young actors and how their lives change through their roles in the biopic "Andy Warhol Never Gets Old."

"It's a book about navigating love and loss all while participating in the



Author John Green poses in his studio in Indianapolis on Jan. 21, 2026. (AP)

strange, complicated exchanges of attention and trauma of the social internet that has become something no longer reserved for movie stars alone," Green said in a statement released Tuesday.

His most recent novel, "Turtles All the Way Down," came out in 2017.

During an appearance at Stanford University in 2024, Green said he expected to be moving away from young adult fiction, explaining that he felt more "emotionally and intellectually" distant from the age group.

The 48-year-old author, whose novels have sold millions of copies, knows a few things about fame, and the movie industry. "The Fault in Our Stars" and "Paper Towns" are among his works that have been adapted into films.

## Plant-based meals support heart health and moderation

## Renew healthy eating habits with monks spring guide

TRIKORFO, Greece, April 1, (AP): Can a centuries-old ritual of spiritual renewal rekindle a New Year's resolution to build healthy eating habits before it fades in the spring?

For six weeks every year, millions of Orthodox Christians around the world adopt a largely vegan diet, abstaining from meat, dairy products, eggs, and fish with backbones. Oil and wine also are prohibited on weekdays during the 40-day Lenten period before Orthodox Easter, which often falls later than its Catholic and Anglican counterpart.

The annual adherence to a plant-based, Mediterranean-style meal plan drives a communal rediscovery of vegetables and oil-free cooking methods in majority-Orthodox countries.

In Greece, even McDonald's franchises get into the lean Lent spirit by adding seasonal menu items that meet most of the proscriptions of the Greek Orthodox Church. The menu includes shrimp wraps, shrimp salad, vegetable spring rolls and plant-based McVeggie burgers but is not oil-free.

Although following Eastern Orthodox dietary guidelines before Easter is often referred to as fasting, the focus is on going without certain foods, not refraining from eating altogether. The



Monks prepare the meals at the Monastery of St. Augustine and Seraphim of Sarov in the village of Trikorfo, about 236 kilometers (147 miles) northwest of Athens, Friday, March 20, 2026. (AP)

rules are not rigid but can be adapted to account for personal needs.

Here's a look at the annual alimentary tradition, along with reasons to consider sticking with a similar diet and cautionary advice from nutritionists.

Christian traditions diverge between East and West ahead of Easter, and not just in their methods for determining the most important date on their calendars. Catholics are encouraged to give up one or more personal indulgences

during Lent but get to decide whether to deny themselves dessert, alcohol, video games, swearing or something else. Members of the Orthodox Church forgo animal products except for shellfish.

Gone are Greeks' beloved dishes like mousaka and souvlakia - grilled meat wrapped with toppings. So are dairy products like milk and cheese. Vertebrate fish like anchovies, mullet and hake are no-nos too, although shrimp, oysters and calamari are permitted.

On a lush coastal hillside in central Greece, 40 monks closely follow these rules at the Monastery of St. Augustine and Seraphim. The monks, who wear black robes and full beards, grow and harvest most of their own produce in the monastery's gardens, including an abundance of zucchini and tomatoes.

Their meals during Lent are basic but not bland. The monks have mastered methods to replicate familiar tastes and textures. Oven-roasted potatoes are coated with tahini instead of oil to preserve the crunch factor. Vegetable stock prepared from scratch gives lentil dishes a hearty flavor.

The monks listen to prayers read

aloud as they eat.

Father Nektarios Moulatsiotis, the monastery's affable abbot, says the practice of fasting and following a restricted diet is essential for deep reflection and focus required for the spiritual preparation for Easter. He compares it to endurance training.

"In the same way someone goes to the gym to shape their body," Nektarios said, "the church is a gym for the soul."

Occasional hunger pangs aren't something to resist; they are part of the plan. The idea is simple: less indulgence, more clarity.

"You cannot really pray, study, chant or do any spiritual exercise with a full stomach," he said with a chuckle.

Nektarios argues that a nutritious yet disciplined diet can produce benefits that apply outside of a religious setting as much as inside of one, such as a sense of greater self-control and enhanced awareness.

Orthodox monks observe several fasting periods that limit what, when and how much they eat for most of the year. Researchers have studied their health and food intake for decades to determine if their customs hold any clues to preventing heart disease, type

2 diabetes and strokes.

However, the advantages of eating a balanced diet that includes whole grains, vegetables, fruits and legumes are well-established. Reduce consumption of meat, saturated fats and processed foods long enough, and the body typically responds.

"Fasting certainly has benefits, provided it's done correctly," Eirini Babaroutsi, a sports nutritionist at the Hellenic Athletics Federation, said. For example, Orthodox Christians tend to eat more fiber during Lent, which helps the digestive system function better, she said.

"It also matters what we do eat, not simply what we avoid," Babaroutsi said. "With the right combinations, we can get all the nutrients we need."

Meals that meet the guidelines aren't confined to the ingredients found in Orthodox-majority countries in Southern and Eastern Europe. Babaroutsi suggests porridge with oat milk, vegetable wraps with olive paste, and high-quality peanut butter as helpful international additions.

There are a few considerations. A six-week fasting cycle is not advisable for older adults and young children, Babaroutsi said.

## Tips for effective meditation practice

## How mindfulness meditation boosts emotional balance and well-being

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

By Yuval Hadash and J. David Creswell

Carnegie Mellon University

Imagine being asked to sit alone in a quiet room for 15 minutes with nothing to do - no phone, no music, no external distraction. In a well-known 2014 study, many participants found that task so challenging that they chose to press a button to give themselves an unpleasant electric shock instead of continuing to sit with their thoughts and sensations.

Because being with their own thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations can be so difficult, people often turn away from them. Smartphones offer constant distraction from boredom or stress, allowing users to disengage from their present-moment sensations and thoughts with a quick swipe or tap.

But avoiding unpleasant internal experience can backfire. Studies show that doing so is associated with a range of mental health problems, including anxiety and depression.

We are psychological scientists who study mindfulness and how it affects stress, health and well-being.

Mindfulness is a mental state that people can learn to cultivate through training. When people are mindful, they direct their attention toward their moment-to-moment bodily sensations, emotions and thoughts, and they meet those experiences with an attitude of curiosity and open acceptance.

Mindfulness can be cultivated through "mindful moments" in daily life, moments in which people intentionally stay present with what they do, hear, see or feel. However, formal mindfulness meditation involves sustained practice that systematically trains attention and acceptance. Our research shows that training acceptance during mindfulness meditation can substantially improve your emotional well-being.

Popular culture often portrays mindfulness as a way of relaxing. But we've found that mindfulness practice can often feel surprisingly difficult. In one of our studies, participants who directed their attention to their thoughts and feelings during a 20-minute mindfulness meditation noticed six times more unpleasant experiences than pleasant



A meditation teacher meditates in her studio with her dog on Sept. 30, 2024, in Woodland Hills, Calif. (AP)

ones. This doesn't mean they were doing it wrong. Turning your attention inward can feel challenging. Often, it brings you into contact with experiences that you normally try to push away, such as feeling bored, uncomfortable or agitated. However, we've also found that facing difficult experiences during mindfulness training can have positive effects.

In particular, adopting an accepting attitude toward your experiences seems to drive many of the positive effects of mindfulness. Our research shows that developing the capacity for acceptance through mindfulness meditation can reduce feelings of loneliness and increase positive emotions, such as happiness. It also reduces stress hormones and helps people notice more positive experiences during stressful situations.

In these studies, we have found that acceptance is the critical driver. When acceptance is removed from mindfulness training, these benefits largely disappear.

A key part of mindfulness practice involves turning toward difficult experiences, such as like stress, boredom and pain, rather than seeking distractions or pushing those experiences away. It means noticing feelings and thoughts as they arise, sensing how they show up in the body, and approaching them with an attitude of acceptance rather than judgment or resistance.

A helpful way to think about this

comes from the "two arrows" metaphor, which is rooted in East Asian Buddhist traditions. It teaches that there are two types of suffering, which can be likened to being struck by two arrows.

The first arrow is the unavoidable unpleasant experience that comes with being human — for example, feeling exhausted after a poor night's sleep. (AP)

The second arrow is how we react to that unpleasantness: tensing up, resisting it, replaying it in our mind, criticizing ourselves or trying to escape it. Often this second arrow adds more suffering than the original unpleasant experience.

In mindfulness practice, the goal is not to stop having unpleasant sensations and feelings. Instead, mindfulness helps people accept the unavoidable difficulties of that first arrow and to soften the second arrow by letting go of struggle with those experiences and reactions that make them worse.

For example, let yourself feel bored without immediately reaching for distraction. Acknowledge anxiety, sadness or grief with openness, instead of trying to suppress those feelings or fueling them with harsh self-criticism.

One way to cultivate this attitude is to treat thoughts, emotions and sensations as guests in your inner landscape. Instead of fighting them or clinging to them, notice when they arise. Acknowledge and welcome them, and when they naturally change, let them go. (AP)

## Most underrecognized disease

## Forum calls for urgent action on psoriasis

STOCKHOLM, April 1, (AP): IFPA (The International Federation of Psoriasis Associations) - is convening the first-ever regional summit dedicated exclusively to psoriasis in Africa - one of the continent's most underrecognized chronic diseases.

The IFPA Forum Africa 2026 - Local Strength, United Action will take place on 7-9 May 2026 in Nairobi, Kenya, and will bring together policymakers, clinicians, researchers, and patient organizations to address a condition that remains severely under-recognized and underdiagnosed across the continent.

The Hidden Burden of Psoriasis in Africa  
Psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are

chronic non-communicable diseases with no cure that can cause pain, disability, and are closely linked to other serious NCDs, like diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, depression, and more. As a condition, visible on the skin, it often leads to stigma, affects mental health and can also cause economic hardship. Yet across Africa it remains under-recognized, underdiagnosed, and undertreated.

Over 3.5 million people are estimated to live with psoriasis across Africa - a continent of approximately 1.3 billion population. As experts warn the real psoriasis burden is likely higher due to limited epidemiological data, low awareness of the disease and severe shortages of specialists. Reported prev-

alence in parts of East, West, Central, and Southern Africa is as low as 0.06%, reflecting widespread underdiagnosis.

Access to care is extremely limited: there is one dermatologist per more than a million people in Africa, compared with 36 per million in the United States and 65 per million in Germany. With most care paid out of pocket, treatment for psoriasis is often unaffordable, meaning the disease can become a pathway into poverty for those affected and their families.

To drive change, IFPA is convening regional and global stakeholders at this first-of-its-kind Forum, working alongside patient organizations like PsorAfrica to create a roadmap for tackling psoriasis in Africa.

## Over 110 new deep-sea species discovered

SYDNEY, April 1, (Xinhua): Marine researchers have identified more than 110 new fish and invertebrate species from the deep waters of Australia's Coral Sea Marine Park.

Marine taxonomists said the number could exceed 200 as more cryptic species are identified in one of the region's largest deep-sea biodiversity surveys, said a statement on Wednesday from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), Australia's national science agency.

The discoveries were made by scientists on board the CSIRO research vessel Investigator. Specimens were collected from depths of 200 to 3,000 meters across seamounts, atolls and unexplored deep reefs in the million-square-kilo-

meter marine park.

Will White, CSIRO voyage chief scientist and shark expert, said the finds, which are "crucial for protecting Australia's marine biodiversity," include new species of rays, deepwater catsharks and chimaeras.

Other notable discoveries included species of brittlestars, crabs, sea anemones and sponges that are new to science, with the voyage samples to be curated in national collections for future research, CSIRO said.

The team recorded a rich diversity of marine life using the Investigator's deep-towed camera, including the rare sand tiger shark, a deep-water relative of the grey nurse shark, it said.



A Greenpeace boat approaches the humpback whale, which is still stuck off near the island of Poel, Germany, Wednesday, April 1. (AP)

## Rescuers lose hope for whale stranded in Baltic Sea

Rescuers said Wednesday that they have lost hope for the humpback whale that has become stranded repeatedly off Germany's Baltic Sea coast and now expect it to die in the inlet where it currently lies.

The whale swam into an inlet on the small island of Poel, near the port of Wismar, on Tuesday and got stuck again. Last week, it was rescued from even shallower water

at Timmendorfer Strand, a resort town around 50 kilometers (over 30 miles) from its current location, with the help of an excavator, but it soon ran into trouble again.

In recent days, authorities have pursued a strategy of trying to give the exhausted mammal peace and quiet so that it can gather enough strength to swim away under its own steam, while sometimes approaching it with boats to motivate

it to set off. Burkard Baschek, the scientific director of the Ocean Museum Germany and the scientific coordinator of the rescue effort, said the whale was breathing at very irregular intervals on Wednesday and that drone photos showed little sign of activity in the sediment under the 12-15 meter (39-49 foot) animal. It barely reacted when approached. (AP)

## 38 deaths

## Measles cases surge in B'desh

DHAKA, April 1, (Xinhua): The Bangladeshi government is considering a hybrid learning model for metropolitan schools, combining online and in-person classes, amid a deepening global energy crisis and a surge in measles cases.

Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon made this disclosure on Tuesday after a meeting with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in the chair.

"We'll prepare a proposal specifying how many days per week will be dedicated to online instruction and how many to in-person teaching," the minister said.

On the other hand, measles cases began rising in December and have escalated sharply this month.

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

Meanwhile, the number of measles cases in Mongolia continues to increase, the country's National Center for Communicable Diseases (NCCD) said on Tuesday.

Over the past 24 hours, 33 new cases have been reported across the country, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 14,498, according to the NCCD.

Nearly half of all reported cases have been recorded in Ulan Bator, the national capital, which is home to about half of Mongolia's population, said the center.

A total of 15 measles-related deaths have been reported nationwide since the current outbreak was declared 401 days ago.

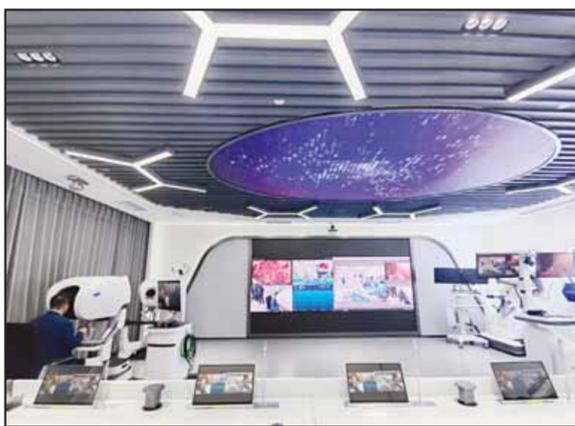
The NCCD urged individuals who have not yet been vaccinated to get immunized in order to protect themselves and others.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease transmitted through respiratory droplets and direct contact.

Common symptoms include fever, dry cough, runny nose, sore throat and inflamed eyes. The disease is preventable through vaccination.

Indonesia's Ministry of Health has reported a 93-percent decline in daily measles cases amid an ongoing outbreak, with figures dropping from a peak of 2,220 cases in early 2026 to 146 in mid-March, officials said on Monday.

"The downward trend has been consistently observed across 14 provinces and 10 regencies and cities that previously recorded case surges in late 2025 and early 2026," said Andi Sagumi, the ministry's acting director general of disease control.



A doctor conducts a remote operation at the international remote robotic center of the West China Hospital of Sichuan University in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan Province, March 20, 2026. (Xinhua)

## 'Sending techs out'

## Chinese surgical robots serve patients worldwide

CHENGDU, April 1, (Xinhua): Seated at a console inside a hospital in southwest China's Sichuan Province, Piotr Suwalski, a Polish doctor, fixed his gaze on the screen ahead of him while manipulating a surgical robot located more than 7,000 km away in Poland.

About two hours later, the surgery was successfully completed, boosting the doctor's confidence in promoting the technology back home.

Suwalski, director of the National Medical Institute under Poland's Ministry of the Interior and Administration, said the surgical field was exceptionally clear, while the patient experienced less bleeding compared with traditional open chest surgery.

The surgery was one of seven remote operations successfully conducted at the international remote robotic center of the West China Hospital of Sichuan University earlier this month in Chengdu, the provincial capital.

Inaugurated on March 21, the center aims to become an international smart-surgery platform, promoting a shift in medical services from "bringing patients in" to "sending technologies out."

Wu Hong, a liver transplant expert and also vice president of the hospital, said the establishment of the center means a tangible medical benefit for patients.

He highlighted hepatobiliary and pancreatic surgery as examples: "Compared with traveling to Chengdu for the surgery, patients and their families can now undergo robot-assisted surgery in their hometowns, cutting financial and time burdens by up to 80 percent."

To ensure safety during remote surgery, a professional team comprising surgical specialists, anesthesiologists, nursing staff, network engineers and equipment engineers has been set up at the center, operating under a 24/7 emergency response mechanism.

A Brazilian doctor, Carlos Eduardo Domene, also performed surgery from the center on a patient over 10,000 km away in Brazil via the remote robotic surgery system.

Also the president of Brazilian Robotics Association, Domene marveled at the device's ultra-high-definition, zero-latency performance.

"China's top-tier medical technologies and equipment are now being introduced to Brazil through the Belt and Road Initiative, benefiting more patients across South America," Domene added.

Curry reveals smile trick to beat pressure at the line

## Even the best feel pressure: Truth about clutch nerves in sports

SAN FRANCISCO, April 1, (AP): In December, Stephen Curry made a conscious effort to smile before he coolly converted two free throws with 12 seconds left that helped seal a 119-116 win against Phoenix.

He seemed calm. He wasn't - saying so afterward. Sometimes, even Curry's nerves kick in when the game is on the line, even 17 years into his NBA career and now at 38 years old.

"That's more mental warfare for me to just enjoy the moment," Curry said at the time. "I don't care how many free throws you've made, when you need two of them, you do get nervous, so the smile is more to kind of embrace the moment and enjoy it instead of overthinking or worrying about mechanics or anything. So I've been doing that a lot lately, like last couple years, just playing mind games with myself and enjoying the moment."

Other professionals find some comfort in Curry acknowledging his angst and anxieties, being he's one of the best in basketball and still has to work through things -- even in real time. It's relatively new for athletes to even be talking publicly about nerves, given the more open dialogue in recent years about the importance of mental health and seeking help through various struggles.

Los Angeles Dodgers manager Dave Roberts, whose club has won the past two World Series titles, happened to be in the stands at Chase Center to see Curry make those free throws on Dec. 20.

Roberts has witnessed so many of his own players deliver for the Dodgers in crucial moments on the big October playoff stage.

"I think that's telling that Steph would say that and there is an innate fear in people to fail in big spots or to be nervous. I think it's just important to admit it at times and then kind of move on from there," Roberts said this spring. "We were talking about it a couple days ago, those moments I think you mitigate the fear or the nerves from preparedness. I think Steph has shot so many free throws when he's tired in big spots, so to admit that he's nervous, he knows at the end of the day that he's prepared for that spot. Most of our guys, we talk about that a lot, so I think that's how they can get past that fear or nerve hurdle."

Chicago Bulls coach Billy Donovan polled his players earlier this season whether they considered a free throw with one second left in a tie game the same as one in the first quarter of a tie game. The answer was a resounding no.



Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry, right, gestures from the bench during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Washington Wizards in San Francisco. (AP)

"I said, 'Why is it different?' and they explained all the consequences of what would happen, but the reality is it's still the same exact shot it is in the first quarter or the second quarter," Donovan said. "And I find that guys in those moments have the ability to block out the consequences or what the ramifications are and really lock in to what they can control and the routine. The basket's still 15 feet away, it's still 10 feet high. And just because the circumstances may be different, the routine should be exactly the same."

When it comes to the nerve factor, mental performance coach Graham Betchart suggests one trick in the moment can somehow transform those fears of failure into something positive instead.

"The biggest surprise to most people is that great pro athletes have the same

feeling that a kid has, they just reframe it," Betchart said. "I remember one of the first pros I worked with, I said, 'What's pressure like for you?' He said, 'Graham, what you call pressure, I call joy.' I said, 'What does joy feel like?' He said, 'Joy feels like I'm going to pee in my pants, 10,000 butterflies in my stomach, heart is pounding, self doubt everywhere.' I said, 'That's joy?' He said, 'Yeah, 'cause when I feel that I'm about to go do what I love, which is play ball.' So we call that reframing. I think this is one of the biggest unlocks in the entire world."

Hall of Famer Jason Kidd, the Dallas Mavericks coach who played 19 NBA seasons and was a 10-time All-Star and 1994-95 Rookie of the Year, realizes sometimes fans might forget professional athletes are people, too.

And becoming fearful is a natural response to stress.

"It is healthy. I think that just lets everyone know you're human. Steph is human," Kidd said. "There are feelings and emotions but I don't know if he gets nervous. Free throws are like layups for him, like 2-foot putts. But it's also great that he is open to sharing that about his feelings, that's pretty cool."

Each day, Warriors guard De'Anthony Melton aims to make 10 free throws in a row. That way, when he gets into a game situation he tells himself the same thing: "Whatever happens, happens, you've just got to live with the results, but sometimes getting to the free-throw line can help you get into a rhythm and get your shot going, too."

Coaches have their moments, too. Doc Rivers doesn't always trust himself to make the right call in crunch time.

"There's nerves with everything. I can draw up a play as a coach and I know it's a good play, but I'm nervous if we're going to run it right or is it going to work. As a player, I was an 80-percent free-throw shooter, but it's still there. That's why you breathe deep and that's where routine comes in. The more you do the routine, the more it becomes normal. But there's nothing normal in life when you're shooting a free throw and there's 20,000 people screaming to make you miss, that's not normal in life. So you have to breathe your way through it."

Athletics pitcher Luis Severino spent the first nine years of his major league career in New York between the Yankees and Mets. That brought its own pressure, so the days he felt off on the mound, the nerves were worse.

### Underdog story worthy of a film script

## ZXMOTO's breakthrough win sparks online buzz

BERLIN, April 1, (Xinhua): Chinese motorcycle manufacturer ZXMOTO has sparked a wave of excitement across Chinese social media after securing a historic double victory at the Superbike World Championship (WSBK) last weekend in Portugal, in what many netizens see not only as a breakthrough moment for Chinese high-end manufacturing, but also as an underdog story worthy of a film script.

Brand founder and owner Zhang Xue was overwhelmed with emotion as he watched the races. In a post on social media after the win, he wrote: "You do something not for the result, but because of passion. And sometimes passion brings a different result." At the Portimao circuit, French rider Valentin Debise, racing on a ZXMOTO machine, won both Race 1 and Race 2 in the World SSP category, which runs as a support class to WSBK.

Widely regarded as one of the world's top production-based motorcycle racing series, the WSBK has long been dominated by established European and Japanese brands such as Ducati and Yamaha. ZXMOTO's success therefore marked a rare moment for a Chinese motorcycle maker on the top of the podium.

The first victory came on March 28, when Debise rode ZXMOTO's 820RR-RS to win Race 1 of the Portuguese round by nearly four seconds. He then returned the following day to claim Race 2, completing a double triumph. The team's strong straight-line speed was especially noted by fans and commentators.

What added to the surprise was the price gap of the motorcycles. ZXMOTO's 820RR is priced at just over 40,000 yuan (6,000 U.S. dollars), while Ducati and Yamaha motorcycles competing in the same arena sell for several times that amount. Many Chinese netizens, as well as motorcycle enthusiasts in overseas markets, noted this was evidence of China's manufacturing strength.

User "Qing Wa" posted on social media: "Seeing Zhang Xue's motorcycle dominate the WSBK race with an absolute margin of nearly four seconds over powerhouses like Yamaha and Ducati is truly exhilarating! This is more than just a victory. It reflects years of dedication by Chinese manufacturing brands and their rise on the international stage." The victories quickly became a trending topic on Chinese social media among motorcycling fans, where race footage and scenes of celebration were widely

shared.

"We have witnessed history! We watched the race together at ZXMOTO's Qingcheng Store, and held our breath together with fellow riders and witnessed the thrilling victory," user "Xiao Ba" wrote under ZXMOTO's post on RedNote.

"As the Chinese national flag was raised on the podium, and as Zhang Xue stood trackside with tears in his eyes, everyone present felt the same emotion welling up. This was more than just a championship - it was the roar of China's motorcycle community after 20 years of perseverance, a milestone breaking the long-standing dominance of Europe, the U.S., and Japan." In interviews, Zhang Xue said the team's competitive edge came from the bike's core strengths within its class, including strong power output, low weight and a low center of gravity.

Founded in Chongqing and bearing the initials of its founder, ZXMOTO has risen rapidly in just two years, a trajectory many Chinese observers described as an inspiring example of the country's manufacturing ambitions.

Although motorcycles are not the most mainstream means of transport in China, and motorcycle racing remains a niche sport, the team's achievement resonated far beyond the racing community. Zhang's name and the ZXMOTO brand quickly gained national attention, while motorcycle-related stocks in China also saw gains amid the excitement.

Zhang, who launched ZXMOTO in 2024, recalled the skepticism the team had initially faced when entering the international paddock.

"When we first arrived in this arena, we were looked down upon," he said. "But when we stood on the top of the podium, they had to look at us again." Zhang said China's industrial supply chain had become increasingly complete over the past decade, with major progress in equipment, manufacturing processes and production capabilities.

He added that Chinese-made motorcycles would be fully capable of earning a place in the global high-end market in the next five years that matches their true strength.

User "laZZe Ruyi Ruyi" wrote: "If you watch his early interview video, you'll truly see a grassroots kid with big dreams, his eyes full of ambition and determination."

"It was all genuine emotion and unwavering belief in his dream. It's the first time I've truly seen someone driven purely by a dream - and he's absolutely radiant because of it."

### Sun Yingsha advances to KO stage

MACAO, April 1, (Xinhua): World No. 1 Sun Yingsha Wednesday cruised into the knockout stage of the ITTF Women's World Cup in Macao with two wins from two group matches.

She followed up a 3-0 victory over Chinese Taipei's Li Yu-Jhun on Monday with another 3-0 win against Egypt's Dina Meshref in Wednesday's group play.

In the opening game, the 25-year-old Chinese trailed 0-3 and 2-5 before finding her rhythm, reeling off a series of points to turn the score from 6-6 into an 11-6 win. She then raced ahead in the second game, opening up a 6-2 lead and never looking back as she closed it out 11-4. Sun maintained control in the third, surging 6-0 ahead and withstanding a brief fightback from Meshref before sealing the match 11-7.

"I think the arena here in Macao is really big, and all the facilities and setup are excellent. It

should rank among the very best in the world," Sun said. "For me, standing on this kind of stage is something I really enjoy, and in such a big venue the lighting design actually makes us more excited and helps us focus on the match."

"Looking ahead to the knockout stage, I believe the 16 players are basically the strongest in the world, and we are close rivals," she added. "So no matter who I face, I just want to focus on myself, give my all and enjoy the match." China's Chen Xingtong, Wang Yidi also made the knockout stage. Chen beat Chinese Taipei's Yeh Yi-Tian 3-0 on the day while Wang took a 3-1 win over Doo Hoi Kem from Hong Kong, China.

Other Chinese players, including Wang Manyu and Wang Chuqin, will play in the evening session, after which the full knockout line-up will be decided.

The 2026 ITTF Men's and Women's World Cup runs from March 30 to April 5 in Macao, with 48 players in each singles draw. Players are split into 16 groups for a best-of-five round-robin phase, with only the group winners advancing to a best-of-seven knockout stage.



Sun

## Connolly steals the show on debut as Punjab tops Gujarat



Punjab Kings' Marco Jansen plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Gujarat Titans and Punjab Kings in New Chandigarh, India. (AP)

### Kings survive middle-order collapse

**CHANDIGARH, India, April 1, (AP):** Cooper Connolly marked his Indian Premier League debut with an unbeaten half-century in Punjab Kings' three-wicket win over Gujarat Titans.

Batting at No. 3, the 22-year-old Australian smashed 72 not out off 44 balls with five sixes and five fours as last year's finalist survived a middle-order collapse to reach 165-7 with five balls to spare.

Fast bowler Vijayakumar Vyshak (3-34) and experienced spinner Yuzvendra Chahal (2-28) had earlier bowled well in the middle overs to restrict Gujarat to 162-6 after Punjab captain Shreyas Iyer won the toss and elected to field.

"I was looking forward to the experience of playing with some world-class players, but to put that performance in tonight, very happy," Connolly said. "I'm just more of a tempo player, feel the flow of my hands, don't hit too many big sixes."

Punjab had the chase under control at 110-2 in 12 overs before impact



Punjab Kings' Cooper Connolly celebrates his fifty runs during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Gujarat Titans and Punjab Kings in New Chandigarh, India. (AP)

substitute Prasidh Krishna rattled the middle order with three wickets in 10 balls and the home team slumped to 118-6 in the 15th over.

But Connolly didn't lose patience with wickets falling around him provided Punjab a winning start to the tournament.

Krishna ignited the collapse when Iyer clipped a straightforward catch

to mid-wicket of the first ball he faced after he was struck hard on his hand at the non-striker by a hard drive from Connolly and needed on-field treatment.

Shashank Singh was undone by a sharp short ball and got a faint edge behind the wicket while Marcus Stoinis sliced a catch to Rashid Khan at third of another short delivery.

Marco Jansen smashed a six but got deceived by a slower delivery from Gujarat debutant Ashok Sharma and offered a tame catch at covers with Punjab still needing 19 runs for victory.

Xavier Bartlett (11 not out) eased the nerves when he pulled Krishna for a six over mid-wicket before Connolly guided Punjab to victory.

Earlier, skipper Shubman Gill top-scored with 39 off 27 balls, but none of the top-order Gujarat batters could convert starts into meaningful knocks. Gill started off well with his fluent boundaries in the power play, but Gujarat got tied down after scoring 54-1 in the first six overs.

Gill dominated Chahal early on with his trademark sweep shots before he got caught at mid-wicket while trying another sweep against the spinner as Gujarat couldn't find momentum after power play.

Jos Buttler scored 38 off 33 balls, that included 14 dot balls before he holed out to long-on at the start of death overs.

Punjab did well in the last five overs and allowed Gujarat score only 34 runs with Jansen (1-20) intelligently varying his pace. Arshdeep Singh's (0-42) long 11-ball last over went for 12 runs that included a no-ball and four wide balls.

## Byrne steps down as coach of Fiji's national team

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, April 1, (AP): Mick Byrne has stepped down as head coach of the Fiji national rugby team after two years in charge, and just months out from the inaugural Nations Championship.

Fiji Rugby on Wednesday said it had reached an agreement with Byrne to "part ways, effective immediately."

According to the sport's national body, the decision followed discussions on the future direction of the national men's squad.

"Mick has been fully committed to his role and remains dedicated to the players and staff," Fiji Rugby chief executive Koli Sewabu said in a statement. "Out of respect for the team and to ensure the program can

continue to the new direction that Fiji Rugby has set for the future, Mick and Fiji Rugby agreed to part ways so FRU can move forward."

Sewabu paid tribute to Byrne's contribution to rugby in Fiji.

"Under his guidance, from the Fijian Drua to the Flying Fijians, we have seen growth, resilience and a commitment to the jersey that will serve us well moving forward," he said. "These are not simply moments in a season, but pillars for our future success."

Byrne, an Australian with coaching experience in seven countries, spent five years working with Fijian teams, first with the Fijian Drua Super Rugby team, then with the national men's team.

"I have been overwhelmed by the support of the

world's best Fiji fans during my five-year involvement," he said. "Their warmth and welcome have meant a great deal to me. I remain fully committed to the game and wish Fiji Rugby every success moving forward."

Fiji Rugby said it will soon announce interim coaching arrangements and begin the process of appointing a new head coach.

The Fiji team is due to play in rugby's first Nations Champion in July. Fiji has decided to play all of its matches in the northern hemisphere, against Wales in Cardiff on July 4, England in Liverpool on July 11, and Scotland in Edinburgh on July 18.

Fiji is in Pool C at next year's Rugby World Cup in Australia.

## SPORTS

# Pistons clinch first division title in 18 years

## Lakers lock top-six spot

**DETROIT, April 1, (AP):** Jalen Duren had 31 points and nine rebounds as the Detroit Pistons defeated the Toronto Raptors 127-116 to clinch the Central Division title.

Duren is averaging 23.4 points and 10.5 rebounds in seven games since Cade Cunningham sustained a lung injury on March 17 in 130-117 win over Washington. The Pistons are 6-2 without their star, including a 114-110 overtime loss in Oklahoma City on Monday - a game Duren sat out.

Daniss Jenkins scored 21 for the Pistons, who have won seven of nine, and Duncan Robinson added 19 points. Detroit won its first division title since 2007-08.

RJ Barrett had 24 points for Toronto, who had won six of nine, including a 119-108 home win over the Pistons on March 15. Brandon Ingram added 22 points.

Toronto missed its first 10 shots, but was able to get back into the game with defense and rebounding. The Raptors turned 13 Detroit turnovers into 23 points and pulled down



Detroit Pistons guard Marcus Sasser (25) goes to the basket past Toronto Raptors guard Ja'kobe Walter (14) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Detroit. (AP)

nine offensive rebounds.

On one possession late in the first quarter, Collin Murray-Boyles pulled down five straight offensive rebounds before RJ Barrett hit a 3-pointer on the sixth shot.

**Lakers 127, Cavaliers 113**

In Los Angeles, Luka Doncic scored 42 points with 12 assists, Deandre Ayton added 18 points with nine rebounds, and Los Angeles extended their winning streak to four games with a victory over Cleveland.

Austin Reaves scored 19 points, while LeBron James, Jake LaRavia and Rui Hachimura each had 14 as the Lakers won shortly after they clinched the Pacific Division title and a top-six spot in the Western Conference playoffs when the Phoenix Suns lost at Orlando earlier Tuesday.

Doncic was 13 of 26 from the floor and had his 16th game of at least 40 points this season after he missed Monday's victory over the Washington Wizards because of technical foul accumulation. James was a game-time decision with continued left foot soreness.

Jarrett Allen scored 18 points and James Harden added 17 in his first game in his hometown since he was traded by the Los Angeles Clippers on Feb. 4. Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell was held to 10 points on 4-of-10 shooting.

**Magic 115, Suns 111**

In Orlando, Desmond Bane scored 21 points, Jalen Suggs added 20 points, eight rebounds and seven assists and the Orlando Magic held off the Phoenix Suns.

Devin Booker's 34 points for Phoenix included a 3-pointer that brought the Suns to within two points with 3.1 seconds left. But Tristan da Silva's two free throws clinched Orlando's second win in nine games.

Suns forward Dillon Brooks, playing for the first time since breaking his hand in a game against Orlando on Feb. 21, had nine points and five rebounds in 22 foul-plagued minutes. Brooks was called for a technical foul just 89 seconds into the game and was one of 10 players to finish the game with four or more personal fouls.

Paolo Banchero had 19 points, nine rebounds and eight assists for



Charlotte Hornets' Kon Knueppel (7) drives past Brooklyn Nets' Noah Clowney (21) during the first half of an NBA basketball game in New York. (AP)

the Magic, who survived 25 turnovers after committing 28 in Sunday's 139-87 loss at Toronto. Wendell Carter Jr. added 15 points and 12 rebounds.

**Hornets 117, Nets 86**

In New York, Brandon Miller scored 25 points, Miles Bridges had 19, and Charlotte routed Brooklyn.

Moussa Diabaté finished with 10 points and 12 rebounds while LaMelo Ball had 14 points, nine assists and seven rebounds to help the Hornets (40-36) stop a two-game losing streak. Josh Minott scored 14 points for the lottery-bound Nets (18-58), who have lost 11 of their last 12 games.

Charlotte (40-36) is tied with the Miami Heat for ninth in the Eastern Conference, a half-game behind Orlando.

**Bucks 123, Mavericks 99**

In Milwaukee, Ryan Rollins had

24 points, seven rebounds and nine assists, Kyle Kuzma added 20 points, and Milwaukee beat Dallas to snap a four-game losing streak.

Milwaukee (30-45), which had lost 14 of its last 17 games overall, won its eighth straight meeting with the Mavericks.

The Bucks led 65-51 at the break behind 17 points from Rollins and 16 by Kuzma. Milwaukee made 11 of its first 22 3-pointers of the second half to take control.

A Rollins jumper with 6:26 left in the fourth gave Milwaukee a 31-point lead at 115-84.

AJ Green added 17 points off the bench for Milwaukee. Gary Trent Jr. added 13 points, Pete Nance scored 11 and Myles Turner 10.

**Rockets 111, Knicks 94**

In Houston, Kevin Durant had 27 points and Houston took a huge lead

early and rolled to a win over New York.

It's a third straight win for the Rockets after they'd dropped two in a row. The victory comes after New York got a 108-106 win at home in the first meeting this season in February.

The Rockets never trailed and led by double digits for most of the game after scoring 37 points in the first quarter. They were up 20 entering the fourth quarter and were leading by 19 with about two minutes to go when both teams cleared their benches.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 22 points and eight rebounds for the Knicks, who lost a third consecutive game after winning their previous seven. Each of their three losses have been by double digits.

Tari Eason started over Reed Sheppard and had 17 points and eight

rebounds for the Rockets.

**Trail Blazers 114, Clippers 104**

In Inglewood, Deni Avdija had 28 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists, Jrue Holiday hit seven 3s and finished with 30 points, and Portland snapped Los Angeles' five-game win streak.

The Clippers (39-37) are eighth in the Western Conference, a half-game in front of the ninth-place Blazers (39-38). Los Angeles leads the season series - which wraps up April 10 in Portland - with the Blazers 2-1.

Toumani Camara scored 17 points and Scott Henderson added 15 for the Trail Blazers.

Kawhi Leonard led the Clippers with 23 points. Darius Garland scored 20, Brook Lopez 18, John Collins added 17 and Jordan Miller 16 points.

## Messi shines in what could be his last Argentina home game

# Spain held by Egypt in pre-World Cup warmup

MADRID, April 1, (Agencies): Spain completed its preparations for this summer's FIFA World Cup finals with a 0-0 draw against Egypt in a friendly at Espanyol's RCDE Stadium.

Coach Luis de la Fuente made sweeping changes to the side that beat Serbia 3-0, with David Raya in goal, Ferran Torres leading the attack, Carlos Soler starting in central midfield and Real Sociedad winger Ander Barrenetxea making his international debut.

Spain produced a disjointed display and Egypt came closest to scoring in the first half, when Omar Marmoush struck the woodwork with an effort from outside the area.

Victor Munoz came on at the start of the second half, while Pedri was also introduced as Spain looked to improve. Both Pedri and Ferran Torres went close, but the hosts were unable to find a breakthrough.

Goalkeeper Joan Garcia replaced Raya to make his debut in the 62nd minute, and received a mixed reaction from a crowd largely made up of supporters of Espanyol which he left to join Barcelona last summer.

Borja Iglesias also threatened for Spain before being fouled by Hamdi Fathy with five minutes remaining. Alex Grimaldo then hit the post from the resulting free kick, but Egypt held on for a creditable draw.

The result gives De la Fuente plenty to consider before he names his final World Cup squad.

Spain will play Peru in Mexico on June 8 before opening its World Cup campaign against Cape Verde on June 15.

In what was likely his final home appearance for Argentina's national squad, Lionel Messi scored a goal and provided an assist in a 5-0 rout of Zambia in a farewell friendly ahead of the World Cup.

The 38-year-old Messi set up Julián Álvarez in the fourth minute and then scored in the 43rd at La Bombonera stadium in Buenos Aires, his 116th international goal in 198 appearances for Argentina.

The crowd gave him a standing ovation and pleaded with him to help Argentina win another World Cup. The global tournament kicks off June 11 in

the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

Nicolás Otamendi and Valentín Barco also scored for Argentina.

The defending world champions raised some concern after their lackluster performance last Friday in a 2-1 victory over Mauritania.

In the lead-up to the Zambia friendly, coach Lionel Scaloni had warned that if the team didn't improve its performance he would take drastic measures regarding the 26-man World Cup squad, which must be submitted by May 30.

For the last home game before the World Cup, Scaloni started with a lineup similar to that which defeated France in the 2022 final, with the notable exclusion of midfielder Rodrigo De Paul, who is recovering from a muscle injury and performed poorly against Mauritania.

Argentina, which also won the World Cup in 1978 and 1986, will open against Algeria on June 16 in Group J, followed by games against Austria on June 22 and Jordan on June 27.

Thomas Tuchel insisted England's dispiriting 1-0 loss to Japan in a friendly will have no bearing on the team's chances at the upcoming World Cup.

England has lost some of the momentum built up under Tuchel by drawing with Uruguay at Wembley Stadium on Friday and then succumbing to Kaoru Mitoma's first-half goal for Japan at the same venue four days later.

Tuchel has fielded experimental lineups for both games, with key regulars like captain Harry Kane, Declan Rice and Bukayo Saka missing because of minor injuries.

The German coach also said many of his players are "heavily invested" in their club campaigns at this stage of the season.

For that reason, Tuchel felt sure "this camp will not define us."

As the World Cup nears, Christian Pulisic's scoreless streak for the United States stretched to a career-high eight games.

Pulisic hasn't scored an international goal since a CONCACAF Nations League quarterfinal against Jamaica on Nov. 18, 2024, and he's scoreless in 12 games with AC Milan since Dec. 28.



Spain's Dean Huijsen, right, challenges for the ball with Egypt's Zizo during the international friendly soccer match between Spain and Egypt in Barcelona, Spain. (AP)



Argentina's Lionel Messi controls the ball challenged by Zambia's Obino Chisala during a friendly soccer match in Buenos Aires, Argentina. (AP)

## Chelsea announces Premier League-record losses of \$350m

LONDON, April 1, (AP): Chelsea made pre-tax losses of 262.4 million pounds (\$350 million) in its latest financial results, the club announced Wednesday, a record high in the Premier League era.

Chelsea, whose owners are from U.S. private equity, attributed the losses in part to "increased operating costs" in 2024-25 compared to the previous year.

The previous highest recorded pre-tax loss in the Premier League was the 197.5 million pounds (now \$263 million) posted by Manchester City for the 2010-11 season, Britain's Press Association reported.

Revenue for the year ending June 30, 2025, was 490.9 million pounds (\$650 million), Chelsea said - the second-highest on record for the London club. That included some of the money earned from its title-winning run at the Club World Cup.

Chelsea was deemed to be compliant with the Premier League's financial rules for the three-year period ending 2024-25, which allows for maximum losses of 105 million pounds (\$140 million) over that block. Spending on things like infrastructure, youth development and women's football, for example, isn't included when the league assesses clubs' losses.

Meanwhile, Tottenham, a top English club threatened by relegation from

the Premier League, hired Roberto De Zerbi as its manager despite opposition to the appointment from fans' groups because of the Italian's past support of a player who was charged with offenses including attempted rape.

De Zerbi replaced Igor Tudor, who was fired on Sunday after 44 days of an interim coaching spell that worsened Tottenham's plight in the Premier League.

Spurs, the reigning Europa League champions and ever-present in England's top division since 1978, are one point above the relegation zone with seven games left.

De Zerbi previously worked in the Premier League as Brighton's manager and was most recently at Marseille, which he left in February after a disagreement with the French club's leadership.

While at Marseille, De Zerbi coached former Manchester United striker Mason Greenwood, who was charged in October 2022 with attempted rape, controlling and coercive behavior, and assault after images and videos were posted online.

British prosecutors dropped the charges in February 2023 owing to a "combination of the withdrawal of key witnesses" and due to "no realistic prospect of conviction."

## Thailand and Tajikistan clinch qualification for AFC Asian Cup

BANGKOK, April 1, (AP): Thailand and Tajikistan secured places at the 2027 Asian Cup in the final round of qualifying.

Lebanon will have to wait, though, because its match against Yemen was postponed because of the Iran war. The game was scheduled to be played in Qatar.

The regional conflict also forced the Asian Football Confederation to postpone the April 11 draw for the 24-nation tournament in Saudi Arabia.

There was late drama in Bangkok, where Thailand needed a win over Turkmenistan to finish first in Group D and qualify. With a minute remaining, the score was 1-1 before

German-born defender Manuel Bihl netted to give the hosts a 2-1 victory.

Tajikistan, which reached the quarterfinals in its Asian Cup debut in 2023, topped Group A with a 1-1 draw with the Philippines.

Singapore, Syria and Vietnam had already secured top spots in their groups, while Lebanon will join them if it beats Yemen on the rescheduled date of June 4.

The six group winners will join the 18 teams that advanced to the third round of World Cup qualifying - including former champions Japan, South Korea, Australia and Iran - who had already secured their places at the Asian Cup.

### Best of the Rest

**Grenoble drops plans to hire coach:** French rugby club Grenoble dropped plans to hire a coach after he was sentenced in a domestic violence case.

Grenoble said in a statement it took note of the conviction of Pierre Caillet by the Béziers Criminal Court. The second-division team wanted to contract Caillet for next season.

"The acts attributed to Mr. Pierre Caillet are not compatible with the values upheld by our club," Grenoble said.

French media reported that Caillet, a former Béziers coach who worked as a consultant for Grenoble, was issued a suspended sentence of six months in prison on Monday, along with 24 months of probation and a requirement to undergo treatment related to drug use. (AP)

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DR Congo's players celebrate at the end of the World Cup playoff final soccer match between DR Congo and Jamaica in Guadalajara, Mexico. (AP)

# Sports

## Iraq completes fairytale World Cup return

Congo qualifies for WC

**MONTERREY, Mexico, April 1, (AP):** Iraq overcame major logistical issues to become the 48th and final team to secure a spot at the 2026 World Cup with a 2-1 win over Bolivia in an intercontinental playoff, ending a wait of four decades to return to soccer's marquee global event.

Ali Almahadi opened the scoring in the 18th minute, Moises Paniagua tied it for Bolivia in the 38th and Ay-men Hussein scored the clincher in the 53rd minute for Iraq. The Iraq team will join Group I along with France, Norway and Senegal.

"We have nothing to lose, let's try to shock the world with a crazy result and performance. It is great that we qualified," Iraq coach Graham Arnold said. "It is a privilege for us."

Arnold, who guided Australia at the 2022 World Cup, said he didn't think his Iraqi players had faced the likes of France star Kylian Mbappe or Norway's Erling Haaland.

"It will be an honor. We respect those players and what they do, but we will try to win."

Iraq will be back at the World Cup for the first time since Mexico 1986, kicking off June 16 against Norway at Foxborough, followed by games against France on June 22 at Philadelphia and Senegal at Toronto on June 26.

Bolivia missed out on qualifying for its second World Cup.

"What remains is pain and frustration; we feel devastated by the result," Bolivia coach Oscar Villegas said. "These young men lost with honor on the field and gave everything to achieve the result, but unfortunately, the country missed out on the World Cup."

The match was played in front of 49,286 fans at the BBVA stadium in Monterrey, one of three host cities in Mexico for the World Cup.

"I've got to give full credit to the players - their fighting spirit was unreal," Arnold said in comments posted on fifa.com. "They put their body on the line, and 46 million people are proud."

Earlier this month, Iraq faced uncertainty about even being able to contest the playoffs. The war in Iran resulted in Iraqi players being stranded because their country's airspace was closed, preventing the team from using commercial flights to leave. Team officials



Iraq's players celebrate after the World Cup playoff final soccer match between Iraq and Bolivia in Monterrey, Mexico. (AP)

officially asked FIFA to postpone the playoff match.

"Everything that is going on in the Middle East made it a little bit harder but the main thing I said, and I worked very hard on, was their mentality," Graham said. "I banned social media since the day we got here. I did not want them to think of what is going on in the Middle East because they had to focus on the job we had here."

The team also faced visa complications because Mexico does not have an embassy in Iraq and players struggled to obtain visas. But the issue was resolved when the Mexico's foreign affairs ministry facilitated visas at other regional embassies.

The team finally arrived in Monterrey on March 21 after a 25-hour journey that included navigating travel restrictions and a stopover in Portugal.

Congo scored in extra time to edge Jamaica 1-0 earlier Tuesday to become the 47th of 48 teams that will play at the World Cup.

Axel Tuanzebe scored following a

corner kick in the 100th minute. The Jamaican defenders failed to clear the ball and Tuanzebe, who plays for Burnley in the English Premier League tapped it into the net.

Congo has never played in a World Cup under that name, although it participated in the 1974 edition in Germany as Zaire.

With its victory in the intercontinental playoff at the Akron Stadium in Guadalajara, Mexico, Congo completed Group K at the World Cup, where it will face Colombia, Portugal, and Uzbekistan.

"We're going to enjoy the qualification, but we'll keep working. We know we'll be facing top nations who play in the World Cup every four years," Congo captain Chancel Mbemba said. "We'll stay humble, keep our feet on the ground, and continue to work. We'll give everything to make our supporters and our people proud."

The Jamaica team, known as the Reggae Boyz, missed out on what would have been a second World Cup appearance.



Iraq's goalkeeper Ahmed Basil, third from left, clears the ball against Bolivia's Luis Haquin during the World Cup playoff final soccer match between Iraq and Bolivia in Monterrey, Mexico. (AP)

Bosnia and Sweden join extravaganza

## Italy misses World Cup again; Türkiye ends drought

ZENICA, Bosnia, April 1, (AP): One of soccer's historic powers has reached a once-unfathomable low.

Four-time champion Italy failed to qualify for a third straight World Cup after getting beat in a penalty shootout at 66th-ranked Bosnia and Herzegovina in the European playoffs.

Moise Kean scored early on for Italy but then Azzurri center back Alessandro Bastoni was sent off with a direct red card before halftime and Bosnia substitute Haris Tabakovic equalized in the 79th to send the game into extra time at 1-1.

The defeat added more misery for Italy's once-proud national team after being eliminated by Sweden and North Macedonia, respectively, in the qualifying playoffs for the last two World Cups.

"It's too easy to say what's working and what's not working," Italy coach Gennaro Gattuso said. "The fact is that Italy has failed to qualify for three World Cups. We're having a tough time achieving our goals, both with the national team and with our clubs."

Bosnia won the shootout 4-1 and qualified for the first time since 2014 - its only previous appearance.

In the shootout, Pio Esposito and Bryan Cristante missed their spot kicks and U.S.-born Esmir Bajraktarević converted the decisive penalty for Bosnia.

"We still don't believe it - that we're out and that it happened in this manner," Italy defender Leonardo Spinazzola said. "It's upsetting for everyone. For us, for our families, and for all the kids who have never seen Italy at a World Cup."

In other European playoff finals, Sweden, Turkey and the Czech Republic each qualified. Sweden beat Poland 3-2; Turkey beat Kosovo 1-0; and the Czechs beat Denmark in a shootout.

Italy's latest ouster means that the 1934, 1938, 1982 and 2006 champions will go at least 16 years without even playing a match at soccer's biggest event.

Italy's World Cup struggles go back all the way to 2010 and 2014, having failed to advance from its group on both occasions. Although the Azzurri

did win the European Championship in 2021.

Italy's last World Cup knockout match was when it won the title in 2006 by beating France in a penalty shootout.

"We realize we're in a huge crisis," Italian soccer federation president Gabriele Gravina said.

The only other World Cup that Italy did not qualify for was in 1958.

An entire generation - basically anyone under 15 - has no memory of the last time Italy played in the World Cup: An elimination loss to Uruguay in 2014 in Brazil remembered for Luis Suarez's bite of Giorgio Chiellini's shoulder.

None of Italy's current players have participated in a World Cup finals.

The defeat will raise questions about the status of Gattuso, who took over from the fired Luciano Spalletti in June with the squad already in crisis mode following a defeat at Norway in its opening qualifier.

The Azzurri then went on a six-match winning streak before losing again to Norway in November to finish second in their group and end up in the playoffs again.

Gattuso's Italy overcame a nervy

scoreless first half to beat Northern Ireland 2-0 at home in last week's playoff semifinals. But the Azzurri struggled even more against Bosnia inside the intimate but imposing 14,000-seat Bilino Polje Stadium in Zenica, which is surrounded by apartment towers overlooking the field.

"I want to personally apologize since we didn't make it," Gattuso said. "Today talking about my future is not important. Today it was important to get to the World Cup."

On paper, it was a massive mismatch between 12th-ranked Italy and Bosnia, which is ranked 54 places below the Azzurri by FIFA.

Italy has a population of nearly 60 million. Bosnia's is about 3.5 million. The combined club salaries of Italy's players total nearly 1 billion euros (\$1.16 billion). Bosnia's total is a seventh of that.

Bajraktarević, who had the winning penalty, was born in Appleton, Wisconsin. He made his U.S. debut in a January 2024 friendly against Slovenia and then switched affiliation that August.

Viktor Gyokeres has sent Sweden back to the World Cup.

The Arsenal striker scored in the

88th minute to earn the Swedes a 3-2 win over Poland, five days after netting a hat trick in the playoff semifinal victory over Ukraine.

Poland great Robert Lewandowski, at age 37, was hoping to qualify for what would likely have been his final World Cup.

Former Chelsea and West Ham coach Graham Potter was hired by Sweden last year - initially on a short-term deal - with one goal: to get the team to the World Cup. He has succeeded.

Sweden reached the quarterfinals in its last World Cup appearance, in 2018.

Türkiye will be in the United States' group at the World Cup after winning 1-0 at Kosovo to reach soccer's biggest stage for the first time since 2002.

The hosts were hoping to qualify for the World Cup for the first time, fewer than 10 years since the national team was out of the international soccer family.

It was in May 2016 that Kosovo and Gibraltar were voted into FIFA as its 210th and 211th member federations. That was eight years after Kosovo declared independence from Serbia.

Kosovo had the best chance of an entertaining first half but Türkiye goalkeeper Uğurcan Çakır pulled off a superb one-handed save to push Fisnik Asllani's strike onto the crossbar.

Türkiye got the breakthrough eight minutes into the second half. Kerem Aktürkoğlu got finest of touches to ensure Orkun Kökçü's cross-shot went into the far bottom corner.

Türkiye joins the U.S. in Group D, along with Paraguay and Australia.

The Czech Republic reached its first World Cup since 2006 with a penalty shootout victory over Denmark following a 2-2 draw.

Michal Sadilek converted the winning spotkick in the 3-1 penalty shootout success. It was the Czech Republic's second straight victory on penalties after also prevailing on spot-kicks against Ireland in the semifinal.

The Czech Republic will face co-hosts Mexico, South Africa and South Korea in Group A.



In this file photo, Kuwait's players celebrate on the field.

## Kuwait rises to 134th as France tops FIFA rankings

KUWAIT CITY, April 1: Kuwait climbed one spot in the latest FIFA World Rankings, moving from 135th to 134th. The team was set to compete in the FIFA Series tournament in Kazakhstan from March 23-31 alongside Namibia and Comoros, but regional developments led to its cancellation.

Meanwhile, France reclaimed the top spot in the FIFA World Rankings for the first time since their 2018 World Cup triumph, following friendly wins against Brazil (2-1) and Colombia (3-1) ahead of the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

France now leads with 1,877.32 points, narrowly ahead of European champions Spain, who drew 0-0 with Egypt and had beaten Serbia 3-0 last week.

Argentina, led by Lionel Messi, dropped to third after a 5-0 win over Zambia, as it prepares to defend its World Cup title this summer.

Among Arab nations, Morocco remains the highest-ranked at 8th overall, followed by Algeria 28th, Egypt 29th, Tunisia 44th, Qatar 55th, Iraq 57th, Saudi Arabia 61st, and Jordan 63rd.

## 48 teams list for 2026 FIFA World Cup

Following is the 48-team list for the 2026 FIFA World Cup:

Group A: Mexico, South Korea, South Africa, Czech Republic  
Group B: Canada, Switzerland, Qatar, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Group C: Brazil, Morocco, Scotland, Haiti  
Group D: United States, Australia, Paraguay, Türkiye  
Group E: Germany, Curacao, Cote d'Ivoire, Ecuador  
Group F: Netherlands, Japan, Tunisia, Sweden  
Group G: Belgium, Iran, Egypt, New Zealand  
Group H: Spain, Uruguay, Saudi Arabia, Cape Verde  
Group I: France, Senegal, Norway, Iraq  
Group J: Argentina, Austria, Algeria, Jordan  
Group K: Portugal, Colombia, Uzbekistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Group L: England, Croatia, Panama, Ghana (Xinhua)