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Kuwait Crown Prince, Saudi counterpart discuss latest regional scenario
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KUWAIT WELCOMES U.S. AND IRAN TWO-WEEK CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

Drones hit Kuwait power, water plants in post-truce turbulence



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Iran takes a bitter pill again

THE strategic truce proclaimed by US President Donald Trump is a manifestation of mercy towards the Iranian people, who have long suffered under the weight of the reckless adventures of their regime.

This pivotal development underscores the capacity of the United States, as the world's preeminent superpower, to dictate terms to rogue entities like Iran, which for 38 days boasted of its supposed ability to impose conditions.

Tehran, having sensed the gravity of the impending consequences, found itself compelled to meekly submit to American mandates. Notwithstanding the specifics of the ensuing dialogue, the die is irrevocably cast for a future marked by an enfeebled and solitary Iran, effectively shorn of its regional influence. This terminal weakness will inevitably exacerbate the domestic fragility of the regime, as an impoverished populace can no longer endure the instability bred by revolutionary delusions.

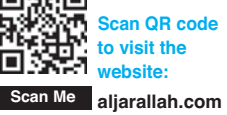
In the twilight of this conflict, Tehran realized its total isolation, finding that even its purported allies offered nothing more than empty diplomatic rhetoric. This global alignment stems from a fundamental contrast -- while Washington operates with a singular and decisive plan, Tehran remains paralyzed by a fractured power structure devoid of unified leadership.

Since the start of hostilities on Feb 28, the state has been leaderless, a reality laid bare on March 7 when the Iranian president offered a hollow apology to the Gulf countries.

On the other hand, the Revolutionary Guard signaled its dominance over the state by launching aggressive strikes against those same nations on that very day. The conflicting narratives emanating from regime leaders, each singing their own tune, further exposed the underlying reality of a regime in disarray.

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A group of Iraqi protesters storms the Kuwaiti Consulate and removes the Kuwaiti national flag from the building, in Basra, Iraq, Wednesday, April 8, 2026. (AP)

Arab nations unite in denouncing incident

Basra consulate breach sparks Kuwait condemnation as diplomatic lines torn

KUWAIT CITY, April 8, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait has strongly condemned and denounced the storming and acts of vandalism targeting its Consulate General in Iraq's Basra City. The attack, which included sabotage of the mission's premises, was described as an unacceptable and serious breach of diplomatic norms and conventions.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry said the assault represents a grave violation of Iraq's international obligations, particularly under the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations -- notably Article 31, which requires the host state to fully protect and safeguard consular premises. Kuwait held the Iraqi government fully and directly responsible for the attack and any failure to take necessary measures to protect diplomatic missions within its territory.

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo
Kuwait's Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Al-Daihani meets Iraqi envoy to protest Basra consulate assault and demand accountability.

- Kuwait FM meets Egyptian counterpart to boost cooperation
- 4 missiles, 42 drones intercepted in 24 hours
- Oman rejects transit fees in Strait of Hormuz

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: The Ministry of Defense announced on Wednesday that the air defense systems of the country detected and engaged four ballistic missiles and 42 drones in the last 24 hours.

In the media briefing conducted by the Government Communication Center, spokesman of the ministry Colonel Staff Saud Al-Atwan confirmed that the Kuwaiti Armed Forces intercepted the hostile targets within the designated operational zones.

He said the Iranian attacks targeted several facilities belonging to Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Oscar Wilde to the American customs officer, 'Yes, I carry my humanity with me.'

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Ukraine has more than five thousand historical castles.

Ukraine is known as the "breadbasket of Europe" because of its massive grain production.

Ukrainian Leonid Kadenyuk was the first independent cosmonaut.



PM Diwan photo
HH the PM chairs a meeting on enhancing infrastructure and planning strategic warehouses.

PM pushes strategic storage to 'secure' Kuwait's future needs

KUWAIT CITY, April 8, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, chaired a meeting on Wednesday to discuss ways to enhance infrastructure and logistics, and to follow up on procedures for inventorying, classifying, and utilizing land for the establishment

of strategic warehouses. The meeting reviewed plans to strengthen the State's capacity in supply management and improve storage efficiency to meet future needs across vital sectors, with directives to submit periodic reports on implementation progress.

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Publication ban imposed on 15 state security cases

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: The State Security and Terrorism Crimes Department, headed by Judge Nasser Al-Bader, with Judges Omar Al-Mulaifi, Abdul-

lah Al-Faleh and Salem Al-Zayed as members, decided to ban the publication and circulation of State Security cases effective Wednesday.

This applies to 15 new State Security cases involving 14 citizens and one expatriate.

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Wave of approval greets Kuwait's KD 10 cash cap

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: The decision to ban cash transactions exceeding KD 10 in several sectors was widely welcomed in business and economic circles, describing it as a "positive step" toward strengthening administrative and accounting oversight and supporting the state's efforts to reduce reliance on cash.

Earlier, Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai had issued Ministerial Decree No. 32/2026, which requires relevant entities to use banking channels and electronic payment methods approved by the Central Bank of Kuwait.

In this regard, businessman and economic expert Qais Al-Ghanim highlighted that expanding electronic transactions carries significant administrative, regulatory, and oversight benefits.

He explained that similar measures are implemented in many countries worldwide, particularly in Europe, where individuals rely almost entirely on electronic payment methods, such as bank cards, and cash is rarely used in cafes and everyday transactions.

Kuwait's infrastructure is fully prepared to support the digital transformation of financial transactions. Payment services such as KNet and bank cards are widely available to citizens and residents without additional fees.

The decision would help reduce workplace theft and improve accounting practices within companies by facilitating the tracking of funds and enabling more accurate and transparent financial operations.

Al-Ghanim affirmed that the shift to electronic payments also contributes to combating money laundering and strengthens oversight of financial transfers, particularly those conducted internationally.



Al-Ghanim



Ramadan



Al-Assad

'Avoid debris'

French citizens told to follow safety protocols

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: The French Embassy in Kuwait urged its citizens to comply with the instructions of local authorities in light of the evolving regional situation and its repercussions, emphasizing the importance of exercising caution.

The embassy stressed the need to seek shelter in safe places within homes upon hearing the siren, such as interior rooms, away from windows.

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2 '58 years of dedication, exclusive journalism'



Kuwait Crown Prince, Saudi counterpart discuss latest regional scenario



Sheikh Sabah Khaled

KUWAIT CITY, April 8, (KUNA): His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held a phone call on Wednesday with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

During the call, His Highness the Crown Prince conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

The two sides reviewed the latest regional developments and discussed the ceasefire agreement between the United States and the

Islamic Republic of Iran, following constructive efforts and intensive mediation led by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

They also affirmed the firm stance of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in supporting all efforts aimed at strengthening security and stability and achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received at Bayan Palace on Wednesday a written message addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from President of Egypt Abdelattah Al-Sisi.

The message was delivered to His Highness by Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates Dr. Badr Abdelatty.

During the meeting, the minister affirmed deep historical ties between the two countries, reiterating Egypt's full support for Kuwait in safeguarding its sovereignty, security and stability.

The meeting was attended by Head of the Crown Prince Diwan Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and senior officials.



Mohammad bin Salman

'58 years of dedication, exclusive journalism'

Al-Seyassah on top rung in Kuwait, Gulf media outlets

By Bassam Al-Qassas

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: Al-Seyassah newspaper on Wednesday celebrated the anniversary of its establishment in 1968, as it continued to play its vital role in documenting a changing world and chronicling dramatic events that have shaped unexpected geopolitical trajectories, particularly since the beginning of the millennium, transforming the circumstances of many countries in the Arab region.

Al-Seyassah left its distinctive mark on these events, offering its free voice and insightful opinions, thus cementing its position as one of the most prominent me-

dia outlets in Kuwait and the region.

Since its inception, the newspaper has adopted a professional approach based on truthful reporting and responsible opinion, keeping pace with developments in the political and regional arenas through balanced analysis and profound commentary. This made the newspaper an influential platform in shaping public awareness and conveying the pulse of the Kuwaiti street in an honest and objective manner.

Throughout its 58 years in circulation, Al-Seyassah has been more than just a news outlet. It has played a vital role in addressing national and regional issues, professionally and boldly tackling public affairs, while remaining steadfastly committed to the nation's principles and defending its highest interests.

It has also contributed to establishing a tradition of sound journalistic practice and presented a media model that combines news, analysis and opinion, earning it a distinguished place in the hearts of its readers and widespread trust within the political and media circles.

On this occasion, Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-



Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad



Flowers from Sheikh Mubarak Al-Humoud

Chief of Al-Seyassah newspaper Ahmed Al-Jarallah received a flood of congratulatory messages from various official, diplomatic and media entities.

The senders praised the national and media role that the newspaper has been playing since its inception and its continuous contributions to support and enhance the presence of Kuwaiti media, affirming that Al-Seyassah remains the cornerstone of the journalistic landscape, given its influential presence and long history.

His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah expressed his sincere congratulations and best wishes on the 58th anniversary of the first issue of Al-Seyassah newspaper.

He commended the dedicated efforts of the newspaper's management and editorial team in raising awareness among the citizens and strengthening the concepts of citizenship, belongingness and loyalty. He also acknowledged their crucial role in combating sedition and rumors, especially under the current circumstances.

His Highness expressed hope that these sincere contributions, which support national security and stability, will continue.

He wished them more success and prosperity and wished Kuwait continuous progress and advancement under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah —may Allah protect them.

Meanwhile, Kuwait National Guard Chief Sheikh Mubarak Hamoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah extended sincere congratulations to the Editor-in-Chief and staff of Al-Seyassah newspaper on its anniversary. He affirmed his pride in the newspaper's achievements and sincere national stances throughout its distinguished history, noting their positive impact on its readers.

Pioneering role

He pointed out the importance of the newspaper continuing its pioneering role within the democratic atmosphere enjoyed by the Kuwaiti press, as well as remaining the beacon of free opinion.

He prayed that Almighty Allah grant them many more such occasions in good health and well-being.

Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad affirmed that Al-Seyassah newspaper has proven its credibility and professionalism throughout its history in addressing events and issues according to an advanced media methodology and clear national responsibility.

This was evident in the crises that the country and the region have experienced, where it stood as a bulwark against attempts to distort facts and mislead public opinion to achieve agendas aimed at destabilizing security.

He expressed his appreciation for the role that the newspaper plays in supporting the positions of the State and confronting media attacks on the nation.

'Jarallah devoted his life serving country'

Kuwait land of peace, giving: Pope Tawadros II

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: On the occasion of the 58th anniversary of the founding of Al-Seyassah newspaper, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II – Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark – expressed his admiration for the long-established journalistic institution in the State of Kuwait, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Pope Tawadros II said the newspaper was a role model of responsible media that promotes dialogue, and reinforces the values of moderation, coexistence and peace among Arab societies.

He pointed out that, throughout its long history, Al-Seyassah has been depicting the civilized image of Kuwait and providing a platform for responsible discourse that raises



Pope Tawadros II

awareness, supports stability, and strengthens ties among Arab na-

tions.

He highlighted the importance of a fully aware media in building peaceful societies and nurturing the culture of understanding.

He added that Ahmed Al-Jarallah, writer and journalist, stands as an example of a committed media figure who has been devoting his life to serving his country, while strengthening the role of the media in upholding national and human values.

In conclusion, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II prayed that Almighty Allah bless Kuwait and its people, and that Al-Seyassah continues to serve as a platform for responsible dialogue and wisdom, as well as the voice for peace and harmony throughout the Arab world.



Sheikh Mubarak Hamoud



Flowers from the Coptic Church

Former Minister of Social Affairs Khaled Al-Jumayan affirmed that Al-Seyassah set an example of responsible national media, raising societal awareness and promoting professional values. He wished the newspaper sustained success in its distinguished service to Kuwait and Arab media.

Businessman Mohammad Badi Al-Mutairi pointed out that the newspaper's 58th anniversary reflects the success of a pioneering media experience under the leadership of Ahmed Al-Jarallah.

He emphasized that the newspaper has succeeded in building bridges of trust with its readers and presenting a model of professional media that supports the development of Kuwait.

Kuwaiti heritage researcher Issa Al-Ghanim considers the newspaper a part of the cultural and media history of Kuwait, contributing to the documentation of events and the shaping of awareness.

He hopes that it will continue to fulfill its national mission and preserve its journalistic legacy.

Church congratulates

The Coptic Orthodox Church in Kuwait congratulated Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper Ahmed Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah on the 58th anniversary of the newspaper's founding, praising its prominent role in serving the community.

In a congratulatory message, Father Bigoul Anba Bishoy, a senior priest at St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Kuwait, asserted that the Church is honored to participate in this occasion, expressing its sincere congratulations to the newspaper's staff and wishing them more progress and success.

He confirmed that the Church appreciates the tremendous efforts that the newspaper exerted in various fields, as well as its media contributions that serve the State of Kuwait, its citizens and residents, and reinforce the national work process.

The Church concluded its message by expressing its wish for the newspaper to continue its distinguished professional journey, supporting the development process and keeping pace with the aspirations of the Kuwaiti society.

United Nations Ambassador and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Awazem Charitable Foundation Hamad Zaid Al-Baseis pointed out that the newspaper has been presenting a pioneering journalistic experience throughout its history, making it a platform for responsible discourse and a voice for truth in the Arab world. He praised its role in raising awareness and promoting national and humanitarian work.

Advisor Tariq Yousef Al-Shamaimri expressed deep appreciation for the newspaper, lauding its efforts in spreading political, cultural, social and economic awareness, in addition to developing the journalistic journey at the Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab levels, wishing it continuous excellence and development.



Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber

Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser

Fahad Al-Mu'jel

Khaled Al-Jumayan

Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi

Salah Al-Maliki

Ali Ibn Issa

Bigoul Anba Bishoy

Mohammad Al-Mutairi

Tariq Al-Shamaimri

Hamad Al-Baseis

Issa Al-Ghanim

Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah stressed that Al-Seyassah has made valuable contributions to the nation's causes, especially in light of the current circumstances that Kuwait is experiencing. He cited its role in maintaining security and stability and supporting the path of prosperity.

He prayed that Allah protects Kuwait and its people under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince—may Allah preserve and protect them.

Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Kuwait Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi expressed sincere congratulations on this occasion, praising the role that Al-Seyassah newspaper plays in strengthening bilateral media relations between the two countries.

He commended the newspaper's coverage of various aspects of development and progress in the Sultanate of Oman, particularly during official and national events, reflecting the deep and close ties between the two brotherly nations. He wished the newspaper continuous success and prosperity.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain Salah Al-Maliki expressed sincere congratulations to Ahmed Al-Jarallah, praising the newspaper's remarkable professional presence and its long, distinguished media history. He said Al-Seyassah newspaper is one of the reputable journalistic platforms.

He indicated that for decades, the newspaper greatly

contributed to the establishment of the principles of responsible journalism and keeping pace with political and regional issues through a balanced approach and clear vision, so it earned a distinguished position, in addition to its role in supporting the fraternal relations between Kuwait and Bahrain.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco Ali Ibn Issa stated that the newspaper is a reputable media platform that, for decades, has been contributing to the consolidation of the principles of professionalism and objectivity, while serving national, Arab and humanitarian causes with utmost competence.

He also commended the leadership of Ahmed Al-Jarallah, characterized by insightful vision and foresight in addressing various issues, thereby, solidifying the newspaper's standing and influence.

Secretary General of the Kuwaiti Diwanias Brigadier General Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Mu'jel said Al-Seyassah newspaper has been playing a prominent national role for 58 years by supporting the progress of Kuwait and strengthening its stability.

He noted its presence on major issues affecting the country and the region, and its contributions to solidifying the values of belongingness and defending national interests. He emphasized that it is a true partner in building national awareness.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Oscar Wilde to the American customs officer, 'Yes, I carry my humanity with me.'

THESE Americans have everything a person could want, except one thing - a sense of humanity. When the Irish writer Oscar Wilde reached New York, the customs officer asked him, "Are you carrying any prohibited substances?"

He replied, "Yes, I carry my humanity with me."

Albert Einstein said the biggest problem facing the United States is not poverty or crime, but its lack of compassion and humanity.

Chris Hitchens said, "There is nothing more annoying than hearing someone talk about lofty values that they don't practice in their daily life."

Edward Said said, "The United States exports democracy and freedom while ignoring human rights abuses in places it believes do not harm its interests."

Mahatma Gandhi said, "Civilization is not about technology or luxury, but about the spirit of humanity we retain."

Che Guevara said, "My friends, life is a dream, and we only truly live it when we believe in a cause greater than ourselves."

* * *

Facts not everyone knows about Ukraine

- Ukraine is the largest country in Europe. It covers 603,548 square kilometers, surpassing both France and Spain.

- Ukraine has the highest number of

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• Ukraine has more than five thousand historical castles.

• Ukraine is known as the "breadbasket of Europe" because of its massive grain production.

• Ukrainian Leonid Kadenyuk was the first independent cosmonaut.

castles in Europe, with over 5,000 historical castles, the most famous being Kamianets, Podilskyi, and Svergne.

- Ukraine is the home of the sunflower and is the world's largest producer of

sunflower oil, with vast fields covered in this plant.

- The capital, Kyiv, has an ancient history, having been founded in the 5th century AD. It is one of the oldest cities in Eastern Europe and was once an important cultural center.

- Kyiv is one of the few capital cities in the world with several beaches, including one on the Dnieper River, where residents can enjoy swimming in the summer.

- Ukraine participated in the Soviet space program. Leonid Kadyniuk became the first independent Ukrainian cosmonaut to travel to space in 1997.

- Kyiv has a population of approximately 36 million. The official language is Ukrainian, and the currency is the Ukrainian hryvnia. Kyiv's economy is based on agriculture, heavy industry, and information technology.

- Ukraine gained independence from the former Soviet Union on August 24, 1991.

- The Ukrainian-Russian conflict began in 2014 and escalated into a full-scale war in 2022.

- Ukraine is known as the breadbasket of Europe due to its massive grain production.

- Ukraine is home to the Chernobyl nuclear reactor, where the worst nuclear disaster in history occurred in 1986.

People don't change over time. Rather, their true nature is revealed. Time exposes human nature.

••••

When you feel the world has become too tight and all doors are closed to you, remember that God alone holds the keys. Trust in Him, for nothing is impossible for Him.

••••

Don't tell a donkey where its feed is. Otherwise, one day it will forget your favor. Don't think that a donkey is smarter than you, because it may eventually become human, while you become the donkey.

••••

The truly brave person is not the one who wins an argument, but the one who avoids it. Therefore, avoiding arguments is better than winning them.



Farwaniya Governorate photo
Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah meets the heads of committees.

All stakeholders to boost cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah met the heads of the Farwaniya Governorate Council committees on Wednesday morning in his office.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the attendees included:

- Head of the Complaints and Petitions Committee Dr. Al-Mundhir Wael Al-Hasawi

- Head of the Services Committee Lieutenant General Ali Abdulhadi Al-Shanfah

- Head of the Development and Initiatives Committee Hessa Abdullah Al-Mutawa

- A member of the Farwaniya Governorate Council Saad Abdullah Al-Hadba

The meeting aimed to support institutional work processes and enhance coordination among various stakeholders.

During the meeting, several topics related to the committees' responsibilities were discussed. Approved work mechanisms were reviewed to improve performance efficiency and achieve integration in implementing service and development plans and programs throughout the governorate.

Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser emphasized the importance of unifying efforts and strengthening coordination between the committees and executive bodies. He said this approach aims to enhance the quality of services provided and align with the directives of the wise leadership to develop government work and effectively respond to citizens' needs, especially under the current circumstances.

Court acquits banker in funds scandal case

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling of the lower court, which acquitted one of the defendants in the case of forging bank documents and misappropriating loans amounting to KD348,000 from a bank.

Attorney Fadhil Al-Basmaan represented the defendant in court.

The case involves nine individuals accused of conspiring to obtain bank loans by submitting forged official and banking documents. These documents contained false information that enabled them to mislead a bank employee acting in good faith and then secure the approval and disbursement of the loans.

The Public Prosecution charged the acquitted defendant with aiding and abetting the other accused by supplying information and acting as an intermediary to obtain the forged official documents, which were used to open bank accounts and finalize loan agreements.

The prosecution also accused the defendant of facilitating the misappropriation of funds by providing the other defendants with the documents for use in banking procedures, leading to the commission of the crime, as stated in the investigation report.

No hiccups in power, water

NIC suspends operations

By Mohammad Ghanem/Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: Director for Collections and Public Utilities at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Mohammad Al-Otaibi confirmed that the Customer Service Sector has been operating as usual since the beginning of the crisis, stressing that all centers continue to receive customers and provide services throughout the country.

In an interview with Kuwait TV, Al-Otaibi pointed out that the sector is a crucial link after the production, transmission and distribution stages, as it deals directly with the public. He asserted that despite the circumstances, there was no interruption of services -- a fact confirmed by the customers themselves. "From the first day of the crisis, the emergency plan was activated, which included expanding reliance on digital services through the website of the ministry, the smart application, and the call center to ensure service continuity and facilitate the completion of transactions," he added.

He said the customer service teams are working round the clock, while urging consumers to cooperate by conserving electricity and water.

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Meanwhile, Salem Al-Asfour, supervisor of Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer districts, affirmed that ministry employees are continuing their work to serve all customers, citing the ongoing processing of electricity connection applications, debt acknowledgments and all other services.

Al-Asfour urged consumers to subscribe to the 'Hafidh' program for conserving energy and water through the 'Sahel' application in order to benefit from the support the ministry provides to subscribers committed to energy conservation.

Salem Al-Azmi, head of the Al-Qusour Office, stated that ministry is keen on continuing the provision of services through various offices, while streamlining procedures for visitors.

□ □ □

NIC suspends work: National Industries Company (NIC) announced the suspension of operations at some of its factories on Wednesday and Thursday due to current regional circumstances and out of concern for the safety of its employees and customers.

The company clarified that operations will be suspended at its factories in Abdullah Port, while its Sulaibiya facilities will continue to operate at reduced capacity, which may affect response times.

It affirmed that the head office will also operate at partial capacity, with potential delays in processing transactions.

The company confirmed that it will continue to receive customers at its showroom in Shuwaikh Industrial Area at Al-Zain Complex during regular working hours, with no changes.

Back to work after drone attack

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: Despite the Ministries Complex being targeted by a hostile drone on Saturday evening, which caused significant damage to the building's facades and facilities but no injuries, the complex witnessed near-normal activity on Monday, reports Al-Anba daily quoting informed sources.

A number of senior officials were able to hold several meetings including Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila who held a meeting with the ministry's Undersecretary Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi, and another with

the Director General of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) Dr. Dalal Dhari Al-Othman.

The sources emphasized that activity within the government ministries complex reflected institutional readiness, with work continuing and employees interacting with visitors, despite some precautionary measures at certain closed locations.

They revealed that the Ministry of Finance had switched to a remote work system from Sunday, April 5, as a precautionary measure.

MoSA refunds events booking fees

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: Following the Ministry of Social Affairs' announcement of the suspension of all social events, including parties and weddings, until further notice due to the ongoing regional crisis and its impact on the country, the ministry's Department of Women, Childhood, and Community Development has refunded all payments made by citizens for booking these halls, including both the booking fee and the security deposit, reports Al-Jarida daily.

According to sources from the ministry, bookings will resume through the automated "Events Hall" application once the situation stabilizes and

the Ministry of Interior allows it.

The ministry is committed to strictly enforcing the current precautionary measures to support government efforts in enhancing public safety and security, and ensuring the well-being of all citizens and residents.

The ministry had previously called on citizens who had pre-booked reservations at ministry-affiliated wedding halls and wished to cancel them to visit the Women, Children, and Community Development Department in Yarmouk, Block 3, next to the Yarmouk Cooperative Society, to initiate the cancellation process and complete the necessary requirements.

Real Estate Union raps banks for withholding property certificates

Brokers warn practice blocks deals, raises buyer risks

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: Head of the Real Estate Brokers Union Imad Haidar says banks' practice of withholding property description certificates for mortgaged properties is one of the biggest obstacles facing the real estate market, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

He explained that the documents are held as collateral by the banks, preventing owners or

brokers from obtaining the certificate, even though it is unrelated to transferring ownership. The property description certificate simply presents the property's specifications, regulatory status, and any recorded violations, and has no impact on the transfer of ownership.



Haidar

Obtaining the certificate involves two stages - first, issuing the description certificate, and second, recording the property details in the document.

The Real Estate Brokers Union has been advocating since the 1990s for separating the property description certificate from mortgages, as this linkage is not practiced in other Gulf countries, with the exception of Kuwait, despite the practical problems it creates.

This procedure could expose the buyer to significant risks, as they might pay the mortgage amount only to later discover violations on the property that prevent the transfer

of ownership, resulting in financial and legal damage.

Haidar stressed the importance of reconsidering these requirements, emphasizing that property transfers should only require a "demarcation certificate," not a description certificate, to streamline procedures and protect market participants.

Haidar called on the relevant authorities in the State Ministry for Municipal Affairs to intensify field inspections to uncover real estate violations on a regular basis, similar to the actions taken by the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) following the Al-Mangaf fire, which would contribute to raising compliance levels and reducing risks.

KU's CBA secures top 15 spot globally in Islamic economics

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: Kuwait University announced that its College of Business Administration has been ranked among the top 30 business schools globally in the field of Islamic economics for 2026, according to a ranking issued by Peace Gateway in cooperation with Dinar-Standard, a company specializing in strategic planning and management. The university noted that the college's 15th-place global ranking reflects its ongoing efforts to develop academic programs and strengthen scientific research in Islamic economics and finance.

It also highlighted the offering of specialized courses and postgraduate programs in collaboration with the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, reflecting a comprehensive knowledge base.

The university emphasized that this achievement reflects two key pillars of its strategy - quality and distinguished presence. This is pursued through raising the level of educational programs, strengthening the credibility of academic outputs, and expanding its presence at both regional and international levels, thereby ultimately supporting the development of qualified national cadres in the financial and Islamic sectors.

It revealed that the ranking is based on important criteria, including the depth of curricula, institutional credibility, and the strength of the educational environment.

Family Affairs Council unveils new logo

MoSA to track charities' int'l links

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/ Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: The Department of Charitable Societies and Foundations at the Ministry of Social Affairs contacted the heads of charitable societies to request the names and locations of international organizations in which they are members.

Sources stated that this request is in line with the commitment of the ministry to efficiently play its supervisory and oversight roles over the charitable societies, in accordance with Law No. 4/1962 on clubs and public benefit associations.

Sources revealed that the total number of registered and officially recognized charitable societies and foundations reached 153 -- 83 charitable societies and 70 foundations.

Meanwhile, Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs, and Chairperson of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila, announced the adoption of the Council's new logo.

In a press statement, Dr. Al-Huwaila

emphasized that the logo was designed by the Council's own staff, which showcases the creativity of national cadres and reflects their commitment to developing institutional work.

She noted that the update comes as part of the Council's efforts to modernize its visual and media identity, keeping pace with the next phase and strengthening its presence and impact in society.

Dr. Al-Huwaila affirmed that empowering employees and involving them in shaping their institution's identity enhances their sense of belonging and represents an important pillar of success and sustainability.

She concluded by stressing that the new logo marks the beginning of a new phase of integrated institutional work, following the issuance of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and its executive regulations governing the operation of protection centers, reflecting a national vision that underscores the central role of the family in development.

KU hosts Respondus workshops

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: The E-Learning Center at Kuwait University is organizing two training workshops for faculty members and students in collaboration with Respondus on Wednesday.

These workshops aim to enhance e-learning quality and improve the efficiency of the educational process. They are part of the plan of the university to develop electronic assessment tools, ensure exam integrity, and improve skills in using modern educational systems to

keep pace with the digital transformation in higher education institutions.

The workshop for faculty members will introduce participants to the utilization of the Respondus system in online exams, which will help reduce cheating and increase confidence in the assessment process.

It will also review the student experience with the system, monitoring and recording mechanisms, and discuss best practices and technical tips to ensure the successful implementation of the system and achieve the highest level of fairness in assessment.

Continued from Page 1

Drones hit

(KPC), in addition to a number of power and desalination stations.

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 Armed Forces Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Earlier, he affirmed that Iranian attacks against the State of Kuwait persisted despite the proclaimed two-week truce between the contending parties.

In an interview with Kuwait TV, Al-Atwan emphasized that this recent development "shows the insistence to target the security and vital assets of the country." He disclosed that since 8:00 am on Wednesday, the air defense units have been dealing with an intense wave of hostile drones targeting several vital installations and facilities in various parts of the country.

He said the valiant Kuwait Armed Forces immediately started performing their national duty, conducting monitoring, tracking and response operations in accordance with the established military procedures.

He indicated that the Army General Staff, in full coordination with the relevant national authorities, continues to exert tremendous efforts to confront these attacks to maintain the security of the country and the safety of its territory, airspace and vital facilities, while ensuring that state institutions remain operational and essential services are provided without interruption.

Reassuring citizens and residents, he stressed that the Armed Forces, alongside various competent authorities, are monitoring the situation with the highest degree of vigilance and efficiency to address any threats or field developments.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior stated that the recurring Iranian attacks during the past 24 hours have resulted in severe material damage.

Speaking at the same media briefing, Director General of the Public Relations and Security Media General Department at the ministry and its official spokesperson Brigadier General Nasser Bousalib indicated that during the past 24 hours, the country has witnessed a number of Iranian attacks using hostile drones. He said many vital facilities of KPC and the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy have been subjected to an intensive series of Iranian attacks since dawn.

According to Bousalib, these attacks on oil facilities, three power and water distillation plants caused severe material damage, as well as fire incidents in certain locations. He stressed that all the necessary precautionary measures have been taken to ensure the safety of workers and secure the sites, in coordination with other concerned authorities.

He revealed that the explosive disposal teams dealt with 18 reports about shrapnel falling from defensive interception operations, increasing the total number of such reports since the beginning of the vicious aggression to 776.

He also conducted a visual presentation highlighting the efforts of the explosive disposal teams in dealing with reports related to shrapnel or unknown objects falling inside and outside the threat areas.

He pointed out that in light of the current situation, which requires the highest level of readiness and vigilance, the state agencies continue to perform their tasks with high efficiency and determination, supported by continuous coordination and integrated readiness to deal with various developments in order to ensure the preservation of the security of the homeland and the safety of everyone.

Moreover, Director of the Public Relations Department at the ministry Faisal Al-Daihani affirmed that the ministry continues its comprehensive efforts in facing security challenges in light of the Iranian aggression.

In a statement to Kuwait TV, Al-Daihani disclosed that this is being done through a comprehensive operational system as per the well-studied emergency plans and security procedures. He said the ministry relies on an inclusive emergency plan being implemented within the coordinated security framework. He explained that this system ensures rapid response and high level of readiness in dealing with various developments.

He stated that his department has been conducting intensive awareness campaigns since the start of the crisis. "These campaigns include television and radio interviews and media announcements, which contributed to raising public awareness and reduction of rumors and unauthorized filming, including the use of drones," he elaborated.

He emphasized that the security authorities do not hesitate in enforcing the law and taking legal action against anyone who violates instructions, particularly regarding unauthorized filming or disseminating misleading information.

He also pointed out that the Cybercrime Department continues to monitor and track accounts that spread rumors or publish illegal content, revealing that a number of violators have been apprehended since the beginning of the crisis across various social media platforms like X, Instagram and Snapchat.

He clarified that intensifying the broadcasting of official statements and awareness messages aims to reassure the citizens and residents and enhance internal security.

He urged the public to obtain information only from official sources and underscored the importance of everyone's cooperation with the ministry by adhering to instructions, following reliable news sources, and educating the children, all of which contrib-

ute to maintaining the safety of society.

On the other hand, Colonel Othman Al-Mansouri, Director of the Security Media Department at the ministry, affirmed the significant role that the Coast Guard General Directorate plays in maintaining the security of territorial waters.

Al-Mansouri told Kuwait TV that the Coast Guard operates round the clock under the current circumstances, complementing the role of their colleagues in charge of protecting land borders by efficiently securing the maritime borders of the country.

Confirming that the Coast Guard personnel maintain high morale and vigilance, he said they are deployed at sea, dealing with various risks to protect territorial waters from threats, infiltration or smuggling of drugs, weapons and other contraband. He emphasized that their extensive efforts reflect a high level of readiness and alertness.

In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the State of Kuwait welcomed US President Donald Trump's announcement of a ceasefire between the US and Iran, praising the role of Pakistan in preventing further regional escalation. In an official statement, the ministry reaffirmed support for all mediation efforts and expressed hope that the ceasefire will lead to a comprehensive and lasting settlement, thus, enhancing security and stability in the region.

The statement stressed full compliance and an immediate halt to hostile actions by Iran, emphasizing the need to guarantee freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and all maritime passages, in accordance with the provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Also, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Wednesday met with his Egyptian counterpart Badr Abdelatty, who is visiting Kuwait with his accompanying delegation.

In a press statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs disclosed that both sides reviewed the strong fraternal ties between the two countries and peoples and explored ways to further enhance cooperation in various sectors.

It added that issues of mutual interest were discussed, along with thorough review of current regional developments, as well as efforts being exerted in this regard.

They also assessed the frameworks for strengthening cooperation between the two brotherly countries to consolidate the pillars of security and stability in the region.

Later, the Kuwaiti top diplomat hosted a luncheon in honor of his Egyptian counterpart.

Iran, the United States and Israel agreed to a two-week ceasefire in an 11th-hour deal that headed off U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to unleash a bombing campaign to destroy Iranian civilization. Hours later, Iran and Gulf Arab countries reported new attacks Wednesday.

It was not clear if the strikes would scuttle the deal, which U.S. Vice President JD Vance called "fragile."

Both the U.S. and Iran declared victory. U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said American and Israeli forces had achieved a "capital V military victory" and that the Iranian military no longer posed a significant threat to U.S. forces or the region. The Iranian military said the country forced Israel and the U.S. to accept its "proposed conditions and surrender."

Even before the new attacks, much about the agreement was unclear as the sides presented vastly different visions of the terms.

- Iran said the deal would allow it to formalize its new practice of changing ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial transit lane for oil. But the details were not clear, nor was it known whether vessels would feel safe using the channel or whether ship traffic had resumed. It also was unclear whether any other country agreed to this condition.

- Pakistan, which helped to mediate the deal, and others said fighting would pause in Lebanon, where Israel has launched a ground invasion against the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group. Israel said it would not, and strikes hit Beirut on Wednesday.

- The fate of Iran's missile and nuclear programs - the elimination of which were major objectives for the U.S. and Israel in going to war - also remained unclear. Trump said the U.S. would work with Iran to remove buried enriched uranium, though Iran did not confirm that.

In Muscat, Oman's Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology Saeed Al-Maawali affirmed on Wednesday that the Sultanate's position on the Strait of Hormuz is clear, stressing that no transit fees can be imposed on ships in accordance with all international maritime agreements signed by Oman.

Al-Maawali made the remarks in response to a question by a member of Oman's Shura Council during its 14th regular session of the third annual sitting of the tenth term, where the minister reviewed the ministry's key initiatives and achievements.

He noted that some countries, including Iran and the United States, have not signed certain maritime agreements, creating a "legal gap," adding that Oman's Foreign Ministry is engaged in discussions on the matter, expressing hope for positive developments.

He stressed that the Strait of Hormuz is a natural passage, not man-made, and therefore "no fees can be imposed under existing agreements."

On the ports sector, Al-Maawali said it is witnessing notable growth, with cargo handling exceeding 143 million tons and container throughput reaching 5.1 million TEUs in 2025.

He added that expansion and development projects, along with the attraction of quality investments, contributed to a 17.4 percent increase in sector revenues.



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Cabinet urges public to follow official guidance

Kuwait strengthens security, warns against sharing sensitive content

KUWAIT CITY, April 8, (KUNA): Kuwait's Cabinet urged citizens and residents to adhere to the calls issued by the Ministries of Defense and Interior, the National Guard, and the Fire Force, urging the public not to circulate images or videos from targeted sites and avoid spreading rumors.

This came during the cabinet's meeting Tuesday under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

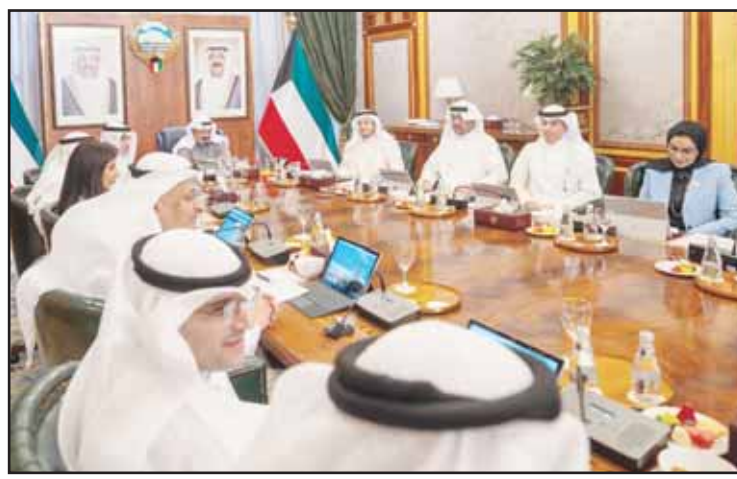
Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Mausherji stated the following:

At the outset of the meeting, the

Cabinet was briefed on the contents of a written message received by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from King Charles III, affirming the United Kingdom's support for Kuwait amid current developments resulting from Iranian attacks, and its commitment to Kuwait's security, safety, and sovereignty.

The Cabinet was also informed of a phone call received by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah from UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer. During the call, the Crown Prince conveyed the Amir's appreciation for the supportive message, which reflects the depth of bilateral relations.

The UK prime minister reaffirmed his country's strong condemnation of repeated Iranian attacks and reiterated full solidarity with Kuwait, while discussing arrangements for the deployment of British air defense systems in Kuwait and stressing the importance of ensuring freedom of navigation, particularly in the Strait of Hormuz.



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

The Cabinet also listened to a briefing by Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-

Sabah on the latest regional developments and ongoing military situation considering Iranian attacks on Kuwait.

He also presented the outcomes of his recent field inspection tour of Kuwaiti Armed Forces units, highlighting readiness and combat preparedness, and commending personnel for their vigilance and dedication.

The Cabinet strongly condemned the targeting of a residential area in northern Kuwait early Monday by hostile drones, which resulted in six injuries reported in stable condition, as well as material damage.

It also condemned attacks on electricity and water facilities, the Ministries Complex building, and a refinery belonging to Kuwait National Petroleum Company, which caused significant damage and fires in several operational units.

The Cabinet expressed pride in the efforts of state institutions and personnel across military, security, and civil sectors, commending the Kuwait Armed Forces for maintaining national security and responding efficiently to threats since late February.

It also reviewed diplomatic efforts

led by Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Kuwait's missions abroad, including participation in an international ministerial meeting hosted by the UK on developments in the Strait of Hormuz, as well as official visits to Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

The Cabinet further condemned attacks on the UAE embassy and the residence of its head of mission in Damascus, describing them as violations of international law and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and reaffirmed solidarity with the UAE.

On the education front, the Cabinet reviewed a briefing by Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei on online learning mechanisms to ensure continuity of education, as well as contingency plans for final examinations.

He also outlined an initiative to deliver second-semester textbooks directly to students' homes across Kuwait.

Continued from Page 1

Iran takes

Tehran's attempts to trumpet a 'victory' are nothing more than a desperate exercise in domestic disinformation, aimed at quelling the rising tide of resentment among its people.

Moreover, the regime abandoned the regional proxies it once brandished as threats, failing to close the Bab Al-Mandeb or intervene in the Lebanese theater. Having surrendered to the imperative of reopening the Strait of Hormuz, Tehran remains powerless to re-impose its closure.

The global community, economically battered by such thuggery, will no longer permit the strangulation of this vital artery. Nations have already initiated immediate corrective measures.

Meanwhile, this conflict illuminated the indispensable strength of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, not only to the global economy but also to the security of their internal fronts. Their resilience and capacity to confront Persian-sponsored terrorism have positioned them as primary architects of the coming regional equation—a reality that the Iranian regime failed to anticipate. These tectonic shifts have forced a profound reassessment within Tehran regarding its precarious standing with the United States and the international community.

As we previously stated, whenever an existential threat looms, the regime's

leaders emerge to declare that they are "drinking from a poisoned chalice."

Today, they are forced to repeat the bitter declaration of 1988, when Khomeini admitted a crushing defeat by accepting a resolution he considered a source of shame.

In its final throes, the regime reaps the harvest of five decades of sectarian discrimination.

This legacy of internal fracture ensures that national separation will become the foundational imperative in the emergence of a new Iran.

Basra consulate

The ministry urged the Iraqi authorities to act swiftly and decisively to hold the perpetrators accountable, prevent recurrence, and take firm steps to protect all Kuwaiti diplomatic premises in Iraq. It underlined Kuwait's longstanding policy of moderation, positive neutrality, and adherence to the principles of international law and good neighborliness, stressing that the State of Kuwait is not a party to any regional or international conflict and does not allow its territory to be used against any country.

The continuing violation of diplomatic norms, the statement warned, could negatively affect bilateral relations and undermine mutual trust. Kuwait affirmed it will monitor the situation closely and take all necessary measures to safeguard

its interests and missions in accordance with international law.

On Wednesday, Kuwait's Foreign Ministry summoned Iraq's Chargé d'Affaires in Kuwait, Zaid Shanshol, delivering an official protest note over the Basra incident. Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani called the attack a "blatant" aggression that contravenes international law and the UN Charter, particularly the Vienna Convention. He reiterated Kuwait's firm rejection of such acts and called on the Iraqi government to take prompt action against those responsible and ensure non-repetition. Al-Daihani reaffirmed Kuwait's legitimate right to defend its interests and take lawful measures to counter any threats against its diplomatic missions.

In turn, Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the assault and announced the formation of an investigative committee by the Interior Ministry to determine the circumstances of the incident and apply legal measures to prevent its recurrence.

The incident drew widespread regional condemnation. Masrour Barzani and the Kurdistan Region Presidency denounced the assault, urging Baghdad to hold those responsible accountable and strengthen protections for diplomatic missions.

Gulf states including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar also condemned the attack as a flagrant breach of international law, ex-

pressing solidarity with Kuwait and calling for decisive action.

Jasem Al-Budaiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, stressed Iraq's responsibility to hold perpetrators accountable and prevent recurrence.

Egypt described the incident as a grave violation of diplomatic sanctity, voicing full support for Kuwait and the Gulf states, while also condemning attacks on civilian and energy facilities in the region and calling for respect for sovereignty.

Wave of

Meanwhile, economic expert Mohamed Ramadan echoed Qais Al-Ghanim's assessment of Kuwait's readiness for electronic banking transactions, emphasizing that the decision carries regulatory, administrative, technical, and security implications.

He noted that the decision aligns with the state's direction to reduce reliance on cash and promote digital payments.

Ramadan highlighted the clear direct correlation between expanding the use of electronic banking systems and strengthening oversight of money flows.

He explained that the greater the reliance on electronic payments, the easier it becomes to track and control financial transactions. The decision helps reduce financial manipulation, particularly in activities not directly subject to price controls. Also, promoting electronic

transactions serves as an effective tool to combat money laundering and suspicious activities by providing a transparent and verifiable record of financial transactions.

Furthermore, Head of the Training Committee at the Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association, Talal Al-Assad, said the decision represents an important step toward strengthening the principles of governance and transparency in the Kuwaiti market. It reflects an ongoing trend, as the majority of society in Kuwait has increasingly become accustomed to using digital payment methods over cash.

Al-Assad emphasized that the shift to electronic systems directly contributes to regulating financial operations within companies and enhances the efficiency of internal controls.

He affirmed that the decision supports the business environment by providing more accurate accounting tools and helping to organize cash flows.

Al-Assad highlighted that relying on electronic payments reduces the risks associated with cash transactions, whether from human error or illegal practices.

French citizens

It warned against approaching or handling any projectile debris, photographing it, or posting it on social media, and underscored the importance of immediately reporting any incidents to security

authorities by calling emergency number 112. It recommended obtaining information from official sources, regularly checking its online platforms, registering visitors in the 'Fil d'Ariane' service, and ensuring the citizens' information is up-to-date in the consular records.

It confirmed that it is continuously monitoring developments in coordination with the relevant authorities, indicating that it can be contacted through the designated number during emergencies.

PM pushes

The meeting was attended by Minister of Public Works Dr. Noura Mohammad Al-Mashaan, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Abdulatif Hamed Al-Mishari, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sabeeh Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem, Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Khaled Bodai, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulaziz Nasser Al-Marzouq, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority Sheikh Dr. Mishaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Chief of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Managing Director of the Kuwait Investment Authority Sheikh Saud Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, and Chairman of the Kuwait Storage Company Hazem Issa Al-Essa.



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Fuller defeats Harris in Georgia to replace Greene

Democratic-backed Taylor wins Wisconsin Supreme Court race, growing liberal majority

MADISON, Wis., April 8, (AP): Democratic-backed candidate Chris Taylor won election to the Wisconsin Supreme Court on Tuesday, growing the liberal majority on the court as cases affecting congressional redistricting, union rights and other hot button issues await in the perennial battleground state.

Taylor handily defeated Republican-backed Maria Lazar in the fourth straight victory for liberal court candidates dating back to 2020. Liberals are now guaranteed to hold a majority on the court until at least 2030.

"Once again, Wisconsin showed the entire nation that we believe that the people should be at the center of government and the priority of our judiciary, not the billionaires, not the most powerful and privileged, but the people," Taylor said in her victory speech.

Wisconsin Republican Party Chair Brian Schimming, in the wake of Lazar's double-digit defeat, called for Republicans to "stay united and continue fighting for our conservative values."

Democrats tightened their control of the court just months before a Novem-

ber election in which they seek to keep the governor's office and flip the state Legislature, where Republicans have held the majority since 2011. Democrats aspire to undo a host of Republican-enacted laws that made Wisconsin a focal point for the nation's conservative movement in the 2010s.

This year's Supreme Court election stands in stark contrast to the swing state's previous two, where national spending records were set in battles over majority control. Spending and national attention was down dramatically this year without control of the court at stake.

Liberals took control of the state's top court in 2023, ending 15 years under a conservative majority. They held onto their majority with last year's victory in a race that drew involvement from President Donald Trump and billionaires George Soros and Elon Musk, who personally handed out \$1 million checks to voters in the state.

Liberals argued that democracy was at stake in the 2025 election, noting that when the court was controlled by conservative justices in 2020 it came just one vote shy of siding with Trump



Wisconsin State Supreme Court Justice-elect Chris Taylor, (right), hugs state Supreme Court Chief Justice Jill J. Karofsky on April 7 in Madison, Wis. (AP)

in his attempt to invalidate enough votes to overturn his loss in that year's presidential election.

The court under liberal control has reversed several election-related rulings, including one that overturned

a ban on absentee ballot drop boxes, and it is poised to once again be in the spotlight around the 2028 presidential election.

Races for the court are officially nonpartisan, but support for candidates breaks down mostly along partisan lines. The seat was open due to the retirement of a conservative justice.

Taylor, who is a state Appeals Court judge and previously worked for Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, focused much of her campaign on abortion rights. One of her TV ads argued that "abortion is on the ballot." In another ad, she criticized Lazar for calling the U.S. Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade in 2022 "very wise."

Lazar, who is also a state Appeals Court judge and was supported by anti-abortion groups in her run for that court, tried to brand Taylor as nothing more than a politician who will push a partisan agenda on the high court.

Also:

RINGGOLD, Ga: US Republican Clay Fuller on Tuesday won Marjorie Taylor Greene's former US House seat in Georgia, turning back a Demo-

cratic challenge with the help of President Donald Trump's endorsement despite uneasiness over the war in Iran.

In a deep red district that Greene won by 29 points and Trump carried by almost 37 points two years ago, Fuller was on track to prevail by about 12 points with almost all votes counted. The result added to a string of special elections where Democrats performed better than expected, a track record that the party hopes will create momentum toward November's midterm elections when control of Congress hangs in the balance.

In another election held Tuesday, a Democratic-backed candidate for the Wisconsin Supreme Court won by double-digit margins, growing the liberal majority there.

Fuller insisted that his victory over Democratic candidate Shawn Harris in Georgia was a testimony to Trump's staying power.

"They couldn't beat Donald Trump and they never will," he told supporters in Ringgold, near the border with Tennessee. "And I will be on Capitol Hill as a warrior to have his back each and every day."

Rep Swalwell vows to push back on ICE in bid for California governor

SACRAMENTO, Calif., April 8, (AP): California Rep Eric Swalwell on Tuesday promised to aggressively push back on federal immigration officers if elected governor, vowing to make them ineligible for state jobs and take away their driver's licenses if they refuse to unmask while on duty.

"They think they're invincible. They're not," Swalwell told a large crowd at a town hall in Sacramento, the state capital. He didn't specify how he'd advance those policies, which would likely face legal challenges.

The event kicked off a series of campaign functions he's planned around the state with less than a month to go until mail-in ballots go out to voters ahead of the June 2 primary. Swalwell, a Democrat, is among a crowded field of candidates jostling for advantage in a race in which a small margin could decide who advances to the November general election. The two highest vote-getters advance regardless of party, and Democrats are worried about a possible lock-out if no clear front-runner emerges.

Speaking to a friendly crowd, Swalwell painted himself as a "battle-tested" fighter in Congress against President Donald Trump. He served as House manager for Trump's second impeachment trial and said he



California gubernatorial candidate, Rep Eric Swalwell appears at a town hall meeting in Sacramento, Calif. on April 7. (AP)

wants to abolish Immigration and Customs Enforcement and has supported taking away the agency's funding. Los Angeles was the target of one of the administration's first large-scale immigration sweeps last summer and the first place where it deployed the National Guard. The position comes after Swalwell faced accusations by some of his Democratic rivals for not taking a strong enough stance against the agency.

Positioning himself as a labor-friendly and progressive candidate,

Swalwell said he wants to address ongoing state budget gaps with a new corporate tax and use state funding to pay for health care for low-income people, including immigrants. He also said he supports letting state employees work remotely, a contentious issue in Sacramento.

"I will root for the success of anyone who invests and does business in California, if they work with me to lift the wages of hard-working Californians and expand the benefits," he said.

Mullin pledges progress on disaster relief during first official trip as DHS secretary

CHIMNEY ROCK, NC, April 8, (AP): US Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin on Tuesday toured North Carolina areas devastated by Hurricane Helene in 2024, revealing plans to prioritize relief to disaster-impacted communities on his first official trip since replacing Kristi Noem, whose leadership cast uncertainty over federal disaster response.

While the trip focused on emergency management, Mullin also weighed in on immigration enforcement, a centerpiece policy of the Trump administration, which his department also oversees. He suggested he might halt customs processing at airports serving cities whose local governments resist the administration's immigration policies, a move that would align with his predecessor's hardline approach.

At his confirmation hearing last month, Mullin tried to project a softer tone on immigration enforcement, after a backlash over high-profile operations and the deaths of two Americans at the hands of federal officers. Mullin also signaled a different approach to the Federal Emergency Management Agency following criticism of Noem's policies.

At a roundtable discussion Tuesday, Mullin said FEMA was focused on catching up on past disaster work and clearing a backlog of needs that stacked up during his predecessor's tenure ahead of the Atlantic hurricane season,



Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin, (right), talks with Mayor Peter O'Leary, during a trip to survey damage caused by Hurricane Helene on April 7 in Chimney Rock, NC. (AP)

which begins June 1.

"Disasters are happening constantly," Mullin said, adding that he would brief President Donald Trump Tuesday on the 22 still pending major disaster declaration requests from states and tribes across the U.S. "We're trying to push this stuff forward as fast as possible."

Mullin also said he "may have identified" a candidate for permanent administrator of FEMA, which is on its third temporary leader since Trump

took office, but declined to name them. Asked if eliminating FEMA - which Trump has threatened to do - was still on the table, Mullin said "reforming FEMA would be a better term."

Mullin's visit comes less than a week after he ended Noem's directive that all DHS expenditures over \$100,000 be personally approved by the secretary's office, a rule that critics said bottlenecked FEMA reimbursements and compromised disaster response and recovery.

America

High school principal shot in leg: A high school principal in Oklahoma was shot in the leg Tuesday after confronting a man who entered the school with a gun, authorities said.

Pauls Valley High School Principal Kirk Moore is in stable condition, and no students were injured in the shooting, according to authorities. The suspect, a 20-year-old former student, was taken into custody, Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation spokesman Hunter McKee told reporters outside the school.

Moore and other staff members quickly confronted the former student after they noticed he entered the school with a gun, McKee said.

"The subject was able to fire multiple rounds, where the principal was hurt, but no one else was," McKee said. "The actions of the staff and the principal stepping in as soon as they saw a subject with a firearm saved lives today." (AP)

Army sergeant faces June court-martial: An Army sergeant accused of shooting and wounding five co-workers at a Georgia base last summer faces a trial by court-martial June 15 after he pleaded guilty to some of the charges against him.

Sgt. Quornelius Radford told a military judge at his plea hearing last week that he used a personal handgun to shoot four fellow soldiers in his supply unit at Fort Stewart on Aug. 6 following an argument with his romantic partner, a civilian who was also among the victims.

Bystanders disarmed and restrained Radford before police arrived.

Radford, 29, pleaded guilty to charges of aggravated assault and domestic violence, WTOC-TV reported. The judge then scheduled him to stand trial this summer on the remaining charges of attempted murder. (AP)



In this image taken from video provided by Oklahoma television station KFOR, authorities block off an area following a shooting inside a high school, on April 7 in Pauls Valley, Okla. (AP)

Ex-Marine undergoes psychiatric treatment: A judge on Tuesday ordered that a Marine veteran charged with three counts of first-degree murder in a mass shooting at a North Carolina waterfront bar last year undergo psychiatric treatment after it was determined he is unable to understand his legal proceedings enough to help his lawyers.

The case of Nigel Max Edge had been scheduled for a Brunswick County court hearing in which the local prosecutor was slated to reveal whether he intended to seek the death penalty. But District Attorney Jon David said in a news release that part of the case was set aside because questions about Edge's "capacity to proceed" were raised by multiple mental health professionals.

"The defense has presented evaluations from two experts, and this office requested an independent evaluation by a state forensic examiner," David said. "All three evaluations conclude that Mr. Edge currently lacks the capacity to proceed to trial." (AP)

Donald Trump Jr criticizes European Union during a trip to Bosnia

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia-Herzegovina, April 8, (AP): Donald Trump Jr lashed out at the European Union on Tuesday, saying its liberal policies were discouraging investment and predicted a "major fracture" between the bloc's eastern and western member states.

The eldest child of the US president said that "the biggest players, the biggest names in banking and finance, in tech and AI across the board" believe that "Europe is a disaster," but "the disaster that they feel also needs to be fixed."

"The only way it gets fixed, though, in my opinion is if they (Europe) get out of their own way," Trump Jr. said during a business discussion in the northwestern Bosnian city of Banja Luka, according to video recordings provided by the official television RTRS television.

Banja Luka is a key city in Republika Srpska, the Serb-run part of Bosnia, whose leaders are staunch admirers of U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The press office of the US Embas-



Donald Trump Jr. speaks during a business discussion, in the Palace of the Republic in Banja Luka, Bosnia on April 7. (AP)

sy in Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital, told The Associated Press in an email that Trump Jr. came "in a private capacity." The visit was nonetheless seen here as a boost for the Serb separatist political leadership.

Trump Jr.'s trip came as U.S. Vice President JD Vance traveled to Hungary to support the reelection bid of nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán before a highly-contested vote next weekend.

Russia confirms 16 Cameroonian soldiers died in Ukraine

Ukrainian forces operating in Libya attack Russian tanker

CAIRO, April 8, (AP): Ukrainian forces are operating in western Libya under a covert deal endorsed by the West, and they used the Northern African country's territory to strike a Russian tanker in the Mediterranean last month, two Libyan officials said Tuesday.

The Russian-flagged Arctic Metagaz, carrying 61,000 tons of liquefied natural gas, was badly damaged in a suspected sea drone attack near Maltese waters early in March. It has since drifted off Libya. All 30 crew members were rescued and put on another vessel heading to the Libyan city of Benghazi, the Libyan Maritime Authority said.

The tanker is part of Russia's so-called shadow fleet transporting oil in violation of international sanctions over Moscow's more than 4-year-old invasion of Ukraine. A recent temporary US waiver on those sanctions is aimed at easing supply shortages amid the Iran war.

Russia blamed the attack on Ukrainian sea drones. Ukraine says the oil export revenue is helping fund Moscow's invasion.

The Ukrainian forces, most of them

drone experts, operate mainly at an air base in the coastal city of Misrata, but also in other military facilities in the capital Tripoli and the coastal town of Zawiya, the officials told The Associated Press. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss confidential matters.

One of the officials said the March 3 drone strike that hit the tanker was launched by Ukrainian operatives in a military facility in Tripoli.

The Libyan Maritime Authority said at the time that the tanker experienced "sudden explosions, followed by a massive fire," while it was about 240 kilometers (150 miles) off the Libyan city of Sirte. The Libyan governmental body mistakenly reported that the tanker had sunk.

The Arctic Metagaz remained afloat after the attack and was pushed by winds and currents toward the Libyan coast, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature, a global conservation organization. In recent weeks, Libyan authorities attempted to tow the tanker to a "safe zone" off the country's western coast. However, their efforts failed due to "harsh" weather conditions and strong winds that caused the tanker to

drift "out of control."

Neither Russian nor Ukrainian officials made any immediate comment on the claims. The government in Tripoli didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ukraine has become a laboratory of rapid military innovation, especially in drone technology, during its effort to thwart the invasion by Russia's bigger army.

Ukraine's Sea Baby naval drones have repeatedly hit Russian ships in the Black Sea. Its successful attacks prompted Russia to adapt, limiting opportunities for further Black Sea strikes and forcing Ukrainian experts to envision more ambitious attacks.

The officials said Ukrainian forces were gradually deployed in western Libya in recent months as part of what one of the officials described as a "covert deal" between Kyiv and the embattled government of Prime Minister Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah who is based in Tripoli.

The deal enjoyed the backing of Western countries, including the United States, whose adviser for African affairs Massad Boulos has drafted a proposal to settle the long-running

conflict in Libya, which keeps Dbeibah as prime minister, the officials said.

Also:

YAOUNDE, Cameroon: Cameroon said on Monday that Russia has confirmed the deaths of 16 soldiers in Ukraine, according to a memo addressed to the Russian Embassy in the central African country.

In the memo addressed to the embassy, the country's foreign affairs ministry acknowledged the death of 16 Cameroonian soldiers serving in the special military operations zone in Ukraine. The ministry said "necessary arrangements" had been made to contact the families of the deceased soldiers.

A separate message sent the same day invited the families of six other Cameroonian nationals living in Russia to come to the ministry for "urgent matters" concerning them. It did not give further information.

In March last year, Cameroon's defense minister instructed the country's various military high commands to take "strict emergency measures" to prevent further defections by active or retired Cameroonian soldiers.



Ukrainian servicemen fire a Grad multiple rocket launcher towards Russian positions at the frontline in Donetsk region, Ukraine, on June 3, 2025. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL

Asia

Indonesia extradites Scottish man: Indonesian authorities on Wednesday extradited an alleged Scottish crime boss to Spain, after his removal was delayed multiple times as police pursued an ongoing investigation, officials said.

Steven Lyons, 45, described by law enforcement as a senior figure in an international crime syndicate, was flown from Indonesia to Amsterdam early Wednesday morning, said Hussein Handano, a spokesperson for the island of Bali's immigration office.

From there, he was to be transferred onward to Spain to face charges related to drug trafficking and money laundering, Handano said.

Lyons was arrested on March 28 upon arrival at Bali's Ngurah Rai International Airport from Singapore after Indonesia's immigration system flagged him through an Interpol Red Notice issued at Spain's request. A Red Notice is an international alert seeking the arrest of a suspect for extradition.

Alleged to be the leader of the Lyons crime family, Lyons has been wanted by authorities in Spain and Britain. He has been on Spain's wanted list for about two years, following a killing there in 2024.

Bali Police Chief Daniel Adityajaya said Lyons' arrest was part of a joint investigation involving Indonesian, Spanish and Scottish authorities. (AP)



Adityajaya

Mount Semeru volcano erupts again: Mount Semeru, located in Indonesia's East Java province, erupted again on Tuesday, spewing a massive hot cloud into the sky, according to the Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation.

The volcano remains under a Level III alert, the second-

highest in the country's four-tier warning system.

The eruption at 5:30 p.m. local time produced an ash column approximately 2,000 meters above the crater, with a thick gray plume drifting northeast and east. Seismographs recorded the event lasting more than seven minutes.

No casualties or immediate damage were reported, but authorities warned that the accumulation of volcanic material on the slopes could trigger debris flows, or lahars, if heavy rainfall occurs.

This follows a restless Monday during which the volcano recorded several separate eruptions. (Xinhua)

3 killed in Vietnam truck plunge: Three people were killed after a truck plunged down a mountainside in central Vietnam's Lam Dong province on Wednesday morning, state media outlet Vietnam Television (VTV) reported.

The incident occurred at about 8:40 a.m. local time, when the truck lost control while transporting construction materials for a telecommunications project along a mountainside road, the report said.

According to the report, two victims died at the scene, another died on the way to the hospital for emergency treatment, and the driver was injured.

Further investigation is underway. (Xinhua)

Decorated Aussie vet remains behind bars: Australia's most decorated living veteran, Ben Roberts-Smith, did not apply for bail when the war crime murder charges against him were listed in a Sydney court Wednesday.

Roberts-Smith was awarded both the Victoria Cross and Medal of Gallantry for his service in Afghanistan and is only the second Australian veteran of the Afghanistan campaign to be charged with a war crime.

The charges follow a military report released in 2020 that found evidence that elite Australian Special Air Service and commando regiment troops unlawfully killed 39 Afghan prisoners, farmers and other noncombatants. Around 40,000 Australian military personnel served in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021, of whom 41 were killed. (AP)



Yin Li, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and secretary of the CPC Beijing Municipal Committee, meets with a delegation led by Georges-Louis Bouchez, president of Belgium's French-speaking Reformist Movement and a member of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, in Beijing on April 8. (Xinhua)

Senior CPC official meets Belgian delegation

Yin Li, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, met with a delegation led by Georges-Louis Bouchez, president of Belgium's French-speaking Reformist Movement, in Beijing on Wednesday.

Noting that this year marks the 55th anniversary of the establish-

ment of diplomatic relations between China and Belgium, Yin, also secretary of the CPC Beijing Municipal Committee, said China is willing to work with Belgium to fully implement the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, strengthen inter-party exchanges and subnational cooperation, and promote greater progress in China-

Belgium and China-EU relations. Bouchez, also a member of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, said Belgium supports free trade and advocates multilateralism, adding that Belgium is willing to strengthen exchanges and dialogue with China and to expand mutually beneficial cooperation between the EU and China. (Xinhua)

S.Korea's military maintains readiness to repel any provocations

North Korea fires missiles toward sea after ridiculing South's hopes for better ties

SEOUL, South Korea, April 8, (Agencies): North Korea fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea Wednesday in its second launch event in two days, South Korea's military said, hours after a senior North Korean official released crude insults against Seoul's hopes for warmer relations.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said several missiles lifted off from North Korea's eastern coastal Wonsan area on Wednesday morning and flew about 240 kilometers (150 miles) each in a direction toward the North's eastern waters. It said an additional North Korean ballistic missile fired later Wednesday traveled more than 700 kilometers (435 miles) off the North's east coast.

South Korea's military said it maintains a readiness to repel any provocations by North Korea under a solid military alliance with the United States. It earlier said it detected the launch of an unidentified projectile from North Korea's capital region Tuesday.

South Korean media reported the projectile, also likely a ballistic missile, disappeared from South Korean military radars after displaying an abnormal development in the initial launch stage. This indicated the launch ended in failure, according to the reports.

The back-to-back launches came after North Korea made it clear that it has no intentions of improving ties with South Korea, whose liberal government has steadfastly expressed its hopes to restore long-dormant dialogue.

On Tuesday night, Jang Kum Chol, first vice minister at Pyongyang's Foreign Ministry, said South Korea would always remain North Korea's "most hostile enemy state." He derided South Korea as "world-startling fools" engaged in wishful thinking over a recent statement by Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

After South Korean President Lee Jae Myung expressed regret over alleged civilian drone flights into North Korea, Kim Yo Jong late Monday praised him for what she called honesty and courage, but reiterated a threat to retaliate if such flights recur. South Korean officials responded by describing Kim Yo Jong's statement as meaningful progress in relations.



A TV screen shows a file image of North Korea's missile launch during a news program at Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea on April 8. (AP)

Jang said her statement was intended as a warning. He cited Kim Yo Jong as calling South Korea "the dogs affected by mange that blindly bark to the tune of neighboring dogs" as she criticized it for recently co-sponsoring of a UN resolu-

tion on the North's purported human rights violations.

North Korea has refused to return to talks with South Korea and the US and pushed to expand its nuclear arsenal since Kim Jong Un's diplomacy with US President Donald Trump collapsed in 2019. North Korea has instead sought to strengthen ties with Russia, China and other countries embroiled in confrontations with the US. Last September, Kim Jong Un traveled to Beijing to attend a military parade alongside other foreign leaders and held his first summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping in six years.

North Korea's state media said Wednesday that Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit North Korea on Thursday for a two-day trip.

Earlier this week, North Korea said Kim Jong Un had observed a test of an upgraded solid-fuel engine for weapons and called it a significant development boosting his country's strategic military arsenal.

Missiles with built-in solid propellants are easier to move and conceal their launches than liquid-fuel weapons, which in general must be fueled before liftoffs and cannot last long.

South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers Monday the engine test was likely related to an effort to build a more powerful solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile that can carry multiple nuclear warheads, according to lawmakers who attended the meeting.

Experts say North Korea wants multi-warhead missiles to penetrate US missile defenses, but they doubt Pyongyang has mastered the technology needed to acquire such a weapon.

Also:

BEIJING: At the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and minister of foreign affairs, will visit the DPRK from April 9 to 10, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson announced on Wednesday.

China says Afghanistan, Pakistan agreed to explore 'comprehensive solution'

BEIJING, April 8, (Agencies): China's government said Afghanistan and Pakistan have agreed not to escalate their conflict and to "explore a comprehensive solution" after several weeks of cross-border fighting between the two countries that has left hundreds of people killed.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Wednesday that after seven days of peace talks in the western Chinese city of Urumqi under China mediation, all the parties also agreed to keep the dialogue.

"The three parties agreed to explore a comprehensive solution to the issues in the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and clarified the core and priority issues that need to be addressed," Mao said during the daily briefing in Beijing.

She added that they acknowledged that "terrorism is the core issue affecting the relationship."

Afghanistan and Pakistan said that they won't "take actions that would escalate or complicate the situation."

The talks began last week in Urumqi at the invitation of China, in an effort to stop the conflict that began between the two countries in February.

Pakistan, which declared it was in "open war" with its neighbor, has also carried out airstrikes inside Afghanistan, including in the capital Kabul.

Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry said Tuesday that the talks had been constructive.

The United Nations' office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs in Afghanistan said on Tuesday that the conflict had displaced 94,000 people



A man places stones on graves during a second mass funeral for victims of an earlier airstrike on a drug rehabilitation center, in Kabul, Afghanistan on March 26. (AP)

overall, while 100,000 people in two Afghan districts near the border have been completely cut off by the fighting since February.

Even during the talks, Afghanistan has accused Pakistan of carrying out shelling across its border on several occasions.

Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of providing a safe haven to militants who carry out deadly attacks inside Pakistan, especially the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan 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 the charge.

Also:

KABUL: Two traffic accidents occurred in separate regions of Afghanistan, resulting in two fatalities and multiple injuries, the official Bakhtar news agency said on Tuesday.

In western Afghanistan's Farah province, a road accident led to the death of one individual and left four others injured. The incident took place on a local roadway, with some of the injured reported to be in critical condition.

In a separate incident in eastern Khost province, another traffic accident claimed one life. Preliminary reports indicate that reckless driving was a contributing factor in the crash.

Bridge over Panama Canal closed after fuel truck explosion kills one

PANAMA CITY, April 8, (AP): The explosion of a fuel truck at the base of a bridge over the Panama Canal has left one person dead and prompted Panamanian authorities to close the span while firefighters investigate the accident and engineers assess the damage.

The blast on Panama's Bridge of the Americas took place about 4 p.m. on Monday, and security camera footage captured a massive fireball rising toward the top of the bridge that connects Panama's capital with an airport and numerous suburbs to the west. Several cars were on the bridge during the explosion but their drivers were not hurt by the flames.

Authorities said that one fuel truck worker died in the explosion. Two firefighters were injured as they extinguished the flames.

"We have no confirmation of any other people injured," said Victor Raúl Alvarez, director of Panama's Fire Department. He added that the investigation is in its early stages and that the cause of the explosion has not yet been determined. Engineers warned the fire may have affected the integrity of the decades-old bridge, a key link between Panama City and the west of the country.

Panama's Public Works Ministry posted a video on social media Tuesday showing engineers surveying the site for structural damage. Meanwhile, Panama's President José Raúl Mulino took to X to warn that the closing of the bridge would



A firefighter sprays water on gas trucks that caught fire after several exploded under Las Americas Bridge next to the Panama Canal in Panama City, Panama on April 6. (AP)

"cause disruption" and said "We hope to return to normal as soon as possible."

"The Bridge of the Americas is a structure that is over 60 years old. Due to the effects of the fire, if the metal structure was subjected to excessively high temperatures, it may have sustained damage," said Edwin Lewis, an engineer at the ministry.

Also:

WASHINGTON: A California man who co-founded one of Mexico's most powerful and violent drug cartels pleaded guilty on Tuesday in the US to a federal narcotics con-

spiracy charge.

Erick Valencia Salazar formed the Jalisco New Generation Cartel with Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, the drug lord known as "El Mencho" who was killed by the Mexican army in February.

Valencia Salazar, 49, of Santa Clara, California, faces a mandatory minimum prison sentence of 10 years and a maximum of life in prison after pleading guilty in Washington, DC, to one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine for US importation. Chief Judge James Boasberg is scheduled to sentence him on July 31.

Subcontinent

Nepal's foreign minister to visit Mauritius: Nepal's Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal is set to embark on his first foreign trip since assuming office, with Mauritius as his destination, said an official on Tuesday.

Khanal will leave for the island nation on Thursday to attend the ninth Indian Ocean Conference set to begin on April 10, Lok Bahadur Poudel Chhetri, spokesperson at the foreign ministry, told Xinhua.

Khanal will be the first minister in the incumbent Balendra Shah government to travel abroad since its formation on March 27. (Xinhua)

Fresh violence in India's Manipur kills 2: Two siblings died and their mother was injured when suspected militants hurled a bomb at their house in India's northeastern violence-prone state of Manipur on Tuesday, confirmed the local police.

The incident happened in Moirang valley of the state's Bishnupur district. Following the incident, internet services were shut in Bishnupur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Kakching districts, as a precautionary step to investigate any further flare-up.

A curfew was also imposed in certain sensitive areas, said the police. Tuesday's bombing incident sparked protests, as hundreds of locals torched two oil tankers and a truck, burnt tyres outside a police station, and also damaged a temporary police post, local media reports said, adding that local police resorted to firing to disperse the arsonists.

Besides, a large mob of protesters stormed a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) camp situated near the Bishnupur-Churachandpur border, said the reports. (Xinhua)

Africa

Rwandan president urges vigilance: Rwandan President Paul Kagame on Tuesday emphasized the importance of confronting denial and preserving historical truth as the country began a week of national mourning and 100 days of commemoration to mark the 32nd anniversary of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

Kagame and first lady Jeannette Kagame, along with the dean of the diplomatic corps in Rwanda, laid wreaths at the Kigali Genocide Memorial in the capital Kigali, where more than 250,000 victims are buried.

The president and the first lady later lit the "Flame of Remembrance" at the memorial before delivering remarks at an arena in Kigali.

"To all survivors, know that you are not alone. We stand with you always. Everything we have achieved was only possible because all Rwandans decided to join hands in a common purpose. We honor the role played by every Rwandan in our country's rebirth," Kagame said.

Kagame said the reality of the genocide is clear for all to see. The real leaders were convicted in national courts with rigorous evidence, and the Gacaca process documented the causes of the genocide in a way never seen or heard in Rwanda. (Xinhua)

S.Africa launches housing reparations program: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on Tuesday launched a housing reparations program in Kwa-Zulu-Natal Province, aimed at advancing restorative justice for victims identified



Kagame

by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) following abuses during the apartheid era.

Speaking at the launch ceremony in Ndwedwe, a community displaced by apartheid-era political violence, Ramaphosa said the initiative, valued at tens of millions of rands, forms part of government efforts to implement long-standing TRC recommendations and restore dignity to communities affected by apartheid-era political violence and forced removals. (Xinhua)

11 killed, 33 injured in Uganda road crash: 11 people were killed and 33 others injured in a road crash in the central Ugandan district of Lwengo early Tuesday, a police spokesperson said.

Twaha Kasirye, spokesperson for police in the southern region, told Xinhua by telephone that the accident occurred at Kalegero Corner along the Masaka-Mbarara Highway and involved a passenger bus.

Kasirye said a speeding truck traveling from Masaka toward Mbarara lost control and rammed into the bus, which was heading from Rukungiri to Kampala, at around 2:00 am local time (2300 GMT). (Xinhua)

Gunmen attack 2 Nigeria villages; 20 killed: At least 20 people have been killed by gunmen in attacks on two villages in the north-central region of Nigeria, police and residents said on Wednesday.

The attacks occurred in the early hours of Tuesday in Bagna and Erena, located in the Shiroro area of Niger state. Shiroro is about 250 kilometers (155 miles) or a four-hour drive from the capital, Abuja.

"They came on motorbikes and began shooting. It was a surprise attack, because it was in the early hours of the morning," said Jibrin Isah, who lives in Erena.

Residents claimed that at least 20 people were killed, with more missing. However, local police said that only three people were killed. (AP)

Kuwait oil prices up \$1.13 to \$121.09 pb

KUWAIT CITY, April 8, (KUNA): Kuwaiti oil prices went up USD 1.13 per barrel to reach USD 121.09 in Tuesday's trading, compared with USD 119.96 pb the previous day, according to Kuwait Petroleum Corpo-

ration (KPC) on Wednesday.

Globally, Brent Crude went down by 50 cents to reach USD 109.27 pb, while US West Texas Intermediate crude went up 54 cents to USD 112.95 pb.

Business

Energy chokepoints test GCC agility, yet growth fundamentals stay intact

Raghu: Resilient GCC markets offer opportunities amid short-term disruptions

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: While geopolitical tensions may trigger short-term market disruptions, resilient GCC economies and disciplined investment strategies continue to create selective opportunities for long-term investors. This is what **M.R. Raghu**, CEO of Marmore MENA Intelligence, the research arm of Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz", said during one of a series of webinars launched by Markaz to shed light on key market developments, emerging risks, and evolving investment opportunities across the region.

The ongoing US-Israel conflict with Iran and the evolving geopolitical landscape in the Middle East have brought investment considerations firmly to the forefront. As global investors reassess how geopolitical developments influence capital markets, energy systems, and trade linkages, the focus is increasingly on understanding how risk is transmitted and where opportunities emerge. While such periods naturally introduce volatility, they also create an environment where strategic clarity and disciplined decision-making become more critical than ever.

The current conflict stands out due to its scale and interconnected impact, particularly across energy markets and global trade routes. Yet history remains instructive. From 9/11 to the Russia-Ukraine war and the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, geopolitical shocks have typically resulted in short-term drawdowns rather than lasting structural damage. Over the past two decades, global equity markets have continued to deliver stable returns, reinforcing the principle that markets reprice risk but rarely deviate from long-term growth trajectories.

Energy Markets

Energy markets remain central to the current environment, particularly given the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most critical energy chokepoint. Approximately 38% of global crude oil, 29% of LPG, 19% of LNG and refined fuels and 13% of chemicals transit through this corridor.

At the peak of tensions, tanker traffic through the Strait declined by nearly 90%. This underscores how quickly geopolitical risk can disrupt physical trade flows. However, the disruption has been largely logistical and insurance-driven rather than indicative of a systemic supply collapse.

Oil prices have reflected this dynamic. Brent crude moved from the low USD 70s to nearly USD 120 per barrel at peak stress, highlighting that markets are pricing uncertainty rather than a structural shortage. Institutional forecasts reinforce this view. Estimates from major institutions, including Fitch Ratings, Bank of America, Standard Chartered, and Goldman Sachs, converge around a medium-term range of approximately USD 70-85 per barrel, even under disruption scenarios.

For investors, this suggests that energy volatility should be interpreted as a recalibration mechanism rather than a structural break, creating selective opportunities across upstream producers, integrated energy companies, and energy-linked credit instruments.

Resilient GCC economies

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) continues to occupy a structurally strong position within the global investment landscape. However, the current environment also highlights



M.R. Raghu, CEO, Marmore MENA Intelligence

important asymmetries across countries, particularly in exposure to Hormuz-related disruptions.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE maintain partial export flexibility through pipeline infrastructure, enabling them to bypass the Strait to some extent. In contrast, countries such as Kuwait and Qatar remain highly dependent on Hormuz transit, with limited alternative routes, particularly for LNG exports.

Despite these differences, higher oil prices provide a significant fiscal buffer. Even under scenarios where 15-20% of global oil supply is disrupted, elevated prices in the USD 100-120 range can offset revenue losses, supporting fiscal and current account balances across major exporters.

Crucially, periods of geopolitical stress have historically accelerated structural transforma-

tion across the GCC, including economic diversification, infrastructure development, and regional trade realignment. This reinforces long-term investment opportunities across logistics, infrastructure, financial services, and non-oil growth sectors.

Understanding Equity Market Trends

Equity markets have responded with dispersion rather than uniform decline. While global markets experienced initial drawdowns, these have remained within historical norms for geopolitical events.

Emerging markets have seen sharper corrections, with heightened volatility in Asia, particularly in economies heavily reliant on Middle Eastern energy imports such as China and India. In contrast, GCC markets have demonstrated relative resilience, supported by domestic liquidity, fiscal backstops, and earnings visibility.

Beyond financial hedges, real assets including infrastructure, logistics, and private market investments are positioned to benefit from longer-term structural shifts. Trade reconfiguration, supply chain diversification, and increased regional capital deployment are likely to drive sustained demand across these sectors.

Inflation Over Growth Risk

From a macroeconomic perspective, the current environment is more inflationary than recessionary. Global GDP growth is expected to moderate marginally, while inflationary pressures rise due to higher energy and transportation costs.

The impact is most pronounced in Asia, which remains the largest importer of Mid-

dle Eastern energy. Countries such as China, India, Japan, and South Korea face increased inflation, trade imbalances, and currency pressures. In contrast, energy-exporting economies benefit from improved pricing power and fiscal insulation.

Within the GCC, economic impact varies by country and sector. Qatar faces higher exposure due to LNG dependence, while the UAE is affected through trade, tourism, and logistics. Saudi Arabia remains relatively insulated due to export flexibility, and Oman may benefit from trade rerouting dynamics.

Markets Reward Discipline

Perhaps the most consistent lesson across geopolitical cycles is that such events test investor behaviour more than market fundamentals. Historical data shows that drawdowns tend to be limited, recovery timelines are relatively short, and long-term return trajectories remain intact.

Even amid increasing geopolitical complexity, markets continue to reward disciplined, long-term investment strategies grounded in diversification and risk management. For investors navigating today's environment, the imperative is clear: focus on fundamentals, differentiate across regions and asset classes, and avoid reactive decision-making.

At Markaz, we believe that informed investing is not about predicting geopolitical outcomes, but about building resilient portfolios that can withstand volatility while remaining aligned with long-term objectives. In doing so, investors can look beyond short-term disruption and position themselves for the next phase of market normalization, renewed growth and new opportunities.

Residential demand lends support

Kuwait's real estate market posts mixed Q1 performance

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: According to a report released by Darwazat Al-Safat Real Estate Research and Studies Center for the first quarter of 2026, real estate transactions during the first three months of the year reflected a cautious balance between short-term pressures and medium-term supportive factors.

The report explained that 1,324 real estate transactions were recorded in the first quarter of 2026. Despite a decline in values in the first quarter compared to the fourth quarter of the previous year, indicators showed remarkable annual growth, reflecting the continued attractiveness of the real estate sector despite the challenges.

The value of real estate transactions in the first quarter of 2026 reached approximately KD 1.024 billion, a decrease of 24.05 percent compared to the fourth quarter of 2025. This quarterly decline reflects a relative slowdown, particularly with the significant drop in activity during March, which fell by more than 51 percent compared to the average monthly transactions over the past five years, totaling KD 324 million.

This decline highlights the extent to which the market has been affected by exceptional factors recently.

Ahmadi Governorate led real estate activity in terms of the number of transactions with 433 transactions, followed by Hawally with 351, Mubarak Al-Kabeer with 146, Capital with 145, Jahra with 126, and Farwaniya with 123 deals.

These figures indicate that the Kuwaiti real estate market is undergoing a rebalancing phase, influenced by short-term factors such as regional tensions and liquidity fluctuations, while supporting structural factors, including increased housing demand and the search for investment opportunities, remain.

Trading activity is expected to gradually regain momentum in the coming periods, especially with greater economic clarity and regional stability.

The residential sector recorded transactions worth KD 394 million in the first quarter, a decrease of

33.3 percent compared to the previous quarter, which totaled KD 591 million. Year-on-year, transactions in the residential sector increased by 13.92 percent, compared to KD 346 million in the first quarter of 2025.

This performance reflects continued genuine demand for private housing, despite a temporary slowdown in transaction activity.

Transactions in the investment sector reached KD 292 million, a decrease of 32.96 percent compared to the fourth quarter of 2025 and 15.54 percent year-on-year.

This decline highlights investor caution, particularly in light of pressures related to operating costs and returns.

The commercial sector recorded a more positive year-on-year performance, with transactions reaching KD 213 million, a decrease of 21.06 percent compared to the previous quarter. Transactions increased by 54.34 percent compared to the first quarter of 2025, which totaled KD 138 million.

The sharp decline in commercial real estate activity during March, with only one transaction recorded worth KD 2 million, a decrease of 97.41 percent compared to the same month of the previous year, which amounted to approximately KD 76 million.

First quarter averages:

■ Average monthly trading volume of KD 341.4 million, a decrease of 10.67 percent compared to the previous year's monthly average.

■ Average monthly trading volume in the residential sector was KD 131.4 million.

■ Average monthly trading volume in the investment sector was KD 97.3 million.

■ Average monthly trading volume in the commercial sector was KD 71.1 million.

Sector weights:

■ The residential real estate sector accounted for 38.49 percent of total trading volume.

■ The investment real estate sector accounted for 28.48 percent.

■ The commercial real estate sector accounted for 20.82 percent.

- Other sectors accounted for 12.21 percent.

Dhman: Due to Iran war, global agencies raised Arab region's political risk ratings during March

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: The Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhman) revealed that following the outbreak of war between the USA and Israel on one side and Iran on the other side on February 28, 2026, risk levels in Arab countries increased during March 2026, according to the monthly report of the Political Risk Services (PRS). With expectations that it will return to its previous levels after the two-week truce comes into effect, the Strait of Hormuz is reopened, and there are possibilities of reaching a final agreement to end the war.

However, the Corporation indicated in its first quarterly bulletin, "Dhman Al-Istithmar" for 2026, that the sovereign ratings of Arab countries, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, have an adequate margin to withstand a regional conflict, provided that it is short-term and does not extend to strike oil industry infrastructure or continue to disrupt supplies through the Strait of Hormuz.

This development comes after Arab countries witnessed a relative improvement in sovereign, political, and commercial risk ratings during 2025, despite geopolitical tensions due to the continued Israeli aggression and tensions in occupied Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia.

Recognizing the significance of sovereign and risk rating indicators in assessing the interest of multinationals and regional and world financing, investment, and trade institutions in Arab countries, the Corporation continued to monitor these indicators for 2025, highlighting the following findings:

■ Only eight Arab countries: UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Jordan, Bahrain, and Egypt, were rated by the world's four main credit rating agencies of Standard & Poor's (S&P), Moody's, Fitch, and Capital Intelligence. Morocco, Iraq, and Lebanon were rated by three agencies, and Tunisia by only two, while other countries were not rated at all until 2025.

■ Saudi Arabia, Oman, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia advanced, while five Arab countries remained unchanged in the sovereign rating. Bahrain declined, and Kuwait was mixed.

■ The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt maintained the Arab lead in most sovereign ratings and risk indicators.

■ The average global ranking of Arab countries advanced in Fitch's Country Risk Index, buoyed by an improvement in the rankings of 14 Arab countries led by Qatar, Jordan, and Lebanon, at the end of 2025.



- Gulf countries' sovereign ratings provide an adequate margin to withstand a short-term regional conflict that does not hit oil facilities and supplies
 - In 2025, Arab countries' ranking in risk and sovereign rating indicators advanced relatively despite sustained geopolitical tensions
- Please, use the attached diagram

■ The average global ranking of Arab countries in the PRS Composite Country Risk Index improved thanks to the advanced rankings of nine countries, led by Egypt, Morocco, and Iraq.

■ The ranking of Arab countries improved in the country risk indexes of Allianz Tradein both short and medium terms, Atradius, Dun & Bradstreet, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and Japan's NEXI.

■ The ranking of Arab countries also advanced in Credendo's business environment risk index at the end of 2025, which is related to country export deals, backed by the better rankings of Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt, and stable rankings of 17 index-listed countries.

■ The status of Arab countries ad-

vanced in the Coface Country Risk Index due to an improvement in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman, and stability in other index-listed countries, while the position of Arab countries declined slightly in the Coface Business Climate Assessment index.

■ The preferred payment terms for trade deals with Arab countries remained the same, with Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia offering the most favorable payment terms for concluding deals, as international exporters prefer to do business with them on open account.

The Corporation urged Arab governments to set up high-level committees involving all relevant Arab stakeholders to implement urgent and all-out blueprints to monitor and upgrade country rankings in sovereign and risk rating indicators, with a view to improving

the Arab investment climate. In this regard, the Corporation underlined that it is ready to play its part in compiling specialized and thorough reports on Arab countries' positions, while stressing the significance of communication with the research teams responsible for issuing these indicators to help carry out reforms and advance the status of the region's countries.

Based in Kuwait, the Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhman) was established in 1974 as a multilateral institution that comprises all Arab countries and four joint Arab financial institutions. It provides specialized insurance services against credit and political risks with a view to facilitating the inflow of foreign direct investments into Arab countries and promoting Arab exports and imports.

Kuwait-Bahrain-Saudi JV maintains exports

Iran targets KPC's foreign investments, GPIC hit by drone attack

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: Iran has targeted not only the domestic oil sector, but also extended its reach through drones, hitting the foreign investments of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC).

Fire broke out in some operating units of the Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC), which is equally owned by Bapco Energies (Bahrain), Petrochemical Industries Company (Kuwait) and SABIC Agri-Nutrients Investments (Saudi Arabia) -- 33.3 percent each. No casualties were reported.

When the fire was brought under control, GPIC began assessing the extent of the damage and the resulting losses from the attack.

In a related development, an official report from GPIC, obtained by the newspaper, revealed that the company achieved notable progress and milestones in 2025, contributing balanced inputs to manufacturing value chains.

The company maintained steady export performance in a range of agricultural and industrial markets, reinforcing its product diversity and its standing as a dependable global supplier in high-demand regions.

The report indicated that the total cumulative production in 2025 reached 1,640,644 metric tons, comprising 471,201 metric tons of ammonia, 446,057

metric tons of methanol and 723,386 metric tons of urea, compared to the cumulative production of 1.7 million metric tons in 2024.

It stated that despite the geopolitical tensions and regional tensions in recent years, GPIC adopted a strategy to preserve stability and excellence by implementing strict global standards that take into account the market fluctuations and ongoing supply chain disruptions.

It pointed out that in spite of the challenges in 2025, GPIC showed remarkable resilience and strong operational discipline, achieving outstanding performance in all production plants and maintaining high productivity in the co-production of urea, ammonia and methanol. Its products were exported to Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Australia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), several African countries, the United States of America and parts of South America.

On its commitment to meet environmental, health and safety standards, the report emphasized that GPIC adhered to the highest benchmarks, proving its determination to overcome challenging conditions.

As further evidence of its environmental leadership, the report highlighted that GPIC was among the first companies to launch a carbon dioxide treatment project. This initiative focused on adopting advanced methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and raise overall efficiency in resource utilization by improving methanol and urea production at the plant.

It explained that the launching of GPIC's solar energy project in 2024 played a vital role in reducing reliance on conventional energy sources by 2025. This was accomplished by installing solar panels on the roofs of parking areas within the industrial complex. The project aims to achieve a total annual energy production of 1,072 megawatt-hours, thereby, strengthening its energy sustainability and lowering its carbon footprint.

In line with its 2040 strategy, GPIC intends to expand its product portfolio by reducing dependence on harmful raw materials through diversification, growth and lower carbon emissions. This is particularly significant given the petrochemical sector's essential role in manufacturing processes, ranging from plastics and synthetic fibers to fertilizers, pharmaceuticals and advanced materials.

As one of the leading industrial companies in Bahrain, GPIC plays a crucial role in supporting national economic growth, contributing around \$265 million annually to the Bahraini economy through the procurement of natural resources, collaboration with local contractors, and a wide range of business activities.

Through its supply chain partnerships, local procurement strategies and capacity-building initiatives, the company continues to solidify its position as a key contributor to enhancing the resilience of Bahrain's industrial sector and advancing economic diversification.

The Conversation

Corn, wheat, rice at risk

War-driven fertilizer crunch threatens global food prices

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

By Aya S. Chacar

Florida International University

The global energy crisis caused by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz is only the beginning of the economic cost of the war with Iran.

I study how institutions affect businesses and supply chains, and I expect food prices to rise next, with high prices lasting even after whatever point hostilities end.

Along with about 20% of the world's crude oil trade and a similar share of the world's liquefied natural gas shipments, shipping traffic through the strait also carries roughly a third of internationally traded fertilizer, which is key to bountiful crops around the world.

Modern agriculture depends on precise timing of delivering nutrients to plants. When fertilizer arrives late or becomes too expensive to buy in sufficient quantities, farmers are left to either reduce the amount they use, plant fewer crops or switch to crops that need less fertilizer. Each option reduces overall productivity, cutting supplies of basic foods, feed for livestock and key ingredients used in a wide range of food products.

Ultimately, with corn prices rising, summer barbecues may taste a bit different or cost more. Corn on the cob may not be cheap, nor will corn-fed beef. In addition, many store-bought condiments, soft drinks and other food products are made with high-fructose corn syrup and will also cost more.

Three staple crops - corn, wheat and rice - supply more than half of the world's dietary calories.

To maximize production, those crops need three main nutrients: nitrogen, phosphate and potassium. Nitrogen helps plants grow. Phosphorus helps transport energy within plant cells and is critical for early root growth and the formation of seeds and fruit. Potassium helps plants conserve water and boosts protein content.

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has reduced the supply and increased the cost of all three.

Natural gas, which determines 70% to 90% of the cost of producing nitrogen fertilizer, has seen a 20% drop in production due to the war and price increases up to 70%. To preserve its own supplies, Russia has suspended exports of ammonium nitrate, another nitrogen source for fertilizer.

In a similar effort, China, the world's largest phosphate producer, has blocked phosphate exports, removing 25% of the global supply.

Potash, the potassium-rich component of fertilizers, has also been in short supply in recent years, in part because of economic sanctions on Belarus and Russia, which are major potash producers.

As a consequence, fertilizer prices have risen globally. In the U.S., some fertilizers rose more than 40% in just one month after the war's start in late February 2026.

Cereal plants absorb the vast majority of their nitrogen needs during their early growth. Applying fertilizer later in the growth cycle is less effective.

Reducing nitrogen application by 10% to 15%, or delaying application by two to four weeks, can reduce corn yields by 10% to 25%.

Producing less corn and wheat reduces not only food available for humans but also food for livestock. Increased fertilizer costs and reduced grain supplies increase the price of raising livestock, making meat and animal products more expensive.

When feed costs become unsustainable, farmers may be forced to kill or sell off the breeding cows and sows that represent the future of the food supply. In the U.S., a combination of persistent drought and high costs in 2022 forced producers to kill 13.3% of the national beef cow herd, the highest proportion ever. As a result, the U.S. beef cattle inventory shrank to its lowest level since 1962, a problem that restricts beef supplies for years.

Ultimately, the costs are passed to consumers. In 2012, when a historic Midwest drought slashed corn yields by 13%, it triggered a surge in feed prices, and U.S. poultry prices rose 20%.

In mid-March 2026, the U.S. fertilizer supply was around 75% of normal levels. That's right at the beginning of the time when Corn Belt farmers typically prepare their soil for planting, including the first applications of fertilizer. Subsequent fertilizer applications typically come from mid-April to early May and between late May and mid-June.

Farmers who fear not being able to optimize their corn yields may decide to plant less corn or switch crops and plant soybeans, which need less fertilizer. Either would reduce the corn supply.

Government loan guarantees and aid packages may help farmers cover higher costs, but they cannot address timing if enough fertilizer simply isn't available when it is needed.

American consumers aren't facing the gas and food shortages or power outages other countries are seeing from the war, but they will be hit in the pocketbook. U.S. prices for gas and jet fuel are already climbing. The effects on the food supply take longer to appear, but they are coming.

Even when crops are bountiful in the U.S., consumers are not immune to global economic forces. A smaller 2026 crop, with rising demand for livestock feed in some of the most populous countries, including China and India, will put pressure on global corn prices, affecting everyone regardless of their nationality.

In March 2026, the U.S. Department of Agriculture used data from before the Iran war to project a 3.1% average increase for all food prices.

The question for consumers is how much of the rise in corn prices will be passed to the consumer, and how fast.

USDA research shows that the speed and extent of changes in food prices vary widely by food category and the level of processing involved in making the food. Other factors also play a role, such as inventory levels, perishability and market competition. When farm prices change, wholesale prices usually adjust within the first month, but retail prices often take longer - sometimes two to four months.

Corn tortillas and other relatively lightly processed corn foods are more likely to show price responses within a few months after corn prices increase. Adjustments to cereals or poultry prices will take a little longer. Changes in the cost of livestock products such as beef will take longer, because there are more steps between the purchase of feed corn and the sale of the meat to consumers.

Other indirect costs, related to the cost of fuel and packaging, tend to hit later. Producers often absorb the price increases in the short term, but some increases are already in the works. For instance, transport companies are adding fuel surcharges on freight shipments.

Food price hikes hit low-income households harder than high-income households, because people with lower incomes spend larger shares of their money on food and housing. For these households, even relatively affordable proteins, such as chicken, may become harder to purchase regularly.

The cost and availability of fertilizer will affect the whole world. More than 300 million people worldwide already do not have enough food. The U.N. World Food Program predicts an additional 45 million could join them by the end of 2026 if the conflict in the Middle East continues into the middle of the year.

Crop yields in India and Brazil in 2026 are expected to be lower than normal. East African farmers struggled to afford fertilizer even before the crisis and will likely have to make do with even less.

These problems may seem removed for most Americans, but food prices are global in nature, and people in the U.S. will soon face these additional costs of the war. (AP)

With KD 3 million in total prizes

KFH launches Al-Hassad's new grand prize campaign

KUWAIT CITY, April 8: Reinforcing its commitment to rewarding customer loyalty, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has launched a grand prize campaign for Al-Hassad investment savings account, offering a total of KD 3 million in annual prizes.

Deputy General Manager Products at KFH, Nehal Al-Musallam stated that the newly launched campaign offers prizes, with the grand prize totaling KD 1.5 million, in addition to a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 and a monthly prize of KD 100,000.

Al-Musallam noted that the campaign will run starting from January this year, in conjunction with the resumed draws campaigns on saving accounts which are conducted in coordination with independent inspection bodies to ensure high levels of integrity and transparency aligning with the Central Bank of Kuwait regulations.

She added that KFH is interested in developing the benefits of the Al-Hassad account, which is one of the prominent banking products KFH offers thanks to the remarkable demand this product has achieved and the



Nehal Al-Musallam

trust it has gained from customers over the past years.

Al-Musallam explained that Al-Hassad grants customers increasing winning chances. Each customer

has one chance for every KD 50. This opportunity increases when the customer retains his/her account balance for longer period, in order to be eligible for the KFH Millionaire title.

She stressed that KFH is committed to providing top-tier banking products that meet the aspirations of customers and provide them with distinguished opportunities to win cash prizes, increasing the demand of the account as a savings and investment option. She noted that the Al-Hassad account is based on the Wakala investment principle. On such a basis, the Bank invests the entire account balance at an expected profit rate agreed upon in advance with the customer. The account also offers draw campaign and prizes which are featured on monthly, semi-annual and annual basis.

Al-Musallam encouraged existing and new customers to open Al-Hassad account to benefit from the grand draws program, adding that customers can open the account through KFH branches, KFHOnline and ATMs.

Airline and cruise stocks rebound

Stocks surge worldwide as ceasefire eases war fears

NEW YORK, April 8, (AP): Stock markets are surging worldwide, and oil prices are plunging back toward \$90 per barrel after President Donald Trump pulled back from his threat to force a "whole civilization" to die in the war with Iran.

The S&P 500 leaped 2.6% after Trump, Iran and Israel agreed to a two-week ceasefire, just hours before a deadline Trump had set for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz and allow oil to flow freely again from the Persian Gulf to customers worldwide. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 1,383 points, or 3%, as of 9:35 a.m. Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite was 3.3% higher following even bigger gains in European and Asian stock markets.

To be sure, stock prices are still below where they were before the war. And oil prices are still higher because the threat remains that the war could continue and keep oil produced in the Persian Gulf area blocked in the Middle East.

The average price for a gallon of regular gasoline has already topped \$4.16 in the United States, according to AAA. That's up from less than \$3 a couple days before the United States and Israel launched attacks to begin the war in late February. If oil prices stay high for a long time, it would push up the price of nearly everything that's moved by truck, plane or boat.

"There is a reason to be optimistic, but it is still too early to tell, because, as you know, after all, it is Trump," said Takashi Hiroki, chief strategist at MONEX.

So far in the war, Trump has set several deadlines for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz and has threatened big repercussions if Iran doesn't, only to delay them.

It's similar to a year ago, when Trump initially threatened stiff tariffs on imports from other countries on "Liberation Day." After a couple delays, his administration eventually negotiated lower tariffs with many countries, though they were still higher than from before his second term.

With uncertainty still remaining, "the mood remains one of cautious optimism rather than outright celebration," said Tim Waterer, chief market analyst at KCM Trade. "The ceasefire is only two weeks long, and markets will be watching closely to see whether shipping through the Strait of Hormuz normalizes as promised and whether the fragile truce can pave the way for a more durable peace



View of the trading floor with display boards at the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, Wednesday, April 8, 2026. (AP)

agreement."

Still, financial markets made big moves following the ceasefire announcement.

The price for a barrel of benchmark U.S. crude oil plunged 17.5% to \$93.15. Brent crude, the international standard, tumbled 16.6% to \$91.11. It had briefly topped \$119 when worries about the war with Iran were at their highest.

In Asia, where countries are more reliant on oil from the Middle East, South Korea's Kospi stock index surged 6.9%. Japan's Nikkei 225 leaped 5.4%, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 3.1%.

European stock indexes rose nearly as much, with Germany's DAX returning 5.2% and France's CAC 40 rising 4.9%.

On Wall Street, companies with big fuel bills roared back to trim some of the sharp losses taken on worries about oil prices staying high.

United Airlines soared 13.7%, for example,

which would count as a decent year for the stock. It cut into its loss for the year that came into the day at 20.1%.

Delta Air Lines climbed 11% after it also reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Norwegian Cruise Line Holding steamed 11.9% higher to trim into its 16.1% loss for the year so far.

In the bond market, Treasury yields eased as worries about high inflation and oil prices ebbed.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.25% from 4.33% late Tuesday. That's a notable move for the bond market, and lower Treasury yields give a boost to prices for stocks, bonds and all kinds of other investments.

The drop should also help ease some of the quick recent rise in rates for mortgages and other loans taken out by U.S. households and businesses, which have been slowing the economy.

Mumbai's Sassoon Dock grinds to a halt as war sends fuel prices soaring

MUMBAI, April 8, (AP): Since it was first built in 1875, the Sassoon Dock in India's financial capital of Mumbai has been many things: a gateway for trade with the Arabian Gulf, a bustling hub for traders and laborers, as well as a center for commerce in textiles, spices, and opium.

More recently, it's been a major spot for the city's fish trade.

But rarely has the harbor felt so muted. The boats sit crowded next to each other in the morning sun. Their colorful flags fluttering against the backdrop of Mumbai's high-rise skyline.

Normally, the dock hums with life. Nets are unloaded. Diesel engines rumble. Ice is hauled. Fishmongers shout over the din.

Today, that chaos has been replaced by concern.

Shekhar Chogle, who owns a fishing boat and whose skin is tanned a deep, warm brown from years at sea, has been forced to keep his vessel idle since the war began. Income has fallen, labor costs persist, and rising diesel prices make fishing all but impossible.

The diesel pump at the harbor looks forlorn, a dry marigold garland hanging over it. One worker returned unsuccessfully from a gas station with six empty containers on his wood barrow. Bulk diesel prices have soared above \$1.20 per liter (\$4.54 per U.S. gallon), making it harder for the groups that help fishers get cheaper fuel, ice, and gear.

In other parts of India and across Asia, fishers face the same impossible choice. Stay ashore or risk going out at a loss, putting livelihoods - and entire coastal communities - on the brink.

That Iran, the U.S. and Israel said they reached a deal for a two-week ceasefire in the war brings some comfort. But analysts warn that fuel flows would take time to normalize.

Chogle is running out of time. "Our income has dropped significantly since we have not been able to take our boat out to sea," he said.

Even with fuel prices soaring, a few boats still venture out. At the morning markets, the morning bustle continues, but the haul is smaller.

Women in colorful saris haggle over the limited supply. One mother, balancing her baby on her hip, inspects each fish carefully, weighing the cost against the day's needs.

"If diesel prices don't come down soon, I don't know how we'll survive," Chogle said.



A woman carrying her child checks out fresh fish at Bhaucha Dhakka in Mumbai, India, Wednesday, April 8, 2026. (AP)



Fisherwomen wait for customers at a fish market at Bhaucha Dhakka in Mumbai, India, Wednesday, April 8, 2026. (AP)



A fisherman prepares tea on a stove in a boat anchored due to high fuel prices at Sassoon Dock in Mumbai, India, Tuesday, April 7, 2026. (AP)



A fisherman stands next to a cooperative diesel pump that is shut due to rising bulk fuel prices at Bhaucha Dhakka in Mumbai, India, Wednesday, April 8, 2026. (AP)

BUSINESS

First-quarter report set to reveal war-related cost hit

Delta joins growing list of US airlines raising checked baggage fees as jet fuel costs soar

WASHINGTON, April 8, (AP): Delta Air Lines announced Tuesday that it is raising checked baggage fees, part of a broader wave of U.S. carriers responding to higher jet fuel prices tied to the war in the Middle East.

Beginning Wednesday, most domestic and short-haul international passengers will pay \$45 to check one bag, \$55 for a second and \$200 for a third, according to Delta. That's an increase of \$10 on each of the first two bags and \$50 on the third.

The move follows similar announcements from United Airlines and Jet-Blue, both of which raised baggage fees last week.

"These updates are part of Delta's ongoing review of pricing across its business and reflect the impact of evolving global conditions and industry dynamics," the carrier said in a statement. It marks Delta's first increase to checked baggage fees on domestic routes in two years.

Delta said complimentary bags will still be available to customers in premium cabins, active-duty military personnel, eligible co-branded credit card holders and members of certain loyalty tiers. Fees for long-haul international flights are not affected.

CEO Ed Bastian told investors last month that the jump in jet fuel prices had already added about \$400 million to Delta's operating expenses since

the conflict began on Feb. 28. Executives at United and American Airlines reported similar figures.

Delta is scheduled to report its first-quarter earnings on Wednesday, kicking off the earnings season for U.S. airlines, which could offer travelers an early gauge of how rising jet fuel prices may affect them.

Airlines around the world have been grappling with volatile oil markets as fighting near the Strait of Hormuz disrupts global supplies. Roughly a fifth of the world's oil typically passes through the narrow water way, and the threat to that chokepoint is pushing up the price of jet fuel, which is refined from crude.

Fuel typically ranks as the second-largest expense for airlines after labor. The average price for a gallon of jet fuel in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles and New York was \$4.81 on Tuesday, up from \$2.50 the day before the war started, according to Argus Media. The energy market intelligence company's U.S. Jet Fuel Index tracks average prices across those major hubs.

In addition to raising ticket prices, analysts say U.S. carriers are likely to lean more on ancillary fees to offset the higher expenses, while many non-U.S. carriers are responding by adding or increasing fuel surcharges.

Brazil's Amazon oil boom leaves community in limbo

OIAPOQUE, April 8, (AP): On a recent morning, Reginaldo Nunes Fonseca smoked cigarettes from the porch of his friend's wooden shack, watching the rain come down hard in an area now known as Nova Conquista - New Conquest - where pristine rainforest in Brazil's Amazon stood a year ago.

The rain meant he couldn't work on building his own house or do odd jobs for others in the area, but the weather wasn't the only thing holding him back. Like thousands of others who have moved to the small city of Oiapoque, in Brazil's northern state of Amapa, Fonseca is waiting for an economic boom that may or may not come.

The area is experiencing a rush of migrants since Petrobras, Brazil's state-run oil company, last year secured environmental licensing for offshore drilling in the Equatorial Margin near the mouth of the Amazon River, about 180 kilometers (112 miles) off Amapa's coast.

"I thought, well, that's good - the city is going to grow, there will be a lot of job opportunities," said Fonseca, who saw a television report about the licensing in January and decided to move from the northeastern state of Maranhao. "So I started calling friends and said: 'I'm going there because here I'm unemployed and not doing anything.'"

Opportunities

Amapa is one of Brazil's poorest and underdeveloped states. Oiapoque's economy relies on fishing, illegal gold mining and visitors from neighboring French Guiana, who cross daily and spend euros, which hold their value better than the Brazilian real. While the prospect of economic opportunities is bringing hope, the impacts of unplanned urban growth in a city with already poor infrastructure are being felt.

The oil-fueled optimism highlights a broader dilemma for developing countries: how to curb their emissions of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, which are released from the burning of oil and cause climate change, while relying on such revenue to transform local economies.

It also raises questions about President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's campaign commitment to protecting the environment. He has made stopping deforestation an important part of his government and last year Brazil hosted the U.N. climate summit known as COP30.

"We don't want to pollute a single millimeter of water, but no one can stop us from lifting Amapa out of poverty if there is oil here," Lula said last year during a visit to Amapa.

On March 10, about 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) from Fonseca's home, Petrobras met with politicians, business owners and community leaders to present its operation plans.

Company representatives said drilling for an exploratory well began in October and would last about five months. If large quantities of oil are found and the company wants to begin extracting it, that would require further government permits, a process that can take months or even years.

Environmental and Indigenous groups have sued the Brazilian government and Petrobras to halt exploration, arguing the licensing process failed to properly consult traditional communities, underestimated spill risks and did not adequately assess climate impacts. Federal prosecutors also asked IBAMA to annul or suspend the environmental license, arguing that Petrobras' studies are insufficient and that the company is concealing the full extent of the environmental impact. No ruling has been issued.

Offshore

During the meeting, officials also said Oiapoque was serving mostly as a helicopter base for offshore crews, as it's the closest land point. Administrative operations related to the drilling were based out of Belem, a major city in the neighboring state of Para. Despite open questions about future extraction and Oiapoque's limited role in Petrobras' operations, speculation has already reshaped the city.

The city's population was 27,482 in 2022, according to census data, but a new count has yet to be taken, so it's unclear how many people there are.

"In the past 18 months, Oiapoque has seen significant population growth," said Tiago Vieira Araujo, an Oiapoque councilman who stood up and voiced concerns during the meeting. "There are already seven new neighborhoods, and social problems have come with them."

Urban infrastructure in Oiapoque is already precarious. Less than 2% of households have adequate sewage systems, and only 0.2% are on properly structured streets, according to Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

In the new settlements - known locally as "invasions" - conditions are worse. Residents have cleared public rainforest, creating informal plots and erecting makeshift homes. Freshly cut tree stumps, wooden stakes and rough shacks rise from mud and have only the basics: a kitchen, a bed and a rudimentary bathroom.

"We know it's not right to clear the forest. Everyone knows it's wrong," Fonseca said. "But space is limited."

Yuri Alesi, 34, a lawyer who advocates for land rights in new settle-

ments and a former city councilman, is running for vice mayor in a special election set for April. He envisions Oiapoque as an "Amazonian Dubai," fueled by oil revenues.

"Dubai is in the middle of a desert, an unlikely place to grow," he said. "The industry that drove its development was oil."

Border

Brazil's offshore Equatorial Margin, from the Suriname border to the country's northeast, is believed to hold significant oil and gas reserves. Preliminary estimates suggest they could hold up to 10 billion barrels, with a potential value of about 3.8 trillion reais (\$719.7 billion). Alesi said royalties could generate roughly 100 million reais (\$19 million) a month for Oiapoque, about the equivalent of the city's total goods and services produced each year, according to Brazil's statistics institute.

The Amazon, which is crucial to regulating the global climate because forests store carbon dioxide, is constantly under pressure from deforestation driven by agriculture, cattle ranching and mining. That pressure has been less intense in Amapa, where about 82% of the land remains forested, according to MapBiomass, a nonprofit that tracks land use.

The state's isolation, bordered by rivers and the sea and lacking road connections to the rest of Brazil, has helped protect it from the deforestation seen in the southern Amazon.

While some point to Dubai as a model for Oiapoque's future, nearby cities that once benefited from oil offer a warning for Oiapoque.

Petrobras has explored oil and gas in the state of Coari, also part of the Amazon, since the 1980s. Yet the city ranks among Brazil's poorest, with about 72% of its residents living in extreme poverty, according to a recent study by Agenda Publica, a nonprofit focused on public policy.

Other cities in Amapa have also seen boom and decline cycles tied to mining. Pedra Branca, about 280 miles from Oiapoque, grew between 2007 and 2014 during an iron ore boom.

Prosperity in Pedra Branca drew Selma Soares, 46, who moved from Maranhao to Amapa in 2008 and opened a grocery store.

In 2013, a collapse at a port operated by mining company Anglo American killed six workers and disrupted iron ore production. India's Zamin Ferrous later took over the mine and suspended operations.

"People who had shopped with us for years struggled to eat," Soares said.

Booming

In the past few years, she heard growing rumors that Oiapoque was booming. After visiting the city last year, she moved with her husband and son. The family now runs a small supermarket on the outskirts of town. Soares said many others have followed.

"People are waiting for drilling to begin," she said. "They believe everything will improve."

At the river separating Oiapoque from French Guiana, a small port hums with boats linking Brazil, its neighbor and nearby communities. Green-and-yellow stickers read: "Oil yes! Development yes!" a message promoted by local politicians.

Just 20 minutes away by boat, members of the Indigenous Galibi Kali'na community are wary. Some see economic opportunity, but leaders oppose exploration, warning of environmental risks and threats to their way of life.

"Petrobras arrived with strong political backing, promising progress as if we would go to sleep one way and wake up like Dubai," said Renata Lod, a representative on Oiapoque's Indigenous council. "But what we have actually seen is completely disorganized population growth, invasions of Indigenous lands."

Lod listed several frequent complaints among Oiapoque residents, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, including overcrowded schools and the city's only hospital operating at full capacity.

There is also fear of potential oil spills.

"Most Indigenous lands are flooded wetlands. How do you clean a wetland? Once oil enters the rivers, there's no way to remove it," Lod said.

Coasts

An oil spill could quickly carry pollutants to nearby coasts and rivers, threatening ecosystems and communities that depend on fishing and mangroves. Petrobras said it conducted spill modeling to secure the environmental license and has been deploying drifting devices to monitor ocean currents since it began exploration in October.

In January, Petrobras reported a drilling-fluid leak that briefly halted operations. IBAMA, the environmental regulator, fined the company 2.5 million reais (\$470,500).

At the community meeting, Petrobras officials sought to ease concerns, defending the safety of its operations. They also pointed to everyday items, from clothing to air conditioning, to underscore oil's economic importance.

"People here see Petrobras as an economic remedy," said Araujo, the city councilman. "But even a remedy has side effects. And we're already experiencing the side effects before seeing any of the benefits."

Travelers will face limits on how many chargers they can carry as airlines try to reduce fire risks

WASHINGTON, April 8, (AP): Travelers will soon face restrictions on how many portable chargers they can carry on a flight as airlines continue to try to reduce the risk of another lithium battery fire aboard their jets.

Southwest Airlines announced Tuesday that starting April 20 passengers will only be able to carry one charger on their planes, and they won't be allowed to put it in the overhead bin or in their checked luggage. The airline already requires passengers to keep their chargers in the open while they are using them, so flight attendants can act quickly if they start to overheat.

The new Southwest rule goes even further than the limit of two chargers per passenger that the International Civil Aviation Organization recommended last month. But the airline says it isn't going to aggressively enforce the policy by searching bags and confiscating chargers. Instead, Southwest's Vice President of Safety and Security Dave Hunt said the airline will stress this to travelers when they book

their flights and arrive at the airport while explaining the potential dangers.

That alone might be a big help because most people don't seem to be aware of the risks, said Jeff Marootian, who is CEO of UL Standards & Engagement, which establishes the guidelines for the makers of these chargers and other electronic devices.

"A huge part of the concern here is seeing that number of incidents continue to increase, correlating, of course, to the number of devices that people are bringing on planes," he said.

The Federal Aviation Administration said more lithium battery incidents are reported every year and hit 97 in 2025 as everyone carries more re-chargable devices like phones, iPads, laptops and these portable chargers. Marootian said that his organization hears about two incidents every week, and reported a 42% increase in the number of incidents involving portable chargers in 2025.

One of the worst happened in January 2025 when a devastating fire aboard an Air Busan

plane waiting to take off from an airport in South Korea forced the evacuation of all 176 people aboard before the fire burned through the plane's roof.

Flight attendants have fire-resistant bags and insulated gloves to put overheating devices into to contain any potential blaze. Southwest's Hunt said the airline's new rule will "strengthen our ability to contain and mitigate lithium battery incidents, including reducing the risk of battery fires."

To help make the rule workable for passengers, Southwest plans to equip all of its planes with in-seat power by the middle of next year.

Aviation safety expert Steve Arroyo, who flew for United Airlines for 37 years, said he thinks Southwest's new policy is a positive step to reduce the risk. Even though the number of fires is small compared to the roughly 100,000 flights every day around the globe, the potential consequences of a battery fire can be disastrous.

"It can turn into something very serious very quickly," Arroyo said.

Galaxy phones to rely on Google Messages after local app ends

Samsung Messages to be discontinued in July for US users

NEW YORK, April 8, (AP): Samsung is saying goodbye its namesake texting app, at least for United States customers.

According to an end of service announcement published on the tech giant's U.S. support website, Samsung Messages will be discontinued in July. Impacted owners of Samsung smartphones and other gadgets are being asked to switch to Google Messages in the meantime, "to maintain a consistent messaging experience on Android."

All Samsung Galaxy phones run on Google's Android operating system. To switch to Google Messages, Samsung's website gives users instructions to download the app from the Play Store, if not already on their phone, and set it as the default. Some people may also receive an in-app notification to guide them through the process.

Samsung says switching to Google Messages will give users access to updates like the latest artificial intelligence features from Google's Gemini - which includes an experimental feature called "Remix" to generate images during conversations and AI-powered reply suggestions - and the abil-

ity to share higher quality photos between Android and Apple iOS devices through RCS-enabled messages.

Users of older Android operating systems (dating back to Android 11 or older) will not be impacted by the end of Samsung Messages, the company noted. To check what Android OS you have on a Samsung device, open the settings app, click on "software information" and scroll to "Android version."

Meanwhile, owners of Samsung's latest Galaxy 26 lineup and other newer phones cannot download the Samsung Messages app from the Galaxy Store today.

All devices will no longer be able to download Samsung Messages after it's officially discontinued in July, the company noted. Samsung said users can check their app for the exact date for when service will go offline.

Samsung confirmed in an update on its website Tuesday that this end of service guidance only applies to the U.S. market.

Legal battle over Panama Ports clouds global port sale plan

Hong Kong firm files arbitration against Maersk

HONG KONG, April 8, (AP): A subsidiary of a Hong Kong-based conglomerate started arbitration proceedings against Danish logistics and port group Maersk, accusing the company of aligning with Panama in a scheme to take over its port operations on the Central American country's critical canal.

The Panama Ports Company, a unit of Hong Kong's CK Hutchison Holdings, said in a statement dated Tuesday that Maersk A/S had undermined a contract over the Hong Kong company's operations of ports at either end of the Panama Canal in order to pave the way for a new operator affiliated with Maersk to take over the Balboa terminal.

The company said the arbitration will be held in London, but didn't explain what remedy it was seeking.

In February, Panama's government seized control of the Balboa and Cristobal ports after the country's Supreme Court declared earlier that a concession allowing the Panama Ports Company to run the ports was unconstitutional. The ruling drew backlash from China.

The Panamanian government later allowed subsidiaries of Maersk and the Mediterranean Shipping Company to take over operations at the two ports.

Panama Ports Company started arbitration proceedings against Panama in February. In late March, it expanded its claims, saying damages have escalated beyond \$2 billion.

It said on Tuesday that its claim against Maersk is separate from its ongoing steps to hold Panama accountable for what it called "anti-contract and anti-investor conduct."

Neither Panama's government nor Maersk immediately commented.

The legal actions could further complicate CK Hutchison's initial plan to sell the bulk of their dozens of global ports, including the two Panama ports, to a consortium that involved U.S. investment firm BlackRock in a \$23 billion deal.

The sale plan, first announced in March 2025, pleased U.S. President Donald Trump, who has alleged Chinese interference with the critical shipping lane's operations. But the planned sale apparently angered Beijing, and China's antitrust regulator last year said it would initiate a review of the deal.

The parties involved in the deal have since been looking for ways to move forward with the sale, including considering plans to add a Chinese investor to the consortium.

Cuban families pay price as fuel shortages paralyze everyday life

US lawmakers push for Cuba sanctions relief

HAVANA, April 8, (AP): Two U.S. lawmakers called for a permanent solution to Cuba's crises after witnessing the effects of a U.S. energy blockade during an official visit to the island.

Democratic Reps. Pramila Jayapal of Washington and Jonathan Jackson of Illinois met with Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel, Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez and members of Parliament during a five-day trip that ended Sunday.

Diaz-Canel wrote on X Monday that upon meeting with Jayapal and Jackson, he "denounced the criminal damage caused by the #blockade, particularly the consequences of the energy embargo imposed by the current U.S. administration and its threats of even more aggressive actions."

Diaz-Canel added: "I reiterated our government's willingness to engage in serious and responsible bilateral dialogue and find solutions to our existing differences."

Both the U.S. and Cuba have acknowledged recently that talks are ongoing at the highest level, but no details have been disclosed.

Jayapal told reporters she believes that recent steps taken by Cuba, such as opening the economy to certain investments by Cuban Americans living abroad; the recent announcement that more than 2,000 prisoners would be pardoned; and the arrival of an FBI team to collaborate in the investigation of a fatal shooting involving a U.S.-flagged boat, "indicate that the moment is here for us to have a real negotiation between the two countries and to reverse the failed U.S. policy of decades, a Cold War remnant that no longer serves the American people or the Cuban people."

Cuba's government has released the pardoned prisoners who were accused of a variety of crimes, although none so far appear to be political prisoners.

In late January, U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to impose tariffs on any country that would sell or provide oil to Cuba, although he made an exception for a Russian ship that reached the island last week with 730,000

barrels of crude oil. It was the first petroleum shipment in three months to dock in Cuba, which produces only 40% of the oil it needs.

"This is cruel collective punishment - effectively an economic bombing of the infrastructure of the country - that has produced permanent damage. It must stop immediately," Jayapal and Jackson said in a statement released Sunday.

Critical oil shipments from Venezuela were halted after the U.S. attacked the South American country in early January and arrested its then-leader, Nicolás Maduro.

Cubans already suffering from five years of economic crisis have acutely felt the impact of the fuel shortage: national blackouts, gasoline shortages and rationing, lack of public transport, cuts in working hours, paralyzed hospitals and surgeries, and suspension of flights, among other things.

Russia has promised a second delivery of petroleum, although it's not clear when it might arrive. Experts have said that the first shipment could produce about 180,000 barrels of diesel, enough to feed Cuba's daily demand for nine or 10 days.

Jayapal said that while such shipments are critical, they are only temporary solutions: "We need a longer, permanent solution for the Cuban people and the American people."

Meanwhile, Jackson compared the blocking of the Strait of Hormuz off Iran's coast to the oil blockade in Cuba, adding that the island "is the most sanctioned part of Earth."

"Our government is fighting to keep the Strait of Hormuz open so there is a free flow of oil around the world. We want, for humanitarian reasons, a free flow of oil, fuel, and energy in our own hemisphere," he said.

Jackson and Jayapal said they would prepare a report and continue to work on initiatives proposed by fellow members of the U.S. House of Representatives to lift sanctions against Cuba to alleviate the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Japanese film traps viewers in a Kafkaesque subway loop

'Exit 8' is the clever video-game adaptation to see right now

LOS ANGELES, April 8, (AP): Hallways, generally speaking, are not places you want to be in the movies. You can be just strolling down one when, all of a sudden, elevator doors open up and a river of blood comes flowing out.

They are often corridors of violence - the site of the hammer rampage of "Oldboy" or the rotating fisticuffs of "Inception" - where narrow walls buffer and condense the action. Or they can focus a character's direction. To set Lee Marvin's appropriately named Walker on his obsessive path in the revenge thriller "Point Blank," John Boorman just needed to send him and his ominously echoing heels down a hallway.

But "Exit 8," a new film by the Japanese director Genki Kawamura, is the first movie I can recall to land in a hallway, and stay there. The movie opens in first person, from the perspective of a guy on a crowded Tokyo subway. Like everyone else, he's looking at his phone.

While he huffs and puffs his way off the train and up the stairs (he has asthma), he fumbles with his earbuds. He pauses from his music - a curiously march-like tune by Ravel - to speak to a woman on the phone. She's in the hospital and they need to make a choice. He mumbles that he's on his



These images released by Neon show Yamato Kôchi (left) and Kazunari Ninomiya in scenes from 'Exit 8.' (AP)

way before the line cuts out.

As he shuffles through the throngs of commuters in the byzantine underground, he turns toward signs for Exit 8. But after he passes down a hallway, he's mystified to end up back where he started. At first he assumes he made a wrong turn, and hustles down the Exit 8 corridor again, only to, again, arrive at the same spot.

Of all the nightmarish puzzles the movies have conjured, "Exit 8" is among the most devilishly simple, and, as it turns out, metaphorically rich. Kawamura's film is based on

an indie video-game sensation, "The Exit 8," where first-person players are ushered down a tiled metro tunnel (almost exactly like the one in the movie) and don't escape its repeating loop until they grasp the game and make it from one level to the next.

So, yes, "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie" has company. You could, realistically, enter a movie theater right now, walk down the hall, follow signs for the video-game adaptation, and stroll unaware not into the Nintendo escapade but into the Kafkaesque labyrinth of "Exit 8."

Such a detour, I'd say, would be advisable. By its nature, "Exit 8" is sparse and repetitive. But in the not-especially-decorated annals of video game adaptations, it's one of the most compelling and clever meldings of the two mediums - cinema and gaming - we've seen yet. It was an enormous hit in Japan.

The game, itself, is spartan. But while the movie keeps the game's premise and even much of its central gameplay intact, it suffuses it with just enough backstory to expand and deepen it. Kawamura's previous film,

"A Hundred Flowers," seen through the eyes of a woman with dementia, was also predicated by a seemingly restrictive point of view. In "Exit 8," he levels up a bare-bones game with humanity.

Our guy's name is never spoken. He's credited only as The Lost Man, and played by Kazunari Ninomiya, a pop star who was a standout in Clint Eastwood's "Letters From Iwo Jima." We only get a look at him once the hallway starts repeating and our perspective shifts. After going around in circles, he notices instructions on the

wall: Turn back if you see any anomaly, proceed forward if you don't.

The Lost Man begins counting every vent, door and poster (including a very fitting Escher one) along his way. Part of the trick is deciphering what constitutes an anomaly and what doesn't. There's a very robotic commuter who walks past every time - The Walking Man (Yamato Kôchi) - and, at one level, a boy (Naru Asanuma) in the middle of the corridor. Making it to Exit 8 may be a game, but passage ultimately hinges on seeing - really seeing - those around you.

That's why the image that's likely to stick with you after the film isn't the sterile subway hallway that's overwhelmingly where the movie resides. In this Möbius strip of a movie, it's those first moments on the subway, when faces lit by smartphones choose not to notice an anomaly: a man shouting at a mother with a crying baby. "Exit 8" may be based on the thinnest of conceits, but bringing it into the realm of cinema means opening it to the possibility of empathy. The marching music in The Lost Man's earbuds may be a call to arms, after all.

"Exit 8," a Neon release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for some bloody images and terror. In Japanese, with English subtitles. Running time: 95 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Television



These images released by Disney show: (left photo) Lucy Halliday (center) with Chase Infiniti; (center photo) Chase Infiniti (left photo) and Lucy Halliday; and (right) Ann Dowd, in scenes from 'The Testaments.' (AP)

Variety

NASHVILLE: Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Ray Stevens broke his neck and is recovering at home after being briefly hospitalized, according to a statement published Tuesday.

The 87-year-old country star, who is known for his topical satire, fell late last month, according to the statement released on his X account. He will need to wear a neck brace for about a month.

"He remains fully mobile & in good spirits," the statement said.

Stevens' decades-long recording career has included such hits as the Grammy-winning "Everything

Is Beautiful" as well as the zany "The Streak," which captured the mid-1970s craze for running naked in public.

Born Harold Ray Ragsdale, Stevens' music was also known for its social commentary. In 1961, he recorded "Jeremiah Peabody's Poly Unsaturated Quick Dissolving Fast Acting Pleasant Tasting Green and Purple Pills," which made fun of the advertising industry.

His latest album is expected to be released Friday on Curb Records.

In July, Stevens suffered a mild heart attack and had heart surgery, according to a post on his X account. His performances at his CabaRay Showroom in Nashville, Tennessee, were canceled for the rest of the month as he recovered. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: The organization that puts on the Oscars has set dates for its final two shows on ABC, including the 100th Academy Awards.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and ABC said Tuesday that the 99th Oscars will be held on March 14, 2027, and the 100th on March 5, 2028.

They will be the last ceremonies broadcast on its longtime network home before the show moves to YouTube in 2029, and the last two held at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

The film academy just recently announced that the show would also have a new physical location at the Peacock Theater in downtown Los Angeles as part of a 10-year agreement with AEG. ABC and the film academy will continue to air the show at its earlier time of 7 p.m. Eastern/4 p.m. Pacific. (AP)

'Handmaid's Tale' spinoff hopes to spark action

'The Testaments' is about girlhood in Gilead

LOS ANGELES, April 8, (AP): Throughout the six-season run of "The Handmaid's Tale," dread hung over the series like a perpetual rain cloud. It made sense because the US had turned into a totalitarian society called Gilead where women were stripped of their rights. In "The Testaments," debuted Wednesday on Hulu, Gilead is still Gilead - but there are glimmers of hope as a through-line.

Like its predecessor, "The Testaments" is based on a novel by Margaret Atwood of the same name. It takes place five years after the events of "The Handmaid's Tale," and follows privileged girls in Gilead who are on the cusp of adulthood. Viewers are reintroduced to Aunt Lydia (Ann Dowd) from the original, who now runs a school training girls to be proper young ladies who are ready for marriage and most importantly, babies. There is a class where the girls are tested in how they pour tea.

Lydia has become a bit softer since we last saw her. "At the end of 'The Handmaid's Tale,' she's in a deep state of remorse and begging for forgiveness when her life, as she knew it, collapses," said Dowd of her character. "She's come into this world a gentler human being. She's still Lydia, but I think she's had time to let go of the wall that was built around her."

We meet Agnes, played by Chase Infiniti ("One Battle After Another") and her friends Shunammite and Becca played by Rowan Blanchard and Mattea Conforti. Lucy Halliday portrays Daisy, a new student who is instructed to shadow Agnes at school.

"I see them as two cats who've been put in a room together and are sniffing each other out," said Halliday. "I think they are aware that there is an inherent similarity overlapping with them both, but they will refuse to admit it because they don't want to be like the other



Chase Infiniti, (from left), Lucy Halliday, Mattea Conforti and Rowan Blanchard from the cast of Hulu's 'The Testaments' visit the Empire State Building on Tuesday, April 7, in New York. (AP)

person."

Because Agnes and Becca have each started to menstruate, it's immediately declared mating season and the girls must marry. This is when cracks begin to show in the Gilead status quo as Becca is uninterested in finding a husband. Agnes is swept up in the romantic idea of it all - until she's introduced to potential mates who are generally older with powerful positions in Gilead's government. She realizes marriage would be a power move for her family and that love isn't required.

Bruce Miller created both "The Handmaid's Tale" and "The Testaments" and says each tells stories about the oppression of women.

"In 'Handmaid's,' they take a child away from its mother and then say to the mother, 'You're going to be docile,'" said Miller. By contrast, he said, "The Testaments" "takes a bunch of teenage girls and tells them what they are going to be and also remove their adolescence from their lives."

This new focus on young women in Gilead, who've only known Gilead "is

an easier show on the system to watch, I believe," said Dowd. "It doesn't mean it doesn't have its intensity. It does. But we're dealing with a whole group of different characters. We're focusing on the young women and how they interact with one another, and they can't help but resist and grow."

"These teenagers' lives have a certain level of lightness to them," added Miller. "That's the interesting thing, their lives have all this lightness that Gilead lets them have and then crushes it into some horribleness and breaks

that lightness up."

Because of "The Handmaid's Tale," women have been inspired to dress in red cloaks and white bonnets as a symbol of resistance against oppression, most recently at last month's "No Kings" rallies. The cast of "The Testaments" hopes this new chapter also moves people to act.

"There are a lot of topics and a lot of things that happen in 'The Handmaid's Tale' that are unfortunately still happening to this day," said Infiniti. "If people can watch our show and if any way they feel emboldened to get off the couch and go out there and fight for their communities, fight for their neighbors unapologetically and with love and respect - I think that that would be the ultimate gift for any of us."

Blanchard, who has been an advocate for women's rights and other causes since she was a teenager, says she can empathize with the teen characters in the story.

"There's nothing more powerless than being a teenage girl. There's so much happening in such a short amount of time. So many emotions, you know? So much like self-realization is happening, so much self-actualizing, and these girls are having to form their identities in a very specific way." When the weight of stepping into Gilead seemed daunting, Halliday said she and her co-stars could turn to Elisabeth Moss - who starred in "The Handmaid's Tale" and is an executive producer of "The Testaments" - for reassurance.

"She's an encyclopedia of information. She was open with us, and she was there for us if we ever had a question or needed guidance on something. But more than anything, what she gave us was the reassurance that we were doing OK and the space to step into these characters and to step into this world and to kind of trust in ourselves."



From left: Maude Apatow, Sydney Sweeney, Jennifer Morrison and Alexa Demie arrive at the premiere of 'Euphoria' Season Three on Tuesday, April 7, at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)



Taylor Swift performs during 'The Eras Tour' on Dec. 6, 2024, in Vancouver, British Columbia. (AP)

Universal Music could merge with Pershing Square

Ackman's firm makes \$64b bid for Swift's label

LOS ANGELES, April 8, (AP): Activist investor Bill Ackman's Pershing Square Capital Management is offering to purchase Taylor Swift and Bad Bunny's music label, Universal Music Group, in a cash-and-stock transaction valued at approximately \$64 billion.

The proposed deal would involve Universal Music merging with Pershing Square SPARC Holdings, an acquisition company approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission in 2023. Plans would include the new company being based in Nevada and moving its stock listing from Amsterdam to the New York Stock Exchange.

"UMG's stock price has languished due to a combination of issues that are unrelated to the performance of its music business and importantly, all of them can be addressed with this transaction," Ackman said in a statement on Tuesday.

The total cash-and-stock value of the deal is estimated at 30.40 euros per share, or \$35.12. That puts Universal Music's value at approximately 56 billion euros based on its outstanding shares.

Universal Music shareholders will receive 9.4 billion euros in cash (or 5.05 euros per share) and 0.77 shares of the newly created company's stock for each share of Universal Music that they own.

Universal Music did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The proposed transaction is anticipated to close by the end of the year, according to Pershing Square.

In 2021 Ackman walked away from a deal that would have given him a 10% stake in Universal Music. At the time, Ackman cited questions from the SEC about whether the structure of a special-purpose acquisition company would allow such an acquisition under the rules of the New York Stock Exchange.

Shares of Universal rose more than 10% in mid-day trading in Amsterdam.

Music

Volunteers turn 10,000 live shows into a digital trove

Fan's lifelong passion becomes online gold

NEW YORK, April 8, (AP): On July 8, 1989, a young music fan named Aadam Jacobs, with a compact Sony cassette recorder in his pocket, went to see an up-and-coming rock band from Washington for their debut show in Chicago.

After a blast of guitar feedback, 20-year-old Kurt Cobain politely announced to the crowd at the small club called Dreamerz: "Hello, we're Nirvana. We're from Seattle." With that, the band, then a quartet, launched into the riff-heavy first song, "School."

Jacobs surreptitiously recorded the performance, documenting the fledgling band in raw, fiery form more than two years before Nirvana's global breakthrough with the album "Nevermind."

Jacobs went on to record more than 10,000 concerts, with increasingly sophisticated equipment, over four decades in Chicago and other cities. Now a group of devoted volunteers in the US and Europe is methodically cataloging, digitizing and uploading them one by one.

The growing Aadam Jacobs Collection is an internet treasure trove for music lovers, especially for fans of indie and punk rock during the 1980s through the early 2000s, when the scene blossomed and became mainstream. The collection features early-in-their-career performances from alternative and experimental artists like R.E.M., The Cure, The Pixies, The Replacements, Depeche Mode, Stereolab, Sonic Youth and Björk.

There's also a smattering of hip-hop, including a 1988 concert by rap pioneers Boogie Down Productions. Devotees of Phish were thrilled to discover that a previously uncirculated 1990 show by the jam band is included. And there are hundreds of sets by smaller artists who are unlikely to be known to even fans with the most obscure tastes.

All of it is slowly becoming available for streaming and free download at the nonprofit online repository Internet Archive, including that nascent Nirvana show recording, with the audio from Jacobs' cassette recorder cleaned up.

By the time Jacobs snuck his tape recorder into that Nirvana gig, he had been recording concerts for five years already. As a teen discovering music, Jacobs began taping songs off the radio.

"And I eventually met a fellow who said, 'You can just take a tape recorder into a show with you, just sneak it in, record the show.' And I thought, 'Wow, that's cool.' So I got started," Jacobs, now 59, recalled.

He doesn't remember offhand what that first concert was in 1984, but he taped it with a tiny Dictaphone-type



Aadam Jacobs poses in front of LP (long play) record storage bookcase at his home in Chicago, Thursday, March 19, 2026. (AP)



Brian Emerick poses in front of cassette decks at his storage room for a photo in his home in Des Plaines, Ill., Thursday, March 19, 2026. (AP)

device that he borrowed from his grandmother. A short time later, he bought the Sony Walkman-style tape recorder. When that broke, he briefly used his home console cassette machine stuffed in a backpack that a generous soundman let him plug in.

"I was using, at times, pretty lackluster equipment, simply because I had no money to buy anything better," he said. Later, he moved on to digital audio tape, or DAT, and, as technology progressed, to solid-state digital recorders.

Jacobs doesn't consider himself obsessive or, as many call him, an archivist. He says he's just a music fan. He figured if he was going to attend a few concerts a week anyway, why not

document them? In the early years, he contended with contentious club owners who tried to prevent him from taping. But they eventually relented as he became a fixture in the music scene, and many began letting the "taper guy" in for free.

Author Bob Mehr, who wrote about Jacobs in 2004 for the Chicago Reader, calls him one of the city's cultural institutions.

"He's a character. I think you have to be, to do what he does," Mehr said. "But I think he proved over time that his intentions were really pure."

After a local filmmaker made a documentary about Jacobs in 2023, a volunteer with the Internet Archive reached out to suggest his collection

be preserved. "Before all the tapes started not working because of time, just disintegrating, I finally said yes," he said.

Once a month, Brian Emerick makes the trip from the Chicago suburbs to Jacobs' house in the city to pick up 10 or 20 boxes each stuffed with 50 or 100 tapes. Emerick's job is to transfer - in real time - the analog recordings to digital files that can be sent to other volunteers who mix and master the shows for upload to the archive. Emerick has a room devoted to his setup of outdated cassette and DAT decks.

"So many of the machines I find are broken. They're trashed. And so I learned how to fix those, get them running again," said Emerick. "Currently, I have 10 working cassette decks, and I run those all simultaneously."

Emerick estimates he's digitized at least 5,500 shows since late 2024 and that it will take another few years to complete the project. The digital files are claimed by a dozen or so volunteer-engineers in the US, UK and Germany who provide the metadata and clean up the audio. Among them is Neil deMause in Brooklyn, who said he's constantly impressed by the audio fidelity of the original tapes, especially considering Jacobs was using "weird RadioShack mics" and other primitive equipment.

"Especially after the first couple years, he's got it so dialed in that some of these recordings, on, like, crappy little cassette tapes from the early 90s, sound incredible," deMause said.

Emerick pointed to a 1984 James Brown concert as a gem he discovered in the stacks.

Often, the hardest job is figuring out song titles. Occasionally, Jacobs kept helpful notes, but the volunteers frequently spend days consulting each other, searching and even reaching out to artists to make sure the setlists are accurately documented.

Jacobs said the majority of the artists he recorded are pleased to have their work preserved. As for copyright concerns, he's happy to remove recordings if requested, but added that only one or two musicians so far have asked that their material be taken down.

"I think that the general consensus is, it's easier to say I'm sorry than to ask for permission," he said. The Internet Archive declined to comment for this story. David Nimmer, a longtime copyright attorney who also teaches at UCLA, said that under anti-bootlegging laws, the artists technically own the original compositions and live recordings. But since neither Jacobs nor the archive are profiting from the endeavor, lawsuits seem unlikely.

People

Volatile behavior cited

No unsupervised visits for Paul with son: court

SALT LAKE CITY, April 8, (AP): Taylor Frankie Paul, a star of "The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives," cannot spend unsupervised time with her 2-year-old son due to a history of volatile behavior directed at the boy's father while kids were present, a Utah court commissioner ruled Tuesday.

Third District Court Commissioner Russell Minas said, "I have concerns going both ways" about competing allegations between Dakota Mortensen and Paul, who was also set to star in the most recent season of "The Bachelorette" before it was pulled days before airing.

"Even if he was trying to provoke a response," Minas said, "the actions that occurred are very troubling."

The hearing set the stage for an April 30 court battle in which Minas will assess dueling petitions for protective orders between the pair.

Mortensen, who shares son Ever with Paul, has asked the court to turn a short-term protective order against his ex into a long-term one. Paul filed her own request just before Tuesday's hearing. Both participated remotely while their lawyers were in court.

Lawyers for the two sides and a court-appointed attorney for Ever addressed several heated and sometimes violent interactions between the couple, some of which were caught on video.

In one key video from 2023, Paul appeared to punch, kick and throw chairs at Mortensen while her young daughter watched and cried. The leak of that video last month spurred the unprecedented move by ABC of shelving Paul's already-filmed season of "The Bachelorette."

Paul was charged for that altercation with aggravated assault and other offenses, including domestic violence in the presence of a child. She pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor assault charge, and the other counts were dismissed.

Eric Swinyard, a lawyer for Paul, argued Tuesday that Mortensen was the aggressor in another fight from February that the lawyer called "the truck tussle."

In his request for a protective order, Mortensen said Paul threw a drink at him as they argued in a truck to not wake children who

were sleeping inside Paul's home. Swinyard said Mortensen slammed Paul's head into the dashboard and punched her in the leg, showing the court commissioner photos of her bruises.

That and another fight around the same time are under investigation by police in the Salt Lake City suburb of Draper City.

The sides generally agreed that Paul didn't intentionally direct violence at their son or her other two children from a previous relationship. At issue was her willingness to lash out at Mortensen in front of her children.

Ever's court-appointed lawyer pointed to a May 2025 video that has not been released publicly. He said it shows Paul pushing Mortensen and shouting at him to get out of her house while he's holding the boy.

"To me, that makes me very nervous about her ability to control herself, and her volatility," said the lawyer, Michael McDonald. He said Paul has "a very difficult time with self-control, and I think that it puts my client at risk."

Paul's attorney said Mortensen deliberately created that situation.

"He's holding the child as his human shield, so to speak, and provoking my client and not getting out of her house," Swinyard said.

Daniela Diaz, a lawyer for Mortensen, argued that Paul uses their shared child to perpetuate a cycle of abuse that keeps Mortensen coming back.

"He's often invited back, and his child is often used as a pawn, as a pawn to start fights," Diaz said.

Minas ordered that Paul can have eight hours per week of supervised visits with Ever, emphasizing it was a stopgap arrangement until the next hearing. Paul had primary custody of the boy before Mortensen got the temporary protective order.

The couple's 2023 fight, one of 11 cited in court filings, was central to the first season of Hulu's "The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives," which made Paul a reality star. The series premiere featured police body camera footage of her arrest.

Production has been paused on the show's fifth season. Paul's co-star Mikayla Matthews said the cast "didn't feel comfortable filming with everything that was happening."

Paul rose to popularity as an influencer in the #MomTok community, a group of women from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who share their lives on TikTok. The group, and Paul's admissions of polyamory within it, helped spawn the hit reality show.

Book out in September

Colin Kaepernick to publish memoir 'The Perilous Fight'

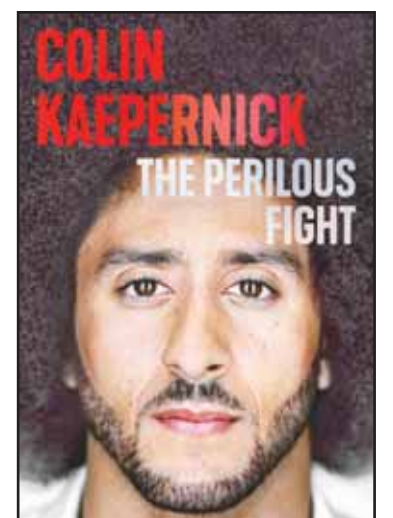
NEW YORK, April 8, (AP): A decade after he first took a knee during the national anthem, Colin Kaepernick will be publishing his life story.

The activist and former San Francisco 49ers quarterback has completed "The Perilous Fight," to come out Sept. 15 through the Hachette Book Group imprint Legacy Lit. His memoir will come out almost exactly 10 years after he knelt before a preseason game, a protest against police violence and racial inequality that was emulated by some players and criticized by politicians, team owners and fans, some of whom booed him and burned his jersey.

Kaepernick, who has not played in the NFL since 2016, said in a statement that he wanted to offer context for what led to his taking a knee. Before that, he had remained seated during the anthem.

"People saw the moment. But they didn't see the years that made it possible: the questions about who I was; the injustices I could no longer ignore; the voices of those who came before me that I carried into that stadium," Kaepernick said in a statement released Tuesday. "That journey, from a Black kid navigating an identity the world didn't always make space for, to an athlete who realized the game was bigger than football, shaped everything. When I took a knee, it wasn't a sudden act."

Legacy Lit is calling the book "equal parts memoir and manifesto," tracing "the off-the-field battles that turned a single act of protest into a movement



This cover image released by Legacy Lit shows 'The Perilous Fight' by Colin Kaepernick. (AP)

that changed American sports and culture forever." Kaepernick is narrating the audio edition, produced and to be sold exclusively by Audible.

Kaepernick, 38, played six years for the 49ers and helped lead them to an appearance in the Super Bowl in 2013. Baltimore won the game 34-31.

Kaepernick has spoken out often on social issues, launched his own publishing imprint and co-written the picture story "We Are Free, You & Me" and the graphic novel "Change the Game."

An ancient Chinese road builds a bridge between nations

US travelers experience China's legendary 'Shudao'

CHENGDU, April 8, (Xinhua): Sandra Dorothy Carpenter paused to catch her breath as visitors inched forward against the rock, testing each foothold on the narrow cliff path -- barely wide enough for a single step.

"I did it because I wanted to do it," she said. "But many people had to use that pass because that was the way across."

Carpenter, a former vice principal of Wuhan Yangtze International School, was among a group of American visitors retracing a section of the ancient "Shudao." Stretching more than 1,000 kilometers through cliffs, rivers and forests, the road system has endured for thousands of years.

The visit, part of a China-US exchange program in Guangyuan City, Sichuan Province, offered a close look at the "Shudao," a vast network of plank roads, fortifications, stone carvings, ancient towns and ecosystems that connected the Guanzhong Plain with the Sichuan Basin in ancient times.

"Climbing the 'Shudao' is more difficult than reaching heaven," leaving one with no recourse but to "sit and sigh deeply, with a hand on the chest," Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Li Bai once wrote. Such words capture the arduous journey and profound impact of this legendary road system.

Yet the road is no longer just about hardship. In Zhaohua ancient town, the "Shudao" reveals a quieter side, serving not only as a route of passage but also as a place where life continues to unfold around it.

At a pavilion tucked beside the ancient government compound, where officials once retreated after court sessions, Carpenter's fellow traveler



An aerial drone photo taken on March 21, 2025, shows the plank road at Mingyue Gorge (below) in Guangyuan City, Sichuan Province, southwest China. (Xinhua)

James Weaver paused to reflect on the idea of contemplation as part of governance.

"The leader would take time to reflect on both the positive and negative aspects of his work and think about how to improve," said Weaver, a former independent advisor to the World Bank.

Further along, at Mingyue Gorge, the story of the road unfolds in layers. Ancient plank roads cling to the cliffs while boats once navigated the river below. Today, railways and expressways run alongside them, compressing different eras of movement into a

single stretch of landscape.

The road system illustrates the close link between transportation and cultural exchange, said Peter Ditmanson, a historian at Yuelu Academy of Hunan University, calling for greater efforts to tell the story of the "Shudao" as part of world history, a network that connects different cultures and regions.

If the road carries memory, it also carries responsibility.

In the Cuiyunlang section of Jian'ge County, more than 7,000 ancient cypress trees line the route, some over 2,000 years old. Their survival de-

pends not only on time, but on care, a system of protection that has been passed down across generations.

Historically, officials were required to account for the number and condition of trees when transferring responsibilities. Today, each outgoing county head of Jian'ge has taken the responsibility.

Technology has joined tradition. Drones and sensors monitor tree health. Digital records track each trunk. Caretakers are assigned. Insurance policies are in place. Even a national highway has been rerouted to reduce pressure on the ancient grove.

Biomarkers could improve depression diagnosis

Irregular sleep patterns linked to higher heart risks: study

CANBERRA, April 8, (Xinhua): People whose sleep apnea changes dramatically from night to night are 30 percent more likely to have a heart attack, stroke or heart failure, according to new Australian-led research.

The research, published in the journal *Sleep*, found that it is not just how severe sleep apnea is that matters, but how much it fluctuates, with wide night-to-night swings in breathing problems during sleep linked to a higher risk of serious heart disease, said a statement from Australia's Flinders University on Tuesday. Obstructive sleep apnea causes repeated pauses in breathing during sleep and affects millions of people worldwide. It is commonly associated with loud snoring, restless sleep and daytime fatigue, but it is also closely linked to heart disease and stroke, it said.

Researchers analyzed sleep data from more than 3,000 adults who monitored breathing at home over several months using under-mattress sensors.

"Many people assume sleep apnea is stable, but the reality is very different, and some nights can be much worse than others, and this repeated up and down strain may place extra stress on the heart," said study lead author and sleep expert Bastien Lechat at Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute.

The findings are reinforced by a second large international study led by Flinders University, published in *npj Digital Medicine*, which found that more severe sleep apnea, high night-to-night variability, and even habitual snoring were all linked to faster ageing of the blood vessels, an early warning sign for cardiovascular disease.

Researchers said the studies show sleep should be monitored over multiple nights, similar to blood pressure or glucose tracking.

Separately, neuroscientists in Australia say distinctive brain activity patterns linked to childhood maltreatment could help pave the way for more objective diagnosis and

treatment of depression.

Researchers at Australia's University of New England (UNE) found three distinctive brain patterns among people who suffered childhood maltreatment and depression, according to a UNE statement released Tuesday.

Based on the comprehensive review of existing research on the topic, the analysis found that individuals affected by the condition were more likely to exhibit altered brain wave activity, an imbalance between the brain's left and right frontal brain regions, and disruptions in brain areas responsible for emotional processing.

"Childhood maltreatment and depression are serious global issues with high prevalence and lifelong impacts on physical and mental health," said PhD candidate Christopher Watson at UNE, who led the study to address critical gaps in the knowledge.

"Experiencing childhood maltreatment has been shown

to increase an individual's risk of developing depression in adulthood by two-and-a-half times; however, very little is known about the underlying neurobiological mechanisms of this association," Watson said.

The UNE Brain Behavior Research Group is now expanding the work through PROFILE-D, a large regional mental health study examining immunological, hormonal, psychological, relationship and brain-based profiles among local residents, the statement said.

Using electroencephalography (EEG), researchers are recording brain activity from about 300 volunteers, some of whom have experienced childhood maltreatment and depression.

"Through this, we'll be looking for biomarkers that have the potential to create a more objective approach to depression diagnosis, improving the existing subjective self-report and clinical assessment approaches," Watson said.

Scans vast disease data

AI re-engineering drug discovery, and testing

By Jeffrey Skolnick, Georgia Institute of Technology and Benjamin P. Brown, Vanderbilt University

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



In December, The Conversation hosted a webinar on AI's revolutionary role in drug discovery and development.

Science and technology editor Eric Smalley interviewed Jeffrey Skolnick, eminent scholar in computational systems biology at Georgia Institute of Technology, and Benjamin P. Brown, assistant professor of pharmacology at Vanderbilt University.

Skolnick has developed AI-based approaches to predict protein structure and function that may help with drug discovery and finding off-label uses of existing drugs. Brown's lab works on creating new computer models that make drug discovery faster and more reliable. Below is a condensed and edited version of the interview.

Question: Let's start with the big picture. How is AI changing biomedical research and drug discovery, and what is the potential we are talking about?

Skolnick: The upside, potentially, is very large. One of the frustrating things about drug discovery is that, in spite of the fact that the people doing it are extraordinarily intelligent and have done an extraordinarily good job, the success rate is very low. About 1 in 5 drugs will have negative health effects that outweigh its benefits. Of the ones that pass, roughly half don't work.

In drug development, there are several key issues: Can you predict which target is driving a particular disease? Once this target is identified, how can you guarantee the drug is going to work and isn't simultaneously going to kill you?

These are outstanding problems in drug discovery in which AI can play an important, though not 100% guaranteed, role. Unlike us, AI can look at basically all available knowledge. On a good day it makes strong and true connections called "insights," and on a bad day it does what is called "hallucinating" and sees things that are weak and probably false.

Diseases

At the end of the day, many diseases do not have a cure. Most diseases are maintained, such as high cholesterol or autoimmune conditions. A treatment for cancer might buy you five years, and now you're in Stage 4 and you've exhausted all the standard care drugs. AI can play a role to suggest alternatives where there are none.

Q: Let's give some basic definitions here. When we use the word drug, we're talking about a wide range of therapies. Can you explain the range - we've got small molecule drugs, biologics, gene therapies, cell therapies.

Brown: We have fairly large molecules in our bodies called proteins. They are like machines that carry out specific functions and interact with one another. Oftentimes, when we're trying to treat disease, we're trying to alter functions of specific proteins. Many drugs, like aspirin and Tylenol, are small molecules that can fit into a protein and change its function. Fundamentally, drugs don't have to just interact with proteins, but this is a major way in which our current repertoire of medications work.

There are also proteins that act like drugs, such as antibodies. When you receive a vaccine for a virus, your body is basically given instructions on how to develop antibodies. These antibodies will target some part of that virus. Your body is creating these big molecules, much bigger than aspirin, to go and interact with foreign proteins in a different way. Gene therapy is a larger step beyond that.

So these modalities - molecule, protein, antibody or gene - are very different types of molecules. They have different scales and rules, so the way you approach designing and discovering them varies widely.

Q: Can you briefly explain artificial neural networks, and what the "deep" in deep learning means?

Skolnick: AlphaFold, developed by DeepMind, involved understanding how neural networks worked. They built a network with a lot of inputs, which are stimuli, and outputs with different weights, similar to how your brain actually works. These simple connections, or neurons, have reinforcement learning.

They also created sophisticated neural networks, such as transformers, which do specific things like a special-purpose tool that can learn, and they added a mechanism called "attention," which amplifies critical details. Super neural networks with transformers is what we call deep learning. These now have literally billions, if not trillions, of parameters.

Essentially, these machines can learn higher order correlations between events, meaning the patterns of conditional interactions that depend on the properties of multiple things simultaneously. In these higher order correlations, AI has the potential to see previously unknown things that are embedded in petabytes (a unit of data equivalent to half of the contents of all U.S. academic research libraries of biological data).

AlphaFold, which predicts three-dimensional, bioactive forms of a protein, has millions of sequences and a couple of hundred thousand structures. It can tell you, based on a particular pattern, what small molecule to design that sticks to a protein to induce some kind of structural shift.

Q: How is this technology being used in biomedical research to understand molecular dynamics or, essentially, the biological processes involved in health and disease?

Brown: In 2013, there was a Nobel Prize for molecular dynamics simulations, computational tools that help you understand the motions of molecules as they move according to physics. There's a huge body of scientific research built around those ideas.

AI and deep learning are large right now, but it's worth mentioning that for the last decade and a half, people have been using much smaller machine learning algorithms to help design drugs. A lot of the ideas, such as [using machine learning for virtual screening], are not new and have been in practice for a while.

With AlphaFold's technologies to help people design proteins and predict their structure, we've changed how we think about a lot of these problems. We have this new repertoire of approaches to build ideas around and to start thinking about drug discovery.

Q: From 20 years ago to now, what has today's AI technology done in terms of scale of change in this process?

Skolnick: A lot of diseases, like cancers, are caused by a collection of malfunctioning proteins. AI now allows us to start to think conceptually about how these diseases are organized and related to each other.

Diseases tend to co-occur. For example, if you have hyperthyroidism, you're very likely to develop Alzheimer's. Kind of weird, right? We can look at pieces, but AI can look at all the information, integrate the collective behavior and then identify common drivers. This allows you to construct disease interrelationships which offer the possibility of broad spectrum treatments that could treat whole collections of diseases rather than narrow-spectrum treatments.

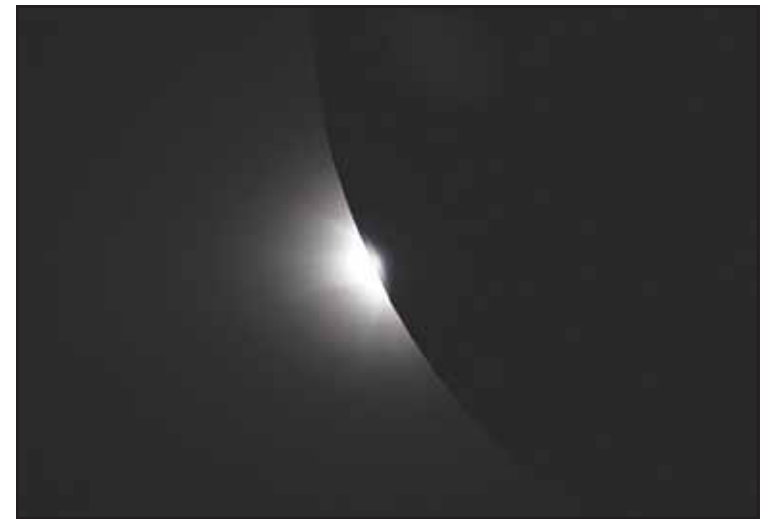
Relatedly, AI also can help us understand disease trajectories. Diseases that tend to co-occur often present themselves consecutively. You have disease 1, it gives you disease 2, then gives you disease 3.

This suggests that if you go back to the root with disease 1, you may be able to stop a whole bunch of stuff. You can't analyze millions of trajectories and millions of data without a tool, so you couldn't do this before.

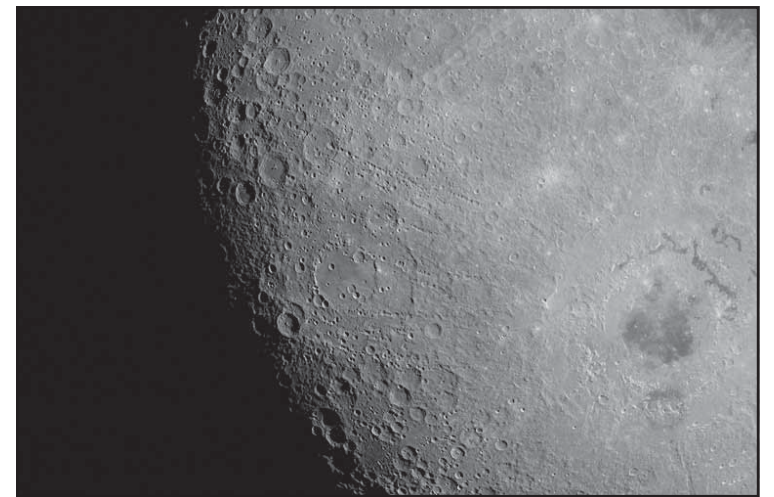
This holds a lot of promise, but one also must be careful not to overpromise. It will help, it will accelerate, but it is not a substitute yet for real experiments, real clinical validation and trials. (AP)



In these images provided by NASA, the Artemis II crew captured this view (left) as the Earth sets behind the Moon and this image (right) of the Sun beginning to peek out from behind the Moon as an eclipse transitions out of totality during a lunar flyby, Monday, April 6. (AP)



In these images provided by NASA, the Artemis II crew captured this image (left) of the Vavilov Crater and of the Orientale basin (right), a round crater with a black patch in the center, on the Moon during a lunar flyby, Monday, April 6. (AP)



Astronauts channel Apollo 8 with a striking Earthset photo

Artemis II crew phones ISS on way home

HOUSTON, April 8, (AP): Still aglow from their triumphant lunar flyby, the Artemis II astronauts made more history Tuesday: calling their friends aboard the International Space Station hundreds of thousands of miles away as they headed home from the moon.

It was the first moonship-to-space-ship radio linkup ever. NASA's Apollo crews had no off-the-planet company back in the 1960s and 1970s, the last time humanity set sail for deep space.

"We have been waiting for this like you can't imagine," Artemis II commander Reid Wiseman called out.

For Christina Koch on Artemis II and Jessica Meir aboard the space station, it marked a joyous space reunion despite being 230,000 miles (370,000 kilometers) apart. The two teamed up for the world's first all-female spacewalk in 2019 outside the orbiting lab.

Koch told her "astro-sister" that she'd hoped to meet up with her again in space "but I never thought it would be like this - it's amazing."

"I'm so happy that we are back in space together," Meir replied, "even if we are a few miles apart."

Houston's Mission Control arranged the cosmic chitchat between the four lunar travelers and the space station's three NASA and one French residents.

Koch described being awe-struck by not just the beauty of Earth, "but how much blackness there was around it."

"It just made it even more special. It truly emphasized how alike we are, how the same thing keeps every single person on planet Earth alive," she told the space station crew. "The specialness and preciousness of that really is emphasized" when viewing the home planet from the moon.



In this image provided by NASA, the Artemis II crew, (counterclockwise from top left), Mission Specialist Christina Koch, Mission Specialist Jeremy Hansen, Commander Reid Wiseman, and Pilot Victor Glover pose with eclipse viewers during a lunar flyby, Monday, April 6. (AP)

By late Tuesday afternoon, the Artemis II astronauts had beamed back more than 50 gigabytes' worth of pictures and other data from the previous day's lunar rendezvous, which set a new distance record for humanity. The highlight: an Earthset photo reminiscent of Apollo 8's Earthrise shot from 1968.

"While they are inspirational and, I think, allow all of us to really feel a little bit of what they were feeling, there's also a lot of science hidden inside of those images," said Mission Control's lead lunar scientist Kelsey Young. "The conversations and the science lessons learned are just beginning."

During a debriefing with Young, the astronauts recounted how they spotted a cascade of pinpricks of light on the lunar surface from impacting cosmic debris. The flashes lasted mere milliseconds and coincided by chance with Monday evening's total solar eclipse.

Young said it was too soon to know whether the crew witnessed an actual meteor shower or more random, run-of-the-mill micrometeoroid hits. Either way, there were "audible screams of delight" in the science operations center, she said.

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not just the beauty of Earth, "but how much blackness there was around it."

"It just made it even more special. It truly emphasized how alike we are, how the same thing keeps every single person on planet Earth alive," she told the space station crew. "The specialness and preciousness of that really is emphasized" when viewing the home planet from the moon.

The first lunar explorers since Apollo 17 in 1972, Wiseman and his crew are aiming for a splashdown off the San Diego coast on Friday to wrap up the nearly 10-day test flight. The recovery ship USS John P. Murtha left port Tuesday for the target zone.

It sets the stage for next year's Artemis III, a lunar lander docking demo in orbit around Earth. Artemis IV will follow in 2028 with two astronauts attempting to land near the lunar south pole. As for the Orion capsule's pesky potty, Mission Control assured the astronauts that no maintenance was required Tuesday. The toilet has been on-and-off limits to the crew ever since last week's launch, prompting them to rely on a backup bag-and-funnel system for urinating.

NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman told the crew following the lunar flyby Monday night: "We definitely have to fix some of the plumbing" ahead of the next Artemis mission. Engineers suspect a clogged filter in the overboard flushing system.

Aside from the toilet and other relatively minor matters, the mission has gone well. Isaacman noted at a news conference Tuesday, "but I'll breathe easier when we get through reentry and everybody's under chutes and in the water."

Downpours bring blessings and woes to daily life

Climate change drives erratic rainfall in Jordan

AMMAN, April 8, (Xinhua): Unpredictable rainfall linked to climate change has emerged as a double-edged sword for water-hungry Jordan, bringing both relief to the country's strained water supplies and disruptions to daily life, infrastructure, and agriculture.

When heavy rain floods the streets of Amman, taxi driver Ahmad Khalil knows his day's work may come to a halt. "Sometimes I have to stop working for hours, and that directly affects my income," he said.

For schoolteacher Lina Riyad, erratic swings between cold, rain, and warmer days have fueled a spike in flu and respiratory illnesses, pushing up student absences.

Across Jordan, such daily disruptions are becoming more common, as unpredictable weather patterns reshape routines, livelihoods, and public health, a trend experts directly link to climate change.

This winter's rains have been both a blessing and a warning for Jordan: While they filled dams, improved water storage, and offered some relief to a country long struggling with water scarcity, they also triggered flash floods, soil erosion, road damage, and farming disruptions. In Karak governorate, part of the

old city collapsed amid floods, shutting a key road.

On the positive side, Water and Irrigation Ministry spokesperson Omar Salameh told Xinhua on Tuesday that the 2025-2026 rainy season is "excellent," having achieved more than 130 percent of the Kingdom's average annual rainfall of approximately 8.1 billion cubic meters. Most of the Kingdom's dams in the southern and central regions have reached full storage capacity due to the continuous rainfall.

Meanwhile, climate change is taking its toll. Climate expert Omar Shoshan noted a clear shift from stable seasonal patterns to extreme and uneven weather - prolonged droughts followed by sudden heavy rains, driven by rising Mediterranean Sea surface temperatures and changing atmospheric circulation.

The implications of this shift are serious, Shoshan warned, noting that heavy rain can fill dams and recharge groundwater only if managed well, since quick downpours usually run off instead of seeping into underground aquifers.

Raed Khattab, director general of the Jordan Meteorological Department, also warned that climate change has become one of the most urgent challenges

facing Jordan, citing a 5-year uptick in atmospheric instability, heatwaves, and extreme rainfalls.

Farmers in the Jordan Valley, the country's agricultural backbone, are caught in the dilemma. Mahmoud Al Awran, director general of the Jordanian Farmers' Union, said the rains benefited water harvesting, fruit trees, and livestock, but the prolonged cold combined with rainfall also damaged crops in the valley, a key producer of high-quality crops, including vegetables, citrus fruits, bananas and Medjool dates.

Vally farmer Nawash Al Yazjeen confirmed rain and cold weather can improve crop quality, but also reduce production. Unprotected crops are prone to disease during the rainy season, while even protected crops suffer lower yields, driving up tomato prices this year, he said. Experts stressed that Jordan can no longer treat these extreme weather events as isolated incidents.

"Climate change is no longer a future risk for Jordan. It is a present reality," Shoshan said. He called for stronger adaptation measures, including upgraded drainage systems, expanded rainwater harvesting, improved flood protection, climate-aware urban planning, and better early warning systems.

Unforgettable week, regardless of how he plays

US Amateur champion Howell skips school to chase Masters dream

AUGUSTA, Ga., April 8, (AP) — You can bet that U.S. Amateur champion Mason Howell is enjoying every minute of his first Masters.

There was the practice round he played Monday with Jacob Bridgeman, a winner on the PGA Tour earlier this year. In the evening, an exclusive dinner for the amateurs playing in the tournament. At night, a climb up the clubhouse stairs to the Crow's Nest, the sleeping quarters nestled beneath the cupola where only amateurs can stay the week of the Masters.

Oh, and the 18-year-old gets to miss some classwork. He's a high school senior.

"Yeah, it's kind of a lot to handle," Howell said with a smile. "It's a long week."

An unforgettable week, regardless of how he plays.

He lives in Thomasville, Georgia, a few hours south of Augusta National, near the Florida border. He'll be playing for the University of Georgia in the fall, which means he has quite the hometown crowd behind him this week, both the friends and family that were able to secure coveted badges and complete strangers familiar with his roots who keep yelling at him, "Go Dawgs!"

They should help to settle his nerves come Thursday.

That's when Howell, who beat Jackson Herrington 7 & 6 in the U.S. Amateur finals, will tee off alongside Rory McIlroy, continuing the longstanding tradition of the reigning amateur champ playing with the defending Masters champion for the first two rounds.

The two of them already share a little history.

As a 9-year-old, Howell attended the Tour Championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, where McIlroy tossed him a ball that he still has in his golf bag. It is stamped with "RORS" on the side of it, and Howell joked about teeing it up at Augusta National.

"I'm not," he said, laughing. "But that would be a power move."

Howell called McIlroy his "idol." It's a feeling the Northern Irishman knows well, because McIlroy felt the same way about Tom Watson, a two-time Masters champion. They played the first two rounds of the 2010 U.S. Open together.

"I think that's the incredible thing about our game is," McIlroy said, "because our careers are long, so many generations overlap."

Howell has been on big stages before. He played the U.S. Open himself last year, missing the cut, and represented the U.S. in both the Walker Cup and Eisenhower Trophy. At the Olympic Club, he became the third-youngest winner of the U.S. Amateur.

"I've known Mason for a long time now," said Harris English, who like Howell grew up playing at Glen Arven Country Club and went on to play at Georgia. "I can't imagine what he's going through at 18 years old and playing in the Masters for the first time."

The youngest player ever at the Masters was Guan Tianlang, who was just 14 when he played in 2013 after winning the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship. Tiger Woods is the youngest winner, triumphing by a record 12 shots in 1997 at the age of 21.

"Told him take it all in but manage your time well. Don't get lost in everything. This is just another golf tournament," said English, who tied for 12th last year in his sixth Masters start. "He has played in a lot of golf tournaments and he's won a lot of big golf tournaments. Treat it as much like that as you possibly can."

Can he close the deal this year?

DeChambeau arrives at Masters on a bit of a roll

AUGUSTA, Ga., April 8, (AP) — For about 25 minutes, Bryson DeChambeau spoke matter-of-factly about the less glamorous side of golf. It's important to stay patient, make good decisions and hit the center of the green. The word "obedience" even came up.

Then a question about his rivalry with Rory McIlroy stirred at least a little bit of his competitiveness.

"Do I respect him as an individual? One hundred percent. Do I want to beat him every time I see him? Absolutely," DeChambeau said. "I think that's what's so brilliant about the game of golf is that juxtaposition - having that sportsmanlike respect and then wanting to just absolutely beat the living you-know-what out of him."

The Masters could do far worse this week than a Sunday rematch between McIlroy, the defending champion, and DeChambeau, who was with him in the final group last year before finishing tied for fifth. After that tournament, DeChambeau acted surprised by McIlroy's lack of chattiness on the course. He gave no indication Tuesday of any lingering issues between them, but DeChambeau made it clear that - regardless of the opponent - he's eager for another chance to contend for a green jacket at Augusta National.

"The more I put myself in those positions, the better opportunities I'm going to have to win. It's just been a gradual learning process," he said. "You never know what this week may bring, but I certainly hope to give it my all and put myself back in that position because I want to feel it again."

DeChambeau's two best showings at the Masters were in 2024, when he finished tied for sixth, and 2025. Even a final-round 75 last year didn't prevent him from shooting a career-best 7 under par for the tournament.

Now, he might be playing better than anyone. DeChambeau won LIV Golf events in Singapore and South Africa last month. Augusta National will be the judge of how much that means, but there are plenty of reasons to consider him among the favorites.

"I feel like my game's in the best place of its career, outside of maybe Greenbrier (in 2023) when I shot 58," he said. "I'm excited to get the week going and see where I can put myself."

Few can create a buzz around the tee box like DeChambeau. He led this tournament in driving distance last year - no shock there - but his performance depends on what he does after that. He'll need more than booming tee shots this week.

DeChambeau attributed his improvement in recent Masters to a



Bryson DeChambeau warms up on the driving range before a practice round ahead of the Masters golf tournament at the Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Ga. (AP)

more measured approach.

"More patience, like not as aggressive all the time. Knowing where to be aggressive and when not to be aggressive," he said. "Making better decisions, having a caddy that reins me in sometimes."

DeChambeau's win in South Africa was emotional for reasons he wouldn't elaborate on, but he spoke Tuesday about perspective off the course.

"I feel like I found something that allows me to be the best of myself, where I've got a little bit of a fire in my belly but an ability to have respect for where I'm at in life and a comfort of knowing where I'm at in life," the 32-year-old DeChambeau said. "Knowing that golf is a big deal, there's no question this week's a big deal, but it's not everything in life. There's more to it than that. As I've gotten older, I've learned that, sometimes the hard way."

DeChambeau beat Jon Rahm, the 2023 Masters champion, in a playoff in South Africa. So dismiss that victory at your peril. Last year, DeChambeau couldn't keep up with McIlroy at Augusta National and was something of an afterthought when it was Justin Rose who forced a playoff with the eventual winner.

DeChambeau was in the mix for a while, though.

"It was a great learning lesson. Leading or being tied for the lead and having the lead, that last-group final round, gave me a lot of perspective on it. Then losing it and having things not go my way as they finished out and Rory completed the (career) Grand Slam," DeChambeau said.

"Last year he earned it, right? It was really cool to see in person. ... As I reflect back on it, the one thing I can take from it is I can put myself in those positions."

World Athletics to introduce World Marathon Championships from 2030

PARIS, April 8, (Xinhua) — World Athletics plans to separate the marathon from the current World Athletics Championships format and introduce a standalone World Marathon Championships from 2030.

The global governing body announced on Tuesday that the marathon will remain part of the World Athletics Championships in the 2027 and 2029 editions, but will move to its own standalone championships from 2030.

From 2031 onward, there will be no road running events at the World Athletics Championships. The World Marathon Championships will be held every year, with men's and women's races staged in alternate years. The World Athletics Road Running Championships, covering the one-mile, 5-kilometer and half-marathon distances, will continue as a separate annual event.

According to World Athletics, Athens has emerged as the preferred host for the inaugural edition of the World Marathon Championships in 2030.

□ □ □

Uganda's Victor Kiplangat is among the high-profile athletes set to compete in the 2026 Paris Marathon scheduled for April 12.

Dominic Otchet, president of Uganda Athletics, confirmed on Tuesday that Kiplangat will take part in the World Athletics event in Paris.

He said Kiplangat, the 2023 world marathon champion and 2022 Commonwealth Games gold medalist, remains a strong contender at the top level. "He is an experienced runner who keeps improving and we expect a lot from him," Otchet added.

Otchet also noted that, in addition to Kiplangat's participation in Paris, Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo and Joshua Cheptegei will compete in the London Marathon April 26.

Kiplangat, who also won at the World Mountain Running Championship as a teenager in 2017, said he is well prepared for the race in France.

"I know I am going to compete against some of the world's best runners, but I am training well and I have managed to work on several aspects including endurance and improving on my times," Kiplangat said.

He will face stiff competition from Kenya's Hillary Kipkoech Kemboi, Ethiopia's Kinde Atanaw Ayalew, Italy's Yemaneberhan Chipcha and Eritrean-born Norwegian Awet Nfalem Kibrab, all of whom are entered in the Paris Marathon.

Mumbai crumbles as Royals extend winning run to three



Rajasthan Royals' Vaibhav Sooryavanshi hits a six during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati, India. (AP)

Jaiswal leads Rajasthan's batting storm

GUWAHATI, India, April 8, (AP) — Opening pair of Yashasvi Jaiswal and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi flattened Mumbai Indians with their power-hitting and propelled Rajasthan Royals to their third straight win in a rain-curtailed Indian Premier League game.

In a match reduced to 11-overs-a-side, Rajasthan plundered 150-3 and cruised to a 27-run win after Mumbai won the toss and elected to field.

Jaiswal hit an unbeaten 77 off 32 balls with 10 fours and four sixes and 15-year-old Sooryavanshi made a 14-ball 39 that included a first-ball six over mid-on off premier fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah.

Mumbai's chase was dashed inside the 20-ball power play when Ryan Rickelton, Suryakumar Yadav and Rohit Sharma all fell for single-digit scores against Rajasthan pace before the former champions finished at 123-9.

Mumbai lost the top three for just 22 runs and then further slipped to 46-5 when impact substitute leg-



Rajasthan Royals' Yashasvi Jaiswal celebrates his fifty runs during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati, India. (AP)

spinner Ravi Bishnoi (2-25) bagged the wickets of Hardik Pandya and Tilak Varma in his first over.

Mumbai's impact substitute Sherfane Rutherford and Naman Dhir played cameos of 25 runs each, but Rajasthan did enough damage up front through Jofra Archer (1-17), Nandre Burger (2-21) and Sand-

deep Sharma (2-26) to seal its third straight win.

Mumbai is in the bottom half of the table with two points.

Earlier, Jaiswal gave Rajasthan a rollicking start with a 22-run first over as the left-hander smacked Deepak Chahar for four boundaries and a pulled six over mid-wicket.

The 15-year-old Sooryavanshi didn't get overawed while facing Bumrah for the first time in competitive cricket and lofted the world's best pace bowler for a straight six and two balls later picked up a slower ball for another six over square leg.

Jaiswal ensured Rajasthan got to well over-par score with another 22-run over against Trent Boult as he smashed back-to-back sixes while Sooryavanshi deposited the left-arm New Zealand fast bowler's shortish delivery to deep backward square leg for the maximum as Rajasthan raced to 58-0 off three overs.

Pandya (0-17), returning to the side after missing Mumbai's last game due to illness, dragged the flow of runs with a four-run fourth over before Shardul Thakur brought an end to an entertaining 80-run opening stand off just 30 balls. Sooryavanshi was distraught when he holed out to deep cover as Varma jumped high and grabbed a good catch over his head.

Afghanistan spinner AM Ghazafar (2-21) and Bumrah (0-32) tried to limit the damage but Jaiswal raised his half-century off 23 balls and then hit three boundaries in Thakur's last over to give Rajasthan a strong total.

Legendary Romanian manager Lucescu dies

BUCHAREST, Romania, April 8, (AP) — Mircea Lucescu, the Romanian soccer great who was a serial trophy winner as a player and a coach, has died. He was 80.

Lucescu's death was confirmed by Bucharest University Emergency Hospital. He had been hospitalized after reportedly suffering a heart attack on Friday morning.

"Mr. Mircea Lucescu was one of the most successful Romanian football coaches and players, the first to qualify the Romanian national team for a European Championship, in 1984," the hospital said in a statement. "Entire generations of Romanians grew up with his image in their hearts, as a national symbol."

Lucescu had a lengthy coaching career and was in his second spell with the Romanian national team until stepping down last Thursday after falling ill during training. Three days earlier, Romania had missed out on qualification to the World Cup after losing to Turkey in a playoff.

As a player, Lucescu captained his country at the 1970 World Cup.

Lucescu's coaching career spanned almost half a century, from late-1970s Romania to 2026 World Cup qualifying, as Eastern Euro-



In this file photo, Dynamo Kyiv head coach Mircea Lucescu looks on prior the Champions League Group E soccer match between Dynamo Kyiv and Benfica in Kyiv, Ukraine. (AP)

pean soccer was transformed by political and economic changes after the fall of communism, and later by the effects of Russia's actions in Ukraine.

Lucescu spent 12 years as coach of Shakhtar Donetsk, where billionaire Rinat Akhmetov's

backing assembled a squad filled with up-and-coming Brazilian talents. Lucescu forged a team that became a Champions League regular and won the UEFA Cup in 2009.

By the time Lucescu left in 2016, Shakhtar had left its home city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine after a takeover by Russia-backed separatists.

His later moves to Russia's Zenit St. Petersburg and to Shakhtar's bitter Ukrainian rival Dynamo Kyiv were less well-received by Shakhtar fans.

Internationally, Lucescu coached Turkey as well as Romania. His second spell with Romania started in 2024, 38 years after he'd left the national team the first time. His last game was the loss to Turkey.

Lucescu coached Pisa, Brescia, Reggiana and Inter Milan in Italy and is remembered fondly in the north of the country, especially at Brescia - despite his tenure being marked by several ups and downs.

His team there was dubbed Brescia Romeno after Lucescu signed four of his compatriots, including one of Romania's greatest ever players Gheorghe Hagi - between stints at Barcelona and Real Madrid.

SPORTS

Rockets move into tie with Lakers for No. 4 spot in West



Los Angeles Lakers guard Chris Manon (30) and Oklahoma City Thunder guard Aaron Wiggins (21) reach for the ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles. (AP)



Toronto Raptors' Scottie Barnes (4) drives to the basket as Miami Heat's Jaime Jaquez Jr. (11) and Kel'e Ware (7) defend during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Toronto. (AP)

Celtics inch closer to locking up East 2nd seed

PHOENIX, April 8, (AP): Kevin Durant scored 24 points in his return to Phoenix and Houston rallied from an early 21-point deficit and pulled away late to beat Phoenix 119-105.

The Rockets are on a seven-game winning streak and moved into a tie with the Los Angeles Lakers for the No. 4 spot in the Western Conference playoff race. All five Houston starters scored in double figures. Durant made 5 of 9 3-pointers.

Durant, a 16-time All-Star, was greeted with a mix of boos and cheers by Suns fans when he was announced as part of the Rockets' starting lineup. He was traded to the Rockets during the offseason after spending 2 1/2 seasons in the desert in a package that brought Dillon Brooks and Jalen Green to the Suns.

Celtics 113, Hornets 102

In Boston, Jaylen Brown had 35 points and nine rebounds, and Boston outlasted Charlotte.

Brown has scored 26 or more points in his last 10 games. Jayson Tatum added 23 points and has had at least 20 in each of his last six games. Both played the entire fourth quarter.

With the win, the Celtics inched closer to locking up the No. 2 playoff seed in the Eastern Conference. It also gave Boston a 2-1 win in the season series with the Hornets, who could potentially be its first-round opponent.

The Hornets led by 11 in the first half but were outscored 35-26 in the third quarter as Boston took a 90-87 edge into the final period. The Celtics limited the Hornets to 15 points in the fourth, when they built a 13-point lead.

LaMelo Ball led the Hornets with 36 points, his second straight 30-point game.

Thunder 123, Lakers 87

In Los Angeles, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 25 points and eight assists, and Isaiah Joe hit six 3-pointers in Oklahoma City's victory over injury-depleted Los Angeles.

Jared McCain scored 15 points and Chet Holmgren had 15 points and 10 rebounds for the NBA-leading Thunder, who swept the season series against the Lakers with their sixth straight victory and 18th in 19 games overall.

The Lakers had their lowest-scoring performance of the season while playing without Luka Doncic, LeBron James, Austin Reaves, Marcus Smart and Jaxson Hayes, who represent a combined 94.6 points per game. Don-

cic and Reaves are out for the rest of the regular season, while the 41-year-old James sat for one game to rest his arthritic left foot.

Rui Hachimura scored 15 points and Drew Timme had 11 for the Pacific Division champion Lakers, who have lost three straight since losing Doncic and Reaves to injury last week in Oklahoma City.

Raptors 121, Heat 95

In Toronto, Scottie Barnes scored 25 points, Brandon Ingram finished with 23 and Toronto beat Miami, an outcome that locked the Heat into the play-in tournament for a fourth consecutive season.

Jakob Poeltl scored 17 points for the Raptors (44-35), who moved within a game of idle Atlanta for the No. 5 spot in the Eastern Conference playoff chase. Toronto is aiming for its first playoff trip since 2022 and leads Philadelphia (43-36) by one game in the race for the sixth and final guaranteed berth in the East.

RJ Barrett scored 16 and Jamal Shaeed had 11 assists off the bench for Toronto.

A 19-2 run by the Raptors in the first half turned a two-point deficit into a 13-point lead, and Toronto maintained the double-digit margin virtually the entire rest of the way.

Andrew Wiggins scored 24 points for Miami (41-38), which now likely needs to win its final three games to have any realistic chance of escaping the No. 10 seed going into the play-in tournament for a second consecutive year.

Warriors 110, Kings 105

In San Francisco, Stephen Curry scored 17 points with a pair of four-point plays in his second game back from a right knee injury, and Golden State held off Sacramento to snap a four-game losing streak.

Curry, who missed 27 games before returning Sunday, tied the game at 104 on a 3-pointer with 2:38 remaining, then dishd to Brandin Podziemski for a go-ahead 3 the next possession.

Kings 7-foot-1 rookie Maxime Raynaud had 17 points and eight rebounds playing on his 23rd birthday. Killian Hayes scored 18 points off the bench as Sacramento lost for the sixth time in eight games.

De'Anthony Melton had 21 points and Podziemski scored 20 for Golden State.

Timberwolves 124, Pacers 104

In Indianapolis, Ayo Dosunmu scored 24 points and Julius Randle and Bones Hyland each added 19 as Minnesota picked up a critical victory over Indiana.

Hyland also had seven assists and Rudy Gobert finished with 12 rebounds. Minnesota is on the cusp of clinching a top six seed and avoiding the Western Conference's play-in tournament. It could happen later Tuesday - if Houston beats Phoenix. For the Timberwolves, it was a much-needed turnaround. They snapped a three-game losing streak and won for just the second time in six games as they try to build postseason momentum.

The Timberwolves also won despite the absences of All-Star guard Anthony Edwards and Jayden McDaniels. Edwards has missed nine of Minnesota's last 11 games with a bad right knee, this time on the front end of a back-to-back and against a Pacers squad missing a large group of injured players. McDaniels missed his sixth straight game with an injured left knee.

Ethan Thompson scored 17 points to lead Indiana, and Obi Toppin and Jalen Slawson each had 14 points. The league's second-worst team lost its third straight and fell to 4-22 in its last 26 games. Indiana still needs two wins to avoid posting the lowest single season victory total in the franchise's NBA history.

Nets 96, Bucks 90

In New York, E.J. Liddell scored a career-high 21 points to lead Brooklyn to a victory over Milwaukee.

Ben Saraf added 19, while Drake Powell and Malachi Smith each had 11 for the Nets (20-59), who have won two straight and three of their last five.

AJ Green scored 20 points for Milwaukee, which dropped to 31-48. Taurean Prince added 16 points, Cormac Ryan chipped in with 14 and Jericho Sims had 12.

Five years after the Bucks edged the Nets in Game 7 of a thrilling second-round series on their way to the NBA championship, both teams are out of the playoff race and Milwaukee's Doc Rivers indicated before the game he might not coach much longer.

Pelicans 156, Jazz 137

In New Orleans, Jeremiah Fears set a Pelicans rookie record for points in a game with 40, and New Orleans snapped an eight-game losing streak with a victory over Utah, who lost their 10th straight.

Fears, the seventh overall pick in the draft, shot 17 for 29 from the field and 1 for 7 from 3-point distance. Jordan Poole scored 34 points, including 22 in third quarter, when New Orleans set a franchise record for points in a period with 50. The Pelicans also set a franchise record for points in a game, despite playing without usual starters Zion Williamson, Trey Murphy III, Dejounte Murray,

Herb Jones and Saddiq Bey.

While Murphy (right ankle) and Murray (bruised left hand) were injured, Williamson, Jones and Bey were all active, but were left on the bench for New Orleans' final home game of a second-straight non-playoff season.

Poole, who has spent more than half the season on the bench, shot 7 of 16 from 3-point range in his seventh start for New Orleans.

Rookie Micah Peavy scored a season-high 20 points, 2023 first-round draft choice Jordan Hawkins added 25 points for New Orleans and 2025 first-rounder Derek Queen (13th overall) had 17 points and 12 rebounds as the Pelicans finished with a franchise-record 90 points in the paint.

Clippers 116, Mavericks 103

In Inglewood, Kawhi Leonard scored 34 points, hitting six 3-pointers, and Los Angeles recovered after blowing a 23-point lead to beat rookie Cooper Flagg and Dallas.

It was Leonard's 55th straight game with 20 or more points in the Clippers' first win in three tries against the Mavs this season.

Leonard played in his 62nd game, and he'll have to appear in the final three games of the regular season to reach 65 and be eligible for postseason awards such as league MVP and All-NBA honors.

Darius Garland added 22 points, Derrick Jones Jr. had 11 points and 10 rebounds and Brook Lopez had 11 rebounds for the Clippers.

After scoring 96 points in his previous two games, Flagg had 25 points and nine rebounds. The Mavs made 25 of 26 free throws, with Max Christie hitting 10 of 10. AJ Johnson had their lone miss late in the game. Marvin Bagley III had 21 points and nine rebounds off the bench.

Bulls 129, Wizards 98

In Washington, Rob Dillingham scored a career-high 26 points and the Chicago Bulls ended a seven-game skid, pounding the NBA-worst Washington Wizards in the opener of a two-game set.

In the first game since they fired their top two basketball executives, the Bulls were in firm control by the end of the first quarter, leading 38-18 against a Washington team that's seeking to maximize its odds of landing a top draft pick.

Chicago extended its lead to 66-37 by halftime and 100-63 by the end of the third against a Wizards team that appeared disinterested on defense. Patrick Williams added a season-high 20 points and Tre Jones had 20 points and nine assists for the Bulls, who play at Washington again on Thursday night.

'Principle of presumption of innocence is being attacked'

Deliveroo orders to Paris address cited in tax residency case against ex-French star Nasri

PARIS, April 8, (AP): A lawyer for Samir Nasri argues the former Manchester City midfielder is being unfairly singled out for allegedly owing back taxes in France, where authorities are citing Deliveroo meals to a Paris address as evidence that he was fiscally based in the country and not in Dubai.

French authorities estimate that the 38-year-old Nasri might owe more than 5.5 million euros (\$6.3 million) in wealth and income taxes for a period from 2018-2025, according to court documents.

In March, a Paris court agreed to the temporary seizure of some of Nasri's assets to cover any eventual payment of tax arrears.

His lawyer, Jean-Noël Sanchez, said he's appealing the seizure ruling and that it might be years before the broader question is decided of whether Nasri owes back taxes, as authorities claim. The lawyer also contested the figure of 5.5 million euros of alleged potential tax debt, calling it "imaginary."

Sanchez, speaking Tuesday in a phone interview with The Associated Press, said Nasri "is a perfect French citizen" who files his tax



In this file photo, France's Samir Nasri, controls the ball during their Group 1 World Cup qualifying soccer match between France and Finland at the Stade de France stadium in Saint Denis outside of Paris. (AP)

returns and pays taxes for his revenues earned in France.

"The problem is that France has decided for Mr. Nasri - and others, for that matter - to attack all those who live in the United Arab Emirates," Sanchez said.

The retired player, he added, is based there with his partner and their son, who attends school there. "He doesn't live in France," Sanchez said. "I am an angry lawyer because the principle of presumption of innocence is being attacked."

The March court ruling on the temporary seizure of some of Nasri's bank accounts and for a provisional mortgaging of one of his Paris properties cited Deliveroo orders and airline reservations among arguments that Nasri should be considered resident in France for tax purposes.

Nasri, a former France international who also played for Marseille and Arsenal, was alleged in the documents to have spent a total of 487 days in France in the years 2021-2023, compared to a total of 226 days in the UAE.

Nasri also was alleged to have used Deliveroo 212 times in 2022 to have meals sent to one of his Paris addresses, the documents show.

Sanchez said it hasn't been demonstrated that Nasri himself placed the orders.

"Did his mother place orders, his sister, his brother, his friends?" the lawyer asked.

"The administration might today believe that it's on solid ground in saying that he lives in France but it will have to prove that. And that is not going to be proven by the 212 Deliveroos."

Tizzano set to debut for Italy in Nations Championship

PERTH, Australia, April 8, (AP): Rugby Australia couldn't have done a better job of finding a Wallaby to help promote Italy's first appearance in Australia in nine years.

Flanker Carlo Tizzano, born in Australia to Italian parents, is helping mark 100 days until the Wallabies take on Italy in Perth on July 18 as part of rugby's new Nations Championship.

The test will be the first time Italy plays Down Under since 2017 and forms part of the first Nations Championship which will see six teams from the Southern Hemisphere take on six teams

from the Northern Hemisphere throughout the year.

A finals weekend will be held in London to decide the overall winner in November.

Tizzano, who plays for the Perth-based Western Force in Super Rugby and was with Ealing in England in 2022-23, turned down offers to play for Italy and made his test debut for Australia in 2024 against South Africa.

"Lucky I didn't pull the trigger" Tizzano had said after having been contacted by former Italy coach Conor O'Shea in 2018 to play for his side.

Italy has played well recently against the Wallabies - last November at Udine, Italy, two players with Australian heritage helped Italy beat the Wallabies 26-19. Louis Lynagh, the son of Wallabies great Michael Lynagh, and Melbourne-born Monty Ioane, the nephew of former Wallabies winger Digby Ioane, scored back-to-back tries in Italy's comeback victory.

Italy had never beaten Australia in 20 matches until 2022, but last year's win proved the win in Florence three years ago was not a fluke. Italy also beat England in March for the first time in an international.

Wang/Sheng triumph in mixed team

MADRID, April 8, (Xinhua): Reigning world champions Wang Zifei and Sheng Lihao gave China a strong start to the new season by winning the 10m air rifle mixed team title at the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup in Granada, Spain.

The World Cup marks China's first international appearance since the ISSF introduced revised rifle clothing regulations, reducing stiffness tolerances, along with a

new mixed team final format featuring four pairs competing for gold instead of two.

Both Chinese pairs, WangSheng and World Cup debutants Zhang Qianying and Ma Sihan, advanced to the final in second and fourth place, respectively.

In a closely contested final, Wang and Sheng recovered from a slow start to take a 0.3-point lead over Hungary's Eszter Denes and Istvan Marton Peni before the elimination stage.

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Bayern's Harry Kane, left, and teammate Joshua Kimmich look at the fans after the Champions League quarterfinal first leg soccer match between Real Madrid and Bayern Munich in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

Sports

Bayern takes control as Kane sinks Real



Bayern's goalkeeper Manuel Neuer heads the ball to save before Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior, left, can score during the Champions League quarterfinal first leg soccer match between Real Madrid and Bayern Munich in Madrid, Spain. (AP)



Sporting's Geny Catamo, right, challenges Arsenal's Riccardo Calafiori during the Champions League quarterfinals, first leg, soccer match between Sporting CP and Arsenal, in Lisbon. (AP)

Second straight Champions League semifinal in sight for Arsenal

MADRID, April 8, (AP): Harry Kane delivered for Bayern Munich on his return from injury, scoring a goal and helping set up another in his team's 2-1 win at Real Madrid in the first leg of the Champions League quarterfinals.

Kylian Mbappé scored Madrid's goal after the visitors had taken a two-goal lead at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium. Veteran goalkeeper Manuel Neuer came up big for Bayern with several key saves to keep the German champions with the first-leg edge.

Kane had been listed as a gameday decision after missing the team's Bundesliga match last weekend because of an ankle injury.

"We knew that coming to Madrid and trying to get a result is always difficult," Kane told TNT Sports. "We played some really good stuff and we could have done even better - maybe the final ball, the final finish, we had

some good chances. But credit to Madrid as well."

The result left Bayern with an edge ahead of the second leg in Germany next week as it tries to reach the Champions League semifinals for the first time since 2023-24, when it was eliminated by eventual champion Madrid.

Madrid and Bayern are playing their sixth knockout-stage meeting in 14 seasons, with the Spanish powerhouse having won four of their five two-leg matchups since the 2011-12 season.

Kane participated in the build up of Bayern's first goal in the 41st minute, exchanging passes with Serge Gnabry who ultimately fed a through ball for Luis Díaz inside the area. The Colombia forward calmly sent a low shot past Madrid goalkeeper Andriy Lunin.

Kane scored himself in the 46th with a nice one-timer from the top of the area, firmly finding the corner with a low strike. It was his 11th Champions League goal, equaling his best scoring season in the European tournament. He finished with 11 goals in 2024-25.

Kane has scored 22 Champions League goals since the

start of the 2024-25 season, the most of anybody.

Mbappé scored his 20th Champions League goal since the start of the 2024-25 season in the 74th, finding the net from close range after a pinpoint low cross by Trent Alexander-Arnold.

A second straight Champions League semifinal is in sight for Arsenal.

Kai Havertz scored in stoppage time to seal a 1-0 win over Sporting Lisbon at Estadio Jose Alvalade to put Mikel Arteta's team in control of the quarterfinal tie.

The substitute fired past goalkeeper Rui Silva from close range to give Arsenal the advantage ahead of next week's second leg at the Emirates.

Havertz settled a tight game in Portugal by combining with fellow substitute Gabriel Martinelli in the first minute of added time. With one touch the German controlled Martinelli's defense-splitting pass in the box and then converted with a side-footed finish.

Victory saw Arsenal bounce back from successive defeats which cut its quadruple trophy hunt in half in recent weeks. Losses in the League Cup final and FA Cup quar-

terfinals had shaken the Premier League leader going into Tuesday's match.

And it had to withstand an early charge from Sporting in front of a raucous crowd, with player-of-the-match David Raya producing an outstanding save to tip Maximiliano Araujo's sixth-minute shot onto the bar.

Arsenal also hit the bar in the first half direct from Noni Madueke's corner, but both teams struggled to create openings.

Martin Zubimendi thought he'd found the breakthrough in the second half with a curling effort from range only for the goal to be ruled out for offside.

Late on, Raya produced a string of saves. First he pushed away a goal-bound header from Geny Catamo and then pulled off a double stop to deny Catamo again and Luis Suarez.

But it was Havertz who delivered the goal that pushed Arsenal a step closer to another semifinal, having lost to eventual champion Paris Saint-Germain at that stage last year.

Qatar's Diamond League meet rescheduled for June

DOHA, Qatar, April 8, (AP): The Diamond League track meet in Qatar has been postponed from next month to June, "should conditions allow," amid ongoing uncertainty caused by the conflict in the Middle East.

The Doha event had been set to open the season for track's elite series on May 8, as it typically has in recent years, but the postponement means Shanghai's meet on May 16 starts the series instead.

"In recent weeks, the Diamond League has been monitoring the situation in Doha, working in close coordination with meeting organizers, Qatari authorities and other stakeholders," the Diamond League said in a statement on Wednesday, hours after the announcement of a two-week ceasefire between Iran, the United States and Israel.

"In the interests of athlete and



In this file photo, fans arrive for the World Cup Group B soccer match between England and Iran at the Khalifa International Stadium Doha, Qatar. (AP)

spectator safety, a decision has now been taken to postpone the meeting. Should conditions allow, it will now be held on June 19."

The change of date also means a change of venue. Temperatures in Qatar in June are typically higher, so the event moves to the Khalifa International Stadium, which is fitted with large cooling systems around the arena that were used when it hosted the 2019 world track and field championships.

Qatar has become a key host nation for global sports events in recent years and has had to postpone or cancel high-profile competitions since the United States and Israel began strikes on Iran in February.

The "Finalissima" soccer game between Argentina and Spain, which was due to be played in Qatar, was canceled last month and Qatar's motorcycle Grand Prix was rescheduled to November. Elsewhere in the region, Formula 1 races set for April in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have been called off.

'A tremendous honor'

Rhode Island team ensures American entry for next year's America's Cup

NAPLES, Italy, April 8, (AP): There will be an American boat at next year's America's Cup after all.

American Racing Challenger Team USA representing Sail Newport in Rhode Island was announced as an official challenger Wednesday for the 2027 regatta scheduled off Naples.

The new team said it acquired key sailing assets from American Magic, including the AC75 yacht Patriot and the team's two AC40 platforms, after the squad representing the New York Yacht Club announced in October that it would not enter its boat - which raised the possibility of having no U.S. entry for the first time.

American boats have won the America's Cup a record 25 times and held it from its first race in 1851 all the way through 1983, when an Australian syndicate won it.

The new team said it was "the vision of entrepreneurs Karel Komárek and Chris Welch." It will be led by American yachtsman Ken Read.

Read, who is from Massachusetts, has helmed three America's Cup campaigns and has also been a prominent TV commentator for several America's Cups. He was inducted into the Sailing Hall of Fame last year.

"Having the opportunity to represent the United States once again in the America's Cup is a tremendous honor," Read said. "We're under no illusion about the challenges ahead and we're fully focused on building a team that can win the Cup. We are looking forward to building a program that American sailors can be proud of and establishing a legacy that endures well into the future."

America's Cup Partnership CEO Marzio Perrelli, whose appointment was announced on Tuesday, welcomed the move.

"Having a strong representative team from the USA is something that we welcome, and in American Racing Challenger Team USA they have an impressive management team that have already acquired the assets of American Magic," Perrelli said. "This makes Sail Newport's challenge a real contender and we look forward to working with the team going forward."

Led by defender Emirates Team New Zealand, there are now six boats entered for the America's Cup.

The other boats are from Britain (GB1, the challenger of record), Italy (Luna Rossa), Switzerland (Tudor Team Alinghi) and France (La Roche-Posay Racing Team).

A preliminary regatta will be held in Cagliari, Sardinia, next month. The America's Cup is set to start in July 2027.

American Magic represented the U.S. in the America's Cup twice, losing in the semifinals both times.

Quite a turnaround from previous three meetings

Medvedev smashes racket 7 times during double bagel loss to Matteo

MONACO, April 8, (AP): Former No. 1 Daniil Medvedev lost his temper, smashed his racket on the red clay court seven successive times, and then deposited the mangled frame in a trash bin midway through a 6-0, 6-0 loss to Matteo Berrettini at the Monte Carlo Masters on Wednesday.

Medvedev, who is currently ranked 10th, received a code violation for unsportsmanlike conduct and will also likely be hit with a hefty fine for his actions early in the second set.

Medvedev was already struggling when he landed a forehand in the net to drop his opening service game of the second set and fall behind 2-0 and he slammed his racket near the baseline. Then he picked the racket up and threw it toward a tarp at the end of the court.

Still not through, Medvedev then continually picked his frame up and kept on smashing it until it was destroyed enough to fit through an opening in a court-side trash can as the crowd sarcastically cheered him on.

Medvedev, who won the U.S. Open in 2021, lost the match in 49 minutes. He had five double-faults to Berrettini's none; put only 36% of his first serves in play to Berrettini's 65%; and won only 17 of the 67 points.

It was quite a turnaround from the previous three meetings between the players - which were all won by Medvedev.

According to statistics provider Opta, Berrettini became only the fifth player since the ATP Rankings started in 1973 to defeat a top-10 opponent

6-0, 6-0 - a score otherwise known as a double bagel - with the last time it happened being a decade ago when David Goffin routed Tomas Berdych at the Italian Open.

"I wouldn't expect to win like that and it doesn't happen that often," Berrettini said.

Medvedev was playing his first match on clay this year, having recently beaten top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz to reach a final on hard courts in Indian Wells, California.

Berrettini, a Wimbledon finalist in 2021 who has struggled with injuries in recent years, is ranked 90th. The Italian received a wild card invitation for Monte Carlo. "It was definitely one of the best performances of my life," Berrettini said. "I think I missed three shots in the whole match."