



Iran intrinsence leaves region on tenterhooks Page 2



Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt Achieves 39% Increase in Net Profit to EGP 5.3 Billion in 2025



Ali Marafi: We strengthened our competitive position through flexible action plans that keep pace with evolving economic conditions

KUWAIT AUTO-RENEWS VISIT VISAS, GRANTS ONE-MONTH EXTENSION

— Details Page 2 —

Key energy lifelines hit in Kuwait attack wave



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

We are all for Kuwait: citizens, expatriates and illegal residents ... difficult times reveal true character

LOYALTY is far removed from being an empty rhetoric, just as national unity is not defined by slogans raised during festive occasions.

Instead, they undergo the crucible of daily trials, particularly during moments of intense adversity when their significance is brought to light.

Amidst the perils that Kuwait has been facing, numerous virtues emerged in this nation, which remains devoted to the homeland and its people. Such virtues have established the foundation of the State, creating an unparalleled paradigm of cohesion between the leadership and its people.

There is an unshakeable conviction among everyone that this nation serves as the ultimate and eternal sanctuary, a sentiment shared by those who have embraced it as their second home.

Consequently, there is a collective obligation to strive for its preservation and protection, as stability fosters the security and prosperity for the benefit of the entire community.

Five weeks have passed since the start of the conflict, instigated by a malevolent and terrorist neighbor that designated the Arab Gulf states, including Kuwait, as its war theater. Its motivations are purely driven by a desire to unleash a deep-seated historical animosity. However, it is foundering and shall continue to do so, just as it failed before. Since it has failed to internalize the lessons of history, it remains oblivious to the remarkable resilience and unyielding will of the Kuwaiti and Gulf peoples in facing daunting challenges.

Within the borders of Kuwait, these trying circumstances have illuminated the true character of our men, the valiant armed forces in various command units - Kuwait Army, Kuwait National Guard, police and security officers, and the dedicated personnel at the civil defense and fire departments. These are the people of Kuwait - citizens who offer themselves for their country and spare no effort in protecting

it. They are the shining examples that constitute our collective pride and glory.

Throughout the difficult days, these forces and units have been standing as the vigilant guardians of our territory, our honor and our national institutions. They deserve our deep gratitude, and beyond that, our highest accolade. Simultaneously, the steadfastness of our national position is mirrored at the home front, where citizens, expatriates and illegal residents showed unwavering loyalty to this land.

The inhabitants of Kuwait recognize the immense value of safety and security, understanding that this nation deserves the preservation of its stability.

We must also acknowledge the existence of a minority who, blinded by their allegiance to the enemy, established subversive cells under various pretexts. These individuals will undoubtedly be held accountable, each of them facing justice according to the severity of their crime. Kuwaiti justice remains impartial, ensuring they are punished as per the law.

The aspiration of all Kuwaitis is that no leniency is shown to these elements, as any form of mercy could serve as a catalyst for others to undermine national stability and security. Decisive punishment is the only effective remedy for preserving the homeland. The people of such nations deserve comprehensive care and respect, for they have acted as an impenetrable bulwark against an enemy seeking to sow discord and break the social fabric. Every segment of the Kuwaiti society has proven their loyalty to the nation.

Continued on Page 5

Follow me on:

@Ahmedaljarallah

Ahmed aljarallah

ahmed@aljarallah.com



Scan QR code to visit the website:



Scan Me aljarallah.com



Ministry of Interior photo: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah checks on one of the ministry personnel who was injured in the line of duty.

By Mohammad Ghanem and Munif Naif Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 4: The Ministry of Defense announced on Saturday that the air defense systems of the country detected and destroyed eight ballistic missiles and 19 drones in the last 24 hours amidst the current regional military escalation.

In a media briefing conducted by the Government Communication Center, Ministry of Defense

Continued on Page 5

- Security of Kuwait remains a non-negotiable priority, says Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef
Ministers visit injured personnel
UK plans air defense deployment to Kuwait
WHO warns of risks after desalination facility strikes

Checkpoints boost rapid response

Kuwait's security forces intensify presence



Ministry of Interior photo: Kuwaiti security forces inspect vehicles at a checkpoint to ensure public safety amid heightened alert.

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 4: The security checkpoints throughout the country adopted the highest level of dedication in mobilizing their resources and capabilities to ensure the safety of citizens and residents under the exceptional circumstances that Kuwait has been experiencing for more than a month now due to the Iranian aggression.

Security checkpoints were established in various areas to guarantee public safety, proving the readiness of security forces under all circumstances.

The security personnel exhibited their competence, working tirelessly day and night in prioritizing Kuwait's well-being, the protection of lives and properties, and boosting the sense of security among citizens and residents.

Continued on Page 5

4-hour outages throughout Kuwait from April 5 till 11

KUWAIT CITY, April 4: The Ministry of Electricity and Water has issued an advisory regarding scheduled maintenance work on secondary substations, which may cause temporary power outages in certain areas.

According to the statement issued by the ministry, consumers can check if their homes will be affected by visiting its official maintenance portal - https://mms.mew.gov.kw/

public - and using the "Am I Affected?" feature. Residents need to enter their PACI number or locate their property on the interactive map to receive real-time notifications about potential outages.

Authorities have urged the public to stay informed through official channels and plan accordingly during maintenance periods.

Continued on Page 5

Online 'solidarity' gains momentum

KUWAIT CITY, April 4: National campaigns highlighting Kuwaiti unity and solidarity, reflecting the country's resilience against Iranian aggression, continue to circulate on social media, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Following a campaign where WhatsApp statuses displayed the Kuwaiti flag with the prayer "Lord, make Kuwait a secure homeland", activists have launched a new wave of engagement, sharing iconic images under the slogan "Kuwait is a red line."

rules of the International Maritime Organization and governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which guarantees the right of passage for commercial, military and civilian vessels through international straits. He said the international law obligates all countries, including Iran, to abide by these rules.

Al-Jazzaf asserted that Iran has no right to close the strait or prevent the passage of commercial vessels, regardless of the reasons, as this is a violation of the international freedom of navigation, a challenge to international law, and a serious threat to the global economy.

He stated that allowing Iran to impose fees on ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz will encourage other countries bordering the straits to do the

Continued on Page 5

Hormuz fees threaten \$3 oil spike, economic strain

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 4: As Iran moves to impose transit fees on ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz amidst its ongoing conflict with the United States of America and Israel, many are wondering about the extent of its right to take such action under the international agreements governing maritime affairs.

Economist Sultan Al-Jazzaf affirmed to the newspaper that the Strait of Hormuz is an international waterway, subject to the



Al-Jazzaf

Other Voices

When war crosses the line: Who will enforce the law protecting civilians?

By Dr. Fawaz Khaled Alkhateeb

In moments of rising regional tension, events are often framed as political maneuvering or strategic escalation. But there are times when what is happening cannot be understood through politics alone. It must be seen for what it is a legal issue.

The targeting of civilian infrastructure, airports, energy facilities, public buildings and residential areas, falls squarely into that category.

International Humanitarian Law was not created for times of peace. It exists precisely for moments like these, to place limits on how conflicts are conducted and to preserve a minimum level of humanity, even in war.

At its core are clear and non-negotiable principles. The first is distinction the obligation to differentiate between civilian objects and military targets at all times. The second is the absolute prohibition against targeting civilian infra-

structure.

These are not abstract ideals. They are binding legal standards.

When they are breached, the issue becomes a matter of accountability. Under international law, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the deliberate targeting of civilian objects constitute war crimes, carrying individual criminal responsibility.

But perhaps the more troubling issue is not the violation itself, it is the risk of becoming accustomed to it.

The most dangerous precedents in history are rarely the ones that shock us once. They are the ones that repeat, gradually becoming accepted. When violations of international law occur without consequence, the damage is not limited to a single incident. It erodes the credibility of the entire international legal system that is meant to regulate conflict.

International law does not lose its force because it is weak. It loses its force when it is not enforced and this is where the real test lies.

Continued on Page 5



Dr. Alkhateeb



8 Boursa Kuwait to launch bonds & sukuk platform following CMA decision



10 Lulu Hyper introduces 'Shop Now, Pay Later' in partnership with Taly

# Iran intransigence leaves region on tenterhooks

Gulf states must unite against aggression: Al-Jarallah

By Suzanne Nasser

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4: The Iranian escalation in the Gulf is raising increasing questions about its motives and timing, even though the declared confrontation appears limited to Iran and both the United States and Israel.**

While the Gulf states continue to manage their daily affairs and maintain internal stability, a central question arises - Why is this escalation affecting the Gulf states?

This question was the focus of a new episode of the talk show "High Tension," presented by journalist Tony Khalifa on Al-Mashhad TV and a digital platform. The show hosted the Dean of Kuwaiti journalism Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers.

Al-Jarallah began by stating that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have never been unaware of the situation or the behavior of the Iranian regime.

He explained that the regime has long pursued an ideological project aimed at exporting a model alien to the region and relies on fueling sectarian divisions as a tool of influence. This trajectory did not develop in isolation from the international context but benefited at times from a degree of leniency, particularly during the administration of former US President Barack Obama.

The Obama administration gambled on the possibility of containing Tehran or reintegrating it into the international system, but the reality on the ground proved this approach misplaced. What followed was a gradual escalation, starting with Iran's attempts to destabilize countries in the region through local proxies, which eventually progressed to direct confrontation and open threats.

Al-Jarallah went on to explain that some defenders of Iranian policy claim that the Gulf states invited foreign powers into the region. This assertion is inaccurate, as the international military presence in the Gulf was part of clear defensive arrangements and was not aimed at Iran.

The Gulf states have repeatedly affirmed that they do not seek direct conflict with Iran. The idea that the Gulf states brought Israel into the situation is a gross oversimplification. The real escalation began with Iranian rhetoric, as Tehran raised the stakes of its threats, highlighted its cross-border military capabilities, and promoted its controversial nuclear program while repeatedly obstructing international monitoring efforts.

These Iranian policies prompted the international community to adopt a more stringent stance, not the other way around, holding the Gulf states responsible ignores the roots of the crisis and its true context.

## Escalation

Placing full responsibility for the escalation on Iran, Al-Jarallah affirmed that the Gulf states did not invite anyone into the conflict.

Regarding the ongoing debate about sympathizing with Iran, Al-Jarallah argued that the saying "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" does not reflect reality, especially when the entity in question is directly targeting the Arab and Muslim Gulf states.

He explained that justifying sympathy for Iran on the basis that it opposes the United States and Israel overlooks a fundamental truth - the security of the Gulf states cannot be linked to the conflicts of other parties. Sympathy does



Editor-in-Chief of Arab Times and Al-Seyassah newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah

not change the facts, as Iran has, for over four decades, offered no justification for it. Instead, it has pursued hostile policies toward regional countries, including attempts at security breaches, support for espionage networks, and arms smuggling.

Al-Jarallah cited a number of cases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia where cells and activities linked to Iran were uncovered as part of attempts to destabilize the domestic front. He emphasized that these countries successfully contained the threats thanks to the readiness of their security services.

Regarding the recent escalation, Al-Jarallah said the war, which has been ongoing for over a month, has not caused significant damage to the GCC countries, despite the intensity of the Iranian attacks.

He stressed that defensive preparedness has helped intercept a large portion of missiles and drones before they reached their targets.

Al-Jarallah indicated that the Gulf states have been preparing for this phase for years by developing defense and early warning systems, which have enabled them to contain threats and minimize losses.

He emphasized that the priority is protecting national security and strengthening internal stability, regardless of external considerations or alignments, stating that the events unfolding in the region require clear positions.

Al-Jarallah affirmed his support for the actions of US President Donald Trump, noting that they do not harm the security or political trajectory of the Gulf states.

He revealed that the countries of the region have come to understand the nature of these wars and their ultimate outcomes, adding, "We are facing new Tatars, a rogue state that has destabilized the region, and it must be stopped. The continuation of this situation is no longer acceptable and that the current phase demands decisive action."

Stating that the regime in Iran is sectarian rather than political, Al-Jarallah asked, "Who governs Iran today? Who makes the political and military decisions there?" alluding to the multiple centers of influence within the Iranian Revolutionary Guard.

He noted that recent strikes targeted a

large number of Iranian leaders, and that every day reports emerge of the assassination of prominent figures, all of whom were either running Iran or collaborating in its administration.

Al-Jarallah said, "The one who runs the government in Iran today is a cunning devil, not a clearly defined political system. This reality reinforces the need to end this influence and put a stop to it."

In response to a question about whether it is Israel or Iran that poses a greater threat to the Gulf and Arab states, Al-Jarallah affirmed that it is Iran, noting that this is well-known to all the Gulf states and their people.

He acknowledged that even if some Arab countries hold differing views, reality shows otherwise.

Al-Jarallah described Iran as a malevolent state with historical animosity toward the Gulf and the Arab world.

He asserted that current events are an extension of this Iranian approach and that the regime governing Iran is not a normal political system.

Commenting on Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statement that the United States does not want the Gulf states to normalize relations with Iran, Al-Jarallah said, "I clearly state that I do not trust Iran, and any political discourse on this matter does not alter my convictions."

He called on all Gulf states to withdraw their ambassadors from Iran and expel Iranian ambassadors from their countries, emphasizing that this reflects his personal opinion that more decisive steps must be taken in dealing with Tehran, unless other considerations apply.

Al-Jarallah indicated that some diplomatic measures had been partially taken, but stressed that a firmer, collective stance toward Iran was needed from the Gulf states.

In his analysis of the regional landscape, Al-Jarallah expressed his sharp and direct opinions, emphasizing that he does not support normalization with either Iran or Israel.

He offered his perspective on the regional balance of power, stating, "I will not normalize relations with Iran, nor will I normalize relations with Israel. I speak from over four decades of experience in journalism and media, during which I have observed developments on both the Israeli and Iranian paths and how things have unfolded."

Al-Jarallah explained that peace among Arab states is the only way to counter Israel and halt its expansion. Any stability or settlement with Arab countries would limit Israel's influence, especially given the significant demographic disparity, as the Arab population numbers in the hundreds of millions, compared to a few million in Israel, which reduces its ability to impose long-term hegemony.

## Criticism

Al-Jarallah continued his sharp criticism of Iran and its claims about the limits of its regional influence by saying, "The Iranians talk about Israel's expansion, but what are your limits? Everyone knows about Tehran's interference in several Arab countries. The Iranians have declared control over four Arab capitals and have instigated crises in Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. This expansion is the most dangerous threat to the region's stability and its impact surpasses theoretical discussions about Israeli expansion."

In response to a question about the sabotage cells apprehended in Kuwait and other Gulf countries, Al-Jarallah replied, "What was uncovered in some Gulf countries, including Kuwait and Bahrain, was not merely limited security activity, but part of a broader project to prepare the region for chaos and political infiltration. The goal of the Al-Abdali terrorist cell was to prepare Kuwait for unrest that could later allow the imposition of Iranian influence, as had occurred in other countries in the region. Bahrain faced similar cells aimed at spreading unrest and sabotage, serving the same Iranian agenda."

The intended mechanism wasn't a direct Iranian occupation, but rather the creation of internal chaos, terrorism, bombings, and accumulated tensions, followed by the empowerment of pro-Iranian forces to seize control of key decision-making positions, similar to the model now in place in Lebanon. These terrorist cells were established to serve this objective, whether through stockpiling weapons, organizing, providing support, or waiting for the opportune moment to act."

Regarding his vision for the end of the war, Al-Jarallah said, "I don't believe Iran is finished yet, but it has entered a phase of extreme exhaustion. Anger to-

ward Iran is no longer solely external, as it has become internal as well. The Iranian structure itself is now susceptible to further disintegration."

When asked about the possibility of a ground war, Al-Jarallah replied, "This war might not require a ground invasion. We have seen other battlefields and witnessed the extent of the destruction that occurred without a full-scale ground invasion. I believe the Iranians will ultimately be forced to admit defeat."

Regarding the stances of Arab states, particularly the Arab League, toward Iran's continued aggression against the Gulf states, the Dean of Kuwaiti journalism said, "The Gulf's anger toward some Arab states stems from their complete failure to address Iran's blatant aggression against the Gulf countries. It's not a matter of partial inaction but it is a complete failure."

Al-Jarallah sharply criticized the Arab League, describing it as a dead body for years.

He criticized the Arab League's decision-making mechanism, explaining that issuing a single resolution requires the unanimous agreement of 22 member states, making it incapable of taking decisive or effective positions. The Arab League, which was founded in 1945 through the initiatives of Arab leaders, including King Abdulaziz and King Abdullah I, is no longer able to achieve its objectives.

Al-Jarallah pointed to pivotal events, such as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, where half the Arab world sided with the invaders instead of supporting Kuwait.

He said, "There is no doubt that the continuation of this situation has stripped the Arab League of its role and value, rendering it incapable of keeping pace with challenges. The Arab League has become a place inhabited by ghosts and beneficiaries."

When asked if he supports the Gulf states remaining within the Arab League, Al-Jarallah replied, "Clearly, I call for the Gulf states to withdraw from the Arab League. Membership in the Arab League is an unnecessary expense and may even involve corruption. I advocate for seeking more effective frameworks for cooperation, similar to other regional models."

In response to a question about the Lebanese situation and the repercus-

sions of the fierce Israeli war on it, Al-Jarallah said, "Frankly, I cannot provide a direct answer regarding the scenarios on the ground in Lebanon. The situation there is complex and open to multiple possibilities, but there is no doubt that the comparison between what happened to Kuwait and what is happening in Lebanon is inaccurate. Kuwait is a sovereign state, while Hezbollah is a state within a state."

He explained that the liberation of Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion was not a matter of contention because it was based on a unified state and a cohesive people, which does not apply to the Lebanese situation, where internal divisions and multiple centers of power exist. The problem in Lebanon is not the multiplicity of sects itself, but rather the monopolization of decision-making by one party, namely Hezbollah, which has imposed its influence on the other components. This situation has disrupted the political balance in Lebanon.

When asked about the fate of Hezbollah, Al-Jarallah replied, "The end of Hezbollah is not solely a matter of external decision, but is primarily linked to the stance of the Lebanese people. Change, if it occurs, will come from within, despite the presence of influential external factors. Ultimately, everyone knows that the Lebanese landscape is fundamentally different from any other experience in the region. Dealing with the Lebanese situation requires a careful analysis of its political and sectarian complexities."

Al-Jarallah believes that "the continued influence of Hezbollah within the Lebanese state has created a state of lost sovereignty, which has opened the door wide to foreign interventions."

## Invade

He said, "If you are pleased with what Israel and Hezbollah are doing, that is your decision. Then let Israel invade and rule Lebanon. The institutions of the Lebanese state are no longer capable of enforcing their decisions."

Al-Jarallah highlighted that the Iranian ambassador in Beirut refused to leave Lebanon despite official instructions declaring him persona non grata, adding that this stance clearly reflects the weakness of the central authority.

"There is no doubt that the continuation of this situation could lead Lebanon into open-ended scenarios, including an Israeli invasion or broader foreign interventions. The absence of a unified decision within Lebanon remains the decisive factor in determining the course of the next phase," Al-Jarallah emphasized.

When asked about his view of the movements of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) factions on the Syrian border, Al-Jarallah said, "The PMF operates under Iranian command despite its affiliation with the Iraqi government. These factions receive funds from the government and claim independence, but in reality, they implement agendas that transcend the Iraqi state. The movements on the Syrian border represent a distribution of harm in more than one direction within the region. This pattern has included targeting, or attempted targeting, Gulf states. All of this occurs while Iranian influence continues to control the PMF."

Regarding Iran's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Jarallah said, "The Muslim Brotherhood and Iran share a tendency to exploit crises. The Muslim Brotherhood seeks a source of power, clings to it, and uses it to expand. This approach has appeared in multiple arenas, and many Arab countries, including Egypt and some Gulf states, have suffered from it. There is no doubt that recent measures taken by some countries, especially in the Gulf, have helped reduce this influence and greatly restricted the relationship based on exploiting crises to gain power."

## Kuwait extends all visit visas by one month

KUWAIT CITY, April 4: The Ministry of Interior has announced a one-month extension for holders of business, family, and tourist visit visas, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

During an interview on Kuwait TV, Director of the General Department of Security Media at the Ministry of Interior, Colonel Othman Al-Gharib, stated that all types of visit visas will

be renewed automatically without the need to visit the General Department for Residency Affairs.

The ministry had previously announced in February the automatic one-month extension of visit visas and granted an additional three-month leave of absence to residents currently outside Kuwait.

## Kuwait leadership's staunch support helped maintain security & stability

KUWAIT CITY, April 4, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait set an exceptional example in managing resilience from the very first moments of the Iranian aggression, based on field engagement that evolved into a fully integrated operational system turning into a shield protecting national interests and security.

Over 30 days of mobilization by leadership, which followed the first sirens on February 28, vital sites across the country were transformed into a large operations' rooms, while officials and leaders carried out more than 130 visits to government buildings and facilities. The visits, by over 28 leaders and officials, succeeded in establishing a comprehensive monitoring network by implementing a proactive deterrence strategy.

This strategy covered more than 67 vital facilities and sites across the six governorates, aiming to fortify key state sectors while securing essential lifelines, ensuring continuity of basic services and reinforcing public reassurance.

At the forefront of this field activity were the inspection tours of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who visited key defense institutions including the Ministry of Defense, Kuwait National Guard Headquarters, and Kuwait Fire Force, in addition to several military bases and sites.

His tours also included the decision-making room at the Ministry of Interior, the Joint Operations Center of the Ministry of Defense and the Air Force Operations Center.

At the executive level, the tours of His Highness the

Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah embodied the concept of comprehensive oversight, closely monitoring vital state sectors. He accompanied His Highness the Crown Prince in most of these visits.

His Highness the Prime Minister's tours included the Liberation Tower, energy and water systems at national control centers and Al-Sabiya station, as well as Al-Ahmedi refinery, Shuwaikh and Shuaiba ports, and the Flour Mills and Bakeries Company.

The tours also focused on civil protection and logistics systems, including emergency shelters, accommodation centers, strategic medical stockpiles, and flow of goods through cooperative society control rooms.

His Highness the Prime Minister visited the Public Authority for Civil Aviation, Kuwait International Airport, border crossings, educational institutions, hospitals and the crisis management room of the Kuwait National Petroleum Company.

A closer look shows a strategic distribution of roles among ministers.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Al-Sabah focused on northern border crossings, Al-Abdaly and Al-Salmi crossings, the Coast Guard and key security sectors.

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah reviewed combat readiness across military units, bases and logistics support systems.

Minister of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah visited cooperative societies, central control rooms, Kuwait Red Crescent Society and social care homes.

## Other Voices

### Soroush's false, polite message

By Ahmad alsarraf

Abdolkarim Soroush, born in 1945, aka Hossein Dabbagh, is considered one of Iran's most prominent intellectuals.

He abandoned his studies in Chemistry and Pharmacy in London to pursue philosophy, dedicating himself to writing and exploring topics related to religion, democracy, and enlightenment.

Along with thinker Ali Shariati, Soroush was among the well-known cultural figures who opposed the Shah. He fled the country, returning after the revolution to hold important positions.

He later devoted himself to research and study, and authored thirty books, many of them controversial, as well as numerous articles and research papers. Some of his works have been refuted due to their significance and his extensive expertise in Western studies, including history, philosophy of science, theology, religious exegesis, and jurisprudence.

Among the accusations leveled against him is his advocacy for applying modern scientific methods to the study of religious knowledge.

Soroush believes that religious knowledge is human in origin rather than divine, as it pertains to the subjects addressed by religion. Therefore, he maintains that it is inappropriate to equate it directly with divine religion. He sought to interpret religious texts within the framework of historical development, aiming to humanize religion to make it serve humanity.

Due to Soroush's academic, religious, scientific, and philosophical stature, an "open letter" attributed to him circulated on social media, addressed to the new Iranian Supreme Leader. While I found no verification of its authenticity, certain passages from the letter are valuable for thoughtful reflection, especially in times of peace.

Soroush addressed the new Supreme Leader of the Iranian Revolution, stating, "I could have sent this message privately, so it would reach you without others present. However, I believed it wiser not to hide what is evident. I restrain my anger as much as possible. Deeply concerned for the future of the country and troubled by the destructive incompetence afflicting Iran, I patiently curb the rebel-

lion of my pen, separating sound advice from harsh words. I speak gently and humbly, hoping to guide and influence a heart with my counsel.

Listening to the people's criticism is your duty in public, not only in private. You hold countless gatherings to support the 'Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist,' yet you convene no meetings to examine its flaws or critique it.

You have hundreds of writers praising and flattering you in newspapers, on radio, and on television. Tolerate a single critic, even encourage them to publicly point out shortcomings. You will lose nothing by facing the harshness of criticism.

Let universities truly be centers of learning. Do not allow the mouths and spirits of students to be silenced. Let ideas clash. Do not fear the loss of faith among the youth. The greatest enemies of faith are tyrants, not critics. Look at the West, which has endured some of the harshest opposition to religion for three centuries. Yet their knowledge-based religiosity continues to grow and endure, and their churches still shine brightly.

Wherever justice, creativity, mercy, and freedom exist, God is present. The God we know and worship embodies these qualities. If you fill society with justice, mercy, and creativity, it will become a divine society.

Do not take pride in superficialities or appearances, nor trade truth for metaphor. Open the door to dialogue with the people. Answer their questions openly. Do not fear the abundance of criticism and messages. The more justice is upheld, the fewer critical messages there will be.

The least one can do to respect the rights of the people is to listen to them and give their concerns due consideration. Keep this door open, for it offers countless avenues for resolution. Recognize the value of these impartial voices.

In conclusion, I remain indebted to the words of the great poet Saadi Shirazi, who opened the door to dialogue between the people and the ruler - 'The king who upholds the rights of the people is entitled to tribute, for it is in return for his care of the people.'

How much Iran needs such a discourse now, as the guns have fallen silent."

email: a.alsarraf@alqabas.com.kw

# diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

## Will Iran call it quits and take nation to affluence?

"DESPITE the escalating Iranian attacks on the Gulf region, countries in the region continue to manage the crisis with prudence and careful calculation, not out of weakness, but out of a desire to protect internal stability, safeguard their nations, and ensure the safety of their people," columnist Ahmad Al-Dawas wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The question now is whether Iran will accept defeat at the hands of its adversaries and rebuild its country, or persist in its aggressive policies. History shows that both Japan and Germany chose a different path centered on internal development.



Ahmad Al-Dawas

"Japan and Germany transformed their defeat into an opportunity by prioritizing internal development and innovation over revenge, eventually becoming major global economic powers. After World War II devastated both countries, they chose not to pursue retaliation or military adventures, but instead redirected their efforts toward building strong, advanced economies.

"Iran, however, appears to be moving in the opposite direction, toward further isolation and depletion, overlooking one of the most important lessons of modern history - how to turn loss into a productive opportunity.

"As the saying in self-development goes, the best revenge against your enemy is remarkable success.

"After the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan was exhausted and defeated. Its people suffered from hunger and disease, its cities were in ruins, and its military standing had collapsed. Yet within a few decades, it transformed from a defeated nation into the world's third-largest economy. It achieved this by choosing to lay down its arms, invest in its people, and transform itself from a nation that sought to dominate its neighbors by force into one that surpassed them in quality and technology.

"Germany offers a similar example. It was divided and devastated after the war, but its leadership chose to rebuild relations with neighboring countries on the basis of shared interests. It invested in infrastructure, education, and an industrial base based on engineering innovation and organizational precision. Germany did not only rebuild its cities but it rebuilt its global standing and is now the leading economic power in Europe.

"The regime in Iran does not seem to learn from history. We advised them repeatedly over the years, even until recently, yet it goes unheeded. In Kuwait, there is a saying used for someone who refuses to listen or learn from advice - 'They have had enough.'

"Finally, the danger of so-called 'artificial intelligence images' has begun to emerge. A video was circulated showing a missile striking the Kuwait Towers, with people running in panic in all directions. Another video showed an American missile hitting the very soldiers who launched it instead of being fired into the air. All of this is fabricated, and more of it is likely to appear in the future.

"The truth, as reported by a newspaper, is that Hezbollah operatives are being dismantled one after another in the Gulf. Emirati authorities have dismantled a terrorist network funded by Hezbollah and Iran, and Kuwait has announced the dismantling of a similar network. These developments in the UAE and Kuwait come at a time when both countries, along with the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council states, are facing a wave of Iranian missile and drone attacks. In addition, Iranian proxies are operating at Iran's behest to carry out attacks in the Gulf.

"It is also said in the field of self-development - 'Change your thinking, and your life will change for the better.' I do not believe Iran will change its thinking in a way that leads to progress and development, so the sentiment expressed is that it may remain as it is, or even worsen."

**Also:**

"When challenges are met with the will of the state, the true face of national strength is revealed. Since the beginning of the Iranian attacks on the Gulf states, Kuwait has proven itself to be a resilient and organized nation," Saudi writer **Hajar Al-Saleem** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior have embodied a unique model of professionalism and dedication to protecting the homeland and its citizens. The Ministry of Defense has served as the impenetrable shield of Kuwaiti airspace, intercepting missiles and drones with precision, reflecting strategic planning and military discipline.

"Every successful interception of missiles and drones, and every well-calculated step, underscores the strength and capability of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces to protect national sovereignty under the most challenging circumstances.

"At the same time, the Ministry of Interior has played a complementary and vital role, maintaining internal security through rapid response teams, enhanced surveillance, and the protection of critical infrastructure.

"Field operations and ongoing guidance provided to citizens and residents have demonstrated the ministry's ability to manage crises with a professional approach that ensures the community feels safe even during moments of extreme tension.

"The coordination between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior

or represents a comprehensive model of institutional efficiency, enabling a rapid and effective response to all challenges.

"Through this performance, Kuwait demonstrates a nation with a clear vision, exceptional resilience, and a steadfast commitment to preparedness, planning, and professionalism, instilling a sense of security among both citizens and residents.

"The coordinated efforts of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense deserve recognition and appreciation, as they go beyond formal procedures to reflect a genuine dedication to the nation and the preservation of its security and stability, making Kuwait a distinguished model in confronting security crises."



"In January 2026, world leaders gathered at the World Economic Forum in Davos not to celebrate progress, but to confront a reality that was becoming increasingly difficult to ignore," writer **Eng. Yasmin Al-Rifai** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

"The world has changed. Technology is no longer separate from politics, economics, or the balance of power. This shift was already underway, even before the rise of tariffs, before trade threats dominated headlines, and before Greenland, Venezuela, and supply chains became daily topics of discussion in boardrooms.

"Davos did not create this shift, but it revealed it. It became clear that technology decisions were no longer merely technical, but they were, above all, geopolitical.

"In the weeks following Davos, geopolitics took center stage. Trade policies began to move markets faster than earnings reports.

"Political positioning increasingly influenced capital flows, while strategic uncertainty replaced predictability.

"Tariffs were no longer just economic tools but instruments of leverage. Land was no longer merely a geographical asset, but a strategic signal. Amid all this, technology was not on the periphery, but it was at the center.

"This shift was most evident in countries under sustained political and economic pressure, such as Venezuela. What unfolded there was not only economic or political turmoil, but a stark illustration of how digital infrastructure and cybersecurity can be used to influence institutions, public services, and national stability.

"This transformation is reshaping how technology decisions are made. Investment has become more selective.

"Capital no longer pursues innovation at any cost, but moves more cautiously, prioritizing stability and alignment above all other considerations.

"Conversely, divestment has become a strategic decision, not because technology has failed, but because geopolitical risks have become too significant to ignore.

"In parallel, the importance of local technology is growing.

"Countries are accelerating the development of their platforms, applications, and domestic digital capabilities, not out of nationalism, but out of necessity.

"Cybersecurity has entered a new phase. Recent events have proven that cyberspace is no longer a purely defensive domain. Cyber operations have been used to disrupt services, influence

public trust, and exert pressure without resorting to conventional force.

"By 2026, cybersecurity is no longer a technical matter, but a top-priority strategic one.

"As a result, the nature of decision-making has changed. Decisions have slowed, not because leaders are hesitant, but because the consequences have become deeper and more significant.

"Every choice carries far-reaching implications for sovereignty, public trust, and national resilience. The margin for error is narrower, and the level of accountability is higher.

"This moment requires leaders to reconsider long-held assumptions.

"Speed does not always equate to success. In a fragmented world, unchecked speed can become a liability.

"Innovation is not always the top priority. In some contexts, continuity, trust, and stability matter more.

"Technology is not neutral ... It is reshaping the balance of power, influence, and national standing, whether acknowledged or not.

"When national interests are at stake, both the decision and its ownership must reside with leadership. Geopolitics will continue to fragment, and cyber risks will evolve. But the winners in the next decade will not be the quickest adopters, but the most deliberate decision-makers.

"For government leaders, this phase demands more than policy updates or technological roadmaps. It requires a full embrace of long-term digital sovereignty and the recognition of cybersecurity as a fundamental component of national resilience.

"The question is no longer whether technology can be adopted safely, but whether it is managed wisely, consciously, and with a full understanding of its geopolitical weight.

"For those shaping strategies at the intersection of technology, policy, and investment, a crucial question is - Are today's technology decisions being made for short-term momentum, or for the stability and sovereignty that nations will need to withstand the next shock?"

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

## Speed up transactions, help needy: Dr Al-Huwaila



Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila

KUWAIT CITY, April 4, (KUNA): Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila inspected recently the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) to review workflow, monitor performance levels, and assess preparations for receiving educational files.

In a press statement, Minister Al-Huwaila, also Chairperson of the Supreme Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, stressed the importance of regularly monitoring professional and administrative performance to improve efficiency and service quality.

She also emphasized the need to strengthen work discipline and adhere to professional standards across all sectors of the authority.

She assessed the readiness of specialized teams to begin receiving educational files starting next Sunday and instructed them to simplify procedures and speed up transactions to provide accessible and efficient services for beneficiaries and their families.

Minister Al-Huwaila reaffirmed the authority's commitment to improving work processes to better serve the beneficiaries.

# Exams, studies on track – MoE

Strategy worked out: official

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4: Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at the Ministry of Education, Eng. Hamad Al-Hamad, reassured students at all levels of public education regarding exams, emphasizing that the ministry has plans in place to manage student exams under the current circumstances, reports Al-Seyassah daily.**



Eng. Al-Hamad

He affirmed that a plan is in place for each scenario and will be announced to students and parents in due course before implementation.

In a joint interview with the Director General of the General Administration for Guidance, Research, and Curricula Mohammed Al-Otaibi and the Director General of the Public Relations and Educational Media Department Arwa Al-Ayyar, broadcast on Kuwait TV, Al-Hamad stressed the commitment to ensuring the continuity of education through the emergency plan launched at the beginning of the crisis.

He explained that the ministry has adopted online learning and activated student and teacher accounts on the Teams platform. Homework assignments and exams can be

submitted through this platform.

Al-Hamad highlighted that the Kuwaiti education system has successfully adapted to the most challenging conditions.

He clarified that the distribution and delivery of textbooks to students' homes is an initiative of the Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, who consistently emphasizes his commitment to the safety of students and teachers.

Meanwhile, the Director General of the General Administration for Guidance, Research, and Curricula Mohammed Al-Otaibi stated that the administration is continuously monitoring and evaluating the educational situation, and the type of examinations will be determined accordingly.

He indicated that assessing academic achievement is a fundamental part of the educational process, noting that there is ample time, approximately two months, before the second semester exams.

Al-Otaibi emphasized the importance of ensuring the continuity of academic progress in accordance with the plan for distributing academic subjects.

In addition, the Director General of the Public Relations and Educational Media Department Arwa Al-Ayyar said the media's role extends beyond simply keeping the public informed.

She highlighted the campaign of 100,000 thank-you messages from students to frontline workers and confirmed that the Minister of Education had directed the launch of this initiative to involve students in the crisis and allow them to express their feelings in their own way.

## Kuwait issues orders, bans sale and trade of drones indefinitely

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) has issued Ministerial Decision No. 31/2026 for prohibiting the sale and trade of drones until further notice.

Article 1 - The sale and trade of drones is

banned in all shops and commercial markets.

Article 2 - Violating establishments will be closed and referred to the competent authorities, with penalties enforced under Decree-Law No. 10/1979, in addition to any other measures in relevant laws.

Article 3 - Any provision contradicting this decision is repealed. The decision is effective from the date of issuance.



KUNA photo

Director General of the General Administration of Customs (GAC) Yousef Al-Nuwaif during his visit to the Abdali border post.

## Smooth entry, exit of food, others ensured

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4:** Director General of the General Administration of Customs (GAC) Yousef Al-Nuwaif emphasized the importance of simplifying customs procedures and facilitating the movement of goods and vehicles according to the highest operational standards, reports **Al-Seyassah** daily.

Al-Nuwaif issued this statement following an inspection visit to Abdali border crossing, accompanied by Deputy Director General for Ports, Research, and Customs Investigation Affairs at GAC Saleh Al-Omar, to assess preparedness and monitor work progress.

He reviewed the work mechanisms and operational procedures followed at the crossing for ensuring smooth entry and exit, efficient flow, and expedited transactions.

The visit included a meeting with customs inspectors, during which Al-Nuwaif commended their dedication, commitment, and role in protecting ports and strengthening the customs security system.

The visit reflected GAC's efforts to develop the work environment, improve performance at various ports, and maintain a balance between speed, accuracy, and international best practices.

## Jahra Gov. visits officers hurt by projectile debris

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4, (KUNA):** Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habshi conducted a field visit on Thursday to check on the condition of injured personnel affected by Iranian aggression, including Ministry of Defense officer Lieutenant Abdullah Al-Dhamer and Ministry of Interior officer Abdullah Tareed, following separate incidents.



Al-Habashi

Jahra Governorate said in a statement that Al-Habshi was briefed on their health conditions and extended his sincere wishes for a speedy recovery and good health, praising their dedicated efforts and sacrifices in performing their national duties.

He also affirmed the political leadership's keenness to follow up on the conditions of the injured and provide necessary medical care and support until their full recovery.

## New criminal circuit set up for terrorism appeal

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4:** President of the Court of Appeals Judge Mohammad Ahmad Al-Sayed Al-Rifai issued Administrative Decision No. 9/2026 for the allocation of a new Criminal Circuit to hear appeals related to crimes of external and internal state security and terrorism, based on Decree-Law No. 51/2026.

The decision establishes the Ninth Criminal Circuit at the new Palace of Justice, granting it jurisdiction over appeals of judgments issued by the criminal circuits of the Court of First Instance in these cases, in addition to hearing referred cases. Sessions will be held every Thursday in Courtroom No. 126 on the thirteenth floor at 11:00 am, with the possibility of scheduling additional sessions as deemed appropriate by the head of the circuit.

The decision also requires that criminal courts refer all pending appeals related to state security and terrorism crimes, where pleadings have not yet been concluded, to the court's presidency for submission to the newly established circuit, in accordance with the provisions of the decree-law.

At the same time, the decision preserves the jurisdiction of the two misdemeanor appeals courts to review appeals currently before them until final rulings are issued.

The circuit will be headed by Judge Abdullah Mohammad Al-Sanea, with Judge Mohammed Yousef Othman Jaafar, Judge Meshal Mohammad Abdul Latif Al-Mutawa, Judge Saud Nayef Abdullah Al-Mutairi, and Judge Hamoud Dawood Suleiman Al-Badr as members, in addition to their existing duties.

The decision takes effect immediately upon issuance, with notification sent to relevant authorities to implement the necessary measures.

**MEGA STAR BUTTER CHICKEN BUCKET**  
Like No One

12 PCS + EXTRA SAUCE Family Feast Deal

Now ONLY 5.750 KD (was 7.200 KD)

1800 188

# MEWRE sees budget increase amid rise in utilities revenue

Estimated earnings surge to KD1.154 billion

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4:** The State budget report for the current fiscal year revealed that the total estimated electricity and water revenues reached KD1.154 billion -- an increase of KD361 million compared to the estimate of KD793.780 million in

the previous fiscal year, indicating that estimated electricity revenues for the current fiscal year reached KD759.220 million and water revenues reached KD395.310 million.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the report, which disclosed that the electricity revenue estimate of KD759.220 million is distributed as follows: KD716 million electricity sales, KD250,000 for meter usage, KD2.400 million for materials and

equipment, KD500,000 for labor costs, KD40 million for electricity connection fees and KD 70,000 for electrical wiring inspection fees.

The report showed that the water revenue estimate of KD395.310 million include the following KD388.800 million for fresh water, KD3 million for brackish water, KD1.010 million for treated water, and KD 2.500 million for water connection costs.

It also stated that the approved budget for expenditures of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy for fiscal 2026/2027 is KD3.134 billion. This covers seven expendi-

ture items (employee compensation, goods and services, capital expenditures, grants, subsidies, expenses and transfers, and social benefits) -- an increase of KD28 million compared to the 2025/2026 budget allocation of KD3.106 billion.

It revealed that the approved amount for the goods and services item reached KD1.693 million, while the approved amount for employee compensation reached K 823.271 million, including salaries, allowances and bonuses for employees. It added that the approved amount for the capital expenditure item reached KD616.700 million.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo  
The Minister of Foreign Affairs receives a copy of the credentials of the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the State of Kuwait.

## Kuwait Foreign Minister receives credentials of Thai ambassador

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4, (KUNA):** Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrar Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on Thursday the copy of credentials of Thai Ambassador to Kuwait, Songchai Chaipatiyut.

During a ceremony at the Foreign Ministry's headquarters, Minister Al-Sabah wished the diplomat success in enhancing bilateral ties during his tenure, said the ministry in a press release.

## Council calls strikes a threat to regional stability

# Yemen reaffirms support for Kuwait

**ADEN, April 4, (KUNA):** Yemen's presidential council chief Rashad Al-Alimi on Wednesday heaped praise on

Kuwait's defensive capabilities amid a wave of Iranian attacks across Gulf Cooperation Council member states,

saying that Sanaa firmly stands alongside the six-member bloc.

These Iranian attacks are a "flagrant violation" of international laws and principles, in addition to being a grave threat to regional security and stability, the Yemeni presidential council chief told Kuwait's outgoing ambassador to Sanaa Falah Al-Hajraf.

He went on to acknowledge the copious amounts of aid Kuwait has delivered to Yemen, which run the gamut from humanitarian assistance to relief and development aid, underlining that bilateral relations remain on an upward trajectory.

Conveying the Kuwaiti political leadership's "warmest greetings" to the Yemeni presidential council, the diplomat said that Kuwait wishes the Yemeni ruling body's members every success as they seek to lead the nation towards prosperity.



KUNA photo  
Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council Chairman Rashad Al-Alimi during his meeting with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Yemen, Falah Al-Hajraf.

## BOT system and hotline launched

# KRCS boosts emergency preparedness



KRCS photo  
The Board of Directors of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society holds its meeting at the headquarters of the Society to follow up on emergency plans.

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4, (KUNA):** Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) convened a meeting of its board of directors on Wednesday, presided over by its chairman Khaled Al-Maqamis, in a bid to follow the progress of ongoing emergency response plans.

The talks looked into emergency mechanisms in conjunction with relevant state bodies, the KRCS chief said in statement, citing such efforts as instrumental in ensuring a "maximum level" of preparedness in dealing with crises.

The official went on to cite a spate of recent services KRCS has launched as of late, which include the automated response system "BOT KRCS," and Hotline 97909065, both of which are available round the clock to provide immediate psychological help and social care, he added.

# PAAET begins issuing certified graduation certificates

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4:** The Dean-ship of Admissions and Registration at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) an-

nounced that certified copies of graduation certificates for college graduates of the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year will be issued starting Sunday, April 5 after booking an appointment online.

Applicants will receive the certified

copies at PAAET headquarters in Adaliya by visiting the Records and Information Department in building No. 12.

The Dean-ship urged graduates to adhere to their scheduled appointment times to ensure a smooth process.

It explained that certified copies will

only be issued after the original certificate has been submitted to the college registration offices. The original certificate must be presented at the time of submission.

If the certificate is in English, a copy of a valid passport must be attached.

# MoCI urges consumers to report complaints via Sahel application

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

**KUWAIT CITY, April 4:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has urged the public to report any consumer protection com-

plaints through the Sahel application.

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to supporting and supervising commercial and economic activities, as well as ensuring the availability of goods, materials, and services in the markets.



**Hala Industrial Co.**  
— Custom Wooden Solutions —



**Crafted Storage. Engineered Precision**

- ✓ Premium Natural Wood
- ✓ Custom-Made Dimensions
- ✓ Factory Direct Quality

☎ 60660817 - 66448545  
 📷 Hala\_Industrial  
 ✉ hala@halakw.com

Subhan Industrial - Block 10 - Street 5 - Plot 151

## Continued from Page 1

## We are all

This country, which has endured major trials, cannot be undermined by any power, regardless of its perceived strength. It remains steadfast amidst adversities. It transforms challenges into opportunities, striving for even greater accomplishments. Perhaps, the upcoming days will bring tidings.

Throughout this protracted journey, mistakes are inevitable. Rectifying errors once the crisis ends will provide the greatest momentum for strengthening unity between the people and the leader of this great nation – the one who raises the banner of national pride.

## When war

Today, the international community is not only witnessing events, it is being measured by its response. The question is no longer simply what has happened. It is whether the rules that have long been established will be upheld through meaningful accountability against the attacks on the GCC, or quietly set aside through selective enforcement ignoring the Iranian attacks on Kuwait and the Gulf.

For countries that value stability and for regions that have experienced the cost of lawlessness, this is not an abstract discussion. It goes to the heart of security, justice, and the rule of international law itself.

In the end, the strength of international law is not defined by the words written in treaties. It is defined by the willingness to apply them by the international community. In moments like this, that willingness is being tested.

Fawaz@tahergrp.org

## Key energy

spokesman Colonel Saud Al-Atwan confirmed that the Kuwaiti Armed Forces intercepted the hostile attacks within the designated operational zones, without causing loss of life, injury or damage.

Al-Atwan added that the Kuwait Army bomb squad responded to four reports over the past 24 hours.

He prayed to Almighty Allah to bestow security and stability on the beloved homeland under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and Commander-in-Chief of the Kuwait Armed Forces Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

In a related development, Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah visited several military bases and sites on Saturday, during which he assessed the operations and the level of readiness of the Kuwait Armed Forces in dealing with the heinous Iranian attacks.

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Defense, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Sabah stressed the need for the Armed Forces to keep performing their duties in a responsible manner and to be fully prepared to overcome the current challenges.

He prayed to Allah the Almighty to bless Kuwait and its people with continuous prosperity, stability and security under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince.

He commended the tremendous efforts exerted by the Armed Forces, their vigilance and high level of readiness in carrying out their national duties.

Meanwhile, official spokesperson of the Interior Ministry Brigadier General Nasser Bouslaib disclosed in the same media briefing that the explosive ordnance disposal teams responded to 20 field reports on shrapnel and foreign objects, increasing the total number of such reports to 669 since the beginning of the Iranian aggression.

Bouslaib stressed that all these reports were dealt with swiftly and efficiently, adding that the General Directorate of Civil Defense activated the sirens three times in the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of sirens activated since the beginning of the aggression to 167.

Earlier on Friday, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah asserted that the security of Kuwait remains a non-negotiable priority, and that its personnel are committed to protecting the nation and preserving its stability.

The minister made the statement when he visited a number of ministry personnel injured in the line of duty, to check their health condition and assess the level of medical care provided to them.

According to the statement issued by the Ministry of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef conveyed the political leadership's greetings, appreciation and pride in their honorable national sacrifice, asking Almighty Allah to grant them speedy recovery.

During the visit, the minister looked into the health condition of the injured and the quality of medical care provided to them. He issued a directive to provide them all forms of support and care, and that their condition should be closely monitored until their full recovery.

He then praised their courage, steadfastness and dedication in performing their duties, emphasizing that their actions embody sacrifice and loyalty, reflecting the unwavering spirit that characterizes the security personnel in playing their respective roles.

He confirmed that these sacrifices are a source of pride and inspiration for all those who bear the honor of serving the nation, showing the true meaning of loyalty to the State of Kuwait and its leadership.

He added "the security of the country is the fruit of the unity of its leadership and people, and the vigilance of its loyal men."

He prayed to Allah to grant success to everyone, the best for the nation and its advancement, to protect the State of Kuwait, its wise leadership and its loyal people from all forms of harm, and to

perpetuate the blessings of security, safety and stability for them.

Also on Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) revealed that unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) targeted Mina Al-Ahmad Refinery, operated by Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), resulting in fires at a number of units in the facility but no casualties were reported.

KPC informed the media that the emergency and firefighting teams immediately activated the response plans and contained the blaze within a short period. It stated that no injuries resulted from the incident and all the necessary precautions were put in place to ensure the safety of personnel and installations.

KPC continues to coordinate with the Environment Public Authority (EPA) to monitor air quality in surrounding areas, affirming that no negative environmental impacts have been detected so far.

The corporation then stressed that it remains committed to the highest safety and security standards to ensure operational continuity while safeguarding lives and properties.

Moreover, the Ministry of Oil has adopted an approach to guarantee the accurate and continuous monitoring of precautionary plans in view of the current regional situation.

In a press statement on Saturday, Undersecretary of the ministry Sheikh Dr. Nemer Fahad Al-Malek Al-Sabah disclosed that the ministry is keen on upgrading the relevant plans under the current regional geopolitical circumstances and challenges brought about by the heinous Iranian attacks on Kuwait and other countries in the region, targeting their vital facilities.

He asserted that the ministry is performing its role, using an advanced institutional system built on high level of preparedness and proactive planning in a bid to boost its ability to handle regional and global changes with efficiency and discipline.

He said the ministry is focusing on institutional collaboration among relevant bodies to improve performance and strengthen the integration of roles within a comprehensive work system to guarantee immediate response, accurate monitoring and concerted institutional efforts.

He lauded the national staff -- the pillar of the oil sector -- for their efficiency and advanced professional experience, thereby, proving their capability to address vital issues.

He added that the ministry is carrying out its tasks as per the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and under the supervision of Oil Minister Tareq Al-Roumi.

In a press statement early Friday morning, KNG spokesman Brigadier Jadaan Fadhel Jadaan refuted the recent social media reports about the alleged radioactive pollution from outside the country.

"Results of tests on samples taken from the air and territorial waters of Kuwait show that the radiation levels are normal. The specialized teams at His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Center for Chemical Defense and Radiation Monitoring are closely following up the situation in collaboration with other concerned State entities. The radiation monitoring systems of the country operate round the clock to ensure the safety of everybody," he affirmed.

He advised the public to obtain information only from official sources and refrain from circulating rumors or wrong information, expressing hope for the safety of the nation under the wise leadership of the country.

Official spokesperson for the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, Fatima Hayat, announced that one of Kuwait's power and desalination plants was attacked in the early hours of Friday morning as part of Iranian aggression against the country.

She revealed that the attack caused material damage to some components of the plant.

Hayat explained that technical and emergency teams immediately began work, in accordance with the approved emergency plans, to address the aftermath and ensure continued operational efficiency. Efforts are being carried out in full coordination with security and relevant authorities to secure the affected sites.

She urged the public to remain calm and not be swayed by rumors, emphasizing the importance of relying on official sources for information.

Affirming that the ministry will continue to monitor developments transparently, Hayat stressed that the safety and stability of the electricity and water systems are a top priority, and that all technical teams are working around the clock with high efficiency to respond to any emergency and ensure uninterrupted services.

In addition, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received a phone call on Friday from Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Keir Starmer.

During the call, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed greetings and appreciation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to King Charles III for his letter, which supports the sovereignty, security and stability of Kuwait, reflecting the depth of historical relations between the two countries.

The British Prime Minister reiterated his country's strong condemnation of the repeated Iranian attacks, reaffirming the full support and solidarity of the United Kingdom with Kuwait in confronting threats to its sovereignty and stability.

Starmer also discussed the arrangements for deploying the British air defense system to Kuwait, emphasizing the need to guarantee freedom of navigation, particularly in the Strait of Hormuz, and the importance of joint action and ongoing coordination to find a lasting solution that preserves the security and stability of Kuwait.

His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his deep gratitude to the British

Prime Minister for this supportive stance in protecting the security of Kuwait, wishing him good health and well-being, and the United Kingdom and its friendly people continuous progress and prosperity.

Lastly, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Ghebreyesus deplored Saturday the targeting of water desalination facilities in Kuwait, indicating this could have serious consequences for public health and essential services.

In a post on his official account on the 'X' platform, Ghebreyesus said "two water desalination facilities in Kuwait have been affected by the attacks. On 29 March, the largest desalination plant (West Doha Power Generation and Desalination Plant) was impacted, resulting in the tragic loss of one worker and damage to infrastructure."

He pointed out that despite these incidents "water services have remained uninterrupted", underscoring the resilience of essential services in the country.

He stressed that "desalination facilities are essential to the provision of access to public health in Kuwait and other Gulf countries. Damage to desalination facilities jeopardizes hospitals, health-care services and the well-being of the entire population."

He called for restraint and adherence to international norms, urging all parties "to exercise the utmost restraint and respect their obligations under international humanitarian law", while emphasizing the need to protect vital infrastructure that supports civilian life.

## 4-hour outages

In case of any electricity faults or emergencies, residents are advised to contact the ministry's hotline number 152 for immediate assistance.

As per the list on the portal, the affected areas are as follows:

Sunday, April 5, 2026, Start time is 1:00 am and duration is four hours

- Jaber Al-Ahmad, Block 7
- Oyoum, Block 1
- Wafra Residential, Block 6
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Block 7
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Block 1
- Salwa, Block 2
- Qortuba, Block 2

Monday, April 6, 2026, start time is 1:00 am and duration is four hours

- Salwa, Block 2
- Qortuba, Block 2
- Oyoum, Block 1
- Jaber Al-Ahmad, Block 2
- Al-Qusour, Block 1
- Abu Futaira, Block 1
- Wafra Residential, Block 6
- Al-Rai, Block 1

Tuesday, April 7, 2026, start time is 1:00 am and duration is four hours

- Al-Rai, Block 1
- Al-Qusour, Block 1
- Abu Futaira, Block 1
- Wafra Residential, Block 6
- Oyoum, Block 1
- Jaber Al-Ahmad, Block 5
- Salwa, Block 4
- Shamiya, Block 8
- Qortuba, Block 3

Wednesday, April 8, 2026, start time is 1:00 am and duration is four hours

- Qortuba, Block 3
- Bneid Al-Gar, Block 2
- Salwa, Block 5
- Oyoum, Block 4
- Wafra Residential, Block 6
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Block 7
- Abu Futaira, Block 1
- Al-Rai, Block 1

Thursday, April 9, 2026, start time is 1:00 am and duration is four hours

- Al-Rai, Block 1
- Wafra Residential, Block 6
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Block 7
- Abu Futaira, Block 1
- Salwa, Block 12
- Bneid Al-Gar, Block 2
- Qortuba, Block 3

Friday, April 10, 2026, start time is 1:00 am and duration is four hours

- Salwa, Block 5
- Hawalli, Block 9
- Jaber Al-Ahmad, Block 5
- Al-Rai, Block 1
- Sharq, Block 3

Saturday, April 11, 2026, start time is 1:00 am and duration is four hours

- Sharq, Block 3
- Al-Rai, Block 1
- Jeeb Al-Shuyoukh, Block 3
- Jeeb Al-Shuyoukh, Block 4
- Wafra Residential, Block 6
- Naeem, Block 2
- Salmiya, Block 4
- Hawalli, Block 1

## Hormuz fees

same, thereby, adopting the extortion tactics of Iran.

He thinks this could be a new approach that will increase global oil prices by more than \$3 per barrel, in addition to raising the prices of other products passing through the Strait of Hormuz and beyond.

He emphasized that the strait does not belong solely to Iran, as Gulf states bordering the Arabian Gulf share it and have equal rights. He said Iran cannot unilaterally close the strait, as such action is not merely hostile, but a direct attack on the interests of hundreds of millions worldwide. He warned that the consequences for the global economy will be catastrophic and a threat to the stability of the whole world, not just the region.

He disclosed that Article 48 of the UNCLOS, ratified by 168 countries, stipulates the principle of the right of unimpeded passage of ships without imposing fees.

He also cited Article 44 of the convention, indicating that the coastal states with straits "should not impede transit passage" and that any financial requirements for passage are considered an impediment and a violation of this right.

Regarding the imposition of fees on the Suez and Panama canals, Al-Jazzaf clarified that certain straits are not covered by the UNCLOS, particularly since the Suez and Panama Canals were constructed by their respective countries using their own funds, so they could impose fees. He said Iran did not construct the Strait of Hor-

muz, it was formed through topography and natural forces, so Iran has no right to demand payment for its use.

Asked about the impact of the Strait of Hormuz closure on the global economy, he said the whole world has been experiencing its worst economic crisis since the outbreak of the war between America and Israel against Iran. He pointed out that a fifth of the world's oil trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz, hence, the global market has been witnessing the most severe geo-economic shock since the Iran-Iraq War. He added that the crisis is not limited to the energy sector, as it has extended to other market like aluminum, petrochemicals, sulfur and many other products used in various industries.

He indicated that the global agricultural sector continues to bear the brunt of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the repercussions of which have extended to sectors that are vital for ordinary people, most notably agriculture, due to the rise in fertilizer prices, following the severe disruption of supply chains.

He emphasized that rising energy prices are the primary driver of global inflation, and the current conflict proved that Gulf oil production is the main factor in the performance of the global economy - a fact that the whole world witnessed last month.

He said the current war, which is now into the second month, has affected global financial markets, citing the decline of American stocks to their worst quarter, as well as the decline of European stocks in March. He added that many European stock indices went down, thus, March is considered one of the bloodiest months for global stock market activity.

## Kuwait's security

The intensified security presence is not just a precautionary measure, but a clear message that national security is a top priority, which cannot be compromised. Checkpoints were established based on a well-defined security plan covering the entire country.

This plan was implemented under the guidance and instructions of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib.

Both officials stressed the need to intensify security presence and raise the level of readiness in all sectors to ensure rapid response to any developments and to improve operational efficiency.

Despite the challenges, the weather conditions in recent days did not dissuade the security personnel. They continued to perform their duties even under the rain and at all times, whether during the day or in the dead of night, showing that national duty knows no bounds.

They remained steadfast in their posts, regulating traffic, ensuring security procedures were followed, and conducting themselves with professionalism and high ethical standards - manifesting their high level of discipline and responsibility.

Various sectors at the ministry participated in these efforts, including Public Security, Traffic, Emergency Services, Special Forces, Criminal Investigation and all other security sectors, working together as an integrated system. Their main goals are to protect the nation and maintain its security and stability.

The newspaper visited several security checkpoints. Officers assigned at the checkpoint in Jahra Governorate asserted that they are the vigilant guardians of security, supporting the comprehensive efforts of the State through its military and security institutions.

## Kuwait FM, US counterpart hold talks on regional developments

KUWAIT CITY, April 4, (KUNA): Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Thursday, in a phone call, discussed with his US counterpart Marco Rubio, the latest regional developments.



Sheikh Jarrah

opments, especially the Iranian aggression on Kuwait and GCC countries, and its repercussions on safety and security regionally and internationally.

Both sides also discussed the historic and strategic bilateral ties between the two friendly countries and ways to enhance those ties, it added.

Both sides also discussed the historic and strategic bilateral ties between the two friendly countries and ways to enhance those ties, it added.

Both sides also discussed the historic and strategic bilateral ties between the two friendly countries and ways to enhance those ties, it added.

Both sides also discussed the historic and strategic bilateral ties between the two friendly countries and ways to enhance those ties, it added.

Both sides also discussed the historic and strategic bilateral ties between the two friendly countries and ways to enhance those ties, it added.



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Rainy day in Kuwait City, streets glisten as cars navigate light rainfall, with the iconic Liberation Tower visible in the misty skyline.

## Solar and wind energy boom

## GCC sees 49% surge in rainfall

MUSCAT, April 4, (KUNA): The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Statistical Center announced Saturday that the region witnessed a significant increase in rainfall rates of 49.4 percent during 2024, compared to the past thirty years (1980-2010).

The center's 2024 Climate Statistics report shows stable temperatures and strong clean energy growth in GCC countries, with no recorded temperatures above 49°C from 2012 to 2024.

The center reported a major leap in solar energy, with solar plant capacity growing annually by 88.1 percent from 2013 to 2024.

Meanwhile, solar electricity production rose from 0.13 thousand GWh in 2013 to 23.5 thousand GWh in 2023.

The center also noted a similar development in the wind energy sector, with design capacity increasing from 4.8 megawatts in 2015 to 567 megawatts in 2024.

The report stated that all GCC countries now have advanced mobile-based early warning systems for extreme weather, improving protection of lives and property.

It also noted that climate change and adaptation have been incorpo-

rated into school curricula to promote sustainable public awareness.

The report highlighted GCC countries' strong commitment to the UNFCCC, with 16 reports submitted by November 2025.

The Gulf countries have also set net-zero targets, aiming for 2050 in the UAE, Oman, and Kuwait's oil and gas sector, and 2060 in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and other sectors in Kuwait.

The report noted a strategic shift toward China as the main supplier of climate technologies, with 99.4 percent of GCC photovoltaic cell imports coming from China in 2024, valued at USD 2.4 billion.

The Statistical Center emphasized that GCC development plans prioritize environmental protection, sustainable resource use, and stronger international cooperation to address climate change and ensure long-term environmental sustainability.

The GCC Statistical Centre, based in Oman, was established as the official body for GCC data, statistics, and information, and to support and strengthen the work of national statistical and planning agencies across GCC countries.



## JOINT OPERATIONS

SAUDI ARABIAN CHEVRON INC. (SAC)

KUWAIT GULF OIL COMPANY (K.S.C.)

Joint Operations (Saudi Arabian Chevron Inc. / Kuwait Gulf Oil Company) announces the below-mentioned Public Tenders for the procurement of materials. Kuwaiti and Saudi merchants registered with either company wishing to participate in any of the below-mentioned Tenders should submit their bids electronically through "SMART BY GEP" <https://smart.gep.com>.

For first-time registration, please contact [TLQX@Chevron.com](mailto:TLQX@Chevron.com) - [BHSJ@Chevron.com](mailto:BHSJ@Chevron.com) for support and guidance.

A non-refundable fee is stated against each tender. Tender fees must be deposited, and bidders must attach proof of payment as follows:

STATE OF KUWAIT		KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA	
NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	ACCOUNT NUMBER: 1001132057	GULF BANK - KUWAIT	IBAN: KW25GULB000000000000090550035
IN KUWAITI DINAR		IN KUWAITI DINAR	
		RIYADH BANK	IBAN: SA262000003100019949901
		IN SAUDI RIYAL	

The start date for the following Tenders will be on **Sunday, 5 APR 2026** and closing date will be on **Tuesday, 5 MAY 2026 @ 09:00 A.M.**

S. NO.	TENDER NO.	MATERIALS CLOSING DATE	FEES (KD)	CLOSING DATE
1	048702 - R1	WELLHEAD SYSTEM FOR CAMERON	25	5 / 5 / 2026
2	048493 - R1	MANIFOLDS	35	5 / 5 / 2026
3	048610 - R1	LINER HANGER, SCHLUMBERGER OILFLD-SMITH	50	5 / 5 / 2026
4	051694	FUEL GAS SCRUBBER	15	5 / 5 / 2026
5	051687	S/F LUFKIN PUMPS	35	5 / 5 / 2026
6	051907	FUEL GAS SCRUBBER, ASHCROFT, WIKA, ABV, ROSEMOUNT, YOKOGAWA, FOXBORO, BUDENBURG	5	5 / 5 / 2026
7	051789	PRESSURE TRANSMITTER	5	5 / 5 / 2026

## INTERNATIONAL



Pechanga Fire Department firefighters monitor the smoky and fast-growing wildfire Springs Fire in Moreno Valley, Calif on April 3. (AP)

### Crews battle fast-growing wildfire in windy Southern California

Crews battled a smoky and fast-growing wildfire Friday in windy Southern California that forced some residents to evacuate and a community college to temporarily close its doors.

The Springs Fire broke out around 11 am Friday and by the evening had grown to about 6.5 square miles (16.8 square kilometers).

The cause of the fire east of Moreno Valley in Riverside County is under investigation. It was not immediately known how many households were under evacuation warnings or orders.

With hundreds of people battling the blaze - using helicopters, engines and water tenders - crews started to contain the blaze by Friday night.

The fire was burning in a populated - but not densely so - unincorporated part of Riverside County in a recreational area near the city of Moreno Valley, which has a population of roughly 200,000. The city is 10 miles (16 kilometers) southeast of Riverside and 64 miles (103 kilometers) east of Los Angeles. (AP)

## Trump to sign order to resume pay for Homeland Security employees

WASHINGTON, April 4, (AP): US President Donald Trump said he will soon sign an order to pay all Department of Homeland Security employees who have gone without paychecks during the record-long partial government shutdown that has reached 48 days.

Despite that unilateral move announced in a social media post, the funding lapse for some DHS needs is likely to stretch into next week as the House contemplates passing a Senate plan it had previously rejected to fund the bulk of the agency, though not its immigration enforcement operations.

Trump used a similar maneuver to resume pay for the Transportation Security Administration after many employees had called out from work, resulting in long delays at airport security lines for travelers. Trump's latest intervention is expected to apply to other non-law enforcement employees at the department, including many employees at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Coast Guard and the agency responsible for coordinating federal cybersecurity efforts.

Trump said their families "have suffered far too long."

"Nevertheless, help is on the way for our Brave and Patriotic Public Servants who have continued to work hard, and do their part to protect and defend our Country," Trump said.

There was no legislative resolution Thursday after both the House and



Rep Don Beyer speaks to reporters outside the chamber after the House chose to not act on a measure passed by the Senate earlier today to fund the Department of Homeland Security, at the Capitol in Washington on April 2. (AP)

Senate met for just a few minutes in pro forma sessions. Nonetheless, the Republican leadership and Trump have coalesced around a plan to fully fund DHS as part of a two-step process. The agreement puts the congressional leaders on the same page for ending the impasse after they had pursued separate paths that resulted in Congress leaving Washington last week for its spring recess without a fix.

During the brief sessions, Senate

Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., put aside the House plan to fund the entire department for 60 days. Then the House met briefly without taking up the bipartisan Senate plan that had been worked out with Democrats, though Thune is looking toward eventual passage.

"I don't know the particulars around what the House will do with it," Thune told reporters. "My assumption is, at some point, hopefully, they'll move it."

'You're looking at an ugly November'

## US President Trump's Iran war leaves Republicans adrift ahead of midterms

NEW YORK, April 4, (AP): This is not the run-up to the midterm elections that Republicans wanted.

A year and a half after winning the White House by promising to lower costs and end wars, Donald Trump is a wartime president overseeing surging energy costs and an escalating overseas conflict.

The war in Iran was largely unpopular even before an American fighter jet was shot down in Iran, a development that dominated headlines on Friday and contradicted Trump's claim that Tehran's military capabilities have been all but destroyed. One crew member has been rescued.

Earlier in the week, the Republican president offered little clarity to a nation eager for answers during a prime-time address from the White House, his first since the US and Israel attacked Iran more than a month ago, simultaneously suggesting that the war was ending and expanding.

"Thanks to the progress we've made, I can say tonight that we are on track to complete all of America's military objectives shortly, very shortly," Trump said. "We're going to hit them extremely hard over the next two to three weeks."

Trump's comments come roughly six months before voters across the nation begin to cast ballots in elections that will decide control of Congress and key governorships for Trump's final two years in office. For now, Republicans, who control all branches of government in Washington, are bracing for a painful political backlash.

"You're looking at an ugly November," warned veteran Republican pollster Neil Newhouse. "At a point in time when we need every break possible to hold the House and Senate, our edge is being chipped away."

It's hard to overstate how dramatically the political landscape has shifted. At this time last year, many Republican leaders believed there was a path to preserve their narrow House majority and easily hold the Senate. Now they privately concede that the House is all but lost and Democrats have a realistic shot at taking the Senate.



US President Donald Trump speaks about the Iran war from the Cross Hall of the White House on April 1, in Washington. (AP)

Republicans are also struggling to coalesce around a clear midterm message on Iran.

The Republican National Committee

has largely avoided the war in talking points issued to surrogates over the last month. The leaders of the party's campaign committees responsible

for the House and Senate declined interview requests. Many vulnerable Republican candidates sidestep the issue, unwilling to defend or challenge Trump publicly.

The president remains deeply popular with Republican voters, and he has vocal supporters like Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina.

"That was the best speech I could've hoped for," he wrote on social media after Trump's address on Wednesday evening. Graham said Trump "gave the American people a clear and coherent pathway forward."

Trump made little effort to sell the conflict to Americans before the initial attack. Five weeks later, at least 13 US service members have been killed and hundreds more injured. Thousands more troops have converged on the region, and the Pentagon requested \$200 billion in new funding.

The Strait of Hormuz, a key passage for a fifth of the world's oil, remains closed. The average price for a gallon of gasoline in the US was \$4.08 on Thursday, according to AAA, almost a

full dollar higher than on President Joe Biden's last day in office.

On Wednesday, Trump insisted that gas prices would fall quickly once the war concluded but offered no solution for reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Instead, he invited skeptical U.S. allies to do it themselves.

He insisted that the war would be worth it.

"This is a true investment in your grandchildren and your grandchildren's future," Trump said. "When it's all over, the United States will be safer, stronger, more prosperous and greater than it has ever been before."

Former Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Georgia Republican who was once among Trump's most vocal allies in Congress, lashed out against his Iran policy.

"I wanted so much for President Trump to put America First. That's what I believed he would do. All I heard from his speech tonight was WAR WAR WAR," she wrote on social media. "Nothing to lower the cost of living for Americans."



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Services on April 4, rescue workers put out a fire of a residential building damaged following a Russian strike in Sumy, Ukraine. (AP)

## Russian drone strikes on Ukraine kill five and wound 30 more, say officials

KYIV, Ukraine, April 4, (AP): Russian drone strikes on Ukraine overnight killed five people and injured 30 more, Ukrainian officials said Saturday.

The attacks came as Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy traveled to Istanbul for talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He will also meet with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodox Christians.

Russia fired 286 drones at Ukraine overnight, 260 of which were downed, the Ukrainian Air Force said in an online statement.

Five people - three women and two men - were killed in the city of Nikopol in the Dnipropetrovsk region, and 19 others, including a 14-year-old girl, were wounded, head of the regional military administration Oleksandr Hanzha said. The attack damaged market stalls and a shop.

In the city of Sumy, not far from the border with Russia, a strike injured 11 people, including a 15-year-old, the National Police said. Residential areas were hit, and houses, cars and utility networks were damaged in the attack.

In the capital, Kyiv, a drone strike caused a fire on the first floor of a three-story office and warehouse building, Ukraine's State Emergency Service

said. No casualties were reported.

The Russian Defense Ministry claimed Saturday that its forces fired "long-range air- and ground-based precision weapons, as well as strike drones" at unspecified "military-industrial and energy facilities used by the Ukrainian Armed Forces."

In a separate statement, the ministry said that the Russian military overnight shot down 85 Ukrainian drones over nine Russian regions, the annexed Crimea region and the Black Sea.

In Russia's Rostov region, on the border with Ukraine, one person was killed and four sustained injuries, according to the region's governor, Yuri Slyusar. The attack sparked a fire at a warehouse facility of an unspecified logistics company, and another fire on a dry-cargo vessel flying a foreign flag several kilometers from the shore, Slyusar said.

In the Samara region's city of Tolyatti, one person was wounded, Gov Vyacheslav Fedorishchev said. The roof of a residential building was damaged, and windows were shattered in several apartments, he said.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy has signaled Kyiv's openness to a potential Easter truce. The holiday is celebrated on April 12 in Ukraine and Russia.

Zelenskyy also said that Ukraine is preparing for a shift in Russian aerial tactics, with intelligence indicating that future attacks will move beyond energy infrastructure.

Russia's Defense Ministry said 192 Ukrainian drones were shot down overnight across Russia and occupied Crimea.

"The Kyiv region is once again under a massive Russian missile and drone attack," said Mykola Kalashnyk, head of the regional military administration, in a Telegram post on Friday.

Kalashnyk said one person died and at least eight others were wounded in strikes on three of Kyiv's satellite towns - Bucha, Fastiv and Obukhiv. Earlier in the week, residents of Bucha marked the fourth anniversary of atrocities committed in the town by Russia's invading forces.

Obukhiv resident Lesia Podoriako, 37, told The Associated Press she was at work with her child when she learned her building had been struck.

"I found out about it through Telegram channels. Then all my friends and acquaintances started calling me, telling me that our building was attacked. I have no words. The main thing is that everyone is alive and healthy," she said.

## Election a 'referendum' on Hungary's place in the world, says opposition leader Magyar

KISKUNHALAS, Hungary, April 4, (AP): Hungarian opposition leader Péter Magyar says a crucial election next week where he's facing pro-Russian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán will be a "referendum" on whether Hungary continues on its drift toward Eastern autocracies, or can retake its place among the democratic societies of Europe.

Magyar, once an Orbán ally, poses the most serious threat to the nationalist prime minister's hold on power since he took office in 2010.

In an exclusive interview with The Associated Press, Magyar said the European Union's longest-serving leader has led the country on a "180-degree turn" in recent years, endangering its Western orientation while cozying up to Moscow.

Yet despite that drift, "Hungarians still see that Hungary's peace and development are guaranteed by membership of the European Union and NATO," Magyar said. "I think this really will be a referendum on our country's place in the world."

Magyar spoke to the AP on Thursday following an election rally by his center-right Tisza party in Kiskunhalas, a small city of around 25,000 on Hungary's southern great plain. It was one of hundreds of rallies he's held in



Hungarian opposition leader Peter Magyar addresses people during an election rally in Kiskunhalas, Hungary, on April 2. (AP)

settlements big and small across the country, a campaign blitz that has him visiting up to six towns a day ahead of the April 12 election.

Orbán has gained a reputation as an inveterate disruptor within the EU for his frequent vetoes of important decisions. He has campaigned by sounding the alarm on a myriad of external dangers he says are threatening Hungar-

ians - the war in Ukraine, a cabal of EU bureaucrats and financial elites aligned against Hungary, and an immigration crisis ever on the horizon.

Magyar, who is leading in most polls, has focused on issues that affect voters' everyday lives, like Hungary's faltering state health care and public transportation sectors and what he describes as rampant government corruption.

### Europe

**Sweden stops sanctioned tanker:** The Swedish Coast Guard said Friday it has boarded a tanker suspected of causing a 12-kilometer (8-mile) oil spill on the Baltic Sea, adding that the vessel is under European Union sanctions aimed at the "shadow fleet" transporting Russian oil.

The spill was detected early Thursday east of Gotland island, and investigators identified the Flora 1 as the suspected source. The Coast Guard boarded the vessel early Friday and took it and its 24-member crew to anchorage near Ysted in southern Sweden.

"We act when we detect emissions. This is a result of our enhanced maritime surveillance that we are conducting as a result of the deteriorating security situation in the Baltic Sea region," Daniel Stenling, deputy chief of operations, said in a statement. There were no immediate details on what caused the spill.

It was unclear under what country's flag the vessel was traveling and its destination was unclear, the Coast Guard said. It departed the Russian port of Primorsk, where a major Russian oil export terminal is located, on Tuesday, according to the MarineTraffic maritime data company.

The EU had sanctioned the vessel, meaning transactions involving it are forbidden, for carrying Russian oil while "practicing irregular and high-risk shipping practices." Unsafe practices can include turning off its automatic tracking system to hide where a vessel is going.

The shadow fleet emerged in response to a price cap on Russian oil imposed by the Group of Seven democracies to limit the revenues that fund Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The cap was enforced by barring insurance and shipping



In this photo provided by the Swedish Coast Guard, personnel board a tanker suspected of causing an oil spill in the Baltic Sea on April 3. (AP)

companies from handling oil above the cap. (AP)

**Teen killed in London shooting, 3 arrested:** A 14-year-old boy has died after being shot in southeast London, and three teenagers have been arrested on suspicion of murder, the Metropolitan Police said Friday.

Police said the victim was killed in Woolwich, a town in southeast London. Two teenage boys, aged 14 and 16, and an 18-year-old man were arrested on Thursday and remain in custody.

The motivation of the shooting remained unclear as investigations are underway. (Xinhua)

## China, Russia support military administration

# Myanmar's parliament elects ruling general as president, keeping army in charge

BANGKOK, April 4, (AP): Myanmar's parliament on Friday elected Min Aung Hlaing, a general who ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government in 2021 and kept an iron grip on power for the past five years, as the country's new president.

The move marks a nominal return to an elected government but is widely considered as an effort to keep the army in power after an election organized by the military that opponents and independent observers deemed neither free nor fair, and as civil war rages.

Transitioning to an elected government is also seen as a way to improve frosty relations with some Southeast Asian neighbors following the military takeover. China and Russia have supported the military administration, while Western powers imposed sanctions.

Min Aung Hlaing was one of three nominees for the president's post, but was virtually guaranteed the job as lawmakers from military-backed parties and appointed members from the army hold a commanding majority in parliament.

The vote was held in the newly renovated parliament building in the capital, Naypyitaw, which was damaged in last year's earthquake.

Aung Lin Dwe, speaker of parliament's combined upper and lower house, announced that Min Aung Hlaing won 429 out of the 584 votes.

The two runners-up become vice presidents. Nyo Saw, a former general, had served as an adviser to Min Aung Hlaing, and Nan Ni Ni Aye, an ethnic Karen politician from the pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party, will be the country's first female vice president. All three are expected to be inaugurated next week.

Min Aung Hlaing, who holds the rank of senior general, earlier this week relinquished his post of commander-in-chief because the constitution prohibits the president from simultaneously holding the top military position. A close aide, Gen. Ye Win Oo, took over the powerful job.

Meanwhile, much of the country remains enmeshed in a bloody civil war.

Nay Phone Latt, a spokesperson for the National Unity Government - Myanmar's main opposition organization, which views itself as the country's legitimate government - charged that Min Aung Hlaing is responsible for numerous war crimes,



Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, head of Myanmar's military council, inspects officers during a parade to commemorate Myanmar's 78th Armed Forces Day in Naypyitaw, Myanmar on March 27, 2023. (AP)

and his easy assumption of the presidency proved that the political change some countries had hoped for will not materialize.

"Myanmar people do not accept it. The revolution will continue with great momentum," he told The Asso-

ciated Press.

The 69-year-old Min Aung Hlaing had been the military chief since 2011. Under the military-imposed constitution, he held significant powers even before overthrowing Suu Kyi's government.

Parliament members were elected in three phases in December and January. Major opposition parties, including Suu Kyi's former ruling National League for Democracy, were either blocked from running or refused to compete under conditions they deemed unfair. Suu Kyi, 80, is serving a 27-year prison term on charges widely viewed as politically motivated.

Myanmar was under military rule from 1962 to 2016, when Suu Kyi's party won a landslide election victory. It won an even greater mandate in the 2020 polls, but the army staged a takeover in 2021 before the new parliament could convene.

Peaceful protests against military rule were then put down with deadly force, pushing pro-democracy activists to turn to armed resistance and ally themselves with ethnic minority groups who have been battling for greater autonomy for decades.

Security concerns meant voting in the recent election could be held in only 263 of the country's 330 townships.

Nearly 8,000 activists and civilians have been killed since the 2021 army takeover, and some 22,872 political detainees are imprisoned, according to the Assistance Asso-

ciation for Political Prisoners, an independent group that tracks rights violations.

The military's major reliance on airstrikes - 1,140 strikes in 2025 alone, according to the U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project - accounts for hundreds of civilian casualties.

"If Min Aung Hlaing thinks that an official civilian title will shield him from prosecution for the many grave violations of international law that he is accused of overseeing as head of the military, that is not how international justice works," Amnesty International Myanmar researcher Joe Freeman said in statement.

The International Criminal Court in The Hague in 2024 began an investigation into charges of crimes against humanity after the chief prosecutor applied for an arrest warrant for Min Aung Hlaing over the military's brutal persecution of the Rohingya minority.

At long-awaited hearings at the International Court of Justice in January this year, Myanmar defended itself against accusations that it was responsible for genocide against the Rohingya. The West African country of Gambia first filed the case in 2019.

## 8 killed in earthquake

# Peace talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan advancing: China

BEIJING, April 4, (AP): Peace talks between Afghanistan's Taliban government and Pakistan are advancing, China's government said Friday, two days after those countries resumed conversations following weeks of fighting that have killed hundreds.

"The consultation process is being steadily implemented and advanced," said China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning. Xi Jinping's government is mediating between Islamabad and Kabul, whose representatives resumed the talks on Wednesday in the western Chinese city of Urumqi.

"The three parties have also reached consensus and arrangements on a specific operational mode, including media coverage," she added, without giving more details.

"Since the recent escalation of the Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict, China has been mediating and promoting talks in its own way, maintaining close communication with both sides through multiple channels and at various levels, and creating conditions and providing platforms for dialogue", Mao said.

She added that both countries "attach importance to and welcome China's mediation efforts, and are willing to sit down again for talks, which is a positive development."

Pakistan has witnessed a surge in attacks in recent years, many claimed by the Pakistani Taliban.

Even as the talks restarted, the police reported that a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a police station in the Bannu district of northwestern Pakistan late Thursday, killing at least five people and wounding several others.

Pakistan often accuses Afghanistan of providing a safe haven to militants who carry out attacks inside Pakistan, especially the Pakistani Taliban, or TTP.

The group is separate from but allied with the Afghan Taliban, which took over Afghanistan in 2021 following the chaotic withdrawal of US-led troops. Kabul denies that it supports the group.

The fighting between the two sides picked up in February, when Afghanistan's Taliban government said Pakistan launched strikes in Kabul and several other areas, causing mostly civilian casualties. Pakistan has said it targeted hideouts of TTP, but also that it is in "open war" with Afghanistan.

### Also:

**KABUL, Afghanistan:** An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.8 rattled parts of northern and eastern

Afghanistan and western Pakistan late Friday, killing at least eight people in Afghanistan, authorities said.

The region is highly seismically active, and quakes have caused thousands of deaths in recent years. Friday's earthquake had an epicenter in the Hindu Kush mountain range, about 150 kilometers (90 miles) east of the Afghan city of Kunduz, according to the Euro-Mediterranean Seismological Center and the US Geological Survey.

**Hafizullah Basharata**, a spokesman for the Kabul governor, said eight people were killed and a child was injured when a house collapsed on the outskirts of the capital. He said all were members of the same family.

Kabul is roughly 290 kilometers (180 miles) southwest of the epicenter. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries from areas closer to the epicenter. The area is remote, and it can often take several hours before local authorities can relay information back to Kabul.

With the epicenter at a depth of over 180 kilometers, the quake jolted a wide swath of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Pakistan, it was felt in the cities and towns of Islamabad, Peshawar, Chitral, Swat and Shangla, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries in Pakistan.

Afghanistan's Health Ministry spokesman **Sharafat Zaman** said Kabul and provincial health authorities had been put on alert.

Last August, a 6.0 earthquake that struck a remote, mountainous part of eastern Afghanistan killed more than 2,200 people, leveling villages and trapping people under rubble. Most casualties were in Kunar province, where people typically live in wood and mud-brick houses along steep valleys.

In November, a 6.3 earthquake struck Samangan province in northern Afghanistan, killing at least 27 people and injuring more than 950. It also damaged historical sites, including Afghanistan's famed Blue Mosque in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, and the Baghe-Jahan Nama Palace in Khulm.

On Oct 7, 2023, a 6.3 quake followed by strong aftershocks in western Afghanistan killed thousands of people.

Impoverished Afghanistan often faces difficulty in responding to natural disasters, especially in remote regions. Many homes in rural and outlying areas are made from mud bricks and wood, with many poorly built.



Local residents look at a damaged area of a police station after an overnight deadly bombing in the Bannu district of northwestern Pakistan on April 3. (AP)

## RSF kills 10 in hospital drone attack

# ADF rebels kill at least 70 in eastern DR Congo

GOMA, DR Congo, April 4, (Agencies): The death toll has exceeded 70 following an attack by rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Panic has spread across several districts of Mambasa territory in Ituri Province, after the deadly attack left more than 70 people dead overnight from Wednesday to Thursday, according to civil society sources.

Dieudonne Lossa, coordinator of civil society in Ituri, confirmed the toll, noting that the attack took place on Wednesday evening in the Bafwakoa Village, Mambasa territory, toward Kisangani, the capital of Tshopo Province.

Armed men believed to be ADF rebels raided several villages, killing civilians and setting homes, vehicles, and motorcycles ablaze. Videos circulating on social media showed bodies lying on roads and in villages, as well as charred vehicles near the attack sites.

The death toll could rise further, local civil society sources said.

Panic has been observed in Mambasa territory since Thursday morning as bodies were being gathered in surrounding areas. "People are in a state of psychosis. They are fleeing their homes for fear of new attacks," said a member of the local civil society, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"With unprecedented zeal, we condemn this attack, which is nothing but



Sudanese soldiers from the Rapid Support Forces unit patrol during a rally for Dagalo, in Garawee town, north of Sudan on June 15, 2019. (AP)

sabotage of the government's actions against these rebels," Lossa said, calling on the congolese government to strengthen its military presence in the region.

### Also:

**CAIRO:** Sudan's paramilitary forces killed at least 10 people in a drone attack that hit a hospital in the south-central part of the country, said a medical group.

Doctors Without Borders, also known as MSF, said the Sudanese

paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, RSF, launched two drone strikes on al-Jabalain Hospital in the White Nile province, hitting an operating theater and a maternity ward.

The strikes, the latest in an intensifying drone warfare between the army and the RSF, killed 10 people, including seven medical staffers, and injured at least 19 people. Those injured were transferred to a hospital in Kosti, which is around 50 miles (80 kilometers) away, said MSF.

# First group of 12 deportees from US arrives in Uganda, lawyers say

KAMPALA, Uganda, April 4, (AP): Twelve people deported from the US arrived in Uganda on Thursday, the Uganda Law Society said, in the first known arrivals since Uganda and the US signed a bilateral deal permitting the transfers.

The deportees were "effectively dumped in Uganda through an undignified, harrowing and dehumanizing process," the law society said in a statement, adding that they arrived on a private charter flight.

The deportations are part of US President Donald Trump's crack-down on immigration as he seeks to deter migrants from entering the United States illegally and to deport those who already have done so, especially those with criminal records and including those who cannot easily be deported to their home country.

The US State Department and the Department of Homeland Security have defended third-country deportations as a means to quickly remove people who are in the US illegally. The deportations have been the subject of several legal cases, both in the US and in some countries where migrants are sent.

The deportations are controversial in part because the unwanted migrants can be sent to countries they have no cultural ties with. In August, for example, US authorities



Minibuses fill the old taxi park near the largest market in Kampala, Uganda, Nov. 23, 2024. (AP)

briefly considered sending Kilmar Abrego Garcia, the high-profile subject of an ongoing migration dispute, to Uganda.

The US has struck deals with at least seven African nations to take some migrants. Those countries range from the western African nation of Ghana to the southern African nation of Eswatini, which the US paid \$5.1 million to take up to 160 deportees, according to details of the deal released by the US State

Department.

It was not clear if Ugandan authorities were similarly paid.

The law society charged that the deportees were at the mercy of "unnamed, private interests on either side of the Atlantic," adding that it was seeking legal remedy to stop what it described as an "international illegality."

There were no details on the identities of the deportees, nor on their countries of origin.



Damian Farinas, (right), walks out of La Lima penitentiary alongside other pardoned prisoners after their release in Guanabacoa, Havana, Cuba on April 3. (AP)

# As freed prisoners celebrate in Cuba, human rights groups demand clarity and release of protesters

HAVANA, April 4, (AP): Katia Arias buzzed with hope on Friday morning as she gathered at the gates of a prison on the outskirts of Havana, waiting with other families for their loved ones to be freed in one of the biggest prison releases by the Cuban government in years.

When her 20-year-old son Emilio Alejandro Leyva walked out of the doors of the detention facility with dozens of other prisoners, bags and a small release document in hand, she wrapped her arms around her son, who was detained for a robbery, for the first time in years.

"It has been so difficult, but today God has given me so much joy," said Arias, 43, breaking down in tears. "Today, I feel so happy. This is how all mothers who will have their children released today should feel."

The outpouring of joy from families comes the day after Cuba's government said it was going to release 2,010 prisoners in what it said was "humanitarian gestures" ahead of Holy Week. But the releases were quickly met with criticisms by human rights groups who said they hadn't seen evidence that those who were released included any of the 1,214 people they have registered as being imprisoned for political reasons.

The government denies holding political prisoners. With very little information provided by the government, it wasn't immediately clear how many people were released on Friday.

The release comes as the Cuban government navigates extreme pressure and a crippling oil blockade by the Trump administration, which has openly expressed its desire for regime

change and the release of those arrested for protesting.

On Friday, detainees in the La Lima prison on the rural outskirts of Havana said they were woken up at 6 a.m. and heard their names called out. Hours later they were walking into the arms of loved ones awaiting them in front of blue prison gates.

The prisoners interviewed Friday by The Associated Press were not serving time for political charges. It's uncertain how many of those released were protesters - often charged with public disorder, contempt or terrorism. Many of the more than one thousand people the activist organization Prisoners Defended has registered as detained for political reasons were protesters from the 2021 mass demonstrations on the island, which were met with widespread arrests by the

government.

Sporadic protests have broken out in recent months as the island sinks into a deeper crisis. In one March incident, protesters burned the headquarters of the communist party in central Cuba, leading to five arrests.

The lack of information over releases on Friday fueled frustration among human rights and opposition groups, who said the releases were a good sign, but fell short of real change.

"The government presents it as a humanitarian gesture toward prisoners, not as the release of political prisoners," said Manuel Cuesta Morúa, leader of the Council for Democratic Transition in Cuba, the island's main opposition platform. "By doing so, it mixes things up to avoid giving the impression that it recognizes political imprisonment in Cuba."

Strategic shift toward market diversification & liquidity growth

## Boursa Kuwait to launch bonds & sukuk platform following CMA decision

KUWAIT CITY, April 4: Boursa Kuwait welcomed the Capital Markets Authority (CMA)'s approval of its proposed rule amendments, alongside the issuance of Resolution No. 38 of 2026 establishing a comprehensive regulatory and legislative framework for bonds and sukuk. The move also includes amendments to the Executive Bylaws of Law No. 7 of 2010.

Boursa Kuwait also issued Resolution No. 1 of 2026, amending its rulebook to incorporate provisions specific to bonds and sukuk. Together, these measures represent a significant addition to the Kuwaiti capital market and constitute a pivotal step toward developing its investment environment and diversifying its instruments in line with international best practices.

"We are pleased to announce the completion of full operational and technical readiness for this phase, as system tests conducted by Boursa Kuwait and the capital market apparatus have delivered successful results, confirming the trading infrastructure's readiness," said Boursa Kuwait Chief Executive Officer **Mr. Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi**.

"Boursa Kuwait is now fully equipped to receive listing applications and operate the bonds and sukuk trading platform, with instruments to be listed upon meeting the applicable regulatory requirements," he added.

Al-Osaimi also noted that investor confidence in Kuwait's capital market is a trust the exchange is committed to upholding, adding, "What sets this phase apart is the introduction of new investment instruments at a time when the region is facing exceptional geopolitical challenges. This reflects the depth of investor confidence in the national economy of Kuwait and its capital market, underscoring the apparatus's commitment to continued development despite these conditions."

"We would also like to reassure all market participants that trading systems are operating at full efficiency, and that Boursa Kuwait is distinguished by a robust operational infrastructure that provides investors with the tools and environment needed to manage their portfolios with confidence," he said.

### An integrated legislative framework covering the full cycle of the platform

Resolution 38 establishes a comprehensive regulatory framework that covers the full lifecycle of bonds and sukuk in the Kuwaiti capital market, from listing and daily trading through to early redemption or maturity.



Mohammad Al-Osaimi



Boursa Kuwait

The new framework governs the listing of both domestic and foreign issuances, sets out ongoing obligations for issuers and obligors throughout the listing period and clearly defines procedures for delisting and withdrawal, including mechanisms for the treatment of these instruments in relation to their exclusion from market indices.

Boursa Kuwait also completed an integrated suite of operational and technical measures, including the introduction of a dedicated trading board for bonds and sukuk that is separate from equities. Trading sessions and price limits were structured to reflect the distinct nature of these instruments, differing from conventional equity trading mechanisms.

In addition, the market framework establishes clear continuous disclosure requirements, outlining issuers' obligations when disclosing financial statements and material developments, alongside provisions regulating negotiated trades and the introduction of tailored operational rules that take into account the unique characteristics of these instruments.

### A clear vision with strategic goals

The comprehensive regulatory amendments included in the resolution align with five clear strategic objectives that reflect the long-term direction for the development of the Kuwaiti capital market. These include aligning the Kuwaiti capital market's regulatory framework with the standards recognized in global capital markets, establishing a clear and structured approach to listing and trading that provides legal certainty for all stakeholders as well as enhancing market liquidity through the introduction of a new class of tradable instruments.

The amendments also aim to strengthen disclosure standards and transparency in a manner that serves investors' interests and reinforces their confidence, while supporting greater diversification of

investment instruments in the Kuwaiti market, reducing reliance on equities as the primary investment vehicle.

### A real opportunity for issuers

For the first time ever, Kuwaiti and foreign companies can finance their operations and projects through the issuance of listed bonds or sukuk on Boursa Kuwait, benefitting from clear and viable financing advantages. The instruments allow issuers to secure funding at competitive costs compared to traditional bank borrowing and access a broader and more diversified investor base beyond conventional lenders.

The new regulatory framework also requires companies seeking listing to meet a set of conditions designed to safeguard investor interests. These include obtaining a credit rating from a recognized rating agency, adhering to a minimum issuance value of no less than KD 100,000 or its equivalent in foreign currencies, ensuring free tradability without restrictions and establishing a body to represent bond or sukuk holders and protect their interests. Additionally, sukuk issuances must comply with the principles and rules of Islamic Sharia.

### A new investment opportunity

The significance of this platform extends to investors in Kuwait's capital market, offering new investment opportunities that were not previously available at this level of regulation and transparency. As listed and tradable instruments on the exchange, bonds and sukuk provide a structured investment option that enhances market efficiency and keeps pace with its development.

These instruments also offer investors a steady and predictable stream of income, distinct from the more volatile returns associated with equities. They typically carry comparatively lower risk, particularly in the case of highly rated bonds and sukuk, while enabling greater portfolio diversification and a more balanced distribution of risk.

### A well-established institutional partnership

Boursa Kuwait commends the regulatory efforts undertaken by the CMA in developing this integrated legislative framework and delivering it to a high professional standard. The exchange also affirms its continued coordination and alignment with the Authority in its capacity as the legislative and supervisory body overseeing Kuwait's securities sector.

Boursa Kuwait views this relationship as a model of effective institutional integration between a regulator that sets and oversees the framework and an operator that implements and advances it, an approach adopted by leading capital markets worldwide.

The exchange further reiterates its commitment to continuously enhancing its infrastructure and technical systems to ensure the delivery of trading services at the highest levels of efficiency and reliability across all asset classes, enhancing Kuwait's position as a leading financial and investment center in the region and across the globe, a vital contributor to the economic diversification goals to which the State of Kuwait aspires.

## Other Voices

### Closure of the Gulf

By **Kamel Al-Harami**  
Independent Oil Analyst

We are entering the second month of the closure of the Arabian Gulf, with no movement of crude oil, petroleum products, or gas through oil tankers or any other vessels passing through it, except for those of Iran.

The primary party responsible for closing this strategic passage is also the one that continues to move more than 22 million barrels daily through this vital global energy route, including its own shipments. This represents between 20 and 30 percent of global supply, translating to losses of about 1.1 billion dollars per day.

The closure caused an immediate increase in oil prices to above 112 dollars per barrel, while Arab Gulf crude reached around 126 dollars per barrel. However, such high levels are not fully realized at present, as most oil producers in the Gulf are unable to produce, export, or transport their oil through the Gulf. This is due to the closure imposed by the Iranian authorities, which are not allowing any loaded oil tankers to pass. This is despite the fact that no single country owns or controls such a vital waterway, which normally carries around 22 million barrels of oil daily, mainly to Asia, where demand for Gulf oil is high.

The only two countries in the Gulf that can bypass this situation are Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia can transport its crude oil through Yanbu on the Red Sea at around 4 million barrels per day, with the capacity to increase to about 7 million barrels per day.

The other country is the United Arab Emirates, which can pump and export about 1.5 million barrels per day through the Habshan pipeline to the Emirate of Fujairah.

Iraq can also export crude from its northern Kirkuk oil fields through the Ceyhan port in Turkey at around 250,000 barrels per day.

The current oil situation, with the closure of the Gulf, is causing panic in the oil mar-

kets. Some oil consumers are seeking ways to protect their interests and ensure that oil continues to flow freely without interruptions or interference. The Gulf is a natural maritime passage and should remain free for all, with no charges or fees imposed by any country, as it has been throughout the history of the Arabian Gulf. It has been and should be open and accessible to everyone, forever.

On the financial side, the closure could result in losses exceeding 15 billion dollars in revenues. While Iran may appear to benefit in the short term, it is losing credibility and risks global legal condemnation for its selfish actions. These actions are creating chaos worldwide, generating anger toward the current Iranian establishment for blackmailing the world, and contributing to inflation and rising prices in almost all sectors, from fuel and food to everyday goods.

This is not to say that our country, Kuwait, is coming under attacks on the most vital facilities that our lives depend on - our water desalination plants, oil facilities, and civilian infrastructure - while our people go about their work and daily lives.

What has Kuwait done to Iran to deserve these military attacks, when we have always supported Iran in times of need? We have never hesitated to assist and provide help, yet now we are being targeted, with vital installations such as water plants, refineries, and crude oil export facilities at risk.

No one can accept Iran's unilateral action of closing the Arabian Gulf. It belongs to all countries in the region, and no single nation has the right to control or restrict its free passage. Such actions will face global condemnation without hesitation. The Gulf is a critical source of oil for the world, and shutting down its facilities will cause panic, drive up inflation, and affect daily life for people everywhere. What harm have our Gulf countries done to justify closing this vital waterway?

It is time for Iran to rethink this criminal act. Your neighbors deserve better. Love thy neighbor.

Email: [nafikuwaiti@yahoo.com](mailto:nafikuwaiti@yahoo.com)



Al-Harami

Expansion grows network to 36 destinations

## Jazeera Airways announces three new routes to Pakistan, India via Dammam

KUWAIT CITY, April 4, (KUNA): Jazeera Airways announced Friday the launch of three new routes to Peshawar and Sialkot in Pakistan and Coimbatore in India, via Dammam Airport in Saudi Arabia, starting April 15.

The airline's CEO, Barathan Pasupathi, told KUNA that flights to and from Sialkot will operate twice weekly on Wednesdays and Fridays, beginning April 15.

Pasupathi added that flights to Peshawar in Pakistan and Coimbatore in India will operate twice weekly on Fridays and Sundays, beginning April 17.

He explained that this move will contribute to accelerating the expansion of the airline's network, which now serves 36 destinations to meet high demand, emphasizing the airline's commitment to strengthening air connectivity between Kuwait and South Asia, noting that the company

continues its efforts to ensure reliable transportation for individuals during this period.

Pasupathi pointed out that Pakistan and India are among the most important markets for Jazeera Airways, as they include two important communities with close ties to Kuwait, indicating that these destinations contribute to providing wider access to major population centers, which supports the demand for essential travel.

### Meeting discusses 2027-2028 draft plans & budgets

## The Arab Labor Organization signals regional escalation hurting economies & labor markets

CAIRO, April 4, (KUNA): The Arab Labor Organization (ALO) confirmed on Saturday that the attacks and military escalation in the region have harmed infrastructure, vital facilities, supply chains, and disrupted production and transportation, increasing pressure on the economy and labor markets, and affecting food security in the region.

This came during ALO Director General Faye Al-Mutairi's speech at the 104th board of directors' session, chaired by Egypt and attended by Arab League representatives.

Al-Mutairi said that the Arab region is facing a dangerous turning point due to the escalation of tensions that negatively affect various economic aspects and exacerbate social challenges in Arab countries.

He emphasized the organization's role in enhancing Arab workers' position and protecting them from negative socioeconomic crises, adding that the meeting would discuss several important issues, including the draft and budget plans for 2027-2028.

The ALO chief affirmed the organization's full solidarity with the workers and people of Palestine, and its condemnation of the violations they are subjected to.

For his part, Egyptian Minister for Labor Hassan Raddad said in his speech that the session is held under exceptional circumstances, as the region is witnessing a serious escalation of events that threaten regional stability and peace.



KUNA photo

Opening of the 104th session of the Board of Directors of the Arab Labour Organization.

He affirmed that the ongoing attacks are a clear violation of international law and United Nations charters, stressing that targeting civilian facilities and death of innocents constitutes as war crimes that cannot be ignored under any pretext.

Raddad stressed the need for Arab countries

to stand united in facing these challenges and to strengthen Arab solidarity, and for the international community to work towards a comprehensive ceasefire, as these tensions have contributed to rising inflation rates, impacting production in various sectors and Arab labor markets.

Ongoing support for Diraya campaign

## KFH urges vigilance against fraudulent online links

KUWAIT CITY, April 4: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) warns customers to remain cautious when dealing with fraudulent online links, reaffirming its commitment to customer protection and secure banking practices. This warning comes as part of KFH's ongoing support for the Diraya campaign, launched in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) to promote banking awareness.

In a press release, KFH stated that the new form of online scam involves sending a message with a suspicious link tricking victims to click the link to visit a particular website or participate in a survey. Once they click the link, their devices will be hacked, enabling the hacker to access and exploit their personal data for harmful purposes.



KFH urged customers to stay vigilant and refrain from disclosing their personal information to requests received through e-mails, text messages, or phone calls, as they are attempts to obtain customers' banking information to steal their funds or data.

KFH advised customers to be careful when receiving links as these links could lead to theft of sensitive banking information. The bank also recommended that customers protect their bank accounts by avoiding the storage of confidential information, such as card numbers or passwords, on their mobile phones.

Additionally, customers were urged not to share their OTP with anyone and to log out of the bank's application or website promptly after finishing a transaction.

Bank supports key economic sectors and SME development

# Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait – Egypt achieves 39% increase in Net Profit to EGP 5.3 bln in 2025

CAIRO, April 4: In continuation of its robust performance since entering the Egyptian market, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait – Egypt (ABK – Egypt) reported outstanding financial results for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2025 with Net Profit recording at EGP 5.3 billion, showing growth by 39% in 2025 compared to EGP 3.8 billion in 2024 after excluding foreign exchange revaluation impact. Net Interest Income grew by 29% to reach EGP 8.4 billion in December 2025 compared to EGP 6.5 billion at the end of 2024.

Meanwhile, Total Assets grew by 26% to reach EGP 178.1 billion compared to EGP 141.6 billion at the end of 2024 indicating a strong financial position and a robust balance sheet. Total Customer Deposits increased by 18% reaching EGP 141 billion compared to EGP 119.9 billion in December 2024, and the Bank's Total Gross Loans Portfolio expanded by 26% to reach EGP 87.6 billion compared to EGP 69.3 billion in 2024. Moreover, Non-Performing Loans (NPL) ratio recorded 1.31% at the end of 2025 compared to 1.74% at the end of 2024.

Commenting on these results, Mr. Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK – Egypt, said, "Over the course of 2025, the Bank managed to achieve outstanding financial results and strengthen its market position, demonstrating the agility of our strategy and business model that enabled us to cope with the dynamic economic landscape. This strong performance is another milestone in our 10-year journey, validating our bold vision and ambitious strategy. In alignment with our relentless pursuit of achieving the Group's goals and enhancing shareholders' rights.

Mr. Marafi stated that over the course of 2025, ABK – Egypt expanded its positive social impact by collaborating with non-profit organizations under the auspices of the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE). These efforts focused on implementing various Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, reflecting the Bank's ongoing commitment to driving meaningful and sustainable change within the community. These initiatives were also endorsed by the Bank's employees, who have shown high level of participation in volunteering activities. Meanwhile, the Bank reaffirmed its commitment to continue to provide both financial and moral support to those in need in order to build a more cohesive society.

In this regard, Mr. Marafi stated that ABK – Egypt continues to focus on supporting key sectors identified by the Egyptian government as critical to economic growth and job creation, including agriculture, industry, export-oriented projects, and technology. He noted that the Bank remains committed to supporting the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and mid-corporate segments, which contribute to expanding the Bank's growing customer base.

## Keeping Up with Market Developments

Mr. Marafi added that the Bank's strategic direction is reflected in its commitment to anticipating and effectively addressing evolving customer needs, while keeping pace with market developments to deliver sustainable value to customers and stakeholders. He concluded by expressing his appreciation to the regulatory authorities in Egypt for their continued support, as well as to the Board of Direc-



Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK – Egypt



Khaled El Salawy, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director ABK – Egypt

tors, shareholders, and customers for their continued confidence in the Bank.

## 10 Years

In the same context, Mr. Khaled El Salawy, CEO and Managing Director of ABK – Egypt, praised the Bank's strong financial performance in 2025, stating, "This year marks a significant milestone as we celebrate our 10th anniversary in the Egyptian market, since our journey started back in March 2016." He emphasized that the Bank's results reflect the efficiency of its business strategy in achieving growth despite local and global economic challenges.

He added that these achievements are a direct result of the dedication and commitment of the Executive Management team, as well as the relentless efforts of all employees, who consistently strive to strengthen the Bank's leading position in the Egyptian market. Furthermore, the Bank recorded a Profit Before Tax EGP 7.5 billion, representing a growth rate of 45% compared to EGP 5.2 billion at the end of 2024, excluding the impact of foreign exchange revaluation.

Mr. Khaled El Salawy confirmed that the Bank has set an ambitious strategy focusing on sustainable growth through enhancing operational efficiency across all functions with clear performance indicators, in addition to strengthening its geographical presence and service levels to ensure the best banking experience for its customers.

He further highlighted, "The Bank's constant efforts in offering innovative products that cater for the evolving needs of both individual and corporate customers has enabled us to strengthen our position and market share. The Bank has also boosted

financial inclusion by launching a series of impactful programs and activities that reached out to various segments in full alignment with national directions and the Central Bank of Egypt's (CBE) initiatives."

Mr. Khaled El Salawy added, after ten years of multiplied growth rates and impressive business performance, ABK – Egypt will continue to focus on its key strategic pillars over the coming period. These include taking further steps towards implementing its digital transformation strategy, adopting sustainability practices in its operations, investing in its cybersecurity infrastructure, promoting customer-centricity throughout its culture, and investing in its human capital.

It is worth mentioning that Sustainability and Sustainable Finance remain integral to ABK – Egypt's core values and business strategy. In 2025, the Bank continued to strengthen its Sustainable Finance division and further operationalize its sustainability strategy through enhanced ESG risk management frameworks, portfolio monitoring, and governance structures, in line with regulatory requirements and best international practices.

ABK – Egypt has remained committed to its promise of providing banking solutions that enrich and simplify the lives of its customers. A transformative shift in corporate culture has fostered an environment of collaboration, transparency, and innovation, enhancing employee engagement and customer satisfaction.

The Bank also advanced its digital transformation strategy, resulting in streamlined operations, enhanced customer experience, and accelerated customer base growth. This transformation, together with initiatives to strengthen the balance sheet, enhance risk management practices, and diversify the Bank's portfolio, contributed to reinforcing its strong financial position and solidifying its standing as a key player in the highly competitive Egyptian banking sector.

## Corporate Services

In 2025, the Bank continued to enhance its digital corporate banking services through the launch of Corpay, an electronic solution designed for corporate clients and directly integrated with the Central Bank of Egypt's Automated Clearing House (ACH). This solution enables companies to execute group financial transactions electronically, improving efficiency, saving time, and reducing the need for branch visits.

## New Awards

In recognition of its achievements, ABK – Egypt received several prestigious awards during 2025. The Bank was named Best Corporate Banking Services – Egypt 2025, while CEO Mr Khaled El-Salawy was recognised as Best CEO in the Egyptian Banking Sector 2025 by International Business Magazine.

The Bank also received the Best Credit Card Offers – Egypt 2025 award from Global Business Outlook. These recognitions reflect the Bank's strong performance, sustained growth, and the success of its transformation strategy following the Group's acquisition of Piraeus Bank – Egypt in 2015.

## The Conversation

### Experts warn US critical infrastructure increasingly vulnerable

## Geopolitical cyber threats hit US corporate operations

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



By William Akoto

American University School of International Service

Michigan may be more than 6,000 miles away from the war in Iran, but, virtually speaking, it's well within striking distance.

An Iran-linked group calling itself Handala claimed responsibility for a cyberattack on Portage, Michigan-based medical device maker Stryker Corp., carried out on March 11, 2026. Handala said the attack was in retaliation for events related to the conflict in Iran.

The cyberattack affected Stryker's internal Microsoft software system, disrupting the company's order processing, manufacturing and shipping.

As a scholar who researches cyber conflict, I've found that in periods of geopolitical tension such as the current U.S./Israel-Iran war, cyber operations often sit right next to missiles and airstrikes as a tool that states and state-linked groups use to inflict damage, probe weaknesses and signal resolve to their enemies.

The Stryker case is notable because it shows how quickly a regional conflict can translate into disruption for organizations far from the battlefield. It also illustrates the vulnerabilities of U.S. organizations, including those involved in critical infrastructure.

Modern critical infrastructure does not only involve the obvious big targets like power plants or water utilities. It also relies on suppliers and service providers that sit one or two links upstream - such as managed information technology providers, cloud and data center operators and specialized parts suppliers - that keep everything from hospitals to transit systems running.

This is one reason U.S. officials emphasize critical infrastructure as a whole-of-society problem, not a niche government issue. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's "Shields Up" guidance is written for exactly this reality: a world where geopolitical shocks can threaten organizations that did not think they were part of the battlefield.

When people imagine cyber warfare, many often picture dramatic outcomes. The lights go out. The water turns toxic. The trains stop. Those scenarios are real risks. But they are not the only objective, and often not the main one. The real strategic value is ac-

cess. Cyber access is like a set of keys. If you can get into a network quietly, stay there and learn how it works, you create options for later. You can steal information, map dependencies and position yourself to cause disruption. You can keep the option to strike in your pocket, so that in a crisis, you can cause or credibly threaten to cause harm.

That is why U.S. agencies took the China-linked Volt Typhoon group's hacking activity so seriously. In joint advisories, U.S. officials described a campaign that compromised the information technology systems of organizations across multiple critical infrastructure sectors and used so-called living-off-the-land techniques that can blend into normal administrative activity.

This is an important point. A lot of state-linked cyber activity is not designed to create immediate, visible chaos. It is designed to build leverage.

Most state-backed cyber operations, including those carried out by the United States, follow a common sequence.

First, the attackers gain initial access through techniques such as phishing, exploiting known vulnerabilities or abusing weak remote access. Once inside, attackers try to learn where the valuable data and sensitive systems are. They seek higher privileges and move laterally, often using legitimate administrative tools to blend in.

That stealthy maneuvering is one reason campaigns like Volt Typhoon raised alarms. Defenders can have a hard time distinguishing an intruder from a normal administrator in a busy environment, especially when the intruder is deliberately trying to make their actions look like ordinary activity.

The attackers then establish persistence, meaning they can sustain their access. If the goal is leverage, the attackers want to survive defenders' cleanup efforts after they discover they've been hacked. That can mean gaining multiple footholds, altering authentication settings or gaining access via third parties.

Finally, they choose the effects they want to have. Consider the "Shamoon" attack in 2012 in Saudi Arabia. After gaining access, the attackers used malware to wipe data on thousands of computers at oil giant Saudi Aramco, disrupting business operations.

But not every intrusion ends in destruction. Sometimes it ends with data theft, where the prize is information rather than causing downtime. An example is the 2015 breach of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, in which attackers stole sensitive per-

sonnel data. Other times, the point is disruption designed to send a message such as the cyberattack on Sony Pictures in 2014, when hackers sought to keep the company from releasing the comedy film "The Interview."

The U.S. has a growing defense ecosystem, but it is not a single shield you can switch on. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency encourages organizations to heighten their cybersecurity vigilance during periods of elevated geopolitical risk. The agency, along with the FBI, the National Security Agency and international partners, also publishes advisories with indicators and recommended mitigations when they see active campaigns.

Because critical infrastructure is mostly privately owned, federal defense also depends on partnership. For instance, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative is designed to support coordinated public-private planning and information sharing around major cyber risks.

Congress has also pushed the private sector toward reporting incidents more quickly. The Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Act of 2022 sets reporting timelines that include reporting cyber incidents within 72 hours and ransomware payments within 24 hours after payment. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has been implementing these requirements through ongoing rulemaking.

These are meaningful steps, but they do not erase the basic constraints: uneven resources, uneven incentives and the reality that many targets sit outside direct federal control.

The Stryker episode is a reminder that cyber operations are now a routine tool that state-linked actors can use to project power during international crises. They can aim at theft, disruption or signaling. Sometimes they hit government networks, and other times they hit private companies that sit inside essential supply chains.

Either way, the consequences can be felt far from the conflict itself.

In cyber conflict, the quiet part - gaining access, establishing persistence and preparing for deployment - typically comes first. The visible disruption often gets headlines, but it is the hidden positioning that sets the stage for offensive cyber operations in a crisis.

Wars today are not only fought with missiles and airstrikes you can see in the sky. They are also fought with what you cannot see moving through computer networks. (AP)



Gas prices are displayed near a ferris wheel in Frankfurt, Germany, Thursday, April 2, 2026. (AP)

### Eurozone inflation rises to 2.5%

## Five EU states seek energy windfall tax

FRANKFURT, April 4, (AP): The finance ministers of Spain and four other European countries are urging the European Union to impose a bloc-wide windfall tax on energy companies, concerned that surging oil and gas prices driven by the war in Iran will fuel inflation and strain households.

Spanish Economy Minister Carlos Cuerdo said Saturday that his counterparts from Germany, Italy, Portugal and Austria had signed a letter to the European Commission citing "market distortions" caused by the price spike.

"The conflict in the Middle East has caused oil prices to rise, placing a significant burden on the European economy and on European citizens," the letter, dated Friday and made public by Cuerdo in an online post, said.

"It is important to ensure that this burden is distributed fairly," it added.

Europe is largely dependent on imported oil and gas, leaving it vulnerable to external shocks. In 2022, turmoil in energy markets following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine pushed

inflation into double digits in many European countries. At the time, the EU imposed a "solidarity contribution" that included caps on excess energy profits.

"Given the current market distortions and fiscal constraints, the European Commission should swiftly develop a similar EU-wide contribution instrument," the letter said. "It would also send a clear message that those who profit from the consequences of the war must do their part to ease the burden on the general public."

Driven largely by higher oil prices, the annual inflation rate in the 21 countries that use the euro rose to 2.5% in March, from 1.9% in February.

Iran has blocked most tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz - a chokepoint for about 20% of global oil and gas - in a move that threatens to stress fuel markets for months. European Union Energy Commissioner Dan Jorgensen warned this week that disruption caused by the closure means fuel prices are unlikely to "go back to normal in a foreseeable future."

## Experts warn of global economic ripple effects if crisis prolongs

BEIJING, April 4, (Xinhua): A virtual meeting led by Britain on the Strait of Hormuz concluded on Thursday with over 30 countries participating, although the United States was notably absent.

As global oil prices continue to rise and supply chains remain strained, nations worldwide are adopting different strategies to handle the crisis.

### Costly deadlock

Hormuz, which once saw around 130 vessels passing daily, now has approximately 20,000 seafarers stranded aboard 2,000 ships in its waters, according to the International Maritime Organization.

Lloyd's List Intelligence, a maritime data and intelligence company, revealed that only 292 ships transited the strait between Feb. 28 and March 31, with 71 percent of them being either owned by or affiliated with Iran.

Oil prices soared on Thursday as investors considered how long the Middle East conflict would impede the transportation of crude oil through the strait, reported CNBC.

It added that June futures for international benchmark Brent crude rose more than 6 percent to 107.35 U.S. dollars per barrel.

Starting April 17, Amazon will impose a 3.5 percent fuel and logistics surcharge on merchants' fulfillment fees for sellers in the United States and Canada.

Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences Paul Krugman on Wednesday argued that rising costs may hit American consumers the hardest through higher prices for food and everyday goods.

Germany's federal government said on Tuesday that petrol prices in the country had been fluctuating up to 22 times a day, as the war and disruptions to oil supplies raised costs.

Around 16 percent of fuel stations in France are experiencing shortages, driven by panic buying and price rises linked to the war with Iran. The Connexion, France's leading English-language media outlet, reported on Thursday.

### Different strategies

As global stakeholders take action, Britain led virtual talks on Thursday. Although no concrete solutions were agreed upon, the meeting is considered a first step, as more detailed discussions could involve military planners in the coming weeks, according to Foreign Policy.

The United Nations Security Council was scheduled to vote on Friday on a draft resolution by Bahrain that would authorize defensive measures to secure the Strait. France circulated a more conciliatory alternative text, while diplomats wait to see whether the two drafts could be reconciled, according to Reuters.

China and Pakistan recently issued a joint five-point initiative to restore peace and stability in the Gulf and the wider Middle East, which includes safeguarding the sovereignty and security of the Gulf states, ending attacks on civilians and non-military targets, and ensuring the security of shipping lanes.

Gulf countries are studying costly options, including expanding oil pipeline capacity and developing new export terminals on the Red Sea coast, to bypass the chokepoint and continue exporting oil and gas, the Financial Times reported Thursday.

Under intense international scrutiny, Tehran said it is drafting a protocol to "monitor transit" through Hormuz and will negotiate with Oman on a joint deal, the Russian news agency Sputnik reported Thursday.

Tanker traffic "should be supervised and coordinated" with Iran and Oman, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharib-

abadi was quoted by Sputnik as saying.

These requirements would apply after the ongoing conflict "to facilitate and ensure safe passage and provide better services to ships that pass through this route," the official said.

This move raised hopes that the Strait may regain some capacity without requiring military force, slightly easing oil prices from their daily highs.

### Mounting pressure

The crisis has highlighted the interconnectedness of the global market. Countries are taking action based on the notion that no one can fully insulate itself from a sustained disruption of the Hormuz.

The Strait is essential not only to oil but also to trade in some of the world's most vital resources -- diesel, jet fuel, fertilizer and plastics, according to Krugman.

UN Trade and Development warned Wednesday that if disruptions persist, the situation could evolve into a cascading crisis with far-reaching consequences for development.

Fuel crunches hitting Asia will soon spread west, while Europe is likely to face surging prices to secure cargoes and is at risk of diesel shortages in the coming weeks, Bloomberg said in an article on Monday.

As the crisis spreads, parts of Africa have already faced supply disruptions, with similar pressures expected in Latin America, the report added.

"It's clear to me if this crisis lasts more than three or four months it becomes a systemic problem for the world," TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanne told Bloomberg.

The economic downturn is compounded by political pressure, especially for many European leaders, who face rising tensions with Washington.

New payment option lets shoppers split bills into four profit-free installments

# Lulu Hyper introduces 'Shop Now, Pay Later' in partnership with Taly



Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait partners with Taly for BNPL services.

KUWAIT CITY, April 4: LULU Hypermarket Kuwait, a leading retail destination offering a wide range of products, announced its partnership with Taly, a Kuwaiti "Buy Now, Pay Later" service provider. The partnership aims to introduce flexible and convenient payment solutions for LULU Hyper customers, as part of ongoing efforts to enhance customer experience through innovative and customer-centric offerings.

Through this partnership, customers will be able to benefit from Taly's payment solutions when shopping across selected categories, allowing them to spread payments over four equal payments with 0% profit. The service is designed to provide customers with greater financial flexibility and accessibility, while maintaining a seamless and transparent purchasing experience across in-store and digital channels.

In a statement, LULU Hypermarket Director Mr Sreejith KS commented: "At LuLu Hypermarket, our customers are at the heart of everything we do. Partnering with Taly allows us to offer more flexibility and ease in how our customers shop and pay. We believe this solution will empower our shoppers

with greater financial convenience while maintaining the quality and value they expect from us."

On this occasion, Sulaiman AlJaser, COO and Co-Founder of Taly, said:

"We are proud to mark our first rollout with a hypermarket partner in Kuwait through this partnership. This milestone reflects Taly's ongoing commitment to expanding its footprint across key retail sectors and bringing flexible payment solutions closer to customers' everyday needs.

We initially launched within the electronics sector, and we look forward to expanding our offering further across additional categories, including grocery, in the near future. Our goal is to continue broadening our partnerships and enabling more customers to access convenient, transparent, and profit-free payment options across their daily purchases."

This Partnership aligns with Taly's broader strategy to partner with leading merchants and retailers, enabling customers to shop with greater flexibility while supporting merchants in enhancing their customer experience and driving growth.

## About LULU Hypermarket

Lulu Hypermarket in Kuwait is one of the Kuwait's leading retail chains, offering a wide range of products including groceries, fresh food, electronics, clothing, and household items and more. It is popular for providing a convenient one-stop shopping experience for residents.

Lulu Hypermarket has a strong presence in Kuwait with 17 outlets located across different areas. The stores are modern and spacious, featuring sections for fresh produce, meat, seafood, bakery items, and international products to meet diverse customer needs.

## About Taly

Taly is a licensed Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) provider in Kuwait, offering customers the ability to split their purchases into profit-free payments. Taly partners with leading partners across various sectors to deliver flexible, transparent, and seamless payment solutions that enhance customer purchasing power and overall shopping experience. We handle the payments so you can focus on what matters.

178K jobs added in March

## US payroll rebound faces oil price threat

WASHINGTON, April 4, (AP): American employers added a surprisingly strong 178,000 new jobs last month, rebounding from a dismal February. And the unemployment rate dipped to 4.3%.

The Labor Department reported Friday that hiring marked a turnaround from the loss of 133,000 jobs in February. The job gains were about three times what economists had forecast. But uncertainty surrounding the war with Iran - and its impact on energy prices - is clouding the outlook for the labor market.

The unemployment rate was down from 4.4% in February. That is partly because the labor force - those working and looking for work - dropped by 396,000 in March so fewer people were competing for jobs. In fact, the percentage of people in the labor force dropped to 61.9% last month, the lowest since November 2021.

Health care companies added 76,400 jobs last month, boosted by the return of 31,000 Kaiser Permanente employees to work after the end of a strike in February. Factories added 15,000 jobs last month but have still shed jobs for 14 of the last 16 months. Construction companies added 26,000 jobs, probably partly because of warmer weather last month.

Average hourly wages were up 0.2% from February. Compared to March 2025, they were up 3.5% - the smallest gain since May 2021 and one consistent with the Federal Reserve's 2% annual inflation target.

Labor Department revisions shaved 7,000 jobs off combined January and February payrolls.

The U.S. job market has been in a slump over the past year. Most economists say the impact of the war and higher energy prices was probably not fully reflected in the March jobs numbers.

"The data is mostly backward-looking, and likely does not incorporate any impact from the recent rise in energy prices, or other risks related to the war in Iran," Thomas Simons, chief U.S. economist with the investment firm Jefferies, wrote in a commentary.

Diane Swonk, chief economist at the accounting firm KPMG, said that the economy is getting a lift from big tax refunds made possible by President Donald Trump's 2025 tax cuts. "But those are now being eaten up by higher energy costs," she said.

Last year, employers added an average of just 9,700 jobs a month, the weakest hiring outside a recession since 2002. Businesses have been reluctant to bring on new workers partly because of uncertainty arising from President Donald Trump's tariffs on imports and crackdown on immigration. One measure released by the Labor Department on Monday showed the weakest hiring since April 2020 - in the middle of COVID-19 lockdowns.

But firms have also been reluctant to let go of their existing employees, creating what economists describe as a "no-hire, no-fire"

scenario that locks young applicants out of the job market. At the same time, there are growing worries that artificial intelligence is taking entry-level jobs.

New jobs are heavily concentrated in health care and social assistance (which includes day care and vocational rehabilitation centers). That combined category accounted for more than half the jobs created last month. The trend reflects an aging U.S. population. A graying Japan saw the same thing in the early 2010s, Vanguard economist Adam Schickling wrote in a commentary ahead of Friday's jobs report.

"The larger-than-expected rebound in nonfarm payrolls in March mainly reflects a reversal of the strike and weather effects that weighed on hiring in February, rather than being a sign that the labor market is rapidly gaining momentum," said Stephen Brown, chief North America economist at Capital Economics. Citing higher oil prices, he warned of the risk that "the hit to consumers' purchasing power will weigh on demand and therefore hiring in the near term."

March's unexpectedly strong hiring is likely to ease pressure on the Fed policymakers to cut interest rates right away to help the job market, giving them time to assess what impact higher energy prices are having on overall inflation.

Worries about the fallout from the war are likely to limit job gains for awhile. "It's the nature of uncertainties," said Olu Sonola, U.S. head of research at Fitch Ratings. "Companies typically respond by holding back" on hiring decisions.

A lot will depend on how long the conflict lasts and what happens to oil prices. The price of benchmark American crude oil closed just below \$112 a barrel Thursday. "If that's \$140 next month, Sonola said, "God knows what's going to happen."

Mai Truong is the founder of Bo & Mei, which makes games and puzzles designed to celebrate Asian heritage. She's currently preparing for this year's holiday shopping season and assessing her hiring plans - but she's facing lots of unknowns.

The Brooklyn, New York-based company, which had sales of under \$500,000 last year, had to pay tens of thousands of dollars in tariffs last year. Truong is not sure what her tariff bill will be this year and whether she will be able to get a refund after the Supreme Court struck down some of Trump's tariffs. The Iran war is also creating unforeseen costs including higher shipping expenses.

Truong is her company's only full-time employee. But she typically hires a couple of contractors, who work in operations, marketing and other areas, to help in the months heading to Christmas.

"It makes everything feel very uncertain," she said. "On the other hand, there's so little you can do with the volatility. You just have to stay the course and kind of deal with the variables as they become more clear."

EU, Japan, Korea, & Switzerland face 15% drug tariffs, U.K. gets 10%

## Trump unveils 100% tariffs on patented drugs

NEW YORK, April 4, (AP): President Donald Trump signed an executive order Thursday that could slap long-threatened pharmaceutical tariffs of up to 100% on some patented drugs from companies that don't reach deals with his administration in the coming months.

Companies that have signed a "most favored nation" pricing deal and are actively building facilities in the U.S. to onshore production of patented pharmaceuticals and their ingredients will have a 0% tariff. For those that don't have a pricing deal but are building such projects in the U.S., a 20% tariff will apply but will increase to 100% in four years.

A senior administration official told reporters on a press call that companies still have months to negotiate before the 100% tariffs kick in - 120 days for bigger companies, and 180 days for everyone else. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to preview the executive order before it was issued, did not identify any companies or drugs that were in jeopardy of getting hit with the increased tariffs but noted the administration had already reached 17 pricing deals with major drugmakers, 13 of which have signed.

In the order, Trump wrote that he deemed such actions necessary "to address the threatened impairment of the national security posed by imports of pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical ingredients." It arrived on the first anniversary of Trump's so-called Liberation Day, when the president unveiled sweeping new import taxes on nearly every country in the world that sent the stock market reeling. Those "Liberation Day" tariffs were among the duties the Supreme Court overturned in February.

Some warned of consequences of the coming tariffs announced Thursday. Stephen J. Ubl, CEO of pharmaceutical company trade group PhRMA, said taxes "on cutting-edge medicines will increase costs

and could jeopardize billions in U.S. investments." He pointed to America's already large footprint in biopharmaceutical manufacturing and noted medicines sourced from other countries "overwhelmingly come from reliable U.S. allies."

Trump has launched a barrage of new import taxes on America's trading partners since the start of his second term and repeatedly pledged that sky-high levies on foreign-made drugs were on the way. But the administration has also used the threat of new levies to strike deals with major companies - like Pfizer, Eli Lilly and Bristol Myers Squibb - over the last year, with promises of lower prices for new drugs.

Beyond company-specific rates, a handful of countries have reached trade frameworks with the U.S. to further cap tariffs on drugs sent to the U.S. The EU, Japan, Korea and Switzerland will see a 15% U.S. tariff on patented pharmaceuticals, matching previously agreed rates for most goods, and the U.K. will get 10% - which Thursday's order noted would "then reduce to zero" under future trade agreements. The U.K. previously said it secured a 0% tariff rate for all British medicines exported to the U.S. for at least three years.

In addition Thursday, Trump rolled out an update on his 50% tariffs on imported steel, aluminum and copper. Starting Monday, tariff rates on those metals will be calculated based on the "full customs value" of what U.S. customers pay when buying foreign metal under the latest order, which the administration officials claimed will keep importers from other countries from escaping higher payments.

Products fully made of steel, aluminum and copper will continue to be tariffed at 50% for most countries. But the administration is also shifting how tariffs are calculated for derivative metals - or finished goods that contain some of these metals, but are not made entirely of them.

For a product with metal that amounts to less than 15% of its entire weight (like the cap on a perfume bottle) only country-specific tariffs will now apply, officials told reporters Thursday. But for products with more metal, such as a largely steel washing machine, they said a 25% tariff will apply to the whole value.

Thursday's orders reflect the latest example of Trump tapping into sectoral duties. The president used Section 232 of the 1962 Trade Expansion Act to impose the levies, the same authority he cited to slap import taxes on cars, lumber and even kitchen cabinets. And many expect to see more product-specific import taxes down the road.

That's because a ruling from the Supreme Court struck down tariffs Trump imposed using another law - the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act - to immediately slap tariffs on any country, at nearly any level.

While the Feb. 20 court decision marked a significant blow to Trump's economic agenda, the president still has plenty of options to keep taxing imports aggressively. Beyond sectoral levies, Trump also imposed a 10% tariff on all imports under a separate legal power mere hours after the Supreme Court's ruling, but that duty can only last for 150 days. Some two dozen states already challenged the new tariffs.

Trump has argued his steep new import taxes are necessary to bring back wealth that was "stolen" from the U.S. He says they will narrow America's decades-old trade deficit and bring manufacturing back to the country. But Trump has also turned to tariffs amid personal grudges, or in response to political critics. And upending the global supply chain has proven costly for businesses and households that are already strained by rising prices.

Critics recall MMS scandal and Gulf oil spill lax regulation

## Trump merges offshore drilling watchdogs

WASHINGTON, April 4, (AP): The Trump administration said Friday it is combining two agencies that were separated in the aftermath of the 2010 Gulf oil spill. The Interior Department said the overhaul would increase efficiency and speed up permitting for offshore oil and gas drilling.

The new Marine Minerals Administration will bring together the functions of the current Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said. Doing so will enable a "streamlined approach" that will maintain existing regulatory protections and rigorous safety standards, he said.

The combined agency will "deliver clearer coordination, better service to the public and stronger, more integrated oversight of offshore energy development," Burgum said in a statement.

The new name is reminiscent of the old Minerals Management Service, which for decades was the federal agency responsible for overseeing offshore drilling. In April 2010, a deadly explosion destroyed BP's Deepwater Horizon drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico, killing 11 people and discharging nearly 5 million barrels of crude oil into the sea over the next three months in the largest offshore oil spill in U.S. history.

Lawmakers from both parties and outside critics accused the agency of lax oversight of drilling and cozy ties with industry. A 2008 report by the Interior Department's inspector general said employees accepted gifts, steered contracts to favored clients and engaged in drug use and sex with employees of the energy firms they regulated.

The head of the agency resigned in May 2010 - less than a year into her tenure - under public pressure as the Obama administration moved to im-

pose stricter control over drilling in the wake of the spill.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement replaced the disbanded Minerals Management Service in 2011. The former agency's revenue management function was also separated into a new office. The Obama administration said the reorganization was designed to remove the complex and sometimes conflicting missions of the former agency.

BOEM oversees development of oil and gas, as well as renewable energy and mining on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf, while BSEE enforces safety and environmental regulations.

Environmental groups slammed the reorganization as a replay of the agency's troubled past.

The MMS was intentionally split up after the Gulf spill because regulators were too cozy with industry and "we couldn't trust the integrity of

their work," said Miyoko Sakashita, oceans director at the Center for Biological Diversity.

The new set-up "sounds like yet another handout to the oil industry that will fast-track risky projects. It sure won't make the people or wildlife on our coasts any safer," she wrote in an e-mail Friday.

The National Ocean Industries Association, which represents offshore developers, said that two separate - yet overlapping - government agencies responsible for administering the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act can understandably result in inconsistencies and delays.

"Bringing them back together should result in closer coordination and a more efficiently functioning government, for the benefit of American citizens who rely upon the energy produced from the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf to fuel our economy and lift society," Association President Erik Milito said in a statement.

## Russia plans to send second oil tanker to Cuba

MOSCOW, April 4, (AP): Russia plans to send a second oil tanker to Cuba, the country's energy minister said Thursday, citing the island's ongoing energy blockade and reiterating Russia's solidarity with the troubled Caribbean nation.

The announcement comes just two days after sanctioned Russian tanker Anatoly Kolodkin docked at the Cuban port of Matanzas laden with 730,000 barrels of oil, marking the first time in three months that an oil tanker reached the island. Experts have said that shipment could produce about 180,000 barrels of diesel, enough to feed Cuba's daily demand for nine or 10 days.

Energy Minister Sergei Tsivilyov spoke on the sidelines of an energy forum in the Russian city of Kazan.

"Cuba is in a total blockade, it's been cut off. Whose shipment of oil made it? A Russian vessel broke through the blockade. A second one is being loaded right now, we will not leave Cubans alone in trouble," Tsivilyov said.

In Havana, hundreds of people gathered aboard bicycles, motorcycles and small, three-wheeled vehicles to protest the U.S. embargo against Cuba.

"Yes to Cuba! No to the blockade!" the crowd yelled as it zoomed along Havana's famed seawall, past the U.S. Embassy and toward the downtown area.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and other officials watched the march go by but refrained from participating.

"Who's afraid here? Who is going to surrender here?" some people riding electric scooters shouted.

Among those participating in the protest was 33-year-old Havana resident Yeni López. "We came by bicycle, given the situation the country is facing in the current context, to reaffirm that we will always be present."

In late January, U.S. President Donald Trump threatened tariffs on any country that sells or supplies oil to Cuba, although he recently said he had "no problem" with the Russian oil tanker that delivered

relief to the island on Tuesday, saying he didn't think it would help prop up the Cuban government.

"Cuba's finished," Trump told reporters as he flew back to Washington on Sunday. "They have a bad regime. They have very bad and corrupt leadership and whether or not they get a boat of oil, it's not going to matter."

Cuba produces barely 40% of its required fuel and relies on imports to sustain its crumbling energy grid. Critical oil shipments from Venezuela were halted when the U.S. attacked the South American country and arrested its leader. Since then, Mexico also has halted its oil shipments to Cuba after Trump warned of tariffs.

The U.S. administration is demanding that Cuba ease political repression and liberalize its economy in return for lifting of sanctions.

The U.S. energy blockade has deepened Cuba's energy and economic crises, leading to severe blackouts, cuts to the state-run food ration system, and shortages of water and medicine, with the island's most vulnerable hardest hit.



This combination of images shows promotional art for animated films, (from left), 'GOAT,' 'Hoppers,' 'The Super Mario Galaxy Movie,' 'Toy Story 5,' and 'Minions & Monsters.' (AP)

## Kids ate the multiplex

# Family movies are taking over movie-going

NEW YORK, April 4, (AP): As "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie" lands in theaters, coloring stations, collectible popcorn containers and mascot Marios are all in place to entice arguably the most prized moviegoers to Hollywood today: kids.

By Sunday, Universal Pictures expects the five-day opening of the "Super Mario" sequel to reach \$186 million domestically, and around \$350 million worldwide. That would make it easily the biggest hit of the year, surpassing a pair of successes that also launched with young moviegoers in mind: Pixar's "Hoppers" (\$297 million worldwide) and Amazon MGM's "Project Hail Mary" (\$300.8 million).

It's not the start of a new trend but the culmination of one. In 2024, PG-rated movies outgrossed any other rating for the first time in decades, with \$3.18 billion in domestic ticket sales according to Comscore. Five of the top six movies worldwide were PG movies: "Inside Out 2," "Moana 2," "Despicable Me 4," "Wicked" and "Mufasa: The Lion King."

Last year was no different. PG-rated films amassed \$2.96 billion, again besting the longtime leader, PG-13. The top draws globally were "Ne Zha 2," "Zootopia 2," "Lilo & Stitch," "A Minecraft Movie" and the PG-13-rated but not exactly kid-adverse "Avatar: Fire and Ash."

Good news has been hard to come by in Hollywood. Contraction, most recently with Paramount Skydance's planned purchase of Warner Bros. Discovery, has added to the anxieties of an already jittery industry. While ticket sales are up so far in 2026, they remain more than 20% below pre-pandemic levels. In February, AMC, the nation's largest exhibitor, said it would continue to shutter underperforming theaters.

But despite a lot of talk about the imperiled future of moviegoing, future moviegoers - kids - are turning out in droves.

"There's a recognition that this is an increasingly important group of movie fans and we're doing everything we can to make sure their experience is wonderful," says Michael O'Leary, president and chief executive of Cinema United, the trade group for

theater owners.

Gen Alpha, those aged 12 or younger, may even be the movies' best hope. A study last year by the National Research Group found that no generational group wanted to watch movies on the big screen, as opposed to at home, more than Gen Alpha.

"We're emboldened by some of the research that indicates younger folks are the fastest growing demographic of people going to the movies," O'Leary says. "We're very much focused on the fact that we have to build the next generation of movie fans."

In 2023, "The Super Mario Movie," part of Universal's collaboration with Nintendo and "Minions"-maker Illumination, grossed \$1.36 billion. Its sequel is likely to get close to that, and add to a mounting string of \$1 billion kids movies. The most recent was The Walt Disney Co.'s "Zootopia 2," which became the highest-grossing Hollywood animated film of all time with a whopping \$1.87 billion.

Increasingly, a generation that grew up with smartphones, iPads and Netflix is propelling today's biggest blockbusters.

"What's been true for a long time and is maybe even truer today: Families want to be out," says Jim Orr, distribution chief for Universal, which recently announced the expansion of its exclusive theatrical window from three weekends to five. "They want to do things. They want to make memories."

"No one talks about: Remember that great time when we sat on the couch?"

And this year may be the most kid-catered year at the movies yet. There are 26 wide-release PG movies slated for 2026, up from 24 in 2025 and 18 in 2024.

That includes a summer lineup that's family friendly on a nearly week-to-week basis. Potential blockbusters lined up include "Toy Story 5" (June 19), "Minions & Monsters" (July 1) and the live-action "Moana" (July 10). Though currently unrated, "The Mandalorian and Grogu" (May 22) and "Supergirl" (June 26), not to mention "Spider-Man: Brand New Day" (July

31), will all also target young moviegoers.

The PG surge comes several years after most family movies detoured to streaming during the pandemic, a shift that some, at the time, feared would become permanent.

"The family film has literally come back from near-extinction," says Paul Dergarabedian, head of marketplace trends for Comscore. "The one genre that really took a major hit with the pandemic was the family film."

But kids increasingly count among a key category for theaters: the habitual moviegoer. That's considered going to six or more movies a year. And it's not just younger kids. Last year, 41% of Gen Z moviegoers went to the movies at least six times, according to NRG, up from 31% two years earlier.

For cinephiles who have long feared movie theaters effectively turning into mini theme parks, the predominance of kid-oriented franchise blockbusters is unlikely to allay those concerns. Mid-budget, adult releases are increasingly rare. Dramas and comedies have struggled to attract audiences. Family-friendly movies occupying a bigger slice of cinemas is partially because adult moviegoing has waned.

But if older moviegoers are harder to coax away from the couch, families have been more eager. For them, the appeal of getting out of the house, despite rising ticket costs or the options on streaming services, is as strong as ever.

"In many instances, they're going to the theater to get away from all of the other screens that inhabit their lives," says O'Leary. "When I was a kid, you went to the movies, in part, to escape from something. So it's a new variation on that old theme."

Dergarabedian has taken to calling PG the new PG-13. If slightly adult-leaning movies once occupied the center of the multiplex, that territory now belongs to the PG movie.

"The kids that are going to the movies today are going to take their kids tomorrow," Dergarabedian says. "As long as people keep making kids, the future of the movie theater experience is assured."

## Variety

**SILVER SPRING, Md.:** A former guitarist for Grammy-winning Baltimore hardcore band Turnstile has been charged with attempted murder after authorities say he chased down and struck a former bandmate's father with his car, badly injuring him.

Montgomery County police officers responding to a Sunday report about a pedestrian being struck in the Washington, D.C., suburb of Silver Spring found William Yates, the 79-year-old father of lead singer Brendan Yates, injured in a front yard, according to charging documents.



Yates

Yates' family said guitarist Brady Ebert, a neighbor who parted ways with the band several years ago, had struck him with a car, police wrote. Yates' daughter, Erin Gerber, told authorities that she and her husband were getting their kids out of their car when Ebert drove up honking at them and yelling obscenities, then drove into her father.

In video footage obtained from a neighbor, Ebert could be seen driving a gold Buick LeSabre and swerving toward William Yates but missing him, according to the charging documents. Yates then threw a rock at Ebert's vehicle and Gerber dragged her 3-year-old son onto the lawn to avoid being hit. Ebert then turned sharply into Yates' driveway and struck him as he was trying to run away, investigators wrote. Ebert finally drove across the lawn and left.

Yates told a detective that as he was injured on the ground, Ebert returned and yelled that he "deserved it" before driving off again, according to charging documents.

Yates said Ebert used to be in a band with his son and had been causing problems for his family since being kicked out. He said Ebert had been taunting them for long time, but that his behavior had been escalating.

Ebert, 33, was arrested Tuesday and charged with attempted second-degree murder and first-degree assault, court records show.

During a bond hearing Thursday in which he appeared via video, Ebert called William Yates a "maniac" who threw a rock at him asked the judge to watch the surveillance footage, saying it would "contradict" the authorities' narrative of what happened. The Baltimore Banner reported. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** Actor, filmmaker and author B.J. Novak will host next month's PEN America gala at the American Museum of Natural History.

Hundreds in the publishing community and beyond are expected to gather May 14 for the free expression organization's signature fundraising event. Novak is known for his role as Ryan Howard on "The Office" and for such bestsellers as "One More Thing: Stories and Other Stories" and "The Book with No Pictures."

"His exceptional and wide-ranging artistry on screen, on the page, and in writing rooms makes him ideal to celebrate the written word and free expression at a moment when governments want to censor and deny both at alarming levels," PEN America co-CEO Clarisse Rosaz Shariyf said in a statement released Thursday. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** The next novel by the author of "The Tattooist of Auschwitz" will again take place during World War II, this time in Nazi-occupied Paris and based on the family of Grammy- and Emmy-nominated composer Kara Talve.

Heather Morris' "The Piano Teacher of Montparnasse" will be released Oct. 20, Blackstone Publishing announced Thursday. The novel centers on a Jewish girl, Josephine, whose family faces arrest by the Nazis, and on her piano instructor, Andrée, a member of the French Resistance who attempts to hide her.

"I am humbled to be re-imagining the lives of Andrée and Josephine: a powerful story of the courage, strength and resilience of ordinary people in extraordinary times," Morris said in a statement. (AP)

## People

### Robust case remains

# Court rejects Lively's claims against Baldoni

NEW YORK, April 4, (AP): Blake Lively's sexual harassment claims against Justin Baldoni over the movie "It Ends With Us" were dismissed Thursday by a federal judge who left intact three claims, including retaliation, that will let a jury hear many of the allegations anyway.

The written ruling by Judge Lewis J. Liman in Manhattan came after Lively, who starred in and produced the film, sued her co-star and director in December 2024. A trial is scheduled for May 18.



Lively

Baldoni and his production company Wayfarer Studios had countersued Lively and her husband, "Deadpool" actor Ryan Reynolds, accusing them of defamation and extortion. The judge dismissed Baldoni's claims last June.

In his ruling, Liman determined that Lively was an independent contractor rather than an employee. On that basis, he said she was not entitled to bring sexual harassment claims under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That law prohibits employment discrimination on various grounds, including gender.

As for retaliation, the judge said some evidence might enable a jury to conclude that Baldoni's production company planned not only to damage Lively's reputation but to destroy her career amid fear she'd file a discrimination claim. Lively alleges a smear campaign has been "devastating for her reputation and career," the judge noted.

In an analysis of the sexual harassment claims, the judge said Lively's claims had to be viewed in the context of the movie they were working on. He said there was no question that the conduct would support a hostile work environment claim if it happened on a factory floor or in an executive suite.

However, the judge noted, Baldoni was "acting in the scene" and his "conduct was not so far beyond what might reasonably be expected to take place between two characters during a slow dancing scene such that an inference of hostile treatment on the basis of sex would arise. At least in isolation, the conduct was directed to Lively's character rather than to Lively herself."

Liman added: "Creative artists, no less than comedy room writers, must have some amount of space to experiment within the bounds of an agreed script without fear of being held liable for sexual harassment."

Despite those findings, the judge said some sexual harassment claims may be put to a jury to support two retaliation claims that survived the ruling, including one against It Ends With Us Movie LLC and Wayfarer Studios, and a third claim that was left intact alleging breach of a contract rider agreement against It Ends With Us Movie LLC.

The judge noted that Baldoni once said "pretty hot" after asking Lively to remove her jacket, and that when he was warned that it was inappropriate and distracting to make such comment, he allegedly rolled his eyes and responded: "Sorry, I missed the sexual harassment training."

Liman also cited a scene in which Baldoni pushed for Lively to perform a birth scene without clothing and then the scene was filmed over several hours without the set being closed to nonessential personnel.

In a statement, Lively attorney Sigrid McCawley wrote that Lively "looks forward to testifying at trial and continuing to shine a light on this vicious form of online retaliation so that it become easier to detect and fight."

She added: "This case has always been and will remain focused on the devastating retaliation and the extraordinary steps the defendants took to destroy Blake Lively's reputation because she stood up for safety on the set and that is the case that is going to trial."

Bryan Freedman, a lawyer for Baldoni, said the defendants in the case were "very good people who have not engaged in this sexual harassment as alleged."

## Music

### 'Indigo Park' is 'one life in reflection'

# Hornsby's reflective new album mixes simplicity and complexity

NEW YORK, April 4, (AP): Bruce Hornsby's new, reflective album starts off sweetly and melodically, a musician looking back at a fascinating life. Then it gets weird. That's by design.

"I'm going along very nicely and then I might just throw something at you," the three-time Grammy Award-winner warns from his home in Williamsburg, Virginia. "I'm well aware that a whole lot of my old-time fans just hate that."

"Indigo Park," a 10-song set that arrived Friday, is a concept album of sorts as Hornsby mulls over his childhood and where he's come from. To borrow a line from one song, it's "one life in reflection."

The album - which features appearances from Vampire Weekend's Ezra Koenig, Bonnie Raitt and Bob Weir, his late Grateful Dead bandmate - is a darkly comic collection that handles memories with soulfulness - and some quirks.

Hornsby, who came out of the gates swinging with the socially conscious hit "The Way It Is" in 1986, knows which songs may trip up the average listener these days - Nos. 3, 6 and 9, which would be "Entropy Here (Rust in Peace)," "Alabama" and "Might As Well Be Me, Florida." They're, in a word, challenging, with dissonant and complex time signatures.

"Look, I love simple music. There's simple songs on this," he says. "But I also love complexity. And I'm interested sometimes in making a sound I haven't heard before."

"Indigo Park" captures Hornsby's restless musical creativity and love of language. Not many pop albums these days casually drop the words "priapic" or "tumescent" or make reference to math's Fibonacci sequence.

"This is just a window into my goofy world," he says, explaining that the Hornsby household loves funny words and a bit of wordplay, with maybe dad telling one of his sons he's looking "a bit concupiscent, pal."

Hornsby calls himself an "invertebrate reader" and many of his songs have been inspired by literary fiction, like 2019's "White Noise" which was a nod to David Foster Wallace's novel "The Pale King." "I guess you could really just call me, simply in one word, a snob."

On one new song, "Silhouette Shadows," Hornsby references learning about the assassination of President



Bruce Hornsby performs during Bourbon and Beyond music festival in Louisville, Ky., on Sept. 20, 2024. (AP)

John F. Kennedy over the school intercom. He was a third grader in a small, conservative Southern town, and suddenly, his classmates started celebrating, hoping Richard Nixon might take over.

"I was really alarmed and confused/ Watching the children parroting parent's views," Hornsby sings. "Ancient scenes and cryptic dreams."

The song's music was inspired by a fugue by classical composer Dmitri Shostakovich that he had written for a Spike Lee project, but the filmmaker never used it. So Hornsby took it back: "That was me trying to make a sound I hadn't heard before."

Another song - "Ecstatic," which features Bonnie Raitt on vocals - sounds like light-hearted playground banter, and it sort of is. It comes from the basketball chants Hornsby heard from parents as his older son, Keith, competed on the basketball court for Louisiana State University.

"You fouled, you did it, raise your hand admit it/That's right, you fouled, you did it, raise your hand admit it," go the lyrics. "That's right, you walked, you traveled and got caught."

"Indigo Park" marks the fifth-straight album Hornsby has tapped guitarist Gibb Droll and the musician says it gives listeners a peek into the inner life of the singer-songwriter.

"It's more personal. I think his fans will feel like they're getting a glimpse of the man and what he thinks about," says Droll, who plays on five tracks.

As for the weirder songs, the guitar-

ist says that "part of the Hornsby experience. "I don't know of anyone that has continued to push the boundaries the way he does," Droll says.

"If it's truly art, it should challenge you at some point. The listener should be challenged to feel 'Do I like this? I don't know. Oh my God, I think I love it.' And then by the eighth time, hopefully, you're looking forward to those little weird nooks and crannies," Droll says.

Hornsby, who plays accordion, dulcimer and piano on the collection, picked an Edward Hopper print - "Night Shadows," a copy of which he owns - as the album cover. It depicts a man alone on a dark street.

"I thought, well, this could be called my aging record. When you're about gone or ready to be gone you realize you're alone, man," he says. "I see this lone guy walking around. I thought that's me right now. It spoke to me in that way. So, I used it."

"Indigo Park" comes 40 years after the single and album "The Way It Is," Hornsby's debut. In the years since, he has been impossible to categorize, having songs scattered across country, adult contemporary, rock, jazz, bluegrass and folk charts. He's played with the Grateful Dead and everyone from Bob Dylan to Chaka Khan.

He laughs that the songs hold up from that early time, but he might fire the frontman. "I'm not a fan of that singer. I guess I'd call myself a slow learner in that way. It's gotten better through the years, at least to me."



Guinness World Record crochet installation turns streets into a colorful wonderland.



Mexican city has become a cultural and tourist destination.

**'Woven Sky' celebrates women artisans**

**Mexico's 'sky of colors' turns streets into living work of art**

KUWAIT CITY, April 4: In Mexico, there is a town where the sky is not blue, but multicolored. Can you imagine a pink, yellow, or purple sky? In Etzatlán, Jalisco, in the center of the country, it is possible – it is not imagination. When you walk through its streets and look up, a woven "sky of colors" stretches over the downtown streets, making a simple stroll feel like stepping into a work of art.

A suspended tapestry of hexagonal flowers transforms the public space. Covering an area of more than 8,000 square meters, this rafia crochet installation, made from palm leaves, earned the Guinness



Mexico's Ambassador to Kuwait, Eduardo Patricio Peña Haller

World Record in 2019 as the largest crocheted piece in the world. The hand-woven work of art covers almost the entire historic center and, in addition to beautifying the landscape, is a collective creation that represents tradition, community, and local pride. It is installed in February, during the carnival season, and again in October, on the occasion of the city's patron saint festivities.

The initiative began with a mother and daughter who started crocheting as a personal exercise to heal the pain in their hearts. What began as a private hobby within the family became a community project that today brings together more than 200

women passionate about textile art, with the support and funding of the local government to cover the cost of materials.

The "Cielo Tejido" is now an artistic and social expression that strengthens the artisan hands of Etzatlán. Not only does it preserve a tradition that will be passed down from generation to generation, but it also promotes women's empowerment and demonstrates the value of collective work. Its impact goes beyond the visual. It is identity turned into landscape.

Thanks to the "Woven Sky", the city has become a cultural and tourist destination. More and more visitors are coming to photograph

the colorful ceiling, turning it into a fashion symbol that circulates on social media, attracting tourism and showcasing the richness of Mexican craftsmanship.

Following its success, the project expanded internationally, decorating spaces with crochet at Expo Dubai 2020, Burning Man in Nevada, and events in Milwaukee, Argentina, and Brussels. What began in a small town in Jalisco now travels the world as an expression of Mexican artisan culture. The "Cielo Tejido" demonstrates the power of collective art to redesign public space and transform a community from within, bringing women and tradition together.

**UFOs**

Trump orders UFO data released

**If aliens exist, how would they view us?**



Model ships hang at the entrance to the Star Trek Experience at the Las Vegas Hilton in Las Vegas on Aug. 25, 2008. (AP)

**Films shape alien myths**

**Hollywood's take on ETs goes back many years**

NEW YORK, April 4, (AP): For generations, human beings have wondered: What would alien life from another planet be like? But we rarely ask the opposite: What would they think of us? It's a question that can produce some, well, uncomfortable answers if you happen to be an earthling. "If I were looking at Earth from a distance, I would be pretty disappointed," theoretical physicist Avi Loeb says. "Most of our investing is dealing with conflicts to prevent other people from killing us or us killing others. Look at the Ukraine war over a little bit of territory. That is not a sign of intelligence."

The debate on whether little green men or UFOs are among us escalated in February when former President Barack Obama, responding to a podcaster's question, said aliens are "real," but he "hasn't seen them" and "they're not being kept at Area 51." President Donald Trump later announced on social media that he was directing release of government files because of "tremendous interest."

Stepped-up interest in UFOs also is swirling as the United States heads back toward the moon with Wednesday's launch of NASA's Artemis II mission. The four astronauts aboard will do a fly-around of the moon before returning to Earth.

In a world riven by war, civil unrest, climate change and divisiveness, it's easy to wonder what newcomers to Planet Earth might make of us and our struggles. Whatever the case, well over a majority of Americans echo the sentiment of the slogan from "The X-Files": "The truth is out there."

A 2021 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center showed that two-thirds of Americans said their best guess is that intelligent life exists on other planets. About half of US adults said UFOs reported by people in the military are "definitely" or "probably" evidence of intelligent life outside Earth.

"We don't want to think this is the only place in this extraordinarily and incomprehensibly large universe where life and intelligence and even technology have emerged," says Bill Diamond, president and chief executive of the SETI Institute in Mountain View, California.

"It sort of says about humans, 'We don't want to be alone.'" Americans have been fascinated by the thought of life outside this planet following the recovery of debris in 1947 near Roswell, New Mexico. The military initially said the material was from a flying disc, only to reverse course and tell the public it was from a weather balloon.

Hollywood ran with it. Flying saucers, little green men and even-

ually humanoid gray aliens became part of popular culture. April 5 even is celebrated annually throughout the iconic "Star Trek" franchise as "First Contact Day" to mark the date in 2063 when humankind, in "Trek" canon, first made contact with Vulcans.

Much in the popular culture suggests any aliens might be aggressive. Priscilla Wald, who teaches about science fiction at Duke University, has a theory as to why.

"It seems to me it's a reflection on who we are, that we're projecting onto aliens the way we treat each other," Wald says. "So the aliens are coming down, they want to conquer us, they're violent. Who does that sound like? It sounds like us."

In 2024, the Pentagon released hundreds of reports of unidentified and unexplained aerial phenomena. However, that review gave no indications

NEW YORK, April 4, (AP): For generations, human beings have wondered: What would alien life from another planet be like? But we rarely ask the opposite: What would they think of us? It's a question that can produce some, well, uncomfortable answers if you happen to be an earthling.

"If I were looking at Earth from a distance, I would be pretty disappointed," theoretical physicist Avi Loeb says. "Most of our investing is dealing with conflicts to prevent other people from killing us or us killing others. Look at the Ukraine war over a little bit of territory. That is not a sign of intelligence."

The debate on whether little green men or UFOs are among us escalated in February when former President Barack Obama, responding to a podcaster's question, said aliens are "real," but he "hasn't seen them" and "they're not being kept at Area 51." President Donald Trump later announced on social media that he was directing release of government files because of "tremendous interest."

Stepped-up interest in UFOs also is swirling as the United States heads back toward the moon with Wednesday's launch of NASA's Artemis II mission. The four astronauts aboard will do a fly-around of the moon before returning to Earth.

In a world riven by war, civil unrest, climate change and divisiveness, it's easy to wonder what newcomers to Planet Earth might make of us and our struggles. Whatever the case, well over a majority of Americans echo the sentiment of the slogan from "The X-Files": "The truth is out there."

A 2021 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center showed that two-thirds of Americans said their best guess is that intelligent life exists on other planets. About half of US adults said UFOs reported by people in the military are "definitely" or "probably" evidence of intelligent life outside Earth.

"We don't want to think this is the only place in this extraordinarily and incomprehensibly large universe where life and intelligence and even technology have emerged," says Bill Diamond, president and chief executive of the SETI Institute in Mountain View, California.

"It sort of says about humans, 'We don't want to be alone.'" Americans have been fascinated by the thought of life outside this planet following the recovery of debris in 1947 near Roswell, New Mexico. The military initially said the material was from a flying disc, only to reverse course and tell the public it was from a weather balloon.

Hollywood ran with it. Flying saucers, little green men and even-



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Emily Blunt in a scene from 'Disclosure Day.' (AP)



A sign directs travelers to the '1947 UFO Crash Site Tours' in Roswell, N.M., on June 10, 1997. (AP)

ually humanoid gray aliens became part of popular culture. April 5 even is celebrated annually throughout the iconic "Star Trek" franchise as "First Contact Day" to mark the date in 2063 when humankind, in "Trek" canon, first made contact with Vulcans.

Much in the popular culture suggests any aliens might be aggressive. Priscilla Wald, who teaches about science fiction at Duke University, has a theory as to why.

"It seems to me it's a reflection on who we are, that we're projecting onto aliens the way we treat each other," Wald says. "So the aliens are coming down, they want to conquer us, they're violent. Who does that sound like? It sounds like us."

In 2024, the Pentagon released hundreds of reports of unidentified and unexplained aerial phenomena. However, that review gave no indications

that their origins were extraterrestrial. On two separate occasions, Debbie Dmytro saw things in the sky over Michigan's southern Oakland County. The greenish object Dmytro says she saw March 1 in the sky over Royal Oak, Michigan, looked like neither plane nor helicopter. Dmytro, a 56-year-old medical professional, acknowledges that it could have been some type of commercial or delivery drone.

What she saw in 2023 in the same general area north of Detroit is not so easily explained.

"Four yellow lights, yellowish golden lights and they were all flying very, very low," Dmytro remembers. She says the lights were about 100 feet (30 meters) up at their nearest.

"I've never seen anything so low without any noise and flying in complete uniformity," she says. "Is it something man-made? Is it something

that's not manmade? Who knows?" Who knows indeed? UFOs, the term for unidentified flying objects, has in recent years given way to UAP - unidentified aerial phenomena or unidentified anomalous phenomena.

"Absolutely, there are such things" as UAPs and UFOs, says Diamond, whose SETI - Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence - seeks to explore, search and understand the nature of life and intelligence in the universe.

"People observe things in the sky that they can't immediately identify or recognize as either human engineering such as planes or drones or helicopters, or animals, such as birds, and therefore they don't know what they are," Diamond says.

Like so many, Dmytro wants to know what the government knows. "I think there's more information out there. I'm open to learning more," she says. "I have an open mind. It's always about scientific proof."

Retired Rear Adm. Timothy Gallaudet says evidence clearly shows there are UAP zipping around the airspace and in the oceans.

"The nonhuman intelligence that operates them or controls them are absolutely real," Gallaudet says. "We've recovered crashed craft. We don't know if they're extraterrestrial in origin."

Gallaudet worked as acting administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He participated in a 2024 congressional hearing on UAP disclosure and says the release of government files promised by Trump is something people find of interest. He just hopes the president follows through.

There are billions of galaxies in the universe and each has billions of stars, so the likelihood life developed elsewhere is fairly high, according to University of Michigan Astronomy Professor Edwin Bergin, who teaches about looking for life elsewhere. He believes that if intelligent beings navigated vast distances to reach Earth they would make themselves known - despite humanity's penchant for creating chaos.

"I would think that they would look at us like we were crazy ... but they would come out," he says. "I mean, why come here otherwise unless you're going to sit and observe."

Loeb, director of the Institute for Theory & Computation at Harvard and head of the university's Galileo Project for the Systematic Scientific Search for Evidence of Extraterrestrial Technological Artifacts, believes in the likely existence of extraterrestrials.

"They might be laughing at us," he says. "They might be watching us ... to make sure we will not become predators, that we will not become dangerous to them."

**Ancient gold helmet stolen from Dutch museum found**

ASSEN, Netherlands, April 4, (AP): A priceless ancient golden helmet from Romania stolen last year from a museum in the Netherlands has been recovered, Dutch authorities announced Thursday.

Under the guard of heavily armed, balaclava-clad police, prosecutors unveiled the 2,500-year-old Cotofenesti helmet, one of Romania's most revered national treasures from the Dacia civilization, during a news conference in the eastern Dutch city of Assen. "We are incredibly pleased," Corien

Fahner of the prosecution service told reporters. "It has been a roller-coaster. Especially for Romania, but also for employees of the Drents Museum."

The helmet was on display at the small museum in January 2025, the last weekend of a six-month-long exhibition, when thieves broke in and grabbed it, along with three golden wristbands.

There were fears the helmet may have been melted down because its fame and dramatic studded appearance made it virtually unsellable.



A stolen artefact from Romania, the 2,500-year-old Cotofenesti helmet, recovered in Netherlands, is shown during a press conference in Assen, Netherlands, Thursday, April 2. (AP)

## Biologic agents bring new hope for severe allergy patients

## Experts make strides in fighting pollen allergies

BEIJING, April 4, (Xinhua): As an allergist who also suffers from pollen allergies, Li Lisha is keenly aware of the arrival of pollen season. The blast of wind that makes the Associate Professor of the Allergy Department of Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH) sneeze reminds her that pollen season has come again.

Every year from early March onward, the consulting rooms and corridors echo with the sound of patients sneezing one after another. While administering medication to herself, Li also prescribes treatments for her patients.

"Over the years, I have clearly observed a growing number of patients suffering from pollen allergies," said Li. During each pollen season, 70 to 80 percent of patients in her clinic seek help for pollen allergy-related symptoms.

Research has shown that over the past two decades, the prevalence of pollen allergies in China has been steadily increasing, she said.

A community-based door-to-door survey led by the Allergy Department of PUMCH, in collaboration with 16 sub-centers across China, shows that the current prevalence of allergic rhinitis is 4.2 percent, the highest among the eight allergic diseases surveyed.

Among the patients Li has treated, the

prevalence of pollen allergies can exceed 18 percent in regions north of the Yangtze River, particularly in the northwestern grasslands, with some localities reporting rates exceeding 30 percent.

In contrast, the prevalence remains relatively low in southern cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou. This regional disparity is closely linked to the localized distribution of allergenic plant species.

It is of great significance to know the specific triggers of pollen allergies for both targeted protection and treatment, said Li. On the one hand, patients can more precisely avoid the pollen they are allergic to based on pollen forecasts. On the other hand, such knowledge also enables more tailored therapeutic interventions.

At present, PUMCH is leading the development of a large-scale data platform for clinical research on allergic diseases, aiming to support clinical decision-making.

To identify exactly which type of pollen a patient is allergic to, Li and her colleagues have been engaged in the research, development and production of allergen preparations. To date, they can perform skin-test diagnoses for more than 30 types of pollen.

Currently, eight types formulated



This photo taken on Jan. 27, 2026 shows a staff member collecting pollen from a water lily at the Yunxi Botanical Garden in Guangzhou, south China's Guangdong Province. (Xinhua)

for medical institutions have been distributed to more than 50 hospitals nationwide for clinical use.

Their findings indicate that simply doubling the dose of antihistamines is less effective than combining them with nasal spray hormones. In the later

stage of the pollen season, appropriately reducing the dosage in response to declining pollen concentrations helps control symptoms.

Many patients become alarmed at the mere mention of "hormones" and would rather endure the symptoms

than use nasal sprays, said Li.

"In fact, intranasal corticosteroids are a topical treatment with minimal systemic absorption and a strong safety profile, making them one of the most effective therapies for hay fever currently available," she explained. On the contrary, long-term avoidance of medication can lead to recurrent symptoms, which may in turn cause complications such as sinusitis and otitis media.

"For patients whose symptoms fluctuate rapidly, adjusting the treatment regimen every two to three days yields better outcomes than a fixed weekly adjustment," said Li.

In addition, they have recognized that starting preventive medication two weeks before the pollen season can significantly delay symptom onset and reduce severity, compared with initiating treatment only after symptoms have developed.

These seemingly minor adjustments in medication strategies can, in fact, greatly improve patients' quality of life and reduce unnecessary drug use, according to Li.

"Is there a way to cure it completely?" This is a question Li is frequently asked by patients. Currently, the approach that comes closest to addressing the root cause is allergen-specific

immunotherapy, which is commonly known as desensitization therapy.

This method involves repeatedly exposing the patient to the vaccine, tiny amounts of pollen extracts, allowing the body to gradually adapt and eventually achieve a state of "peaceful co-existence" with the allergen.

However, desensitization therapy requires continuous year-round treatment for three consecutive years.

For those patients with severe symptoms that are not well controlled by conventional medications, biologic agents have brought new hope. These drugs target key steps in the allergic response and only require treatment during the pollen season, making them easier for patients to adhere to, said Li.

Li acknowledged that hay fever is not that frightening. It is a chronic condition, just like hypertension or diabetes, that requires long-term management. "We should neither panic excessively nor take it lightly," she said.

The allergist realized that there has been growing public attention to pollen allergies across society in recent years. For example, Beijing has taken measures such as pruning the male cone branches of sabinia chinensis in advance during autumn and winter, and spraying tree canopies with pollen fixatives.



This image provided by NASA shows a view of Earth taken by NASA astronaut and Artemis II Commander Reid Wiseman from the Orion spacecraft's window after completing the translunar injection burn on April 2. (AP)

## Artemis II crew captures Earth's stunning view on way to the moon

The Artemis II astronauts have captured our blue planet's brilliant beauty as they zoom ever closer to the moon.

NASA released the crew's first downlinked images Friday, 1 1/2 days into the first astronaut moonshot in more than half a century.

The first photo taken by commander Reid Wiseman shows a curved slice of Earth in one of the capsule's windows. The second shows the entire globe with the oceans topped by swirling white tendrils of clouds. A green aurora even glows, according to NASA.

"It's great to think that with the exception of our four friends, all of us are represented in this image," said

NASA's Lakiesha Hawkins, an exploration systems leader. She added the mission was going well.

As of late Friday afternoon, Wiseman and his crew were more than 110,000 miles (180,000 kilometers) from Earth and were quickly gaining on the moon with another 150,000 miles (240,000 kilometers) to go. They should reach their destination on Monday.

The three Americans and one Canadian will swing around the moon in their Orion capsule, hang a U-turn and then head straight back home without stopping. They fired Orion's main engine Thursday night that set them on their course. (AP)

## Cataract patients face years-long waits

## Eye surgery marathon restores sight for some South Africans

TSAKANE, South Africa, April 4, (AP): Gladys Khoza had missed being able to see her family. Not because they couldn't visit, but because the 84-year-old had vision problems.

Now that has changed. Khoza is one of 133 people whose sight was restored during a "marathon" of free cataract surgeries conducted by doctors in South Africa at two hospitals over two weekends last month.

"Wow!" a delighted Khoza whispered as a nurse peeled back a bandage a day after her operation, and the world came back into view.

"Can you see me?" the nurse asked. "Very well," Khoza replied, a big grin on her face.

Patients in South Africa's public health service can be on waiting lists for years for the simple 15-20-minute cataract operation. Officials said some of those who were selected for hospital waiting lists for the surgeries had been waiting since 2019 to see properly again.

Cataracts are a common, often age-related condition in which the eye's lens becomes clouded, and they are the leading cause of curable blindness. The surgeries insert a new artificial lens.

For Khoza, who said she couldn't see anything out of one eye because of a cataract and had long had issues with the other, the simple surgery equates to a major boost for her quality of life.

"I just wanted to be able to see," she said. Now, after nearly a year of waiting, some of her favorite things - seeing loved ones, reading her Bible and watching late-night soap operas - are all possible again.

Dr. Tebogo Fakude, one of the doctors who volunteered to perform the operations at two regional hospitals near Johannesburg, said his mother was blind and that having sight restored is "beautiful."

"It's beautiful because it alleviates depression," Fakude said adding that the sense of being a burden was also eased.

Globally, more than 2 billion people suffer from some



Gladys Khoza adjusts an eye testing device during an eye surgery marathon, in Tsakane, South Africa, Saturday, March 28, 2026. (AP)

kind of vision impairment, according to the World Health Organization. For half of them, the problem could have been prevented, or they are still waiting for treatment.

Nearly 100 million people are affected by cataracts, and half of them still need access to surgery, according to the WHO. In Africa, that figure rises to 75% of people without surgery, according to a study published in March by the Lancet medical journal.

Surgery backlogs are a significant problem in South Africa, where government-run hospitals serve more than three-quarters of the population of 62 million people. Limited resources mean emergency procedures and more serious operations are prioritized over elective surgery.

The Health Department-led surgical marathons were first staged on Mandela Day in 2023 to commemorate the legacy of the country's first Black president, Nelson Mandela. They have developed into a public-private partnership that takes place several times a year to increase access to care.



Tourists take photos of Jonathan, a then 192-year-old tortoise, on the lawn of Plantation House in Jamestown on the South Atlantic island of St. Helena, Feb. 22, 2024. (AP)

## World's oldest tortoise still alive despite contrary rumor

LONDON, April 4, (AP): Reports on April Fools' Day of the death of the world's oldest living land animal - a 193-year-old tortoise called Jonathan - were greatly exaggerated.

Jonathan is still kicking - albeit slowly - on the island of St. Helena.

"It was a hoax," Anne Dillon, head of communications on the island, told the Associated Press on Thursday. "I can just assure you that he is very much alive."

News of the Seychelles giant tor-

oise's demise spread rapidly on social media on Wednesday.

An account on X, falsely claiming to be by Joe Hollins, a veterinarian who had worked with the reptile on the island in the south Atlantic Ocean between Africa and Brazil, said he was heartbroken to announce the death of the "gentle giant" that "outlived empires, wars, and generations of humans."

The post quickly accumulated nearly 2 million views through Thursday,

mostly an outpouring of condolences.

But Hollins later said on Facebook that he didn't even have an X account and something more sinister was afoot.

"There is a hoax - not even an April Fool - going around," Hollins wrote. "The hoaxer is asking for crypto donations. It's a con." Guinness World Records lists Jonathan as the oldest living land animal and the oldest tortoise ever. He was believed to be about 50 years old when he was brought to St. Helena in 1882.

## 'How humans came to be'

## Scientists get first look at the evolution of complex animals

WASHINGTON, April 4, (AP): Newly discovered fossils have given scientists their first real glimpse of when Earth made a crucial transition from plants and unrecognizably simple animals to the complex creatures that took over the world and would eventually lead to us.

And it happened millions of years earlier than researchers thought.

More than 700 fossils found in southwestern China's Yunnan province offer a window into life from 539 million years ago, during the waning end of the Ediacaran period, a time of simple but strange animals that lived two-dimensionally in the oceans, never going up or down, researchers said.

But a study in Thursday's journal Science said many of the fossils in this trove are remnants of more complex animals that lived three-dimensional lives, traveling up through the water and eating. Those are traits that had been thought to only spring to life at least 4 million years later in the Cambrian period, during what was called the Cambrian explosion of complex and recognizable animal life.

"This really is the first window we have into how basically the modern animal-dominated biosphere was formed and developed and came through this weird Ediacaran transitional interlude," said co-author and paleontologist Frankie Dunn of the Museum of Natural History at Oxford University. "We go from a two-dimensional world, and within the geological blink of an eye, animals have diversified. They're everywhere. They're doing everything, and they're changing biogeochemical cycles. They've changed the world."

The new finds were a short distance from a United Nations Chengjiang world natural heritage site for other fossils in an exposure along a roadside that's not glamorous, but has different layers "where you can literally walk through time,



This November 2023 photo provided by Gaorong Li shows a Haootia-like fossil at Yunnan University in Kunming, China. (AP)

geological time, in a landscape," Dunn said. And one of those areas provides a "snapshot" where evolution brings forces together.

In that spot, Dunn said, the group of fossils includes both bizarre examples of life that existed in earlier periods and disappeared, along with early examples of organisms that would evolve into modern animals. What's important in those more modern animals are that their bodies are mostly the same on the left and right.

Nearly all of the animal life on Earth now have similar features on left and right sides, as well as a head and an anus. Before the fossils discovered in China, scientists saw traces of this symmetric body type in fossil tracks, but not the critters themselves.

"Now we know what's making them because we have those fossils for the first time," said study co-author Ross Anderson, also of Oxford's Museum

of Natural History.

Until now, there was a conflict in the field of paleontology. Genetic analysis of how fast traits mutated and evolved suggested that humans and starfish had their earliest common ancestor in the Ediacaran period, but the fossils or rocks weren't there to show it happening, Dunn said. It was called a debate of "rocks versus clocks," she said.

"What our new fossil site tells us is that actually perhaps the rocks and the clocks are in closer agreement than we thought," Dunn said.

Emily Mitchell, a paleontologist at the University of Cambridge who wasn't part of the research, said the new study "makes a huge amount of sense because the Ediacaran contains animals, we know there must have been a transitional stage between them and the Cambrian fauna. But until now we didn't really have any evidence of this."

## Stunted growth and cognitive defects

## Extreme heat linked to low birth weights: study

CANBERRA, April 4, (Xinhua): Exposure to extreme heat is increasing the risk of babies being born underweight, according to new research led by Australia's Adelaide University.

The study analyzed health data from more than 85,000 mothers and babies in Pakistan, combining 10 years of birth records (2008-2017) with temperature data to assess how extreme heat affects birth weight, a statement from Adelaide University said Thursday.

The findings showed that 18 percent of babies were found to have low birth weight, defined as weighing less than 2.5 kg or being described as smaller than average in size at birth.

The research, published in BMC Medicine, linked about 13 percent of low-birth-weight cases to hot weather, a figure projected to rise

by 8-10 percent by the 2060s due to climate change.

In some areas of Pakistan, pregnant women exposed to high temperatures were up to 70 percent more likely to deliver low-birth-weight infants, due to their hotter climate and greater socioeconomic disadvantage, among other factors, said project lead, Associate Professor Zohra Lassi from Adelaide University's Robinson Research Institute.

Low birth weight leads to neonatal mortality and impaired long-term health problems such as stunted growth or cognitive defects, Lassi said.

Lead author Hira Fatima, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Canberra, said stronger maternal health services and climate-adapted maternal care strategies were urgently needed.

## US recalls cheese items over E. coli

WASHINGTON, April 4, (AP): A California dairy producer that health authorities have been investigating amid an ongoing outbreak of E. coli is recalling some of its raw cheese products, after initially refusing to do so.

Raw Farm of Fresno, California, said Thursday it is voluntarily recalling more than a half-dozen varieties of its cheddar cheese made from raw milk. The recalled batches carry expiration dates spanning from May 2026 to September 2026.

Interest in and sales of raw milk have been rising in recent years, fueled by social media and growing support from the Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Make America Healthy Again movement. Raw milk has not been pasteurized, which kills germs like E. coli, salmonella, listeria and campylobacter.

The Food and Drug Administration began investigating cases of E. coli food poisoning among people who had reportedly consumed the company's products last month and previously requested a recall.

In an update last week, the FDA said it was conducting an inspection of the company's facilities but had not found positive testing for E. coli bacteria among the company's products.

Raw Farm reiterated that point in its announcement Thursday and added that it was conducting its recall "under protest" and in order to chart "a path forward."

"This voluntary recall is limited to Raw Farm-brand cheddar cheese, and no other products are being voluntarily recalled," the company said.

## Americans racing from 'scratch' in the 144th edition of event

## Richardson and Coleman advance to Stawell Gift semifinals in Australia

STAWELL, Australia, April 4, (AP) — American sprinters Sha'Carri Richardson and Christian Coleman won their heats Saturday and qualified for Monday's semifinals of the Stawell Gift, an annual race contested over 120 meters on grass in a small Australian town near Melbourne.

Both Richardson and Coleman are racing from "scratch" in the 144th edition of the event, meaning they must run the entire distance and chase down opponents who in some cases may start 25 meters ahead of them.

Richardson won her heat in 13.815 seconds Saturday and Coleman his in 12.681. On Monday there will be six semifinals in each of the men's and women's divisions, with the winners of each of the heats advancing to the respective finals.

"My experience so far is just reminding me what track and field feels like - love the respect and also fun," Richardson told 7plus Television after the heat.

"It felt like being a kid again, playing tag, like playing rabbit. I had a great time, and it just kind of woke my body up with this being the first time running in 2026... chasing everyone actually made me activate and work on my race pattern."

Richardson is one of the fastest women of all time, winning a silver medal in the 100 meters in the 2024 Paris Olympics, and gold in the 4x100 relay that same year.

Coleman is a former world champion over 100 meters. He and Richardson appear to have continued their relationship despite a domestic violence charge against Richardson last July.

There are more than 700 competitors in the Stawell race, including many of Australia's top runners, in the event held about 235 kilometers (145 miles) west of Melbourne. The men's and women's finals each carry a prize of 40,000 Australian dollars (\$27,500).

It has not been disclosed whether Richardson or Coleman were paid appearance money to take part in the race. Last year Australian media reported that top Australian sprinter Gout Gout was paid 50,000 Australian dollars (35,000) to run at Stawell, where he was eliminated in the semifinals.

Richardson said this week that she was excited about the handicap format.

"I've been known to be a chaser in a couple of races, so actually the challenge of the stagger makes me more technical and sound, and with that comes great results," she said in comments on the Australian Athletics website.

Coleman, known for its fast starts, said he's the opposite.

"I'm usually leading from the front and people are trying to come catch me. I feel that this will be the perfect start to the season, to have some fun, but also be able to work on the things I have been practicing," he said.



In this file photo, Christian Coleman of United States celebrates winning the men's 100m competition during the World Athletics Diamond League final 2025 athletics meeting in Zurich, Switzerland. (AP)

## Fundora siblings hold five world titles

## Caroline targets double as 'Fundoras' stay ahead

LONDON, April 4, (AP) — British boxers Caroline and Daniel Dubois have some catching up to do on Gabriela and Sebastian Fundora.

The Fundora siblings hold a total of five world titles - Gabriela with four of them as the undisputed flyweight champion. The Dubois' have one - Caroline's WBC light-weight belt.

Caroline Dubois can double her tally when she faces WBO lightweight champion Terri Harper on Sunday in London. Next month, Daniel Dubois will try to become a two-time world champion when he takes on WBO heavyweight title holder Fabio Wardley in Manchester.

Ahead of a busy weekend of women's boxing, here's a look at some successful sister-brother boxing pairs.

Besides being world champions, the Fundora siblings are each other's No. 1 fan.

Sebastian wore a red 'Fundora' headband as he celebrated his sister's sixth-round stoppage of Viviana Ruiz Corredor last month. During her post-match interview in the ring, he carefully placed her glasses on as she held her championship belts.

"I know he's ready for a knockout too. He's witnessed that, he's going to see how he can top it," she said.

Last weekend, Sebastian retained his WBC super welterweight title with a sixth-round stoppage of his own - against Keith Thurman. This time it was Gabriela's turn to wear the headband. She sat beside him at the post-fight news conference, where Sebastian wished "happy birthday to my little sister" before joining the crowd in singing "Happy Birthday to You."

In March 2024, the Fundora siblings became the first sister and brother to hold world titles at the same time.

The California natives, both southpaws, typically have height advantages over their opponents. Sebastian is 6-foot-5 and is nicknamed the "Towering Inferno." Gabriela is 5-foot-9.

The Dubois siblings have forged their own paths in boxing.

Caroline split from their father's management a couple of years ago. She became the WBC world light-weight champion in late 2024 after Katie Taylor vacated the belt.

The 25-year-old Dubois (12-0-1, 5 KOs) faces a tough test in Harper (16-2-2, 6 KOs) in an all-British bout at Olympia in west London.

"You're pathetic," Dubois told Harper in a face-to-face. "I'm going to come for you."

Daniel previously held the IBF world heavyweight belt but lost it to Oleksandr Usyk last summer. He's now preparing for Wardley on May 9 at Co-op Live Arena in Manchester.

Caroline told The Associated Press in an interview last year that she and Daniel were not on speaking terms.

Lucas Matthisse of Argentina retired after losing to Manny Pacquiao in 2018. Matthisse had held the WBA's welterweight "regular" title.

His sister, 45-year-old Edith Soledad Matthisse, is still fighting. She's a former WBA and WBC world featherweight champion.

Ireland's Michaela and Aidan Walsh became the first sister and brother to box at the same Olympic Games. That was in the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

Aidan won a bronze medal in the men's welterweight category in Tokyo. The Belfast natives have also represented Northern Ireland at the Commonwealth Games.

The Dubois-Harper fight is part of an Easter Sunday card by Jake Paul's Most Valuable Promotions. In the co-main event, Ellie Scotney (11-0) will try to become the undisputed super bantamweight champion when she faces WBA titleholder Mayelli Flores (13-1-1, 4 KOs) of Mexico.



Caroline

## Punjab outguns CSK in run-fest



Punjab Kings' wicketkeeper Prabhsimran Singh plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Punjab Kings in Chennai, India. (AP)

## Arya and Singh give Kings flying start to a target of 210

CHENNAI, India, April 4, (AP) — Opening batters Priyansh Arya and Prabhsimran Singh gave Punjab Kings a flying start to a target of 210 as they overhauled Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League.

Impact substitute Arya set the tone with 39 runs off 11 balls as he and Singh rumbled to 68-1 in the powerplay. Captain Shreyas Iyer's 26-ball half-century and Cooper Connolly's 36 ensured Punjab reached 210-5 with eight balls to spare and won by five wickets.

Chennai thought it put up a defensible total of 209-5 at home thanks to former India Under-19 captain Ayush Mhatre's 73 off 43, Shivam Dube's unbeaten 45 off 27 and Sarfaraz Khan's cameo 32 off 12.

But Chennai's bowling was ordinary. Only five bowlers were used while allrounders Dube and debutant Prashant Veer were not used.

"That was an exceptional start for us," Iyer said. "I feel the way they (Arya and Singh) have been batting has been phenomenal and it stabilizes the rhythm for us. I am glad everyone is getting to bat. It gives



Chennai Super Kings' Rahul Chahar bowls a delivery during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Punjab Kings in Chennai, India. (AP)

immense confidence to the team."

Arya smacked fast bowler Matt Henry for three fours and a six in a 20-run second over after the left-

hander hit Khaleel Ahmed for a four and a six off the first two legitimate balls in the first over.

Singh raised Punjab's 50 in only

the third over when he took three boundaries off Anshul Kamboj.

Henry rattled Arya's off stump and Singh was run out in a mixup with Connolly when the Australian refused to go for a tight second run. Connolly holed out at long-on then Iyer took charge of the chase.

Iyer smashed three sixes and four boundaries in a 59-run stand with Nehal Wadhwa that sealed the result.

Earlier, Iyer continued the template of teams preferring to chase when he won the toss and elected to field. Sanju Samson, returning to his home venue, perished in the second over for just 7.

Mhatre showed plenty of aggression in a stand of 96 with captain Ruturaj Gaikwad, who made a scratchy 28 before falling to IPL leading wicket-taker Yuzvendra Chahal in the 12th over.

Mhatre looked set for a big knock after crashing five sixes and six boundaries and was livid with himself when he was caught at short third while attempting an extravagant shot against Vijay Kumar Vyshak (2-38).

Khan and Dube propelled Chennai beyond 200 but their bowlers couldn't tie down Punjab.

"We felt... having two wrist-spinners bowling in tandem will help but off-day for both of them and that is what cost us," Gaikwad said.

## Sierra Leone FA ends Kallon's tenure as head coach

FREETOWN, April 4, (Xinhua) — The Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA) announced late Thursday the immediate termination of Mohamed Kallon as head coach of the national men's football team, Leone Stars.

In a statement issued by the association, the decision was described as a resolution duly adopted by its Executive Committee in the exercise of its statutory and administrative mandate.

"The appointment of Mr. Mohamed Kallon as Head Coach of the Sierra Leone National Men's Football Team has been terminated with immediate effect," the statement said.

According to the SLFA, the decision followed "due deliberation and a considered assessment of the technical, administrative, and strategic imperatives of the national team." The SLFA expressed appreciation for Kallon's service during his tenure and extended best wishes for his future professional endeavors.

Kallon, born on October 6, 1979, is widely regarded as Sierra Leone's most celebrated footballer. A former striker, he played for top European clubs including Inter Milan and AS Monaco, and

became the youngest-ever Sierra Leone international at age 15.

He was officially appointed head coach of Leone Stars in 2025 and previously owned and coached Kallon FC.

Meanwhile, the Ghana Football Association (GFA) will announce a replacement for dismissed coach Otto Addo in the coming days, with more than 600 local and foreign applicants expressing interest in the role, GFA president Kurt Okraku said.

The position became vacant after the GFA parted ways with Addo following a series of poor results, including back-to-back defeats to Austria and Germany in pre-World Cup friendlies, prompting a late-night decision in Stuttgart on Monday.

Addo led the Black Stars to the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar and later guided the team to qualification for this year's tournament.

Okraku said the volume of applications underlined the appeal of one of Africa's top national team jobs.

The GFA is expected to begin a screening pro-

cess to shortlist candidates for interview, with less than three months remaining before the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

A new coach could be appointed within one to two weeks, Okraku said, as the association looks to avoid delays in its preparations.

The appointment is seen as critical, with the GFA seeking a coach capable of delivering immediate results while shaping the long-term direction of the team.

"We are quite clear on the kind of quality we need for the Black Stars. If you've been very close to this team, you know the kind of manager to hire for this team," he said.

"Our job is to make sure that we are very clear on who we want and the kind of quality we want to bring in, knowing very well the kind of intangible assets we have in that changing room," he added.

Okraku said the association's executive committee will meet in the coming days to accelerate the search.

"We will be meeting as an executive committee in the next few days, and we will accelerate the search for a new trainer for Ghana," he said.

## Orlando scores late goal to hand Angel City first loss of the season

WASHINGTON, April 4, (AP) — Haley McCutcheon scored two late goals and the Orlando Pride handed Angel City its first loss of the season, 2-1.

In other National Women's Soccer League action, the San Diego Wave defeated the Boston Legacy 1-0; the Houston Dash won 4-3 over Racing Louisville; and the Utah Royals beat the Chicago Stars 1-0.

Orlando (2-1-2) had two goals called off but still won at home for the first time this season.

McCutcheon scored her first off a loose ball in the 84th minute.

Angel City responded two minutes into stoppage time with Gisele Thompson's strike front the top of the box that hit the top of the post and crossed the line.

Marta's corner kick in the eighth minute of stoppage time created chaos in the box and McCutcheon found the ball for the winner.

Angel City (3-1-0) was the last undefeated team in the NWSL. Orlando's Jacquie Ovalle went down while pursuing Angel City's Sveindís Jónsdóttir on a breakaway. Ovalle had to be carried off the field. The extent of her injury was not known.

Ludmila broke the deadlock with the Legacy in the 62nd minute at Gillette Stadium, giving the Wave (4-1-0) their best start in club history.

Both teams had eight shots, but the Legacy did not get one on target.

Wave goalkeeper Leah Freeman did not need a save for her second consecutive shutout win and fourth straight as a starter.

The expansion Legacy remain winless (0-4-0).

Sarah Puntigam converted the fourth penalty kick of the game to lead the Houston Dash (3-1-0) over Racing Louisville at Shell Energy Stadium.

Taylor Flint opened the scoring with a penalty kick for Louisville in the 23rd minute after defender Avery Patterson committed a handball infraction in the box.

Kat Rader equalized from the spot for the Dash in the 39th. Sarah Weber scored off a loose ball in the 48th to give Louisville (0-3-1) a 2-1 lead.

Mimi Van Zanten scored consecutive goals in the 50th and 67th to put Houston in front 3-2.

Flint converted another penalty in the 81st to make it 3-3 before Puntigam's winner, her first NWSL goal.

Mina Tanaka converted a second-half penalty kick to give the Utah Royals (2-2-1) their second consecutive win.

Utah forward Cece Delzer drew the foul on Chicago defender Tessa Dellarose in the 70th minute leading to the penalty kick.

The Royals had a 27-3 advantage in shots, 62% to 38% in possession, and 14 to 1 in corners.

The Chicago Stars dropped to 1-4-0.

## SPORTS

# Bayern stages epic comeback to stay on course for title

## Wolfsburg troubles continue

**MUNICH, April 4, (AP):** Lennart Karl scored in the ninth minute of added time to complete a dramatic comeback 3-2 win for Bayern Munich over Freiburg and keep his team on track for the Bundesliga title.

Freiburg was heading for an upset win at 2-0 up in the 81st minute before Bayern's young midfielders changed the game, 20-year-old Tom Bischof scoring twice with low shots from distance and 18-year-old Karl slotting in a low cross from Alphonso Davies to turn the game on its head.

Harry Kane was out with an ankle



Bayern's Tom Bischof celebrates after scoring during the German Bundesliga soccer match between SC Freiburg and Bayern Munich in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. (AP)

issue ahead of next week's Champions League quarterfinal against Real Madrid and Nicolas Jackson was suspended so Serge Gnabry was tasked with leading the Bayern attack but made little headway.

Bayern's defense was at fault for Freiburg's opening goal, giving Johan Manzambi plenty of space to cut in from the left flank and line up a powerful shot past Manuel Neuer.

Back in the team after injury, Neuer made strong saves in the first half but blundered for Freiburg's second, leaping out of his goal to palm a corner straight to Freiburg striker Lucas Höler for an easy second.

Michael Olise missed a huge chance for Bayern but it was Bischof who made the breakthrough, scoring once from outside the area in the 81st, then again in added time as Freiburg was caught out by Bayern's quick corner routine. Davies' assist for Karl's winner marked an encouraging return from a hamstring injury for the Canada left back ahead of the World Cup.

Bayer Leverkusen surged back from 3-1 down to beat Wolfsburg 6-3 in an action-packed game which pushed relegation-threatened Wolfsburg closer to ending its 29-year stay in the top division.

Leverkusen's Spanish wing back Alejandro Grimaldo scored twice to move to 14 goals for the season in all competitions as he competes for a World Cup spot. Patrick Schick, Edmond Tapsoba, Ibrahim Maza and Malik Tillman also scored for Leverkusen.

Tapsoba's goal marked redemption after he'd conceded a penalty which allowed Christian Eriksen to score Wolfsburg's third, but the Leverkusen defender wasn't the only one to achieve that feat. Wolfsburg defender Joakim Maehle scored with a low drive in the



Freiburg's Philipp Treu, right, battles for the ball with Bayern's Luis Diaz during the German Bundesliga soccer match between SC Freiburg and Bayern Munich in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. (AP)

31st barely 10 seconds after the kickoff following a penalty conceded for his own foul.

Leverkusen stayed sixth and remained firmly in the Champions

League race. Wolfsburg was 17th in the 18-team league and winless since January.

Antonio Nusa and Romulo made the most of Leipzig's few chances

in a 2-0 win over Werder Bremen to stay on target for a return to the Champions League in fourth.

Leipzig got another boost as fifth-placed Hoffenheim was upset

by Mainz 2-1. Union Berlin and Augsburg drew 1-1 and Frank Honorat's goal rescued a 2-2 draw for Borussia Mönchengladbach against last-placed Heidenheim.

## Celtics start fast again and roll to blowout the Bucks

# Orlando spoils Flagg's 51-point explosion as Mavericks extend home losing streak

**DALLAS, April 4, (AP):** Wendell Carter Jr. scored 28 points and the Orlando Magic beat Dallas 138-127 on Friday night, overcoming a 51-point showing from rookie No. 1 pick Cooper Flagg and handing the Mavericks their 14th consecutive loss at home.

Desmond Bane had 27 points as the Magic remained a half-game behind eighth-place Charlotte in the Eastern Conference. Orlando is safely in the play-in tournament with an outside shot at the top six and automatic entry into the East playoffs.

Coach Jason Kidd and Maji Marshall were ejected seconds apart early in the fourth quarter for the lottery-bound Mavericks, who are on their longest home losing streak at 25-year-old American Airlines Center. Dallas lost the first 19 games of the 1993-94 season at since-demolished Reunion Arena.

Flagg was caught up in the disagreement that led to Kidd's ejection, drawing his own technical foul before Kidd went onto the court apparently to protest the same non-call that drew Flagg's ire.

The 19-year-old responded with 24 points in the fourth quarter to become the youngest in NBA history with a 50-point game.

### Celtics 133, Bucks 101

In Milwaukee, Jaylen Brown scored 26 points, Jayson Tatum added 23, and the hot-shooting Boston Celtics capitalized on another fast start in a victory over the short-handed Milwaukee Bucks.

Tatum was an assist shy of his second straight triple-double despite sitting out the entire fourth quarter of a game the Celtics never trailed. He had 11 rebounds and nine assists Friday after collecting 25 points, 18 rebounds and 11 assists Wednesday in a 147-129 triumph over the Miami Heat.

In the Miami game, Boston scored 53 points in the opening period - its highest first-quarter point total in franchise history. The Celtics didn't quite match that Friday, but they made eight of their first nine 3-point attempts and led 43-26



Philadelphia 76ers' Tyrese Maxey (0) goes up to shoot against Minnesota Timberwolves' Rudy Gobert (27) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)



Dallas Mavericks forward Cooper Flagg (32) works to the basket against Orlando Magic forward Tristan da Silva, right, in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Dallas. (AP)

after the opening period.

That represented the most first-quarter points Milwaukee had allowed all season.

Boston (52-25) remained 2 1/2 games ahead of the New York Knicks in the competition for the No. 2 seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs. The Celtics are four games behind the Eastern Conference-leading Detroit Pistons.

### Rockets 140, Jazz 106

In Houston, Kevin Durant scored 25 points and the Houston Rockets won their fifth straight game, beating the Utah Jazz.

Durant shot 8 of 12 from the field and added five assists. It was the 45th time this season he's scored 20 or more points while shooting 50% or better. That's second among NBA players behind Oklahoma

City star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, who has done it 47 times.

Amen Thompson had 21 points and Alperen Sengun scored 19 for the Rockets (48-29), who clinched a playoff spot Thursday. They are a game behind Denver for fourth place in the Western Conference.

### Knicks 136, Bulls 96

In New York, OG Anunoby scored 31 points, Mitchell Robinson had 17 points and 11 rebounds, and the New York Knicks routed the Chicago Bulls 136-96 in a game they led by 47 points.

Anunoby was 9 for 15 from the field, including 7 for 10 from 3-point range, and Robinson made each of his seven shots starting in place of All-Star center Karl-Anthony Towns, who did not play because of a right elbow impingement.

### 76ers 115, Timberwolves 103

In Philadelphia, Paul George scored 23 points, Tyrese Maxey and Kelly Oubre Jr. each had 21 and the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Joel Embiid had 19 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists in his return to the lineup to help the 76ers remain sixth in the Eastern Conference with five games to play.

Julius Randle and Bones Hyland each had 21 points for the Timberwolves. Anthony Edwards struggled to eight points. Edwards was back in action after sitting out Thursday night in a 113-108 loss at Detroit due to illness. He missed 12 of 15 shots overall, including all seven 3-point tries.

### Raptors 128, Grizzlies 96

In Memphis, RJ Barrett scored 25 points, Brandon Ingram had 17 points and seven rebounds and the Toronto Raptors built a first-half lead, extended it in the third and coasted to victory over the Memphis Grizzlies.

Rookie Collin Murray-Boyles, the ninth overall pick last summer, added 19 points on 7-of-10 shooting to help Toronto snap a two-game skid. Murray-Boyles had a career-high 20 points against Sacramento on Wednesday night.

# Iraq receives hero's welcome after World Cup qualification

**BAGHDAD, April 4:** Iraq team was met with an enthusiastic public celebration yesterday after securing a spot in the FIFA World Cup 2026 for the first time in 40 years, following its 2-1 victory over Bolivia in the intercontinental playoff final last Wednesday.

According to the Iraqi News Agency, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani personally welcomed the team upon their return and immediately ordered a public parade. An open-top bus carrying the squad departed from Al-Hurriya Square, allowing fans to celebrate the historic qualification and share in the team's triumph.

Iraq earned the final World Cup berth with goals from Ali Al-Hamadi and captain Ayman Hussein in Monterrey, Mexico. While Iraq advanced directly to the playoff final, Bolivia had to first defeat Suriname in the previous week's matchup in Monterrey.



Iraq's soccer players celebrate with fans during an open-top bus procession and ceremony after qualifying for the 2026 World Cup in central Baghdad, Iraq. (AP)

# PSG warms up for Liverpool with comfortable win

**PARIS, April 4, (AP):** Ousmane Dembélé scored twice in the first half as Paris Saint-Germain beat Toulouse 3-1.

The game was brought forward to give PSG more recovery time ahead of next Wednesday's Champions League quarterfinal with Liverpool at the Parc des Princes.

PSG came into the match having scored 12 goals in its last three games and it took the lead midway through the opening period when Dembélé crashed a superb volley into the top corner from the edge of the 18-yard box.

However, four minutes later goalkeeper Matvey Safonov could not secure a wick-



Toulouse's Yann Gboho, left, and PSG's Warren Zaire-Emery fight for the ball during a League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Toulouse in Paris, France. (AP)

ed in-swinging corner and Rasmus Nicolaisen headed home the rebound to level the scores.

Dembélé restored PSG's lead 12 minutes before halftime. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia headed on a corner kick and former Dortmund and Barcelona forward Dembélé was on hand to side-foot the ball over the line.

He had a third goal disallowed for offside in a second half dominated by the home side but it wasn't until stoppage time that PSG added a third, substitute Gonçalo Ramos stroking home with his right foot from 25 meters.

**ARAB TIMES**  
Kuwait's No.1 English Newspaper

**For Subscriptions and Complaints**

Please Call

**51508991**  
**51526559**





Sacramento Kings forward Doug McDermott (7) fights for the ball with New Orleans Pelicans guard Micah Peavy (14) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif. New Orleans Pelicans forward Trey Murphy III (25) is at rear. (AP)  
- See Page 15

# Sports

Al-Ghanem: Postponing the season best for clubs, support Sheikh Al-Yousuf's Presidency

## Minister Al-Jalahma pledges full support for Kuwaiti Clubs in international competitions

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DAMMAM, Saudi Arabia, April 4: KUWAIT CITY, April 4: Kuwait's Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs, Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, emphasized the government's commitment to supporting local clubs through infrastructure development and creating optimal conditions for technical and physical preparation, aiming to boost competitiveness and achieve sporting success.

Al-Jalahma recently visited Kuwait Club, meeting with the first-team players and coaching staff ahead of their upcoming Asian Challenge Cup quarter-final against Oman's Al-Shabab on April 19.

He described participation in continental competitions as a "national responsibility" requiring discipline, commitment, and fighting spirit, expressing confidence in the players' ability to represent Kuwait honorably. He also noted that fans eagerly expect performances worthy of Al-Abyad's proud history.

The minister announced plans to visit Al-Qadsia Club, reaffirming his ongoing support for clubs and their presence in both regional and continental competitions. Regarding the new sports law, Al-Jalah-

ma stated: "We will address each matter at the right time and are working to finalize the law in the best form possible."

Players expressed gratitude for the visit, highlighting the leadership's support and reaffirming their determination to perform at their best and elevate Kuwait's name in the tournament.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Club President Khaled Al-Ghanem praised the state's support for sports and emphasized the importance of representing Kuwait with distinction. On the suspension of domestic competitions, he said:

"Postponing the season is the most suitable option, as agreed by the clubs, similar to what happened in 2002 and during the COVID-19 pandemic with Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi."

He also confirmed support for Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousuf in the upcoming Football Association presidential election, with the final decision to be made in consultation with all clubs.

Kuwait Club kicked off its training camp in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, with sessions continuing today. The two-week camp will include two friendly matches before the team departs for Kyrgyzstan to face Al-Shabab in the Asian Challenge Cup.



Al-Jalahma meets with the first-team players and coaching staff ahead of Kuwait Club upcoming Asian Challenge Cup quarter-final against Oman's Al-Shabab.

## Haaland scores 18-minute hat trick as City crushes Liverpool in FA Cup



Liverpool's Rio Ngunmoha, left, and Manchester City's Savinho fight for the ball during the FA Cup quarter-final soccer match between Manchester City and Liverpool in Manchester, England. (AP)

### Salah fails to convert penalty

**MANCHESTER, London, April 4, (AP): Erling Haaland's 18-minute hat trick powered Manchester City to a 4-0 win over Liverpool and into the FA Cup semifinals for a record eighth straight season.**

Mohamed Salah's failure from the penalty spot added to the woes of Liverpool, whose meltdown at Etihad Stadium will put more heat on under-pressure manager Arne Slot.

Haaland converted a penalty in the 39th minute, headed home a cross from Antoine Semenyo in first-half stoppage time, and then swept in a finish off the crossbar in the 57th to score his first hat trick of the season for City and 12th since he joined the club in 2022.

Semenyo scored the other goal in the 50th for City, which was playing its first match since winning the English League Cup two weeks ago by beating Arsenal in the final at Wembley Stadium. City will be heading back there later this month for the FA Cup semis.

Salah, who announced during the recent international break that he'd be leaving Liverpool after nine trophy-filled seasons, was beginning his long goodbye to the Reds but couldn't mark it with a goal. The best of the many chances he spurned came from a penalty, which City goalkeeper James Trafford palmed away in the 64th.

It was a record 18th straight home win for City in the FA Cup, dating to 2017. Pep Guardiola's team shared a record with Clapham Rovers for reaching seven consecutive FA

Cup finals, but now holds it outright. The draw for the semifinals takes place Sunday after West Ham hosts Leeds in the final match in the last eight.

Meanwhile, Enzo Fernandez's agent called Chelsea's decision to drop the midfielder "completely unfair".

Fernandez was banished from the next two games - the FA Cup quarterfinal against Port Vale and the Premier League match with Manchester City next weekend - Chelsea coach Liam Rosenior confirmed on Friday.

The sanction was in response to Fernandez telling a podcast this week that he would like to live in Madrid. There's speculation linking him with a move to Real Madrid even though he's contracted to Chelsea to 2031.

Fernandez's agent Javier Pastore said the Argentina international does not understand



Manchester City's Erling Haaland celebrates after scoring during the FA Cup quarter-final soccer match between Manchester City and Liverpool in Manchester, England. (AP)

the decision.

"The punishment is completely unfair," Pastore told The Athletic. "Banning the player for two matches, which moreover are also absolutely crucial for Chelsea because qualification for the Champions League is at stake and he is one of the team's most important players."

"There's no real reason or justification for why he has been banned. Enzo didn't understand the situation. When the coach told him he accepted it because he's a highly professional guy who's always fully committed wherever he is and respects decisions, but we don't understand the punishment because he doesn't mention any club or say he wants to leave Chelsea, far from it. He only mentions Madrid, the city."

"Our plan after the World Cup is to meet with Chelsea again and, if there is no agreement, to explore other options."

Rosenior said he was part of the club's decision.

"It's disappointing for Enzo to speak that way. I've got no bad words to say about him but a line was crossed in terms of our culture and what we want to build," Rosenior said.

"Enzo, firstly, as a character, a person and a player, I have the utmost respect. He's frustrated because he wants us to be successful. The door is not closed on Enzo. It's a sanction. You have to protect the culture, and in terms of that, a line was crossed."

Fernandez joined Chelsea for a then-British record 107 million pounds (\$142 million) in 2023 and was appointed vice-captain the following year.

## Two Kuwaiti riders shine at Qatar Equestrian Tour

DOHA, April 4, (KUNA): Two Kuwaiti riders secured top positions at the Qatar Equestrian Federation Cup, held at the Longines Arena in Al Shaqab, as part of the 2026 Doha Equestrian Tour.

Anaz Al-Anaz claimed first place in the 140 cm three-star class, finishing with a time of 65.74 sec-

onds, while fellow Kuwaiti Fawaz Rashid took third place with a time of 72.97 seconds. The competition featured over 170 riders from 21 countries.

The tournament began Friday and will continue through Monday, showcasing top equestrian talent from around the world.



KUNA photos

Left-right: The outstanding riders receive their awards.

## China overcomes Bangladesh for second consecutive victory

BANGKOK, April 4, (Xinhua): China defeated Bangladesh 2-0 in their second Group A match at the 2026 AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup at Nonthaburi Stadium in Thailand, securing their second consecutive group-stage win.

Facing Bangladesh, who have qualified for the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup finals for the first time, China dominated possession in the first half but struggled to create effective attacking combinations. Apart from a free-kick strike against the crossbar by Wang Aifang and a missed one-on-one opportunity for Yu Xingyue, China created few clear chances before the break.

The breakthrough came in the second half when Zeng Yujia made a break down the right flank and crossed for Yu Xingyue to open the scoring in the 47th minute. In the 82nd minute, Wang Aifang doubled the lead with a powerful free-kick strike, sealing the win.

China, who had beaten Vietnam 3-0 in the opening group match on April 1, will conclude its group-stage campaign against host nation Thailand on April 7.

This tournament features 12 teams, which were divided into three groups. The top two finishers from each group and the two best third-placed teams will advance to the knockout stage. The top four finishers of the competition will qualify for the FIFA U20 Women's World Cup 2026 in Poland.

### Best of the Rest

**Trippier to leave Newcastle:** Former England right back Kieran Trippier will leave Newcastle at the end of the season when his contract expires, the Premier League club announced.

The 35-year-old defender joined from Atlético Madrid in January 2022 as a marquee signing soon after the northeast club, then in the relegation zone, was bought by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund.

Trippier has made more than 150 appearances Newcastle - scoring four goals - during his four-and-a-half-year spell at St James' Park, helping the team win the English League Cup for its first major trophy in 70 years and also qualify for the Champions League twice in the last three years. (AP)

**Zhao sets hammer record:** Olympic bronze medalist Zhao Jie became the first Asian female hammer thrower to break the 78-meter barrier as the 23-year-old achieved 78.22m in a Chinese national throws meeting.

Four days after improving her personal best mark by one centimeter to 77.61m, Zhao maintained her momentum with a first round effort of 77.31m to take the lead and went on to hurl 78.22m in the second round to seal the win. Zhao's winning mark beat the previous Asian record of 77.68m set by compatriot Wang Zheng in 2014, also in Chengdu.

Teenager Zhang Jiale, third finisher at the World Championships in Tokyo last September, took the silver at 77.15m, which was just nine centimeters shy of her own world U20 record. (Xinhua)