



Maintain top levels of readiness, Naval Force told Page 3



HH Amir oversees oath of new ambassadors, consuls

KUWAIT CITY, April 14, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, received on Tuesday the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with a number of newly appointed heads of Kuwaiti diplomatic missions, at Bayan Palace.

During the meeting, the new envoys were presented to His Highness and took the constitutional oath on the occasion of assuming their new posts.

The diplomats included Abdullah Jassim Al-Jarrai; Consul General of Kuwait to the People's Republic of China in Shanghai, Falah Fahad Al-Mutairi; Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Yemen, Nawaf Dheidan Busheiba; Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Turki Khaled Al-Mekrad; Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mohammad Rashid Al-Omairi; Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Tajikistan, Fahad Yousef Al-Masoud; Consul General of Kuwait to the United States in Houston, Mohammad Khaled Al-Ajran; Consul General of Kuwait to the Italian Republic in Milan and Northern Italy, and Mishari Saleh Al-Mezaini, Consul General of Kuwait to the Federal Republic of Germany in Frankfurt. The ceremony was held marking the officials' assumption of their new diplomatic duties.

Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the newly appointed diplomatic heads on the same occasion.

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



Amiri Diwan photo
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and newly appointed Kuwaiti ambassadors and consuls following their constitutional oath-taking ceremony at Bayan Palace.



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

People who love their countries deserve recognition

IN major crises, especially wars, countries take measures to ease the burden on their citizens, particularly when it comes to monthly loan installments, due to the disruption of most sectors and the paralysis of businesses.

Some countries provide financial support to the most vulnerable groups to prevent an increase in poverty rates after the war ends.

During the recent war, the end of which is still uncertain, all sectors in the Gulf countries were affected. As a result, most governments in the region ordered a three-month suspension of loan repayments. Bahrain was among the latest, with its Central Bank directing banks and finance companies to offer options to postpone loan installments and credit card payments, including both principal and interest, for individuals and companies for three months. This came as part of an economic support package, while continuing subsidies for certain groups and services.

Such measures help individuals and businesses manage their affairs during sensitive times like these, especially as many activities have come to a standstill.

Due to the highly sensitive situation, some Gulf countries directed their social security funds to cover the salaries of citizens working in the private sector for three months, without deductions, after the war ended.

In times of war, the focus is on ensuring social stability in all its aspects, as it forms the foundation for easing the burden on the state.

When supply chains are disrupted, governments resort to drawing from strategic reserves. Likewise, when salaries are delayed, the state works to secure them through financial support for individuals and companies, sometimes in the form of non-refundable aid.

Kuwait is among the countries most affected by this war, despite the significant efforts made by security, military, and government institutions.

To make the picture look perfect, it is necessary to adopt measures that strengthen

social stability. There is an urgent need to ease the burden on citizens and companies whose operations have been severely affected by this war, the end of which remains uncertain.

A compassionate approach is required to alleviate the suffering of the people.

During this crisis, some supply chains have been disrupted, making it difficult to secure many goods, especially amid rising global inflation. This situation is placing increasing pressure on household and individual budgets, leaving them in urgent need of support.

Therefore, postponing loan and credit card payments, including installments and interest, for individuals and businesses for three months is a crucial step to address the current and future repercussions of the war.

The burden on people is increasing, especially if monthly payments are not postponed.

We submit this matter to the attention of the government and His Highness the Prime Minister, hoping that directives will be issued to the Central Bank of Kuwait, which in turn could instruct banks and finance companies to postpone loan repayments for individuals and businesses for three months, following the example of other Gulf countries.

This measure was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic and had a significant positive impact on both the public and the economy, contributing to Kuwait's recovery from the crisis and emerging from it even stronger.

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Kuwait maintains stability as security grid stays alert

Pakistan pushes second US-Iran talks amid standoff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14, (Agencies): Kuwait's airspace remains safe, having not detected any threats or risks over the past 24 hours, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said in its daily briefing on Tuesday.

Director General of the General Department of Security Relations and Media, Interior Ministry spokesperson Brigadier Nasser Bouslaib underlined that security forces remain vigilant in their efforts to protect the nation's security and stability.

He went on to say that the ministry's Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams had dealt with six reports of remaining missile shrapnel from previous air defense operations, bringing the total of such calls to 827 since the start of the Iranian onslaught against Kuwait.

The official said that Kuwait's armed forces continue to monitor developments around the region as part of efforts to ensure maximum preparedness across state bodies to deal with any emergencies that may arise.

He concluded by praying for the continued protection of Kuwait, its people and leadership from all harm.

Meanwhile, direct and incorporated collaboration among state bodies marks a core pillar of scaling up alertness and effective response to ongoing happenings, said Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior (MoI) Maj. Gen. Abdulwahab Al-Wuhaib Monday.

He made the remarks while inspecting Special Security Forces to check workflow, preparedness, and personnel deployments, the ministry said in a press release.

During the tour, he was kept posted on the operational mechanisms and joint coordination with military bodies, commending coordination among the Kuwaiti Army, the MoI and National Guard as reflecting advanced efficiency and preparedness as well as effective performance.

The official voiced gratitude and appreciation to all members of the military and security forces for their sincere efforts and continuous dedication to serving the nation.

He elaborated that the main goal of everyone is to serve the public interest of the state, noting that the Special Security Forces mirror the image of the State of Kuwait and its institutions in living up to their national duty.

Elsewhere, the standoff between the United States and Iran deepened Tuesday as the U.S. declared it had blockaded Iran's ports, Tehran threatened to strike targets across the region, and Pakistan said it was racing to bring the sides together for more talks.

Though last week's ceasefire appeared to hold, the showdown over the Strait of Hormuz risked reigniting hostilities and deepening the regional war's economic fallout.

Also, in Washington, direct talks between Israel and Lebanon were set to begin, the first such negotiations in decades.

Talks aimed at permanently ending the conflict in Iran - which

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983 laws under review, 237 amended

Legislative transformation gains ground ahead of 2026 deadline: Justice Minister

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait affirmed that the National Plan for updating the Legislative System, launched in 2024, is progressing according to schedule.

He explained that the second phase, which extends until the end of December 2026, is witnessing an accelerated legislative pace.

The goal when the plan was launched in 2024 was to review 25 percent of the legislative system.

There are currently approximately 983 laws in force in Kuwait, of which 250 are being amended

as part of a comprehensive legislative modernization project. The total number of amended laws so far has reached 237, including 21 new decrees, 54 amended decrees, 8 decrees repealing existing laws, 77 international agreements, and 77 requests for preliminary approval of international memoranda of understanding pending finalization.

These achievements are not limited to amending legal texts alone, but form part of a comprehensive process to modernize the state's legislative framework in a way that meets development needs and strengthens legal protections for rights. Minister Al-Sumait stressed that work is ongoing to complete the announced plan by the end of December 2026.



Nasser Al-Sumait
Minister of Justice

Health ministry reset underway

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi approved a ministerial decree regarding the ministry's new organizational structure.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Health, the decree represents a step forward toward a new institutional phase aimed at strengthening governance principles and

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Judiciary shuts door on filming

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: The Supreme Judicial Council issued a decision banning taking photos and videos in courtrooms and judicial buildings without a written permission from the presiding judge.

In a press statement Tuesday, the council explained that this decision aims to ensure that the judiciary performs its

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Day by Day

EXPERIENCED and wise men say that a man who never lies will never get married. Such is life, which ranges from seriousness to humor and from light to darkness. Although honesty is a salvation, life is a mix of beauty and darkness, laughter and sorrow. So, give to God what is God's, and to Caesar what is Caesar's. ... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

8



NREC announces entry into a sale agreement for a subsidiary's stake in MII - Malta for total consideration of approximately KD 26.4 mln

Rebound hinges on repairs

Kuwait's oil sector eyes 3-month recovery amid extensive damage

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Questions remain regarding the actual impact of the war on the oil sectors of Kuwait and the entire Gulf region after the announcement of the Middle East ceasefire. Many were wondering how much time is needed for production to rebound to levels seen before Feb 28, as the regional damage has been extensive, including the closure of gas-to-liquids (GTL) facilities, refineries, and liquefied natural gas (LNG) units.

Following the cessation of hostilities, international reports estimated the cost of repairing and rehabilitating targeted Middle Eastern oil infrastructure at \$25 billion within the 40-day conflict period.

Oil analyst Kamel Al-Harami pointed out that while the exact cost is difficult to determine now, a thorough assessment is required, particularly for the Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-

Ahmadi refineries. He expects that the restoration of damaged local facilities could span around three months.

Al-Harami explained that returning field production to pre-Feb 28 levels depends on the speed at which malfunctions in damaged facilities are resolved. He said this situation is unprecedented for Kuwait, as its wells have never previously halted production for 40 days or longer.

To ensure a smooth restoration of the oil flow, he emphasized the necessity of involving major international firms with the specialized expertise and technology required to fix complex malfunctions.

Although the recent production halt at the Burgan field—is not expected to cause significant long-term impact on its output, Al-Harami stressed that advanced global technology is vital. He pointed out that Burgan used to produce 70 percent of the output of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) and this reached below 60 percent recently.

He said Kuwait must benefit from the capabilities of international oil giants to restore full production capacity, as traditional private contractors lack



Al-Harami



French Ambassador Olivier Gauvin poses for a group photo with Kuwaiti architect Sabah Al-Rayes and attendees following the conferral of the Order of Arts and Letters at the ambassador's residence.

France confers prestigious cultural honor on Kuwaiti architect Al-Rayes

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: French Ambassador to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin awarded the Order of Arts and Letters to Kuwaiti architect and engineer, Sabah Al-Rayes, in a ceremony held Monday at his residence with various officials in attendance.

Ambassador Gauvin lauded the professional and cultural journey of Al-Rayes, describing him as a prime example of blending architectural



Photos by Rezk Tawfiq
Ambassador Gauvin pins medal on Sabah Al-Rayes during ceremony.

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Prayer Timings

Fajr	04:01	Asr	15:23
Sunrise	05:24	Maghrib	18:14
Zohr	11:48	Isha	19:34

Kuwaitis urged to obtain Umrah permits via 'Nusuk' platform

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia FMs discuss region, call to upgrade security, stability



Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah

KUWAIT CITY, April 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Monday made a phone call with his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan.

During the phone conversation, both sides tackled the ongoing regional developments and efforts being exerted to address them, as well as ways and means to strengthen regional and international security and stability, said the Foreign Ministry in a press release.

Meanwhile, in another unrelated devel-

opment, the Consulate General of Kuwait in Jeddah urged Monday Kuwaiti citizens wishing to perform Umrah to fully comply with the regulations issued by the competent authorities in Saudi Arabia, in preparation for the 1447 Hijri Hajj season.

In a statement, the consulate stressed the need for Kuwaiti citizens intending to enter Makkah to perform Umrah to obtain an Umrah permit via the "Nusuk" platform during the period from Monday, April 13, until Friday, April 17.

It noted that issuing Umrah permits through the "Nusuk" platform will be suspended for Saudi citizens, Gulf Cooperation Council nationals, residents inside the Kingdom, and all visa holders starting Saturday, 1 Thu Al-Qi'dah 1447 AH (April 18) until Sunday, 14 Thu Al-Hijjah 1447 AH (May 31).

The consulate emphasized the importance of adhering to these instructions and decisions issued by the competent authorities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Prince Faisal bin Farhan

Heading for Gulf integration

MoU to widen trade horizons between Kuwait and S.Arabia

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: A decree was issued to formalize the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the governments of the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regarding export development.

This is a strategic move to reinforce economic synergy and broaden trade horizons.

This development indicates that both nations are gearing toward strengthening Gulf economic integration, catalyzing national export growth and establishing sophisticated channels for investment and trade cooperation between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Article One of the decree stipulates that the memorandum signed in Riyadh on Dec 16, 2025 is officially approved.

Article Two mandates the concerned ministers – each within their jurisdiction – to ensure the implementation of the decree upon publication in the official gazette.

The agreement between Kuwait (represented by the Public Authority for Industry) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (represented by the Saudi Export Development Authority) aims to strengthen cooperation, establish a multifaceted framework for joint initiatives, and develop institutional capacities to secure mutual benefit.

The memorandum outlines avenues for activating this cooperation, particu-

larly through synchronized participation in general and special trade exhibitions in both countries, systematic exchange of national market studies, and sharing non-confidential technical expertise and commercial data. Implementation mechanisms include promoting trade missions, organizing training seminars and conferences, and engaging in diverse economic events designed to empower national exporters and enhance trade promotion opportunities.

The MoU stipulates the appointment of liaison officers from both nations to oversee the implementation process, supported by periodic meetings – conducted in-person or virtually – to refine procedural coordination and strengthen ties.

Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to maintain the confidentiality of documents and exchanged information, indicating that such materials remain restricted to agreed objectives and strictly prohibiting their disclosure to third-party entities without consent.

Regarding conflict resolution, the memorandum establishes a mechanism for settling disputes arising from its interpretation or execution through diplomatic consultation, specifically precluding recourse to external judicial bodies.

The memorandum takes effect upon completion of legal formalities and it is valid for three years with automatic renewal for a similar period, provided no termination notice is issued three months in advance.

KD 803m spent on development projects in '25/'26 yearend plan

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Statistics from the Secretariat General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development revealed an expenditure of KD803.158 million for development projects up to the last quarter of the 2025/2026 development plan.

This is 60 percent of the total approved annual cost of KD1.333 billion, an increase of KD335.004 million compared to KD468.154 million in the 2024/2025 development plan, which constituted 43 percent of the total budget of KD1.069 billion.

The newspaper viewed the data on the website of the council, indicating that the 2025/2026 development plan included 133 projects -- 10 have yet to start, 42 in the preparation phase, 67 in the implementation phase and 14 in the handover phase.

The Secretariat explained that as per the vision of Kuwait, the structure of the 2025/2026 annual plan is based on seven pillars. Each pillar consists of 32 development programs and each program includes a package of related projects, selected based on their potential to enhance the global competitiveness of Kuwait, and consequently, realize the vision of the State to become a financial and commercial hub that attracts investment.

In the introduction to the plan report, the Secretariat pointed out that it

adopted indicators to measure the developmental impact of the plan on the progress of the country in achieving this vision. The indicators were used to identify the gaps in each program and determine the implementation mechanisms to narrow these gaps. The implementation mechanisms include systems and standards, institutions, capabilities, automation, laws and regulations, private investment, and government investment.

The Secretariat added that the annual development plan is managed as a package of initiatives reviewed annually. It is subject to amendment based on the performance of the initiatives or the development of new initiatives to achieve the goals.

The new annual development plan differs from previous plans, because it is based on more specific criteria for selecting development initiatives and defining the legislative requirements to drive development in various programs of the plan.

A governance system was established for each program to ensure their success in achieving the objectives.

All these aim to improve the ranking of Kuwait in all international indicators, so it becomes part of the top 35 countries by 2035.

It is worth noting that 42 government entities are participating in the plan, which targets 36 policies and 38 legislative requirements.

GCC grid power to offset shortage during summer

Kuwait to buy electricity worth KD 283 million

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy recently referred to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) the contract for importing electricity from the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) for the period starting from May 2026 until March 2027 at a total cost of KD283.286 million.

SAB will review and audit the contract, which is subject to its oversight. This is to ensure the integrity of procedures before finalizing the contract with the GCCIA and commencing the supply of the agreed quantity of electricity.

The ministry is utilizing the GCCIA network to cover electricity needs and guarantee the stability of the national grid during the summer months, when consumption usually increases to record levels due to high temperatures that lead to intensive use of air conditioning units, which consume around 70 percent of the electricity produced.

The power import also aims to provide more time for carrying out routine maintenance of

power generation and water desalination units at various stations, as per the approved plan. This is important for older units that the ministry is working hard to rehabilitate and resume operations, in addition to the new units, which are being commissioned now.

In a related development, the ministry, in cooperation with Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP), is finalizing procedures for tendering and implementing several power production projects to achieve electricity self-sufficiency in the future and reduce the need for electricity imports. These projects include the North Zour power plant (phases two and three) with a total capacity of 2,700 megawatts, the Subiya power plant with a capacity of 900 megawatts, Khairan power plant with a capacity of 5,400 megawatts and others.

Contract

The ministry will sign the electricity import contract with the GCCIA once it obtains approval from SAB and there are no issues hindering the contracting procedures.

Meanwhile, the latest general budget report revealed the allocation of KD173.2 million for electricity and water in ministries and government agencies, listed under the goods and services category, for the 2026/2027 fiscal year.

This allocation covers 36 ministries and government agencies -- an increase of

KD39.724 million compared to the approved budget for the same item in the previous fiscal year, which totaled KD133.476 million.

According to the report, the approved expenditures for electricity totaled KD139.498 million, while KD33.702 million was allocated for water.

It is worth noting that electricity and water fees for the government sector are the highest compared to other residential sectors -- 25 fils per kilowatt-hour and the cost of 1,000 imperial gallons is KD4. This is significantly higher than the fee for the industrial and agricultural sectors, where the fee for the same quantity is 750 fils.

The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy will establish 23 administrative, technical and service buildings in various areas to decentralize services and make them more accessible to the public, including emergency services, electricity connection, debt payment and other services, as well as providing a suitable environment for employees and visitors.

The ministry included these buildings in its current annual plan, which will be implemented gradually through the Technical Services Sector.

Among these buildings are six green buildings to serve customers in all governorates, a workshop for manufacturing solar panels, and a water analysis laboratory building in Shuwaikh.

Registration for session '25/'26 starts April 19-23

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari/Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: The Deanship of Admissions and Registration at Abdullah Al-Salem University announced that the early registration for the summer term of the 2025/2026 academic year will be on April 19-23, urging the students to adhere to the specified dates to ensure successful course registration.

In a press statement, the deanship clarified several important points that the students should consider, indicating there will be no add/drop period once the summer term starts, hence, the need for careful course selection during the early registration phase.

It also disclosed that the deadline for withdrawing from courses or the summer term is on June 2, stressing the importance of noting this date to avoid academic problems.

Regarding transfers, it advised students wishing to transfer from the College of Business Administration and Entrepreneurship to other colleges to register for course IMP099, not IMP099B, in accordance with the regulations.

It then affirmed its commitment to organize the registration process to better serve the students, calling on them to monitor official announcements and comply with the issued instructions.

Ramadan donations: The Department of Charitable Societies and Foundations at the Ministry of Social Affairs emphasized the need to include donations collected during the holy month of Ramadan in the automated management system to the heads of the boards of directors of charitable societies and foundations.

In a letter addressed to the aforementioned boards of directors, the ministry stated that it noticed some of these entities failed to include the Ramadan donations in the automated system for managing charitable societies and foundations. It then underscored the importance of taking this step, warning that failure to comply will lead to suspension of the erring entity's automated system.

Other Voices

Israel's right to exist

By Ahmad alsarraf

GUESTS on talk shows, including public figures and politicians, often feel uncomfortable when asked about their stance on Israel's right to exist.

The answer is usually yes, especially in influential Western countries. A different answer could lead to accusations of antisemitism and a denial of the Jewish people's right to life.

One of the most notable responses to this question was provided by British-American commentator and interviewer Mehdi Hasan, who is known for his sharp interviewing style and insightful interviews.

Mehdi was born in 1979 in Swindon and has worked for major media organizations such as Al-Jazeera, MSNBC, and Zeteo News.

Mehdi Hasan and Tariq Ramadan (grandson of Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood) were among the leading Muslim commentators in Europe.

Mehdi Hasan's answer is provided in greater detail in his widely read book "Win Every Argument", published in 2023.

Hasan poses three questions that constitute the answer to the question raised above.

1. What geographical area does the question refer to? Israel is the only country in the world that refuses to clearly define its borders or acknowledge where they begin and end. Is it pre-1967 Israel or post-1967 Israel? What about the West Bank, Jerusalem, Mount Hermon, and the Golan Heights? These are considered occupied territories, and Israel's claim to them is not internationally recognized, although Israel considers them part of its territory.

2. What does "the right of a state to exist" mean? He says it is a flawed concept. States do not pos-

sess such a right, rather, it is people who have rights. States change their borders, names, and structures, they disappear and re-emerge in different forms. This happens constantly. The Soviet Union, once the second superpower after the United States for seventy years, disintegrated into Russia and fourteen other independent republics.

The same thing happened with Yugoslavia, which split into several states. The same occurred with Czechoslovakia, Sudan, and others. What became of the Soviet Union's right to exist? Does the United Kingdom have the right to exist? If the answer is yes, then Scotland, for example, would have no right to vote for independence from the United Kingdom, and there have already been two attempts to leave the Union. Therefore, no one has the right to question the United Kingdom's right to exist. The concept is meaningless, both now and in the future.

Meanwhile, why did Palestine not have the right to exist, despite its name appearing in hundreds of thousands of Arab, British, and other documents? And why were the name, borders, and geography of the land itself changed to become Israel in 1948?

3. If we assume that a state has a right to exist, as some argue, then why does the question not include the right of countries such as Canada, Norway, or India to exist?

This is out of the question, so why should we give anyone the right to question Israel's right to exist?

Those who raise such a question aim not only to justify the actions of the Zionist state in the West Bank and Gaza, its wars in Lebanon, its racism, and its insistence on the extermination and displacement of Palestinians and the people of southern Lebanon, as well as its brutal actions, but also to obtain a certificate of innocence for the crimes, massacres, and ethnic cleansing that Israel has been accused of committing since 1936 and before and after. This is precisely what Israel, or those who pose this question, seek.

□ □ □

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Gulf national prime suspect in funds scandal

Several years in jail for meager KD60 commission

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: A Gulf national allegedly lured a citizen through suspicious banking links to carry out financial transactions in exchange for meager commissions, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources, the Ministry of Interior is coordinating with its counterpart in a Gulf state to apprehend the suspect wanted for questioning, after he was implicated in a money laundering and bank fraud case, having drawn a citizen into the scheme in exchange for a small financial commission.

The coordination memorandum will also reveal the mechanism the suspect used to seize a large sum of money from a citizen's account without obtaining her bank card PIN or any of her personal information, a case that has raised eyebrows.

The sources expressed astonishment that

the arrested citizen would be involved in a serious case potentially carrying a prison sentence of several years for a commission of no more than KD 60. During investigations conducted by the Hawally Criminal Investigation Department, which is affiliated to the Criminal Security Sector, the citizen confessed to his involvement in the crime for this small sum.

In the details of the case, which was registered at the Al-Shaab Police Station as a felony, a citizen filed a report stating that she was surprised to receive a text message informing her of a deduction of KD 1,640 from her account without her knowledge or consent. This occurred through two withdrawals on March 28.

The victim confirmed that she had not made any purchases, accessed any suspicious links, received any phone calls, or

downloaded any applications. She emphasized that she was not accusing anyone in particular.

After the case was registered, it was referred to the Criminal Investigation Department, which initiated its procedures to uncover the circumstances of the incident. The investigation revealed that the withdrawn amount had been transferred to a citizen's account.

The citizen was summoned and appeared voluntarily. He stated that someone had contacted him from a number outside Kuwait, specifically from one of the Gulf countries, offering to send and receive banking links in exchange for a commission for each transaction. He said he had no further information about the details of the activity.

The source confirmed that security efforts are continuing to apprehend the main suspect and uncover all aspects of the case.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Kuwait remains target in fragile ceasefire accord?

"WHILE the people of the Gulf welcomed the ceasefire agreement between Washington and Tehran, Iranian missile and drone attacks continue to target Kuwait. Is Kuwait the only country excluded from the agreement? What steps should Kuwait take, especially since the ceasefire agreement appears to have been implemented first by Iran and then by Washington?" Kuwaiti journalist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Why have Iranian missiles continued to strike Kuwait? Does the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps consider Kuwait an enemy or a threat to Iran's security to this extent? Perhaps the Revolutionary Guard officers will come to their senses and ensure that the ceasefire extends to neighboring Kuwait. If only the situation would end there."



Hassan Ali Karam

"Iraqi militias linked to Iran in Basra continue to occupy the Kuwaiti consulate, carrying out acts of vandalism, looting, and theft. Is history repeating itself? What occurred at the hands of mobs and outlaws in the absence of Iraqi security forces is reminiscent of the events of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Security forces may have been complicit in the vandalism, looting, and occupation of the consulate building, as the saying goes, 'like father, like son.'"

"The ceasefire was undoubtedly a relief, allowing us to breathe a sigh of relief and ease our anxieties. The war was not limited to Iran, the United States, and Israel, but the entire Gulf region was affected. Missiles flew over our heads, targeting sensitive and dangerous sites in the Gulf states, even though they were not parties to the war."

"The reason behind the Iranian attacks appears to be the thirst for revenge that has taken root among the soldiers who have abandoned reason and wisdom and disregarded the principles of good neighborly relations. In Kuwait, we are accustomed to crises, so missiles and drones will not frighten us; even young children consider them as a game. The ceasefire agreement will be fragile as long as tensions persist, fingers remain on the trigger, and some parties stay eager to settle scores."

Also:

"According to political analysis, how do we measure victory? Is it by toppling a regime, changing its behavior, or achieving specific regional arrangements?" columnist **Ahmad Al-Dawas** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"A brief summary of the answer is as follows - Since World War II, the United States has fought major wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. All began with overwhelming tactical victories, but were followed by prolonged chaos. The adversary was not fully defeated but instead adapted and, in some cases, expanded its influence. Iran is a prime example of this."

"Iran has neither won nor lost, and the United States has not fully achieved its objectives, leaving the region trapped in a cycle of chaos. Prolonged attrition has replaced victory. Today, Iran faces the most severe sanctions in its history. It suffers from high inflation, and experiences recurring internal protests. Its relative international isolation is increasing, despite closer ties with Russia and China."

"Iran has not regained its ability to export oil freely. It is considered the losing party, yet the United States negotiates with it as an equal at the Islamabad conference, which is a strange situation."

"After the Vietnam War, the Americans left behind a government that collapsed only two years later. In Afghanistan, they withdrew after twenty years, and the Taliban returned stronger than before. And in Iraq, they left behind sectarian chaos that contributed to the rise of ISIS and unprecedented Iranian influence. Each time, there were no celebrations of victory, no peace treaties, only temporary ceasefires and withdrawals."

"The United States has lost credibility in its ability to impose its will unilaterally, while Iran has lost its economic prosperity and internal political freedom. The region has lost decades of stability, the Iranian people have lost opportunities for openness, and the American people have lost trillions of dollars that could have been spent on health and education."

"This is the harshest lesson - some wars do not end with victory for anyone, but rather with exhaustion for all parties. For 47 years, the Gulf states have suffered from political and terrorist attacks, and later Iranian missile strikes. Despite this, these countries have adhered to restraint and avoided recklessness, not out of weakness, but out of a deep sense of responsibility and a commitment to preserving stability for the benefit of their people. They should have been present at the negotiating table in Pakistan."

"Eight days after the start of the American-Israeli war against Iran, the Secretary-General of the Arab League

suddenly expressed his opinion. I swear by God Almighty that, as an Arab citizen, I had forgotten the existence of the Arab League at that moment. Then, other Arabs began mocking the people of the Gulf on social media, often using offensive language and caricatures. Their hearts were filled with intense hatred and hostility toward us."

"Were your hearts so consumed with hatred and envy toward us? We have not been negligent toward you, and we thank God that we have rulers whom their people love, rulers who did not come to power through tanks or military coups. We live in the best of circumstances, praise be to God. And God speaks the truth when He says, 'Say, 'Die in your rage!'"

"We have not been stingy with you. Whenever you face hardship, you find the Gulf countries standing as support in times of difficulty and need. Insulting us is unacceptable. Indeed, trials reveal what is in people's hearts, expose their true nature, and distinguish friend from foe."

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"Kuwait Municipality's resources are unable to properly manage the burial of ten bodies at once, as Sulaibikhat Cemetery is unable to accommodate the large number of mourners and their vehicles. It is unacceptable for Kuwait Municipality to allow this situation to continue in its current form. This overcrowding makes it difficult for mourners to fulfill the religious duty of attending funerals and offering prayers for the deceased," Kuwaiti writer **Zaid Al-Jalawi** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Kuwait Municipality has left mourners to endure this congestion. Without the strong sense of respect associated with cemeteries, such extreme overcrowding could potentially lead to disputes among attendees. Kuwait Municipality is required to issue a decision regulating the burial process. Before the invention of refrigeration, burials were carried out as quickly as possible to preserve the dignity of the deceased before decomposition and the spread of unpleasant odors."

"In this day and age, there are resources that allow some burials to be postponed to the following day, or the day after, or to be distributed across three or more times a day, so that the decision regarding burial timing is not left solely to the family of the deceased. The overcrowding at Sulaibikhat Cemetery is unbelievable. Mourners arrive before the afternoon prayer and often do not leave until close to, or even after, the sunset prayer."

"Offering condolences inside cemeteries is not in accordance with the Sunnah (Prophetic tradition). Why does Kuwait Municipality not issue a decision to prohibit offering condolences inside cemeteries, which is the main cause of this overcrowding? Condolences have become a social custom and a matter of etiquette, rather than a strictly religious practice. They can be offered by phone or through written messages. The family of the deceased may receive mourners in diwanis or in the homes of relatives and neighbors."

"Mourners are often required to stand in long and exhausting queues, placing a significant burden on the

relatives of the deceased, the mourners themselves, and the overall process. Kuwait Municipality is contributing to the congestion and the difficulty faced by mourners. The Sunnah is limited to attending the funeral procession and performing the prayer over the deceased. Designating halls for condolences that emphasize social formalities is not part of the Sunnah. This may lead to disputes because one person offered condolences while another did not."

"The cemetery is a place associated with the afterlife, not worldly affairs. All activities within it should be purely religious, limited to attending the funeral procession, performing the prayer for the deceased, and then returning home."

"Kuwait Municipality's decision to regulate burials and eliminate condolences at cemeteries would help reduce embarrassment for Muslims and others attending funerals. Many people have stopped attending funerals due to the municipality allowing up to ten funerals to take place simultaneously."

"Nearly 500 vehicles, or more, crowd the narrow cemetery pathways. Kuwait Municipality is not required to accommodate the preferences of the deceased's relatives regarding exact burial times. Instead, organizing burial schedules - morning, noon, afternoon, or evening - and coordinating funerals should fall under the municipality's responsibility."

"Kuwait Municipality could also consider providing shuttle buses, if possible, to transport mourners from the cemetery gate to parking areas and back."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

Maintain top levels of readiness, Naval Force told

KUWAIT CITY, April 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Defense, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, visited the Naval Force on Tuesday to review workflow, readiness levels, and combat preparedness.

In a statement, the Ministry of Defense said the minister held direct communication with all naval units during the visit, conveying the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Abdullah expressed pride in the dedication and sincerity demonstrated by naval personnel in performing their national duty, praising their high efficiency and constant vigilance in protecting Kuwait's territorial waters and safeguarding its maritime borders.

He stressed the importance of maintaining the highest levels of readiness to address various challenges amid current conditions.

The minister commended, at the conclusion of the visit, the sincere efforts of naval personnel, highlighting their high preparedness and discipline in carrying out their duties.



KUNA photo
Minister of Defense, Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, visits the Naval Force to review workflow, readiness levels, and combat preparedness.

How to curb flow of illegal money?

Eye on supervisors

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: The General Administration of Customs (GAC) organized a specialized workshop titled "Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Crimes and Procedures to Combat Currency Smuggling Across Borders" as part of its commitment to raising preparedness levels and enhancing the efficiency of customs personnel, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

In a press release, GAC explained that the workshop, held at the training center in Shuwaikh, targeted shift supervisors at all border crossings. The workshop highlighted the latest methods and procedures for monitoring and combating money laundering and terrorist financing crimes, as well as mechanisms for countering attempts

to smuggle cash through land, air, and sea borders.

This workshop is part of a comprehensive strategy aimed at enhancing preparedness for the coming period and raising the level of field awareness among customs personnel, thereby contributing to strengthening customs control and combating all methods of financial smuggling.

It is complementing GAC's training programs by holding additional workshops for customs inspection staff at the same ports of entry. This aims to ensure the participation of the largest possible number of inspectors, equipping them with the necessary practical skills, as well as enhancing documentation and field follow-up mechanisms.

These training courses and workshops are scheduled to continue throughout the year, as part of GAC's efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, and to establish a professional work system aligned with international best practices.

Illegal blogger gets 5 years in jail for insulting senior 'royal'

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: The Criminal Court's Circuit 11 sentenced a social media user, who was residing in the country illegally, to five-year imprisonment followed by deportation after convicting him of insulting the Amir on social media, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

The defendant was apprehended by the State Security department of the Ministry of Interior. His phone was found to contain the incriminating statements, and he was also found to have used the applications through which the offense was committed.

The court, in its reasoning, confirmed the

charges against the defendant and that the technical evidence was consistent with the accusations against him.

Acquittal upheld: The Court of Cassation upheld the acquittal of Saleh Al-Mulla on charges of insulting the Palestinian president, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

The Court of Cassation upheld the rulings of the Criminal Court and the Court of Appeals that acquitted former MP Saleh Al-Mulla of insulting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.



Farwaniya Governorate photos
Top and above: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah receives complaints of ordinary Kuwaiti citizens.

Meet thru app

Governor listens to citizens complaints

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received citizens Saad Al-Shuraika and Nayef Al-Shalabi on Monday as part of his meetings with citizens who submitted requests through the Sahel application.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the meeting reflects the governor's commitment to directly listening to citizens' complaints and suggestions.

Governor Sheikh Athbi listened to the issues and observations submitted by the two citizens, discussed them and reviewed the details.

He affirmed that he would follow up on the matters raised with the relevant authorities and work to study them and take the necessary actions.

Both citizens expressed their gratitude to the governor for the warm reception and his attention to the issues raised.

Municipality says safe housing is top priority

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Kuwait Municipality conducted extensive field inspection campaigns on Monday targeting construction projects in Farwaniya Governorate, aiming to identify violations and ensure compliance with regulations and laws, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

Eng. Saeed Al-Azmi, Director of the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department at Farwaniya Municipality, explained in a press release on the sidelines of a tour of the Ardiya Industrial Area that the inspection teams are committed to providing a safe environment that contributes to achieving Kuwait Municipality's goals and vision of a sustainable and modern environment. The inspection team issued 12 building code violations, ranging from encroachment on state property to the installation of partitions within commercial premises.

He emphasized that the municipality's inspection teams will not hesitate to take regulatory measures in accordance with the building code and to ensure adherence to all regulations and standards.

Eng. Al-Azmi stressed that violating the regulations could endanger lives, and underscored the importance of complying with Kuwait Municipality's regulations and laws.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Municipality announced that the Safety Department in Ahmadi Municipality conducted a field inspection campaign targeting several locations as part of its efforts to enhance compliance with safety and security requirements, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily. The campaign resulted in the issuance of one violation notice and 128 warnings for non-compliance with safety and security requirements.



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Cops on duty injured: A warrant officer and a policeman were injured in a traffic accident on Al-Mutlaa Road after a vehicle collided with their police patrol car while they were responding to a traffic incident, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

According to security sources, security patrols and paramedics were dispatched to the scene immediately after passersby reported the accident. The patrol vehicle sustained significant damage as a result of the collision.

The officers were carrying out their duties at the time of the incident when they were unexpectedly struck by another vehicle. Both injured personnel, born in 1997, were taken to hospital for treatment.

A report was filed on the incident. The condition of the injured officers is confirmed to be stable.

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Higher Education directs PAAET to phase out surplus specializations

Al-Jalal orders graduate reforms to meet labor market needs

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Nader Al-Jalal held a meeting at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) in the presence of Director General of PAAET Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam, Deputy Director General Dr. Meshal Al-Mansouri, and a number of senior officials.

The meeting discussed ways to enhance the alignment of PAAET graduates with labor market needs, particularly in light of certain specializations experiencing a surplus of graduates.

Dr. Al-Jalal directed a comprehensive and thorough review of programs and specializations, including discontinuing those with graduate surpluses that do not match labor market demand, and reducing student intake in other specializations.

He also instructed expanding new, high-quality applied and training pro-



MoHE photo
Minister of Higher Education discusses with PAAET the strategy of aligning education outputs with labor market variables.

grams linked to actual demand in state institutions, to be included in admission policies for the 2026/2027 academic year.

During the meeting, they reviewed the current status of specializations experiencing a surplus of graduates, supported by data and statistics provided by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and the Ministry of Education.

They discussed several educational specializations in the College of Basic Education and other disciplines where student numbers have exceeded labor market needs. A range of practical solutions was presented to address this situation.

The minister emphasized the impor-

ance of institutional integration with stakeholders in both the public and private sectors to ensure a balance in the number and quality of graduates.

He explained that it is essential to adopt mechanisms for the periodic review of programs and specializations based on clear performance indicators. This would enhance the flexibility of the education system and its ability to respond to labor market changes and the needs of state institutions.

Minister Al-Jalal affirmed that reviewing and developing programs and specializations is a national priority, highlighting the importance of bridging the gap between educational outcomes and labor market demands.

He revealed that the next phase will not be limited to academic development but will also focus on a genuine reorientation of the education system to serve the country's needs.

The minister emphasized that applied education represents a direct national arm in supporting the country's requirements, adding that in the next phase, educational programs will be measured by their ability to serve the nation as a top priority, with the focus of education directed toward actual needs, moving away from traditional approaches.

Minister Al-Jalal commended PAAET's efforts and the practical insights and solutions it has provided.

He directed the preparation of a clear implementation plan with timelines, performance indicators, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure effective implementation and the achievement of desired results.

For his part, Al-Fajjam affirmed PAAET's continued commitment to implementing development initiatives aimed at raising the quality of educational and training outcomes and achieving optimal utilization of national human resources.

He emphasized PAAET's commitment to working according to an institutional methodology based on strategic planning grounded in accurate data to meet labor market demands.



MoE photo
Kuwait Minister of Education Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei discusses boosting Kuwait UNESCO heritage listings.

Committee to fast-track nominations

Kuwait pushes UNESCO World Heritage bid for iconic towers

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: In a strategic move aimed at strengthening the State of Kuwait's cultural presence on the international stage, Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei held an extensive meeting with Permanent Delegate of Kuwait to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Dr. Ali Al-Mudhaf and Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Dr. Mohammad Al-Jassar.

The meeting focused on expanding the representation of Kuwait on the World Heritage List and reviewing institutional mechanisms for preparing and submitting new national nominations to UNESCO.

Discussions covered the completion of the nomination dossier for the Kuwait Towers, along with several other Kuwaiti landmarks, for inclusion on the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage List.

Participants conducted a comprehensive assessment of the challenges these sites are facing, while highlighting the need to address technical issues related to the Kuwait Towers and the Water Towers in compliance with the international standards.

They emphasized the importance of maintaining strong coordination and alignment among various sectors and relevant authorities to support national heritage nominations, reflecting the rich historical depth and cultural legacy of Kuwait.

Strategic plans and procedural

frameworks required to finalize the technical and documentation files were reviewed, along with mechanisms for institutional cooperation aimed at ensuring integrated roles and expediting completion.

Participants stressed the importance of strengthening collaborative efforts and intensifying technical and organizational work to showcase the cultural identity of Kuwait globally and preserve its heritage for future generations.

The meeting concluded with Al-Tabtabaei issuing a directive on the formation of a joint committee whose members are from the relevant entities to tackle existing challenges and fulfill the requirements of nomination dossiers to improve the chances of inclusion on the World Heritage List.

Present at the meeting were acting Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs Eng. Mohammad Al-Khaldi and Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs Eng. Hamad Al-Hamad from the Ministry of Education, while acting Director of the National Commission for Education, Science and Culture Athari Al-Qallaf and Head of the UNESCO Department Shadd Matar represented NCCAL.

Also in attendance were acting Assistant Secretary General for the Antiquities and Museums Sector at NCCAL Mohammad Bin Redha, Head of the Restoration and Preservation of Historic Buildings Department Eng. Zahra Ali Baba, and Eng. Noura Al-Muslim -- an architect in the same department.

MoE launches 'My Academic Certificate' service

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: The Ministry of Education activated the "My Academic Certificate" service on its website to update academic certificate data for all employees.

According to a press release issued by the ministry, it called on all members of the teaching and administrative staff, as well as employees at the ministry's headquarters and educational zones, to update their academic certificates through the online service without the need to visit administrative affairs departments.

The ministry clarified that the "My Academic Certificate" service will be active for one month, from April 14 to May 14, 2026, in accordance with the requirements of the Certificates Verification Committee.

It explained that the online service includes two tracks - the first is for those who have not previously uploaded their certificates, requiring them to enter their data, attach the required documents, and then acknowledge and confirm their

accuracy.

The second track is for employees who have previously uploaded their certificates. Their earlier submitted data will appear, and they will be asked to acknowledge and confirm its accuracy, with the option to cancel and re-upload the certificates if needed.

The ministry emphasized that this step is part of its ongoing efforts toward digital transformation and simplifying administrative procedures, thereby enhancing work efficiency and improving data accuracy.

It stressed the importance of adhering to the update process within the specified period, in accordance with the instructions of the Certificates Examination Committee, in order to avoid disruption of certain procedures or job benefits related to academic qualifications.

No exam changes, no oral overrides

Kuwait University Science College reinforces strict assessment rules

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Acting Dean of the College of Science at Kuwait University Dr. Haider Behbehani underscored the need for faculty members to deliver synchronous lectures and conduct exams on the specified dates according to the approved academic timetable, without any changes, to guarantee the stability of the students' academic progress.

On the assessment mechanisms, Behbehani clarified in an official circular to the heads of academic departments and the English Language Unit that he rejects the idea of conducting random oral exams to verify the students' answers or to invalidate written exam results based on them. He stressed that these practices contradict the principle of academic fairness and lack standardized evaluation criteria.

He called for using only approved assessment methods, applying them equally

on all students according to the standards to reinforce the principle of equal opportunity and guarantee the integrity of the educational process.

He also emphasized the need to disseminate these directives to the faculty members and take the necessary steps for their implementation to maintain the quality of education and its outcomes under the current circumstances.

The circular was issued after the College of Science decided to continue distance learning until further notice, in light of the evolving situation and in accordance with the decision that the College Council issued on April 8.

The decision is in line with the directives of the university administration and its commitment to ensure the continuity of the educational process.

This decision proves the commitment of the university to promote structured e-learning and regulate assessment mechanisms to achieve academic fairness and overcome challenges in the higher education sector.

CSC OKs MoCI 50% attendance cap

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) approved the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's request to increase the number of employees required to be present at the ministry's headquarters to 50 percent, in accordance with public interest and work needs, reports Al-Anba daily.

The ministry will determine the employee rotation mechanism.

The ministry had requested the following from CSC:

■ The percentage of employees present at the workplace should not exceed 50

percent of the total number of employees. This percentage should be distributed among employees on a rotational basis, divided into two groups - A and B - with a "one day on, one day off" system to ensure continuity of work. The rotation mechanism is to be determined daily.

■ The remaining provisions of Administrative Circular No. 6/2026, issued on March 18, remain in effect until further notice.

■ This circular is effective from April 14 until further notice.

News in Brief

KIPIC, KOTC extend tender deadlines

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) announced the postponement of the deadline of the pre-qualification for the provision of integrated door-to-deck logistics services for vessels fleet to June 11, instead of April 12.

In a related development, Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) published an announcement in the official gazette - 'Kuwait Al-Youm' - on the extension of the closing date for the agriculture and irrigation works tender to April 28, as well as the closing date for the specialized firefighting services tender to April 14.

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PAHW offers video service: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) launched a paperless service for completing transactions via video conferencing, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a post on its website, PAHW stated that the new service represents a significant step forward in its services in terms

of offering speed, ease, and accuracy in completing procedures.

PAHW called on citizens to book appointments through the Sahel app to take advantage of this service.

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PAFN opens e-license inquiry: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) announced the activation of a license inquiry service on its website - <http://pafn.gov.kw>, reports Al-Anba daily.

This comes as part of implementing remote work systems, ensuring the continuity of services, and facilitating inquiry procedures.

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Namaa builds wells in India: Namaa Charity announced Sunday the implementation of 20 water wells in India, benefiting over 7,000 people.

Head of development and relief sector Khaled Al-Shammari said the wells provide vital access to safe water for families facing scarcity and limited clean sources.

He added the project forms part of sustainable initiatives carried out by the organization in several countries.



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SMEs get new boost from CBK

Despite dominance, GDP share remains low

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: The Central Bank of Kuwait has announced additional financing facilities for the small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in view of their vital role in economic diversification and private sector support.

Due to the escalating economic challenges and geopolitical pressures, combined with the limited impact of SMEs on the gross domestic product (GDP), a fundamental question arises: How can these enterprises transform from mere numbers into a powerful economic force?

It is estimated that SMEs represent about 90 percent of all companies in the country, yet they contribute only around three percent to the GDP. This shows a gap between their size and prevalence on one hand, and their actual economic impact on the other hand.

The number of full-time self-employed citizens exceeded 17,000, while the number of enterprises supported by the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development reached

1,040 in mid-2025.

Experts confirmed to the newspaper that these figures present the sector with a real test: either it remains confined to small, consumer-oriented enterprises, or it transforms into a major driver of economic growth and job creation.

They explained that the challenge is no longer simply increasing the number of enterprises, but rather improving their quality and aligning them with the needs of the economy. Achieving this balance requires better integration of financial, legislative and developmental policies to ensure that SMEs transform from mere statistics into having a tangible economic impact.

Mohammad Al-Qattan, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwaiti Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, affirmed that the facilities approved by the Central Bank are considered a positive step. He pointed out that this proves the confidence of the financial system in the ability of the local economy to overcome challenges, taking into consideration the enhancement of liquidity and the capacity of banks to provide financing in a volatile economic environment.

He explained to the newspaper that the importance of the decision lies not only in providing financing but also in

its practical implementation mechanism in terms of expediting approvals, easing requirements, and offering financing products that suit the nature of enterprises. He stressed that the sector needs "smart and flexible financing" that is linked to the stages and performance of the enterprises, not just traditional financing.

He pointed out that the sector, despite its large size, still faces the challenge of achieving qualitative balance, as a large percentage of enterprises are concentrated in traditional consumer activities such as restaurants and retail, compared to the shortage of value-added enterprises, especially in the fields of technology, logistics, light industries and professional services.

He asserted that the Kuwaiti market no longer needs an increase in the number of enterprises, as much as it needs high-quality enterprises that fill the gap in supply chains and boost the economy.

He also cited the previous statistics from the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS), indicating that the number of citizens working full-time in the private sector reached more than 17,000.

He said estimates suggest that SMEs constitute about 90 percent of all companies in the country, yet their contribution

to the GDP remains modest -- around three percent only, which indicates a gap between the number of enterprises and their economic impact.

Meanwhile, entrepreneur Asrar Jawhar Hayat considers the stimulus package offered by the Central Bank, which includes easing some liquidity criteria and raising financing limits, a valuable support for the private sector, especially since SMEs are the most affected by financing costs and the slowdown in the business environment. She explained that these measures contribute to expanding the financing capacity of banks and providing wider scope for supporting economic activities.

She emphasized that the Kuwaiti market still needs high-quality enterprises in technology and digital services, cybersecurity, logistics, healthcare, food security and renewable energy sectors. She pointed out that the real challenge is not the number of enterprises, but in their ability to provide solutions and added value.

She stated that the sector's contribution to the GDP remains below expectations, despite employing about 23 percent of the total workforce.

She added that the National Fund supports around 1,040 enterprises as of mid-2025, distributed in various economic sectors.

Strengthening diplomatic ties

Kuwait FM holds talks with UAE, Peru, Ukraine, Panama, Pakistan

KUWAIT CITY, April 14, (KUNA): Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held a phone call Monday with UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

In a statement, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the two sides discussed the latest developments in the region, ongoing efforts in this regard, and ways to enhance regional and international security and stability.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Monday two separate phone calls from the Foreign Minister of

the Republic of Peru Hugo de Zela Martinez and the Foreign Minister of Ukraine Andrii Sybha.

In statements, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the calls discussed the latest regional developments and ongoing efforts related to them.

The ministry added that both sides reviewed ways to enhance coordination and support efforts aimed at promoting regional and international security and stability.

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Monday received a phone call from his Panamanian counterpart Javier Vasquez.

During the phone conversation, both foreign ministers discussed the latest regional developments and efforts being exerted to address them.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday discussed, over phone call, latest regional developments with Pakistani counterpart, Ishaq Dar.



Sheikh Jarrah

Subsidies, exports up; IP down

Kuwait trade hits new highs

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: The January 2026 report of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry revealed a multifaceted landscape of sectoral performance.

While indicators for food subsidies, export operations and trade exhibitions witnessed growth, certain intellectual property segments, such as patents and trademarks, went down.

Regarding the sectoral performance, the food subsidy allocation reached about KD1 million, while KD16 million -- 50 percent of total subsidies -- was allotted for essential commodities in the ration card system -- 63 percent increase compared to December 2025.

On the other hand, subsidies for milk and infant formula decreased to KD1 million or 35 percent reduction.

Subsidy for construction materials increased to KD14 million or 46 percent of total subsidies and 25 percent increase.

By the end of January, the number of ration cards reached 275,299, extending benefits to 2,346,651 individuals.

Regarding construction materials, the ministry processed 387 applications for initial disbursement or 33 percent decline. Renewal transactions declined to 23 or 49 percent decrease.

In contrast, requests for the exchange of subsidized materials rose to 12 or nine percent increase and the 'To Whom It May Concern' certificates for material receipt increased to 38 or six percent rise, while non-receipt went down to 76 or 13 percent drop.

In a related development, the International Relations Department recorded significant momentum in the value of Kuwaiti certificates of origin, about KD192 million -- 67 percent increase compared to the preceding month.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations had the highest share with KD145 million or 159 percent growth. The value of certificates issued to Arab and Islamic countries went down to KD10 million, 72 percent decrease. Certificates for European destinations increased to KD36 million -- 66 percent increase. African nations recorded KD50,000 and certifications for American markets decreased to KD179,000 or 37 percent decline. Certificates for Asian countries and Australia increased by 218 percent, totaling about KD 5,000.

Trade exhibition activity witnessed vitality, with 80 licenses granted for temporary exhibitions in the country -- 16 percent increase compared to 69 licenses issued in December.

Licenses for gold and jewelry exhibitions doubled to 12, compared to six in the previous month, achieving a growth rate of 100 percent.

The industrial sector achieved growth with 51 new filings or 50 percent increase, while grants and publications soared to 107 or 328 percent increase.

Industrial design renewals witnessed a sharp decline with only two transactions or 82 percent decrease.

The trademark sector witnessed decline in several indicators. Registration applications reached 986 or 19 percent reduction compared to 1,217 in December.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait maintains

began Feb. 28 with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran -- failed to produce an agreement last weekend, though Pakistan has proposed hosting a second round in the coming days.

Two Pakistani officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter with the media, said the first talks were part of an ongoing diplomatic process rather than a one-off effort.

Two U.S. officials said Monday that discussions were still underway about a new round of talks. A diplomat from one of the mediating countries said that Tehran and Washington had agreed to it.

The talks could happen Thursday, according to the U.S. officials. The location, timing and composition of the delegations had not been decided, although Islamabad and Geneva are being considered as host cities.

The U.S. officials and the diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic negotiations.

The war, now in its seventh week, has jolted markets and rattled the global economy as shipping has been cut off and airstrikes have torn through military and civilian infrastructure across the region.

The fighting has killed at least 3,000 people in Iran, more than 2,000 in Lebanon, 23 in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Thirteen U.S. service members have also been killed.

The blockade is intended to pressure Iran, which has exported millions of barrels of oil, mostly to Asia, since the war began. Much of it has likely been carried by so-called dark transits that evade sanctions and oversight, provid-

ing cash flow that's been vital to keeping Iran running.

Both the nature of enforcement and the extent to which ships will comply remained unclear during the first full day of the blockade Tuesday. Tankers approaching the strait Monday turned around shortly after it took effect, though one reversed course again and transited the waterway early Tuesday.

The tanker Rich Starry had been waiting off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, according to shipping data firm Lloyd's List, which cited data from the energy cargo-tracking firm Vortexa. It was not immediately clear whether the tanker had earlier docked in Iran. Yet it was listed by the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control as linked to Iranian shipping.

Lloyd's List, citing ship registry and tracking data, reported that the vessel is owned by a Chinese shipping company and ultimately bound for China.

U.S. Central Command did not immediately respond to questions about the tanker after it cleared the 21-mile-wide (nearly 34-kilometer) waterway. A day earlier, Central Command said the blockade applied to vessels going to and from Iranian ports.

Since the start of the war, Iran has curtailed maritime traffic, with most commercial vessels avoiding the waterway.

Kuwait's oil

the sophisticated tools needed for such major oil-related issues.

He also highlighted the importance of engaging these companies for onshore and offshore exploration at Failaka Island, considering their potential to help Kuwait achieve a daily production target of four million barrels.

Meanwhile, Audun Martinsen, Head of Supply Chain Research at Rystad En-

ergy, stated that rehabilitating Gulf oil facilities is a complex process, adding that some assets may recover in months, while others could remain offline for years.

He expects the operators to focus on restoring existing fields, driving demand for original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and engineering contractors with regional experience. He thinks that initial efforts will likely involve site preparation, engineering and inspection, followed by construction and equipment replacement as procurement restrictions are eased.

International reports suggest that shutdowns lasting several months can impair field pumping due to technical, operational and economic damages. Challenging fields, in particular, may require extended efforts to reach former production levels. Current estimates indicate that regional production recovery could take around three months to more than a year, as prolonged inactivity can lead to well-pressure issues and enormous damage. Surface and subsurface equipment will require costly and complex maintenance before Kuwaiti production can resume fully.

France confers

innovation with dedication to culture. He disclosed that since its founding in 1957, the Order of Arts and Letters has been honoring individuals for their remarkable efforts in promoting the arts and intercultural exchange -- values that are perfectly illustrated in the career of Al-Rayes.

He pointed out that Al-Rayes is not only an influential architect, as he has also greatly contributed to documenting and preserving the architectural history of Kuwait.

The active participation of Al-Rayes

in cultural spheres, notably his devotion to music, was also recognized.

Reflecting on the life of Al-Rayes, Ambassador Gauvin stated that he observed and helped shape the major transformations Kuwait has undergone.

Meanwhile, Al-Rayes expressed his deep appreciation for the honor, considering it as an acknowledgment of his career and a symbol of the strong ties between Kuwait and France.

He said the French-Kuwaiti relationship is exceptionally strong at the governmental and public levels, highlighting the vital role culture plays in strengthening this bond.

Judiciary shuts

duties, uphold the dignity and sanctity of the judiciary, protect the privacy of litigants, and maintain security in judicial facilities.

The council emphasized that compliance with this decision is mandatory for all those frequenting the courts in order to maintain public order within the judicial system and ensure the smooth conduct of the judicial process, without external interference.

Health ministry

improving performance efficiency within the healthcare system. The next phase will include a comprehensive reshuffling of leadership positions, along with the appointment and placement of administrative staff, including general directors and directors.

Work is underway to complete the procedures for integrating the new organizational structure into the ministry's systems, paving the way for the placement process to begin in the coming period through coordination with the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

Bahraini envoy honors Indian Ambassador with Al-Arfaj

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: In a gesture expressing appreciation and solidarity, the Bahraini Ambassador to Kuwait, Salah Al-Maliki, presented the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, Paramita Tripathi, with the Al-Arfaj flower badge, in recognition of the efforts of frontline workers serving as Kuwait's first line of defense with dedication and sincerity during this critical time, reports Al-Rai daily.

This symbolic initiative reflects the strengthening of diplomatic and humanitarian relations between nations within the same community.

The "Al-Arfaj Flower" symbolizes resilience and unity in Kuwait, and this gesture underscores the importance of international cooperation during times of crisis and acknowledges the vital role played by frontline personnel who have demonstrated their ability to confront challenges with a spirit of responsibility and dedication.



Bahraini and Indian envoys pose during a meeting.

Al-Rai photo

Technical Committee OKs new site for Shooting Club

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: The Technical Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Munira Al-Amir, approved the request of the Public Authority for Sports to allocate an alternative site for the Kuwait National Shooting Club during its meeting on Tuesday.

This will support sports activities and provide a suitable environment for developing the shooting sport.

The committee also approved the following:

q Request of the Ministry of Public Works to allocate the site of the Center for the Prophet's Biography and Hadith Studies, Plot Six in Mubarak Al-Abdullah, for the establishment of a sewage pumping station, as part of the plan to develop the sewage system and improve its operational efficiency,

q Request of the same ministry to allocate a route for two sewage lines extending from the new Jahra pumping station to North Kabad station to improve network connectivity and its capacity to handle increasing flow rates,

q Request of the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to allocate a route for water services in Sabah Al-Ahmad Coastal City to support urban expansion and provide integrated infrastructure for residential and development projects in the area.

OBITUARY

Condolences

The Members of
Bahman Family,
Management and Staff of



شركة خليل باهمان وشركاه للتجارة والهندسة
KHALIL BAHMAN & PARTNERS
GENERAL TRADING & CONTRACTING CO. W.L.L.

deeply mourn the passing of



Mr. Karol Cyril Mathias

Partner / Executive Vice President
(09/July/1947- 12/April/2026)

Mr. Karol Mathias

was the founding member and the Architect of KBP and his demise is a great loss to the organization and will have a profound impact on all who had the privilege of knowing and working with him. He touched many lives in a very special way and will be remembered with great respect and admiration.

We extend our heartfelt condolences and sincere sympathies to the bereaved members of the Mathias and D'sa families.

We pray that Almighty God grants them strength, comfort, and peace during this time of grief

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INTERNATIONAL

Canadian PM Carney secures majority government with special election wins

TORONTO, April 14, (AP): Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney secured a majority government with special election wins Monday night, allowing his Liberals to pass legislation without the support of opposition parties.

Voters cast ballots for three vacant seats of the 343 districts represented in Parliament. In Toronto, Liberal candidate Danielle Martin won the election for the district of University-Rosedale and Liberal Doly Begum won the district of Scarborough Southwest. The result for a Quebec district was expected later.

The Liberal Party could stay in power until 2029 after Monday's results.

Carney won Canada's election last year, fueled by public anger over US President Donald Trump's annexation threats, and he has vowed to reduce Canada's reliance on the U.S.

Since then, five defections from opposition parties, including four from the main opposition Conservative party, put Carney's Liberals on the cusp of the majority.

One of those defectors referenced Carney's speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, as helping in his decision. In that speech, Carney condemned economic coercion by great powers against smaller countries and received widespread praise for his remarks.

Carney, the former head of the Bank of England as well as Canada's central bank, has moved the Liberals to the center-right since replacing Justin Trudeau as prime minister in 2025.

Carney congratulated Martin and Begum in social media posts but did not comment on winning a majority.

"As of tonight, Mark Carney and our entire incredible Liberal team have earned an even more powerful mandate to continue building a better Canada," Martin said.

Daniel Béland, a political-science professor at McGill University in Montreal, said the Liberals also had a shot at winning the Quebec seat.

Béland said the deterioration of Canada-US relations under the second Trump presidency has convinced many Canadians, including people who do not identify as Liberal, to rally behind the prime minister.

"Mark Carney entered the political arena about 15 months ago, but he is proving himself to be an astute politician," Béland said. "He remains popular nearly a year after leading his party to victory in late April 2025 and, with the help of a series of floor-crossings, he is now at the helm of a majority government that provides more stability and greater capacity to move forward with his economic and policy agenda."

The Liberal majority and the recent defections are another blow to Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, who lost the previous national election last year and even his own seat. He has since rejoined Parliament.

Poilievre won a party leadership review earlier this year, but continues to have problems controlling his lawmakers.

Poilievre said in a social media post Monday night that he "will continue to lead that fight every day and in every way in Parliament, across the country and in the next election, when Canadians will reclaim the country we know and love."



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney speaks at the Liberal national convention in Montreal on April 11. (AP)

Republican Rep Gonzales of Texas to retire after bipartisan calls for expulsion

Moore falls short in push to redraw Maryland's congressional map to boost Dems

ANNAPOLIS, Md, April 14, (AP): Maryland Democrats have rejected an effort to redraw the state's congressional map to boost their party's chances in the midterm elections, a setback for Gov Wes Moore who put his clout behind the attempt to blunt President Donald Trump's own redistricting campaign.

The clock officially ran out on the proposal late Monday night as the state legislative session ended, a casualty of internal party disagreements. In the end, the Maryland Senate left the bill in a committee, with Democrats who control the chamber concerned it could backfire under judicial review.

The unusual mid-decade redistricting spree, which started when Trump encouraged Republican-controlled Texas to redraw their map last year, is expected to continue next week. Republicans want to change congressional boundaries during a special legislative session in Florida, while Democrats are asking voters to approve a redistricting referendum in Virginia.

But Democrats will not be poised to pick up a seat in Maryland, where the proposed map would have made it easier for voters to oust the state's lone Republican member of the US House.

Moore, a potential 2028 presidential candidate, said he disagreed with another powerful Maryland Democrat, state Senate President Bill Ferguson,

about "what is required to be able to make sure we're fighting back" against Trump.

"This is not a political game to me," Moore said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I don't look at this as some kind of political talking point. I look at the fact that I think Donald Trump is actively trying to manipulate and change the rules around the November election and beyond because he knows he cannot win on his policies."

Ferguson has said redistricting could actually cost Democrats seats in Maryland because, in the inevitable legal battle that would ensue, a court could order a new map that would be even less favorable to the party. He refused to budge despite pressure from Moore and US House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries.

While speaking at National Action Network in New York on Thursday with the Rev Al Sharpton, Moore complained that Trump was urging some states to redraw maps to favor Republicans, while telling other states to "sit on your hands."

"Don't play with me," Moore said. "And if the rest of the country is going to have this conversation about mid-decade redistricting, then so should Maryland, and so should every other state. Because until it is done nationally, we have to make sure that this election is not stolen right before our face so this pain is made permanent."



Maryland Gov. Wes Moore acknowledges guests as he exits the stage at the National Action Network Convention in New York on April 9. (AP)

But while Moore named a panel in November that proposed the new map for Maryland, the governor could not prevail on the heavily Democratic Maryland Senate to approve it.

When it was before the Democratic-controlled General Assembly, the governor told lawmakers in January that the state needed to act to counter what he called "political redlining" by Trump in other states at the cost of Black representation in Congress.

Moore, who is the nation's only serving Black governor, compared

February, but the measure ran into opposition from Ferguson.

The senator pointed out a map adopted in 2021 that would have made it easier to flip Harris' seat was ruled unconstitutional by a judge who called it "a product of extreme partisan gerrymandering." Maryland passed another map in 2022, and the parties dropped their legal fight.

Also:

WASHINGTON: Republican Rep **Tony Gonzales** of **Texas** said Monday he will retire from Congress after bipartisan calls to expel him.

Gonzales had already said he would not seek reelection after admitting to an affair with a staff member who had later died by suicide. His retirement announcement came just hours after Democratic Rep. **Eric Swalwell** of **California** said he would be resigning from Congress as he also confronted allegations of misconduct.

House Republican leaders had already called on the three-term Gonzales to not seek reelection as they try to hold on to a strongly Republican district in November's midterm elections. And the House Ethics Committee had initiated an investigation. Under House ethics rules, lawmakers may not engage in a sexual relationship with any employee of the House under their supervision.

"There is a season for everything and God has a plan for us all," Gonzales

said in a social media post. "When Congress returns tomorrow, I will file my retirement from office."

He said it has been a privilege "to serve the great people of Texas." He gave no further details on his plans to step down. Previously, he had insisted he would serve out the remainder of his term as the GOP works to hold its slim House majority.

Last month, the top Republican and Democratic members on the House Ethics Committee said in a joint statement that an investigative panel would look into whether Gonzales engaged in sexual misconduct toward an employee in his office and whether he discriminated unfairly by dispensing special favors or privileges.

That announcement came the same day that Gonzales, appearing on the "Joe Pags Show," was asked if he had a relationship with the aide, **Regina Ann Santos-Aviles**.

"I made a mistake and I had a lapse in judgment, and there was a lack of faith, and I take full responsibility for those actions," Gonzales said.

Gonzales went on to say he had reconciled with his wife. He also said he looked forward to the Ethics Committee investigation.

But as lawmakers returned from a two-week break on Monday, there was a growing clamor among members to take a stand against alleged sexual misconduct. Swalwell's alleged transgressions brought renewed attention to the issue.



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attend a welcome ceremony ahead of German-Ukrainian government consultations in Berlin, Germany, Tuesday, April 14, 2026. (AP)

Zelenskyy meets Merz as Ukraine seeks more support from Germany against Russia

BERLIN, April 14, (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met Tuesday in Berlin with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, whose country is one of Ukraine's biggest supporters, as Kyiv battles to defeat Russia's all-out invasion, now in its fifth year.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius was also holding talks with his counterpart, Mykhailo Fedorov, the former Ukrainian digital transformation chief who took up his new post in January and is credited with advancing military drone technology.

US-led efforts to end Russia's war on Ukraine have recently petered out as the Iran war grips the Trump administration's attention, although Tammy Bruce, the deputy US ambassador to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Monday that Washington "will continue to push for a negotiated and durable end" to the war.

Western analysts and officials say Ukraine has in recent months recorded battlefield successes against Russia's bigger army, disrupting a spring offensive started by Russia amid improving weather, as fields dry out and new foliage on tree lines offers more cover.

Meanwhile, the long-range drones and missiles that Kyiv designs and produces are repeatedly striking oil facilities and manufacturing plants deep inside Russia.

Ukraine "is in a much better place than it has been at any stage in this horrific war," Finland's President Alexander Stubb said at the Brookings Institution in Washington on Monday.

Ukraine "is on top from a military perspective," Stubb claimed, noting that last month Ukraine fired more drones and missiles at Russia than Russia launched at Ukraine.

Moscow has also claimed progress on the battlefield. Independent verification of each side's claims was not possible.

Russia occupies about 20% of Ukraine. That includes the

Crimean Peninsula, which Russia seized in 2014.

Ukraine is desperately short of cash and needs a promised 90-billion-euro (\$106 billion) loan from the European Union. That was being held up by Hungary's Viktor Orbán, but his departure as prime minister after weekend elections could free up the sum.

Kyiv is also heavily reliant on US intelligence for targeting inside Russia and needs more sophisticated American-made air defense systems to stop Russian missile attacks on its power grid. If the Iran war drags on, it could erode vital US support for Kyiv, Zelenskyy fears.

Furthermore, the Ukrainian army is short-handed, facing some 200,000 troop desertions and draft-dodging by around 2 million people, Fedorov, the defense minister, said in January.

Meanwhile, Russia does not want a temporary truce, but lasting and sustainable peace, the Kremlin said.

Peace in Ukraine can be reached today if Zelenskyy makes such a decision, the spokesman added.

Meanwhile, Peskov confirmed that Kirill Dmitriev, Russia's special presidential envoy, is currently on a visit to the United States.

Dmitriev is not negotiating the Ukrainian settlement, Peskov said, adding that his visit to the United States does not mean the resumption of such contacts.

In another development, Hungarian election winner Péter Magyar said on Monday that if Russian President Vladimir Putin were to initiate a call with him, he would speak with him and tell him to end the war in Ukraine.

"If Vladimir Putin calls, I'll pick up the phone," he said at his first news conference after his landslide win against Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, a Putin ally. "If we did talk, I could tell him that it would be nice to end the killing after four years and end the war."

Election loss for Hungary PM has ripple effects for Trump and US conservatives

WASHINGTON, April 14, (AP): The big election over the weekend was in a small European country nearly half a world away from Washington, but the defeat of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has significant reverberations in the United States.

That's because President Donald Trump and many US conservatives have long embraced Orbán, who has become an icon among the global right for his anti-immigrant stance.

The American president's agenda has striking parallels with the way the Hungarian leader used the levers of government to tilt the media, judiciary and electoral system to keep his party in power for 16 years.

Trump supported Orbán's reelection bid and even dispatched Vice President JD Vance to Budapest last week - in the midst of the Iran war - to stump for the incumbent.

Orbán's loss was a reminder of how the war has diminished Trump's ability to help allied politicians overseas, as well as of the limited ability of leaders to use their power to tilt voting in their direction in an age of worldwide discontent over incumbents of all ideological stripes.

"Oppositions can win despite a tilted playing field," said Steven Levitsky, a politics professor at Harvard and co-author of the book "How Democracies Die." "Democracies are facing many challenges in many parts of the world, but so are autocracies."

Orbán's defeat has immediate global implications because he was the Euro-



US President Donald Trump, left, greets Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the White House on Nov 7, 2025, in Washington. (AP)

pean leader closest to Russian President Vladimir Putin and had blocked European Union aid to Ukraine, which is defending itself after Russia's 2022 invasion.

His fall was celebrated on Sunday by both Democrats and Republicans, some of whom criticized their own administration for such overt support for the Hungarian leader.

"Don't fiddle-paddle in other democracies' elections," Republican Rep. Don Bacon of Nebraska said on the social media site X.

"The freedom-loving people of Hungary have voted decisively in favor of democracy and the rule of law," posted Republican Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi.

Vance on Monday said he went to Budapest because Orbán was one of the few European leaders to stand up to the European Union bureaucracy in Brussels. "We went because it was the right thing to do," Vance said on Fox News.

Matt Schlapp, chairman of the American Conservative Union, is part of the wing of the American right that embraced Orbán. The Conservative Political Action Conference, which Schlapp's group hosts, held its first European session in Budapest and has made Hungary a regular destination.

Orbán was a featured speaker at the group's conference in Dallas in 2022.

Schlapp said there's an easy explanation for Orbán's loss.

America

5.7 earthquake jolts rural Nevada: A magnitude 5.7 earthquake struck a rural part of Nevada east of the state's capital of Carson City on Monday.

The tremor hit just before 6:30 p.m., the U.S. Geological Survey said. It was centered 12.9 miles (20.7 kilometers) east of the town of Silver Springs at a depth of 3.1 miles (5 kilometers).

Video shot in the town of Fallon showed shattered glass and food scattered on the floor in the aisles of a grocery store. Trina Enloe was sitting with one of her daughters as she did homework in their dining room when the quake hit. (AP)

Sinlaku takes aim at remote US islands: A super typhoon is taking aim at several remote U.S. islands in the Pacific Ocean, lashing Guam with heavy rain and tropical storm-force wind gusts hours before its arrival.

Super Typhoon Sinlaku is on track to barrel over the Northern Mariana Islands late Tuesday local time with widespread rain and flooding along with destructive winds that could cause lengthy power outages, the National Weather Service said.

Guam, a US territory with several American military



This satellite image provided by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) shows super typhoon Sinlaku in the Pacific Ocean on April 13. (AP)

installations and about 170,000 residents, isn't expected to take a direct hit but still could see damaging winds.

The tropical typhoon - the strongest on Earth so far this year - was producing sustained winds of 173 mph (278 kph) on Monday as it neared the islands of Rota, Tinian and Saipan, according to the Joint Typhoon Warning Center. (AP)

'UAE is a comprehensive strategic partner of China'

Xi meets Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, makes four-point proposal on ME peace

BEIJING, April 14, (Xinhua): Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), in Beijing on Tuesday.

Xi said that the UAE is a comprehensive strategic partner of China, and China has always attached great importance to developing relations with the UAE.

Through joint efforts of both sides, China-UAE relations have maintained healthy and stable development, and witnessed deepened political mutual trust, growing practical cooperation and rich people-to-people exchanges, Xi said.

Noting that consolidating and enhancing China-UAE relations is a firm consensus of both sides and meets the expectations of the people of both countries, Xi said China is willing to join hands with the UAE to build a more stable and dynamic China-UAE comprehensive strategic partnership.

Both sides should continue to support each other on issues concerning their core interests and major concerns, maintain high-level exchanges and consolidate strategic mutual trust, Xi said.

He called on both sides to strengthen the alignment of development strategies, and tap the potential for mutually beneficial cooperation in energy, investment, trade, science and technology and other fields.

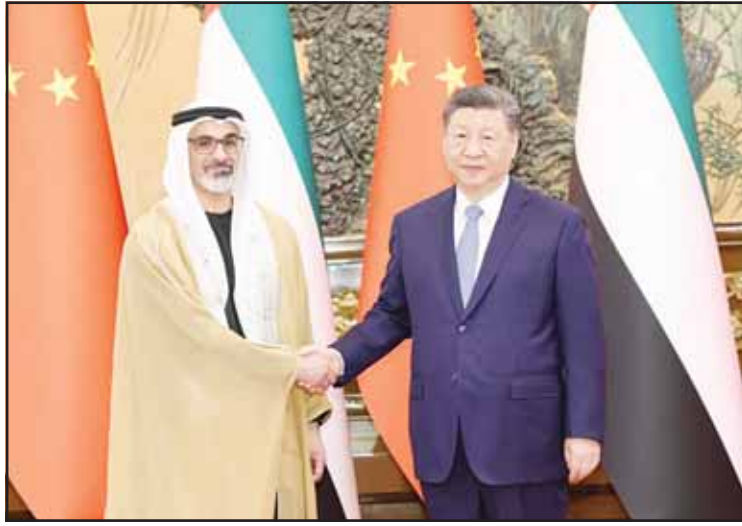
The two countries should promote greater progress in cooperation in education, civil aviation, tourism and other fields, enhance people-to-people exchanges, and consolidate the foundation of public support, Xi added.

He called for enhancing coordination and cooperation in multilateral platforms such as the United Nations (UN) and BRICS, leveraging the stability of China-UAE relations to cope with the uncertainties in international and regional situations, and jointly promoting the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

The two sides exchanged views on the current situation in the Middle East and the Gulf region. Xi emphasized China's position on promoting peace and talks, and reaffirmed that China will continue to play a constructive role in this regard.

Xi put forward a four-point proposal on promoting peace and stability in the Middle East.

Xi called for adherence to the principle of peaceful coexistence. Countries



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets with Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, April 14. (Xinhua)

in the Middle East and Gulf region are interdependent and inseparable neighbors. Efforts should be made to support these countries to improve their relations, and it is imperative to promote the building of a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security architecture for the Middle East and the Gulf region.

He urged adherence to the principle of national sovereignty. Sovereignty serves

as a foundation for all countries, especially developing countries, to survive and thrive, and it must not be violated. The sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of countries in the Middle East and the Gulf region should be fully respected, and the safety of personnel, facilities and institutions of all countries should be effectively safeguarded.

On adherence to the principle of international rule of law, Xi said the authority of international rule of law should be upheld, rejecting selective application to prevent the world from falling back into the law of the jungle. He called for firmly upholding the international system with the UN at its core, the international order based on international law, and the basic norms of international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

He said development and security should be coordinated. Security makes development possible, and development helps maintain security. All parties should work together to create a favorable environment for the development of countries in the Middle East and the Gulf region. China is ready to share with these countries the opportunities brought about by Chinese modernization to strengthen the foundation for regional development and security.

Noting that the UAE attaches great importance to developing relations with China, Sheikh Khaled said his country is willing to work with China to implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state, deepen cooperation in various fields, open up broader prospects for bilateral relations, and benefit the people of both countries.

Sheikh Khaled said the UAE appreciates China's responsible and constructive role in international affairs and its active efforts to seek political solutions to the current crisis in the Middle East.

The UAE is committed to maintaining close communication and coordination with China to promote a ceasefire among the parties concerned, restore regional peace and stability at an early date, safeguard international shipping security, and prevent further impact on the global economy and energy security, he said.

He added that the safety of Chinese citizens and institutions will be effectively protected.

North Korean leader Kim supervises missile tests from naval destroyer

SEOUL, South Korea, April 14, (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised more missile tests from his prized new warship over the weekend, state media said Tuesday, as he pledged to boost the navy's operational capabilities with his growing collection of nuclear-capable weapons.

North Korea's official newspaper Rodong Sinmun said Kim on Sunday observed the launches of two strategic cruise missiles and three anti-ship missiles from his 5,000-ton-class destroyer, the Choe Hyon, first unveiled in April 2025. The cruise missiles flew for more than two hours and the anti-ship missiles for more than 30 minutes along pre-set trajectories over the country's western seas before accurately striking their targets, the newspaper said.

The Korean Central News Agency, another state outlet, published photos of Kim and other senior officials watching from a pier as a projectile trailed gray smoke while arcing away from the warship.

Kim had also supervised two rounds of missile tests from the



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, its leader Kim Jong Un, (center), visits to observe the test launches of missiles at an undisclosed place in North Korea on April 12. (AP)

Choe Hyon last month while vowing to accelerate the nuclear armament of his navy. After Sunday's tests, he said his government remained focused on the "limitless expansion" of its nuclear forces and issued unspecified new tasks to sharpen the country's nuclear attack and rapid-response capabilities. He

also reviewed plans for the weapon systems for his third and fourth destroyers currently being built, Rodong Sinmun said.

Kim has hailed the development of the Choe Hyon as a major step toward expanding the operational reach and preemptive strike capabilities of his military.

Bid to show commitment to Asia

US forces to join combat drills in Philippines

MANILA, Philippines, April 14, (AP): More than 17,000 American and Filipino military personnel will participate in one of their largest annual combat exercises in the Philippines that underscore the United States' staunch commitment to Asia despite its preoccupation with the Middle East, a US military official said Tuesday.

During the April 20-May 8 maneuvers, called the Balikatan, Japanese forces will fire a missile in a ship-sinking exercise in northwestern Philippine waters facing the disputed South China Sea. Japan's defense chief has been invited to witness the live-fire drill, Philippine military officials said.

The large-scale combat drills between the US and Philippines, which are longtime treaty allies, will expand this year to include other friendly forces, including those from Japan, France and Canada, which have signed visiting forces agreements with Manila, the Philippine military said.

"Our message is our dedication and commitment to our alliance and regional security," Col. Robert Bunn, a spokesperson for US forces, said in a news briefing when asked what message the US military wanted to send



US Col Robert Bunn, (center), speaks beside Philippine Navy Col. Dennis Hernandez, (left), and Canada Navy Lt. Commander Craig Cook during a press conference for the upcoming joint military exercise dubbed 'Balikatan' or 'Shoulder to Shoulder' at Camp Aguinaldo military headquarters on April 14, in Quezon city, Philippines. (AP)

with its large Balikatan deployment despite the war in the Middle East.

Bunn did not immediately specify the number of US forces joining the combat drills. Last year, about 9,000 US military personnel joined the Balikatan - Taga-

log for shoulder-to-shoulder - exercises. "The defensive aspect of countering drones is very much a part of the exercise," Bunn said in response to a question on the types of mock combat operations to be expected.

Xi and Sánchez say China and Spain should help safeguard multilateralism

BEIJING, April 14, (AP): The leaders of China and Spain on Tuesday pledged to strengthen their relations and work to safeguard multilateralism at a time when the world is being impacted by various conflicts, including the recent war in Iran, during a meeting in Beijing on Tuesday.

"We should strengthen communication, consolidate mutual trust, cooperate closely, oppose the world's retrogression to the law of the jungle, and jointly safeguard genuine multilateralism," said Chinese President Xi Jinping during a reception for Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez at the Great Hall of the People.

Sánchez agreed and said both countries "can contribute to finding solutions to the various trade tensions that exist, to the geopolitical difficulties and complexities of today's world, to the wars, to the environmental and social challenges that afflict the world."

Sánchez is in China for his fourth trip in just over three years to the world's second-largest economy. Spain is looking to strengthen its

political and commercial ties with Beijing, and the visit comes as Sánchez faces a strained relationship with the U.S. over his opposition to the war in Iran.

Later, during a press conference, Sánchez said that China was the only global player he could see helping end wars in Iran and other places, such as Ukraine.

"I find it very difficult to find other interlocutors, beyond China, who can resolve this situation in Iran and the Strait of Hormuz," Pedro Sánchez said, urging the Asian giant to do more on the diplomatic front. Sánchez said that his country wants to avoid impunity for those who commit crimes in places like Gaza, where he said a "genocide" has been committed.

"International law is being violated today, fundamentally by one country: the government of Israel," he said. "There is also an absolutely illegal response from the Iranian regime regarding a war that we have described from the very beginning as a mistake and an illegality."

Sánchez has been one of Europe's loudest critics of the U.S. and Israel's military actions in the Middle East. His government recently declared its airspace closed to U.S. planes being used in the Iran war, and says it is not allowing the U.S. to use jointly operated military bases in southern Spain for actions related to the Iran war.

One of the goals of Sánchez's trip has been to find ways to reduce the trade gap with China, and he said that after raising the issue in his meeting with Xi, he sensed "understanding and a willingness to work to achieve that balance."

He said that Spain will sign 19 agreements, 10 of them on the economic side, including some to expand access for Spanish agri-food products in China and boost exports.

"The current trade imbalance between Europe and China, and between Spain and China, is excessive, and we must do everything possible to correct it," he said. The prime minister added that China must see Spain and Europe as a place to invest.



China's President Xi Jinping, (third left), and Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, (third right), attend a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on April 14. (AP)

Lat/Am

Haiti arrests 7 suspects over fortress stampede: Authorities in Haiti have arrested seven suspects, including five police officers, after a fatal stampede killed at least 25 people at a historic mountaintop fortress over the weekend, police said Monday.

Among the arrested are two employees of Haiti's Institute for the Preservation of National Heritage, which oversees La Citadelle, an imposing fortress in the northern town of Milot built in the early 1800s where Saturday's stampede occurred.

Dozens of people were injured, with 30 reported to still be in hospital on Sunday. It's not clear what caused the stampede. A police investigation is ongoing.

It wasn't immediately clear if the police officers or institute employees have been formally charged.

Milot Mayor Wesner Joseph told Magik9 radio station on Monday that his administration was not aware of any activity planned at La Citadelle on Saturday, and that authorities later found that a local DJ had invited people there for an event via TikTok, with many children and teenagers attending.

Ahead of the event, videos posted on social media show hundreds of young people making the arduous, roughly 8-kilometer (5-mile) hike up a steep mountain to reach La Citadelle, while some opted to ride horses.

Another video shows two young Haitians driving around promoting the event via loudspeakers, more than a week before it was held: "You have to hurry to make sure you're in the line."

The event, for which participants had to pay nearly \$8 to attend, promised free water and fruit juice, with promoters urging attendees to meet at 7 am at the park below La Citadelle and noting everyone should be present by 10 am. (AP)

5 killed in Brazil highway crash: At least five people, including two children, were killed and one other person injured in a multi-vehicle crash Sunday night in Brazil's southern state of Santa Catarina, highway police said Monday.

The crash, which happened on state highway SC-355 between the towns of Iomere and Videira in the western part of the state, was triggered when a vehicle collided with another car while passing, causing the car to cross the lane and strike two other vehicles.

Those killed were a young couple, their two children, aged 2 and 6 respectively, and a family friend, according to local authorities. The driver of one of the cars involved was injured and taken to hospital.

Police said rain was falling at the time of the crash. The driver of one of the cars involved, a 31-year-old man, was taken to police station for fleeing the scene before authorities arrived. Investigation of the accident is ongoing. (Xinhua)



Mayoral pre-candidate for Rio de Janeiro, Alexandre Ragem, campaigns as former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro stands by in Rio de Janeiro, July 18, 2024. (AP)

Former Brazilian intelligence chief arrested by ICE: A Brazilian senator said on Monday that the country's former intelligence agency chief Alexandre Ragem was arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and is pleading for him to get political asylum in the United States.

Ragem, also a former lawmaker, was sentenced in September to 16 years in prison for his role in the coup attempt by supporters of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro in 2023. Brazil's federal police said he fled the South American nation before he would have started serving his sentence.

Sen. Jorge Seif said in his social media channels that he had informed the U.S. embassy in Brasilia that Ragem should not remain in custody for he was being persecuted at home. Seif did not give details as to why the former Brazilian intelligence agency chief had been put under custody.

On Monday, Ragem appeared as in custody in ICE's online detainee database, although where he is being held was not specified. "The political persecution against President Bolsonaro, his sons and his allies is now hitting an elected lawmaker in foreign

soil," Seif said. "In our document (to the U.S. embassy) we showed all the reasons that justify and defend the concession of political asylum to Ragem and his family." (AP)

Outcome of Peru presidential election unknown: Peruvians still did not know Monday night the outcome of Sunday's presidential election after the failure to deliver ballots to voting centers forced authorities to extend voting by a day, but early results showed two right-wing candidates were ahead.

Keiko Fujimori, the conservative daughter of a disgraced former president, and Rafael López Aliaga, the ultra conservative former mayor of Peru's capital, Lima, lead the pack of 35 candidates with 62% of ballots tallied. Official results showed Fujimori had received 16.88% of the votes tallied, while López Aliaga earned 13.88%. Electoral authorities counted votes throughout Monday even though thousands of Peruvians were back at the polls for a second day of voting. Authorities granted the one-day extension for more than 52,000 voters in Lima as well as to Peruvians registered to vote in Orlando, Florida, and Paterson, New Jersey.

Voting is mandatory for Peruvians from the ages of 18 to 70. Failure to do so comes with a fine of up to \$32.

"I'm fed up," Iris Valle, 56, said as she waited to vote Monday at a public school in Lima. She feared that her employer would cut her pay for not showing up early because she had to meet her voting obligation. (AP)

Mexican judge rules in favor of plaintiffs in '18 Cuba plane crash: A Mexican judge ruled that the plane involved in a 2018 crash in Cuba that killed 112 people suffered from severe maintenance failures and should never have flown, and ordered the owner to pay millions in damages to the families of the victims who sued.

According to court documents dated March 31 and seen Friday by The Associated Press, an independent expert determined the 2018 crash was an "institutional accident" caused by maintenance negligence. The expert's report, which sided with the plaintiffs, described the pilots as a "final line of defense" who were tragically unable to prevent the low-altitude crash.

Based on these findings, the judge ordered Mexican charter Aerolíneas Damojó to pay \$1.5 million in damages to each of the families of the four Mexican crew members who filed the initial lawsuit. The company failed to appear at trial and was tried in absentia. The aircraft's insurer was also named in the lawsuit but was ultimately cleared of any financial penalties.

The Boeing 737 went down in a field moments after departing Havana's José Martí International Airport, marking one of Cuba's deadliest aviation disasters in decades. Of the 113 people on board, only a Cuban woman survived. Most of the victims were Cubans. (AP)

Oil barrel price up \$5.64 to \$106.67

KUWAIT CITY, April 14, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti oil price went up USD 5.64 to reach USD 106.67 per barrel (pb) on Monday, compared to USD 101.03 pb the previous day, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Tuesday. In international markets, Brent crude oil price went up by USD 4.16 to USD 99.36 pb, and West Texas crude went up by USD 2.51 USD 99.08 pb.

Business



NREC announces entry into a sale agreement for a subsidiary's stake in MIH – Malta for total consideration of approximately KD 26.4 mln



Faisal Sultan Al-Essa, Vice Chairman and CEO of National Real Estate Company

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: National Real Estate Company K.P.S.C. (NREC) announces that a subsidiary of the Company has entered into a sale agreement to sell its entire 50% stake in Mediterranean Investment Holding (MIH) in Malta to its partners, for a total consideration of €74 million (equivalent to approximately KD 26.4 million) with completion to take place no later than 30 June 2026.

NREC is expected to record a gain of KD 6.16 million in its 2026 financial results, primarily driven by the reclassification of previously recognized reserves into the income statement upon disposal.

This gain is accounting in nature and does not impact the Company's total equity or overall financial position.

This divestment marks the culmination of a successful investment, with the Company achieving a

return exceeding three times its invested capital of €24 million since entering the investment in 2006, demonstrating the effectiveness of its disciplined investment strategy and value realization approach. Including dividends received from MIH, NREC's investment in MIH will have returned total cash of €94 million since inception, representing almost 4x the initial investment.

The proceeds from the transaction will be directed towards debt reduction and capital structure optimization, thereby contributing to lower financing costs and strengthening the Company's financial position. The transaction is also expected to enhance NREC's financial flexibility and support the redeployment of capital into strategic, higher-return opportunities aligned with its growth objectives.

Commenting on the transaction, the Vice Chairman

and CEO of National Real Estate Company, **Mr. Faisal Jamil Sultan Al-Essa**, said:

"This transaction represents a direct step in executing our strategy to maximize asset value and enhance capital efficiency. With a strong return and a strengthened financial position, we continue to allocate our resources through a disciplined approach toward more value-creating investment opportunities, thereby enhancing value for our shareholders."

About NREC

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

Ahmadi tops Kuwait property trading

Kuwait real estate trades reach KD 45.5 mln in first week of April

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Statistics issued by the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Department at the Ministry of Justice on Monday showed that 51 real estate contracts were traded during the first week of April, with a total value of approximately KD 45.5 million (around 150 million US dollars), reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The statistics, published on the ministry's website, cover transactions during the first week of April, which includes two working days (April 1 and 2). Investment property contracts topped the list with 26 properties traded, valued at KD 27.9 million (around 92 million dollars).

Private property came in second with 21 contracts valued at KD 8.8 million (around 26.4 million dollars).

Commercial property recorded two contracts, valued at KD 1.5 million (around 4.9 million dollars).

Two warehouse properties were traded, valued at KD 8.8 million (around 26.4 million dollars).

One private property contract and one investment property contract were traded in the Capital Governorate.

Five private housing contracts and five investment property contracts were traded in Hawally Governorate.

Farwaniya saw the trading of four private real estate contracts, in addition to two commercial and two investment contracts.

Two private residential real estate contracts were traded in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate.

Ahmadi Governorate witnessed the trading of seven private real estate contracts and 18 investment real estate contracts during the week in question.

Two private real estate contracts were traded in Jahra Governorate.

Central banks stay cautious

Markets juggle slowing growth and energy inflation

By National Bank of Kuwait

Global markets remain caught between slowing growth, energy-driven inflation, and persistent geopolitical uncertainty. In the United States, growth momentum weakened as Q4 GDP was revised down to 0.5%, alongside softer services activity, while inflation rose sharply to 3.3% year-on-year, driven by energy costs, even as core measures such as Core PCE and core CPI remained relatively contained. This mixed backdrop has left the Federal Reserve cautious, with a more hawkish tone emerging as policymakers balance inflation risks against signs of a softening labor market, limiting expectations for near-term rate cuts. In the Eurozone, a similar pattern is evident, with Germany's inflation rising to 2.7% year-on-year on higher energy prices, while core inflation held steady, pointing to more moderate underlying pressures. Elsewhere, China's producer prices returned to positive territory, signaling a pickup in upstream inflation, while the Reserve Bank of New Zealand held rates steady but warned of rising inflation risks linked to higher energy costs. In commodity markets, oil remains highly volatile, pulling back on ceasefire optimism but holding near \$100 per barrel amid ongoing supply disruptions, particularly through the Strait of Hormuz. Financial markets reflect this fragile balance, with the U.S. dollar weakening modestly on de-escalation hopes trading below 99, equity markets extending gains, while FX remains sensitive to both geopolitical developments and central bank expectations, with EUR/USD approaching key technical resistance levels that could signal further upside if broken.

Currencies	Previous Week Levels			This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward	
	Open	Low	High	Minimum	Maximum		
EUR	1.1516	1.1504	1.1739	1.1719	1.1645	1.1840	1.1768
GBP	1.3182	1.3173	1.3484	1.3458	1.3380	1.3660	1.3460
JPY	159.49	157.86	160.03	159.29	158.30	160.50	158.10
CHF	0.7992	0.7852	0.8018	0.7891	0.7745	0.7960	0.7814

calating Middle East tensions could simultaneously worsen inflation and growth, though it remains too early to assess the full economic impact. Overall, the Fed appears near its neutral rate and increasingly cautious, caught between stubborn inflation and downside labor risks, with markets reflecting this uncertainty by pricing only a limited probability of easing unless conditions materially improve.

Core PCE Holds Steady, Signaling Contained Inflation

The Core PCE Price Index rose by 0.4% month-on-month, in line with expectations and unchanged from the previous month, indicating steady underlying inflation. As a key gauge for the Federal Reserve, the stable reading suggests inflationary pressures remained contained in February, supporting a neutral impact on the U.S. dollar. Overall, the data points to balanced economic conditions, reducing the need for immediate policy adjustments while remaining an important input for future rate decisions.

U.S. Inflation Jumps on Energy Surge While Core Pressures Remain Contained

U.S. inflation accelerated sharply to 3.3% year-on-year in March 2026, marking its highest level since May 2024 and a notable jump from 2.4% in the previous two months, in line with expectations. The increase was largely driven by a surge in energy prices, particularly gasoline and fuel oil, amid the Iran conflict, highlighting the growing impact of geopolitical tensions on headline inflation. On a monthly basis, consumer prices rose 0.9%, the fastest pace since June 2022, mainly due to a significant spike in fuel costs. Despite the strong headline print, underlying inflation pressures remained more contained. Core inflation, which excludes food and energy, rose to 2.6% annually, slightly below expectations, while monthly core prices increased by a modest 0.2%. Elsewhere, price dynamics were mixed, with continued declines in used car and truck prices, stable shelter inflation, and easing food price growth. Overall, the data suggests that while headline inflation is being pushed higher by energy-driven factors, core inflation remains relatively stable, indicating less broad-based price pressure across the economy.

The Greenback was last seen trading at 98.650.

Eurozone

Germany Inflation Accelerates on Energy Surge Despite Softer Core Pressures

Germany's inflation rose to 2.7% year-on-year in March 2026, its highest level since January 2024, accelerating from 1.9% in February and confirming preliminary estimates. The increase was largely driven by a rebound in energy prices, particularly fuel and heating oil, amid ongoing Middle East tensions and higher global crude prices. Goods inflation picked up, supported by rising consumer and durable goods prices, while services inflation strengthened, led by higher costs in social services and transport. In contrast, food inflation eased slightly due to falling fats and oils prices. Meanwhile, core inflation held steady at 2.5%, indicating more moderate underlying pressures. On a monthly basis, prices rose 1.1%, aligned with expectations.

The EUR/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 1.1719.

Asia-Pacific

RBNZ Holds Rates Steady Amid Rising Inflation Risks

New Zealand's central bank kept its policy rate unchanged at 2.25%, in line with expectations, as it balanced rising inflation risks against a weakening near term economic outlook. Policymakers noted that Middle East tensions and higher oil prices have significantly shifted the outlook, with energy costs expected to push inflation higher, projected to reach around 4.2% in the June quarter, while also weighing on growth. Inflation is likely to remain near the upper end of the 1% to 3% target range in the near term.

The NZD/USD currency pair was last seen trading at 0.5833.

China PPI Turns Positive, Ending Deflationary Streak

China's producer prices rose 0.5% year-on-year in March 2026, exceeding expectations and marking the first increase since September 2022, effectively ending a prolonged deflationary period. The rebound was driven by higher global commodity prices, particularly energy, and improving domestic supply-demand dynamics. Production material prices turned positive, led by strong recoveries in intermediate and raw materials, while processed goods saw a faster rise. Consumer goods' deflation eased slightly, with smaller declines across food, daily-use items, and durable goods, although clothing prices continued to fall. On a monthly basis, producer prices increased by 1.0%, the strongest pace since 2022, signaling a clear pickup in upstream price pressures.

The USD/CNY currency pair was last seen trading at 6.8278.

Commodities

Oil Prices Slide on Ceasefire Hopes but Supply Risks Keep Markets Elevated

Oil prices were heading for their steepest weekly decline since last June, falling roughly 12% after a temporary U.S.-Iran ceasefire eased some immediate supply fears. Despite this pullback, prices remain elevated near \$100 per barrel, reflecting ongoing disruptions in global supply. Flows through the Strait of Hormuz remain heavily constrained at less than 10% of normal levels, with Iran asserting control and proposing transit fees, while most passing vessels are linked to Iran. At the same time, Saudi Arabia has faced production losses following attacks on its energy infrastructure, further tightening supply conditions. While futures markets have softened on hopes of diplomatic progress, the physical oil market continues to signal tight supply conditions, with prices at record highs. Additional geopolitical developments, including continued clashes in the region and discussions around broader ceasefire efforts, are keeping uncertainty elevated. Meanwhile, increased Russian exports have provided only limited offset to supply disruptions. Overall, the market remains highly sensitive to developments in the Strait of Hormuz, with analysts warning that any prolonged blockage or escalation could quickly drive oil prices higher again.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti Dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30650.

Underscoring shift toward more accessible investments

UIC discusses the opportunities and challenges of 'Tokenization' in developing capital markets

In light of the rapid transformations taking place across the global financial sector, "Tokenization" has emerged as one of the most significant innovations reshaping capital markets and opening new opportunities for investors and financial institutions alike.

In this context, the Union of Investment Companies (UIC), in cooperation with CFA Institute and CFA Society Kuwait, organized a specialized virtual seminar titled "Tokenization: An Investment Perspective." The seminar was held on 14th April 2026, and witnessed strong participation from representatives of financial institutions, investment companies, and professionals interested in emerging financial technologies. The session provided an in-depth discussion of the concept, exploring its practical applications, potential benefits, and the challenges associated with its adoption.

Tokenization refers to the process of converting traditional assets into digital units (tokens) that are recorded and traded using distributed ledger technologies, such as blockchain. Each token represents a fraction of ownership in the underlying asset or a financial right associated with it. The concept extends beyond traditional financial assets to encompass a wide range of asset classes, including real estate, equities, bonds, sukuk, and even alternative assets.

Practical Examples of Tokenization

Real Estate

Instead of purchasing an entire property with a high capital requirement, the asset can be divided into thousands of digital tokens, allowing investors to acquire fractional ownership. For example, a property valued at USD 1 million could be tokenized into 10,000 tokens, with each token representing a small share of the asset. Investors can then benefit from rental income or potential capital appreciation.

Bonds and Sukuk

Debt instruments can be issued in tokenized form, enabling faster and more efficient trading while reducing costs associated with traditional settlement processes.

Private Markets

Tokenization allows shares in private companies to be traded more flexibly, expanding access to investment opportunities in private markets and enabling broader investor participation.

Alternative Assets

Assets such as art, commodities, or even intellectual property rights can be tokenized and traded digitally, improving liquidity and accessibility.

The Growing Importance of Tokenization

Discussions during the seminar highlighted that tokenization is not merely a technological development but represents a structural shift in how assets are issued, managed, and traded. It offers several potential advantages, including:

- Lower operational costs by reducing the number of intermediaries.

- Faster settlement processes – from days to minutes or seconds.

- Greater transparency through real-time transaction recording.

- Broader investment access, particularly for retail investors.

- Improved market efficiency and enhanced opportunities for portfolio diversification.

Key Challenges

The seminar also addressed several challenges associated with tokenization, including:

- The need for clear regulatory frameworks to protect investors.

- Digital asset custody considerations.

- Liquidity in secondary markets.

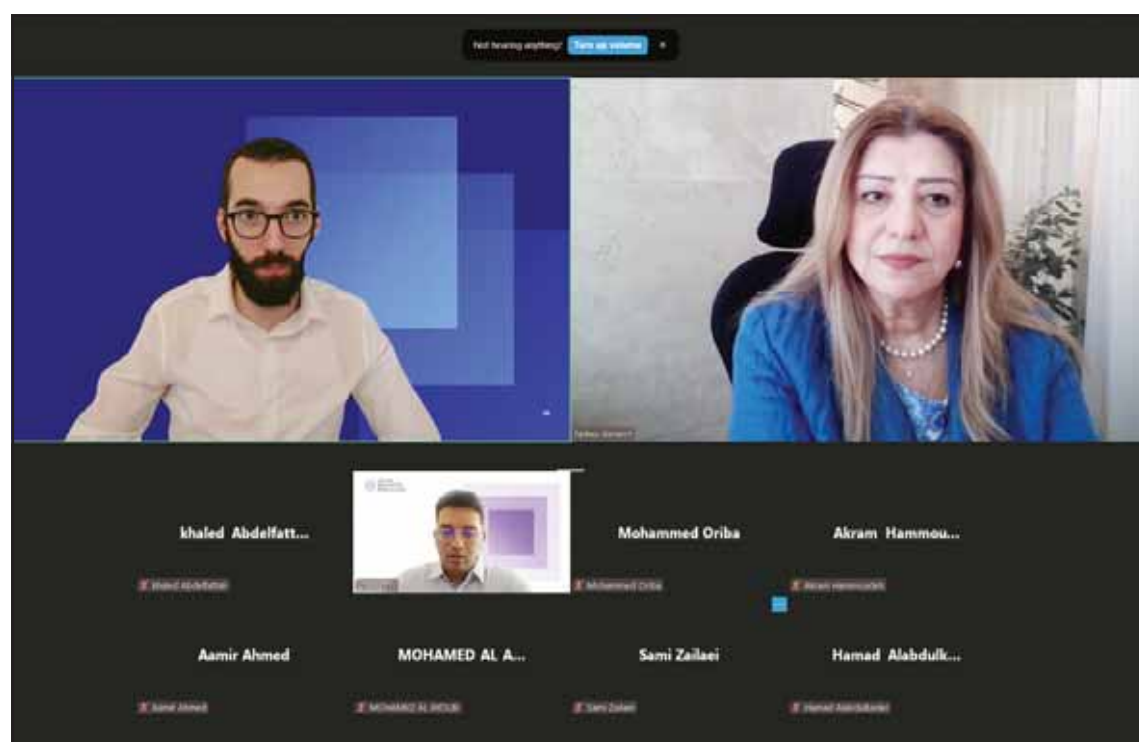
- Cybersecurity risks and interoperability between systems.

- Legal frameworks governing ownership rights and token-related claims.

Official Statement

In this regard, UIC stated: "Tokenization represents a transformative development in the evolution of capital markets, redefining the concept of investment and creating unprecedented opportunities for a wider spectrum of investors. Through its collaboration with international institutions such as CFA Institute, UIC is committed to enabling its member companies to better understand these developments and prepare for them, thereby strengthening market competitiveness and aligning with global best practices."

UIC emphasized that organizing this seminar forms part of its ongoing efforts to promote knowledge-sharing and support the development of the investment ecosystem by addressing forward-looking topics and creating dialogue platforms that bring together local and international expertise. Such initiatives aim to enhance market readiness and enable stakeholders to benefit from the opportunities presented by emerging digital technologies.



UIC, CFA Institute host seminar on Tokenization's impact on investments.

As part of its support for the Diraya Campaign

KFH warns against fraudulent investments and scams

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) reaffirmed its commitment to financial awareness and customer protection as part of its participation in the Diraya Campaign, warning the public against the rising risks of fraudulent investments and financial scams.

In a press release, KFH added that the investment options offered by local banks, under the regulations of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), are a safe haven and a stable source for financial investments, along with other companies and official institutions licensed and subject to the regulatory authorities responsible for protecting the national

economy and the investment sector.

KFH pointed out that the secure investment services and products obviate the need for involvement in investment activities with unfamiliar entities that promise financial returns from fraudulent or high-risk projects. KFH also stated that banks are assisting individuals seeking to invest in their funds through a variety of investment tools and experienced employees subject to the regulations and guidelines of regulators.

KFH explained that among these safe investment services the banks offer are investment deposits, investment funds, investment savings in ad-

dition to the long and short-term investment plans.

Meanwhile, KFH warns customers against engaging in high-risk investments that are promoted by unregulated entities and are not subject to oversight by any supervisory authority fueled by the growing presence of shell companies and other online scammers that promote quick profits. KFH advises customers and investors to refrain from responding to advertisements, text messages and emails received from unknown sources. Additionally, the Bank also urges investors to seek advice from qualified experts before making any investment decisions.



The Conversation

US mine-clearing push eases trade route fears



Fishing boats dot the sea as cargo ships, in the background, sail through the Arabian Gulf toward the Strait of Hormuz off the United Arab Emirates, Friday, March 27, 2026. (AP)

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

□ □ □

By John Femiani
Miami University

U.S. military officials said the Navy has begun the process of clearing mines in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical choke point for global shipping. Iranian forces have deployed a small number of mines in the strait. The move gave the Iranians a means, along with missiles and drones, of threatening ships.

The U.S. Navy recently decommissioned the minesweeping vessels that it had operating in the Persian Gulf region. However, it has other ships and aircraft for finding and destroying mines. As a computer scientist who researches how to detect mines, I have been researching how artificial intelligence techniques, such as machine learning, can help navies detect modern sea mines. Here's what I've learned about how the mines work and how they can be neutralized.

The mines most people picture, like those seen in films such as "Godzilla Minus One," are floating spheres tethered to the seabed, with small protrusions called Hertz horns that trigger the mine when it makes contact with a ship. These are called moored mines.

In the film, characters use a small wooden boat to sweep mines without triggering them because the mines responded to a metal-hulled ship's magnetic field. Detecting magnetic fields is characteristic of influence mines, which respond to a ship's magnetic, acoustic or pressure signature, as opposed to simple contact mines that detonate when ships run into them.

Modern mines typically combine multiple sensing modes. Some are designed to detonate only after a certain number of ships have passed, allowing them to ignore smaller vessels or mine-sweeping attempts and target higher-value ships. Examples include the Iranian Maham 3, which uses both magnetic and acoustic sensors.

Not all mines float. Many modern mines instead sit on the seabed. These mines are most effective in shallow water, where ships pass closer to the seabed. Some bottom mines sit exposed on the seabed, while others are partially or completely buried in sediment. Examples include the Iranian Maham 7 and the Manta mine, a low-profile bottom mine used by Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War. These mines can be deployed by small vessels or laid from aircraft, making them relatively easy to place. They are triggered when they sense a ship passing overhead.

Many modern mines are cylindrical or torpedo-shaped, allowing them to be deployed from aircraft or submarines and descend in a controlled way before settling on the seabed. More advanced designs include so-called rising mines, which sit on the seabed and launch upward toward a target once it is detected.

A key advantage of naval mines is not just the damage they can cause, but also the time and resources required to find and clear them. This is because it's challenging to do so over large areas quickly and reliably.

Even the possibility of mines can disrupt shipping and force

extensive and costly clearance operations. This has been demonstrated in practice: During the 1980s, Iran and Iraq deployed relatively small numbers of mines against each other in the so-called Tanker War in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. This caused significant disruption to shipping and forced costly, time-consuming clearance operations, even when direct damage was limited.

Some countermeasures use uncrewed systems to trigger mines by mimicking the magnetic or acoustic signatures of ships, or to disable them with explosive charges. However, more targeted approaches require identifying individual mines, which motivates the need for reliable detection.

Mine detection is best understood as a wide-area sonar search, which produces many contacts - essentially, anything unusual in the sonar data. Automatic target recognition algorithms then triage these contacts and classify them as either minelike objects or benign. Divers or camera systems then provide higher-confidence identification or confirmation to validate the result. This is known as a detect-classify-identify pipeline.

To collect data, an uncrewed surface vehicle - deployed from a larger ship - can tow a sonar platform at a fixed height above the seabed. The platform, called a towfish, resembles a small missile and carries multiple sensors, including port and starboard sidescan sonar. The British Royal Navy is also preparing to send this type of towed sonar array to the Persian Gulf region, according to a report.

The Navy also operates several types of undersea drones, including the MK 18 Kingfish sonar-equipped drone that is used for detecting mines. The military said that undersea drones were slated to join the effort to clear the Strait of Hormuz.

These sonar devices use sound rather than light to form images. Unlike a photograph, a sonar image is built from one-dimensional measurements of returned sound energy as a function of distance from the sensor. As the platform moves, these slices are assembled to form a continuous image of the seabed. The center of the image corresponds to the water column directly beneath the sonar device and appears dark. The seabed appears as if illuminated from the sensor, with objects characterized by a bright highlight facing the sonar and a shadow extending away from it.

At the detection stage, researchers have developed a range of techniques to detect minelike objects in sonar imagery. Early methods segmented sonar imagery into regions that show as highlights paired with acoustic shadows. Other statistical approaches model seabeds and identify anomalies that deviate from it. Template-like matched filters are used to identify objects with known geometric characteristics.

More advanced approaches incorporate machine learning, using carefully selected features derived from texture, intensity and shadow geometry to classify objects.

More recently, researchers have applied deep learning methods directly to sonar imagery and have often shown improved performance, particularly in complex environments. But their effectiveness depends on the availability of representative training data. (AP)

Bahrain delivers Gulf Group statement on Hormuz security at UN meeting

Gulf Group, Jordan condemn Iranian threats to ports, warn over maritime security risks

GENEVA, April 14, (KUNA): The Gulf Group in Geneva and Jordan condemned Monday Iranian threats to target ports in neighbouring countries, warning of their serious repercussions on maritime security and international trade.

The statement was delivered by Bahrain on behalf of the Gulf Group and Jordan during a meeting of the expert group on maritime transport and trade affiliated with the UN Conference on Trade and Development in Geneva.

The group condemned what it described as unilateral measures by Iran that could disrupt navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, considering them a clear violation of international law and the principles of freedom of navigation.

It stressed the need to keep the strait open without restrictions in accordance with international law, urging the avoidance of any actions that could negatively impact shipping, global trade, and supply chains.

The group warned of the serious consequences of disruptions to navigation in vital maritime routes on littoral states and the international community, particularly developing and least developed countries, which are disproportionately affected by rising transport and insurance costs and supply chain volatility.

It underlined that the stability of the global trading system and the promotion of sustainable development are closely linked to ensuring the smooth flow of international trade and maintaining a safe and stable maritime transport environment, particularly for developing countries facing growing economic challenges.

The group emphasized the importance of continued international efforts to support an open global trading system, address supply chain disruptions, and enhance the resilience of transport and logistics sectors in line with UNCTAD's principles

of promoting trade as a driver of development and global economic stability.

The group also highlighted recent UNCTAD reports on the Strait of Hormuz, noting that nearly a quarter of global seaborne oil trade, equivalent to around 20 million barrels per day, passes through the strait, in addition to significant volumes of natural gas and fertilizers.

It warned of the scale of economic impacts resulting from recent regional developments, including effects on energy markets, rising shipping and insurance costs, and a sharp decline in vessel traffic through the strait, which has reportedly dropped by nearly 97 percent.

The group noted that around one-third of global fertilizer trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz, increasing the risk of higher food costs, particularly in developing countries, given the close link between energy, transport, and food prices.

It also stressed the importance of enhancing the accuracy and objectivity of future analyses by UNCTAD through integrated approaches that link causes and outcomes to support a more comprehensive understanding of global economic developments.

The group further emphasized the need for UNCTAD to continue its vital role in supporting countries, particularly developing ones, in addressing supply chain disruptions and strengthening the resilience of transport and logistics systems.

It reaffirmed the importance of safeguarding the security of international maritime routes and ensuring freedom of navigation in accordance with international law, given their central role in global trade stability and achieving sustainable development goals.

Global inflation outlook rises as energy prices surge

IMF cuts global growth forecast amid Iran conflict

WASHINGTON, April 14, (AP): The Iran war has stalled the world's economic momentum this year, likely pushing growth lower compared to 2025, the International Monetary Fund warned Tuesday.

The IMF downgraded its forecast for global growth to 3.1% in 2026 from the 3.3% it had forecast back in January. The expected growth would mark a deceleration from a 3.4% expansion in 2025.

U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran - and Tehran's closing of the Strait of Hormuz and retaliatory strikes on oil refineries and other energy infrastructure in neighboring countries - have driven oil and gas prices sharply higher around the world.

As a result, the IMF marked up its expectation for global inflation this year to 4.4% from 4.1% in 2025 and from the 3.8% it had forecast for this year in January.

Until the war, the world economy had shown surprising resilience in the face of President Donald Trump's protectionist policies, which built a wall of import taxes around the United States, the world's biggest economy and once a market practically wide open to imports. The damage was less than feared partly because Trump's tariffs last year ended up being lower than what he'd originally announced.

A tech boom, marked by massive investment in data centers and artificial intelligence, and rising productivity also combined to strengthen the world economy.

"War in the Middle East has halted



International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva speaks at a news conference ahead of the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings at the IMF headquarters in Washington, Thursday, April 9, 2026. (AP)

this momentum," IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas wrote in a blog post accompanying the fund's latest World Economic Outlook.

The IMF's forecast assumes that conflict in the Persian Gulf is short-lived and that energy prices rise "a moderate 19%" this year. Things could be much worse. In a "severe scenario" in which the energy shocks spill into next year and central banks are forced to raise interest rates to combat inflation, global growth could drop to 2% in 2026 and 2027. "Despite the recent news of a

temporary ceasefire, some damage is already done, and the downside risks remain elevated," Gourinchas wrote.

The fund slightly downgraded its forecast for U.S. growth this year to 2.3%. The 21 European countries that share the euro currency, hard hit by soaring natural gas prices, will collectively grow 1.1% this year, down from 1.4% in 2025, the IMF forecast.

Hardest hit are likely to be deeply indebted poorer countries that import energy and can't afford to buffer their economies with stepped-up government spending and tax relief. The IMF

sharply lowered the outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, to 4.3% this year from the 4.6% it had expected in January.

One winner that's emerging from the conflict is Russia, an energy exporter that stands to benefit from higher prices. The IMF upgraded its forecast for the Russian economy, hard hit by sanctions following the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, to a still-modest 1.1%.

Meanwhile, the governor of the National Bank of Ukraine has tried to keep Russia's war in his country at the center of talks among global economic leaders. But in a Monday interview with reporters, Andriy Pyshnyy noted how higher oil prices due the war in Iran are hurting his country.

He said through a translator that annual inflation in March hit 7.9% in Ukraine, well above the forecast of 7% in large part because of higher fuel costs. He estimated that fuel prices could push up annual inflation by 1.5 percentage points to 2.8 percentage points.

Pyshnyy noted that there could also be higher fertilizer and production costs in an economy that is seeking stable prices as part of the ongoing war with Russia, which attacks Ukraine by air on average every 3 to 4 minutes.

"We are trying to walk on a razor blade," he said of a mission complicated by external factors.

The IMF is a 191-nation lending organization that works to promote economic growth and financial stability and to reduce global poverty.

Gold, silver rise as dollar weakens

Global stocks rise as Iran-US talks hopes lift sentiment

HONG KONG, April 14, (AP): World shares were trading higher, tracking Wall Street gains, and oil fell on Tuesday as expectations rose over a possible second round of talks between the U.S. and Iran on an end to the Iran war.

In early European trading, Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.1% to 10,591.45. France's CAC 40 gained 0.6% to 8,285.37, while Germany's DAX was up 1% to 23,980.13.

Asian stocks ended higher Tuesday. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 was up 2.4% to 57,877.39. South Korea's Kospi jumped 2.7% to 5,967.75 after briefly topping 6,000 intraday.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.8% to 25,872.32, while the Shanghai Composite index climbed 1% to 4,026.63. China on Tuesday reported worse-than-expected export growth of 2.5% in March for the first month since the Iran war began, although some analysts believe Chinese exports of goods related to AI and renewable energy will continue to support overall export momentum for the year.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.5%, and Taiwan's Taiex rose 2.4%.

Investors are still hopeful for a lasting de-escalation of the Iran war, which is in its seventh week, as the U.S. and Iran are said to be weighing a second round of talks before a temporary ceasefire agreement expires next week. The U.S. military on Monday began a blockade of Iranian ports as Washington steps up its pressure on Tehran, following ceasefire talks between the two sides over the weekend that ended without an agreement.

But U.S. President Donald Trump also suggested on Monday that the United States is still willing to engage with Tehran. "I can tell you that we've been called by the other side," he said, without further elaborating details.

Oil prices continued to pull back on Tuesday from earlier gains. Brent crude, the international standard, was down 0.4% to \$98.93 per barrel. It reached near-



People walk in front of an electronic stock board showing Japan's Nikkei Index at a securities firm Tuesday, April 14, 2026, in Tokyo. (AP)

ly \$104 early Monday morning over Iran war worries on limited progress from the weekend ceasefire talks.

Benchmark U.S. crude fell 2% to \$97.09 a barrel. The global energy shock stemming from maritime traffic disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, where roughly a fifth of the world's oil is typically transported, has led to surging fuel prices and is threatening to push up inflation in many countries and impact economic growth.

Wall Street rose on Monday. The S&P 500 gained 1% to 6,886.24. The Dow Jones Industrial Average

climbed 0.6% to 48,218.25, and the Nasdaq composite added 1.2% to 23,183.74.

Shares of investment bank Goldman Sachs dropped 1.9% despite its announcement of better-than-expected quarterly profits.

In other dealings, gold and silver prices rose on Tuesday. Gold's price was up 0.8% to \$4,806.20 an ounce, while silver prices gained 2.9% to \$77.82 per ounce. The U.S. dollar fell to 158.86 Japanese yen from 159.45 yen. The euro was trading at \$1.1793, up from \$1.1759.

Bank to help shape global digital economy

Warba Bank joins Digital Cooperation Organization as observer

KUWAIT CITY, April 14: Warba Bank has officially joined the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) as an observer, reinforcing the bank's role in shaping the global digital economy. The move follows a series of digital transformation initiatives by the bank aimed at enhancing financial innovation and digital inclusion.

The DCO, an intergovernmental organization headquartered in Riyadh, includes member states such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Cyprus, and Greece. Through this membership, Warba Bank will participate in the organization's technical committees, contributing its expertise to policies designed to accelerate regional and global digital growth.

Digital Leadership and Global Expertise:

Anwar Badr Al-Ghaith, Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Digital Transformation and Operations at Warba Bank, said the bank's accession reflects its commitment to leading digital transformation on both local and international levels.

He said the digital economy is a key engine for future growth, and cross-border collaboration is an effective path toward achieving sustainable and inclusive development. "We view technology as a means to empower our customers and simplify their daily lives," he added.



Anwar Al-Ghaith

■ **SiDi Wallet:** A digital wallet designed for low-income segments to provide accessible financial services.

Al-Ghaith noted that the bank's digital investments focus on smart solutions that serve diverse social segments and promote financial inclusion while ensuring security and privacy. "Our goal is to make secure and reliable banking services accessible to all customers, contributing to the development of an integrated digital economy."

Innovative Solutions and Future Partnership:

The membership reinforces Warba Bank's track record in digital innovation. The bank has successfully launched several advanced products, including:

■ **Wave Account:** A contemporary banking experience tailored for the youth demographic.

■ **Gold Account:** A secure platform enabling customers to invest in gold via the bank's application.

The observer status enables the bank to collaborate with global experts and decision-makers in policy labs and specialized working groups. The move aligns with Kuwait Vision 2035, which aims to transform the country into a regional financial and commercial hub.

Selection and Standards:

The DCO selected Warba Bank for membership following an evaluation of the bank's recent initiatives and its continued investment in advanced digital services. After a series of discussions and meeting its membership criteria, the bank formally joined the organization to support the advancement of the digital economy.

About Warba Bank:

Warba Bank is a leading Islamic bank in Kuwait with a strong focus on Sharia-compliant digital banking. With one of the largest shareholder bases in the country, the bank delivers innovative financial products and services, reinforcing its position as a digital-focused institution.

Mortgage rates cloud US housing recovery

US existing home sales hit 9-month low

WASHINGTON, April 14, (AP): Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes fell in March to their slowest pace nine months, as easing mortgage rates failed to motivate home shoppers during what's traditionally been the busiest time of the year for the housing market.

Existing home sales fell 3.6% last month from February to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.98 million units, the National Association of Realtors said Monday.

Sales also fell 1% compared with March last year, weighed down by declines in the Northeast and Midwest. The latest sales figure fell short of the roughly 4.06 million pace economists were expecting, according to FactSet.

"Lower consumer confidence and softer job growth continue to hold back buyers," Lawrence Yun, NAR's chief economist, said in a statement.

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

Sales have been hovering close to a 4-million annual pace now going back to 2023. That's well short of the 5.2-million annual pace that's historically been the norm.

Despite the pullback in sales, home prices continued to rise last month. The national median sales price increased 1.4% in March from a year earlier to

\$408,800, an all-time high for any March on data going back to 1999, NAR said. Home prices have risen on an annual basis for 33 months in a row.

The U.S. housing market has been in a slump dating back to 2022, when mortgage rates began to climb from pandemic-era lows. Sales of previously occupied U.S. homes remained stuck last year at 30-year lows. They have remained sluggish so far this year, declining in January and February versus a year earlier.

The pace of home price growth has slowed or fallen in many metro areas and there are more homes on the market than a year ago.

And until recently, mortgage rates were easing, lowering borrowing costs for homebuyers. Homes purchased last month likely went under contract in January and February, when the average rate on a 30-year mortgage ranged from 5.98% - its lowest level in three and a half years - to 6.16%, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac.

But mortgage rates have been mostly rising since the war with Iran began, sending energy prices surging and heightening worries about higher inflation. That's pushed up the yield on U.S. 10-year Treasury bonds, which lenders use as a guide to pricing home loans. The average rate on a 30-year mortgage was at 6.37% last week, according to Freddie Mac.

The rise in mortgage rates led Yun to lower his 2026 existing U.S. home sales forecast. He now projects sales will rise 4% this year, down from his previous forecast of a 14% increase.

Trump moves to ease housing rules

White House says US faces 10 million-housing shortfall

WASHINGTON, April 14, (AP):

White House economists estimate the United States has a shortage of 10 million houses, according to a new report out Monday - and say regulatory cuts could lead to more construction to stabilize prices, increase home ownership and fuel faster economic growth.

The analysis, part of the Economic Report of the President, outlines both a political risk and a messaging opportunity for President Donald Trump, whose public approval has slumped because of concerns about his tariffs, the Iran war and his unfulfilled promises to slash inflation and unleash stronger growth.

Trump signed two executive orders in March directing federal agencies to reduce housing regulatory burdens and make it easier for smaller banks to provide mortgages but he's been slow to take other steps that would show that high housing costs are a top priority for his administration.

The White House has been trying to focus on housing and other affordability issues for months to get ready for what's expected to be a challenging midterm season for Republicans, but it has been thrown off course by a series of global issues. In January, a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, that had been billed as focusing on housing turned into a showdown for Trump over control of Greenland.

Meanwhile, the Iran war has driven up the cost of buying homes, with average rates for 30-year mortgages jumping from just under 6% to 6.37%.

Trump also has argued in favor of keeping home prices high to protect values for existing owners. "I don't want to drive housing prices down," Trump told his Cabinet earlier this year. "I want to drive housing prices up for people that own their homes, and they can be assured that's what's going to happen."

The housing chapter of the annual economic report, obtained by The Associated Press before its release, lays out a blueprint for how more home construction would help the middle class and the overall economy, setting up an argument that Trump could make to voters.

Put together by staff at the White House Council of Economic Advisors, it finds there would be 10 million more houses in the country if "homebuilding and the growth of the single-family housing stock had continued at their historical pace instead of falling dramatically" after the 2008 global financial crisis. That crisis was caused largely by a wave of defaults in the housing market, where prices had been fueled by problematic lending

practices.

The analysis notes that home prices have risen 82% since 2000, while incomes are up just 12% - a mismatch that had been masked for a period by historically low mortgage rates. But when rates jumped with inflation in the aftermath of the pandemic, monthly mortgage costs also rose for buyers and affording a home, a signifier of middle class status, became a top concern for voters under 40.

The White House maintains that the executive orders in March, in addition to the plans to purchase mortgage-backed securities, show that the president is focused on housing issues.

The report says that various regulations on home construction, which it calls "the bureaucrat tax," add more than \$100,000 in costs to building. That cost includes changing the building codes over the past decade, compliance costs and zoning approval fees, among other expenses.

By the report's estimates, a reduction in those regulatory costs could help spur construction of as many as 13.2 million homes. That could add on average 1.3 percentage points to annual economic growth over the next decade and support 2 million manufacturing and construction jobs, it argues.

Trump could decide to make federal funding to state and local governments contingent on reducing some of the regulations, according to an administration official, who insisted on anonymity to discuss the report before its release.

The report also attacks the green energy housing standards introduced during the Biden administration as a factor in increasing construction costs. Those steps gave preferences for more efficient air conditioning units and water heaters as well as higher standards for the related duct work.

But getting rid of some of those requirements could increase other costs for homeowners over the long run, such as utility bills.

The report relies on a 2021 analysis by National Association of Home Builders that says the standards could add up to \$31,000 to the price of a new home, while it could take as many as 90 years for a homebuyer "to realize a payback on the added cost of the home."

It is not clear how much savings would occur from rolling back Biden-era housing standards because of existing legal challenges regarding their enforcement and different practices by states. In March, a federal judge in Texas agreed with 15 states led by Republicans that said the standards for federally backed housing were unlawful.

Fed faces fresh inflation pressure

US wholesale prices surged 4% last month as the Iran war sent energy prices soaring

WASHINGTON, April 14, (AP): U.S. wholesale prices surged last month as the Iran war drove up the cost of energy.

The Labor Department reported Tuesday that its producer price index - which measures inflation before it hits consumers - rose 0.5% from February and 4% from March 2025. The year-over-year gains was the biggest in more than three years. Energy prices surged 8.5% from February.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core producer prices rose a modest 0.1%

from February and 3.8% from a year earlier. The gains in wholesale prices were smaller than economists had forecast.

The surge in prices complicates the work of the inflation fighters at the Federal Reserve, who have faced intense pressure from President Donald Trump to lower their benchmark interest rate. But some Fed policymakers are inclined to raise rates instead, as higher energy costs increase the inflation threat.

Wholesale prices can offer an early look at where consumer inflation might be headed. Econ-

omists also watch it because some of its components, notably measures of health care and financial services, flow into the Fed's preferred inflation gauge - the personal consumption expenditures, or PCE, price index.

The Labor Department reported last week that soaring gasoline prices pushed consumer prices up 3.3% last month from a year earlier, the biggest year-over-year increase since May 2024. Compared to February, March consumer prices jumped 0.9%, biggest gain in nearly four years.

Middle East war weighs on Swiss watchmakers

GENEVA, April 14, (AP): The bling is back, but the Iran war has tarnished the outlook for the luxury watch industry - the ultimate in opulence.

Starting Tuesday, Geneva hosts the annual "Watches and Wonders" fair, a premiere gathering in an industry eager for a rebound after two years of market contraction, hopefully including sales in oil-rich Gulf Arab countries.

The U.S. and Israeli war against Iran that began Feb. 28, however, has had a sweeping impact on the global economy, driving up energy prices, stalling shipments of fertilizer and disrupting air travel, among other things.

High-end watches have not been spared. Soaring prices for precious metals like gold and silver over the last year and U.S. President Donald Trump's Liberation Day tariffs launched a year ago - while down from peak levels - already affected the market.

Now, renewed inflation pressures and doubts about consumer confidence are injecting new uncertainty into the market that generates tens of billions of dollars in revenue each year.

"The war in the Middle East will have certainly a huge impact for the Swiss exports because it represents 10% of the total Swiss watch exports, so it's quite substantial," said Oliver Müller, founder of Swiss consultancy LuxeConsult.

"Some markets in the Middle East are totally halted," he said. In the United Arab Emirates, for example, "60% of business is done with tourists. You can imagine that nothing is going on currently."

The show is an elite gathering that showcases innovations, drums up deals and hosts some 65 exhibiting brands from around the world: That's just a sliver of an industry that counts some 450 watchmakers in Switzerland alone. About 60,000 visitors are expected to attend.

Morgan Stanley, in the 9th Annual Swiss Watcher report put together with LuxeConsult, said in February that Swiss watch exports declined 1.7% last year in value terms - a year when Switzerland's franc was relatively strong compared with the U.S. dollar and the euro.

It was a second straight year of market contraction, the report said.

"When you look back at a year ago, the sort of theme was: The tariffs and the uncertainty," said industry analyst Ming Liu. "Unfortunately, we aren't anywhere closer to certainty, probably even less with what's happening in the Middle East."

"That's obviously going to have a cloud over Watches and Wonders," she said. "But it has a cloud over everything, right?"

Similar to the luxury goods sector as a whole, the biggest brands have been gaining market share. Four of Switzerland's 450-odd watch brands - Rolex,



Visitors look at watches at the Swiss watch manufacturer Vacheron Constantin stand, during the opening day of the "Watches and Wonders Geneva" luxury watch fair, in Geneva, Switzerland, Tuesday, April 14, 2026. (AP)

Cartier, Patek Philippe and Omega - make up over half the total Swiss retail market share, the report said.

And the upper-end segment has been growing: hand-crafted watches priced at more than 50,000 francs (more than \$63,000) apiece made up 37% of the total value of Swiss watch exports last year - up from 33.5% in 2024, it said.

The Morgan Stanley report said Swiss-made watches represent about 96% percent of the global luxury watch market, or those that retail for at least 2,000 francs each (more than \$2,200).

Japan's Grand Seiko is the "most credible non-Swiss challenger" and India's Titan is making a run at the top tier, the report said.

The Swiss are coming off a turbulent year. Trump imposed exceptionally high U.S. tariffs on goods from Switzerland last year, hitting a peak of 39% - the highest faced by any developed Western country.

A delegation of Swiss business executives traveled to the White House and offered Trump gifts, including a Rolex clock, in November. The following month a deal was announced that sharply lowered U.S. tariffs on Swiss products.

Imports surge

China's export growth slows to 2.5% in March

HONG KONG, April 14, (AP): China's exports grew 2.5% in March from a year ago, significantly slowing from the previous two months as uncertainties rose from the Iran war and its impact on energy prices and global demand.

The March export data released by China's customs agency Tuesday missed analysts' estimates and was sharply down from the 21.8% export growth recorded for January and February.

Imports last month surged 27.8%, up from the 19.8% year-on-year increase in the first two months of this year.

Technology-related exports including a jump in shipments of semiconductors from China on the global artificial intelligence boom have powered its robust exports in early 2026, but economists say impacts from the prolonged Iran war could

affect overall global demand for Chinese exports this year.

"China's exports have decelerated as the Iran war starts to affect global demand and supply chains," said Gary Ng, a senior economist for Asia Pacific at French bank Natixis.

Despite the significant rebound in China's export growth in January and February, demand is likely to weaken due to the war's energy shock, Bank of America economists led by Helen Qiao wrote in a recent research note. The risks will "arise from a persistent global slowdown in overall demand if the conflict lasts longer than currently expected," they wrote.

U.S. President Donald Trump's elevated tariffs on Chinese exports and tensions between Washington and Beijing have also been straining Chi-

na's shipments to the U.S. over the past months, with China stepping up its exports to other regions including Europe, Southeast Asia and Latin America.

Analysts are also closely watching Trump's planned visit to Beijing in May to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping following a delay due to the Iran war.

Chinese leaders have set an annual economic growth target for 2026 of 4.5% to 5%, the lowest since 1991. China met its "around 5%" economic growth target for 2025 on strong exports - with a record high \$1.2 trillion trade surplus - and analysts say exports likely will continue to be a key driver for maintaining economic expansion this year as a prolonged property sector slump in China weighed on domestic demand and investments.

China seen as 'golden key'

Tesla sees Shanghai as key to robot scale-up

SHANGHAI, April 14, (AP): A Tesla Inc. leader said Tuesday he believes its Shanghai factory operations will help resolve the challenges in achieving mass production of the company's humanoid robots as the U.S. electric vehicle giant pivots to robotics.

Wang Hao, Tesla's vice president, said the Shanghai facilities, like other Tesla factories, will contribute after the company enters an era of robots.

Wang, who also serves as president of Tesla China, told reporters on a government-organized tour of one of its Shanghai factories that CEO Elon Musk once noted having production at scale is a critical challenge in manufacturing humanoid robots.

Wang said he believes the Shanghai manufacturing arm "is a golden key to solving this challenge," but did not specify how the operation will support the company's robotic business.

Musk has urged investors to focus less on car sales and more on what he considers a bright artificial intelligence future of robotaxis ferrying millions in cars without drivers, or

even steering wheels, and robots watering plants and taking care of elderly parents.

Musk earlier underlined that shift by announcing Tesla had decided to end production of two older car models, S and X, in the second quarter and convert a Fremont, California, factory to instead produce its Optimus robots.

London-based technology research and advisory group Omdia said Tesla shipped fewer than 500 general-purpose embodied, intelligent robots in 2025. Still, the company is among the vendors that showcased industry-leading advancements in AI capabilities, its report said.

Tesla entered the mainland Chinese market in 2013 and the factory Wang spoke of delivered the company's first made-in-China vehicles in late 2019. The factory delivered 851,000 electric vehicles in 2025, accounting for more than half of Tesla's total global deliveries that year.

A separate factory began production in Shanghai in 2025, marking the firm's launch of commercial energy storage manufacturing in China.

Record-breaking trailer builds hype for sequel

New 'Spider-Man' is most emotional, most mature yet: Holland

LAS VEGAS, April 14, (AP) — Tom Holland's Peter Parker is dealing with the reality of making his friends forget his identity in the upcoming "Spider-Man" movie. Sony Pictures unveiled new footage from "Spider-Man: Brand New Day" Monday at CinemaCon in Las Vegas, in which Zendaya's character MJ apparently has a boyfriend.

Five years after "Spider-Man: No Way Home" became a sensation in theaters, earning over \$1.9 billion worldwide thanks in part to the appearance of past Spider-Men Tobey Maguire and Andrew Garfield, the webslinger's fourth standalone movie is one of the most hotly anticipated of the summer. Its trailer already broke records, with over 1 billion views in its first four days.

Tom Holland, in a video message, told the exhibitors in the audience that it's the most emotional Spider-Man movie yet, and "the most grown-up." He introduced an early scene in the new film showing the aftermath of his decision at the end of "No Way Home." In the sequence, he attends a housewarming party for MJ and Jacob Batalon. In the sequence, he attends a housewarming party for MJ and Jacob Batalon's Ned and introduces himself as "Maynard ... just a neighbor from across the hall."

Destin Daniel Cretton, who made the Marvel movie "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" stepped in to direct this newest "Spider-Man," which opens in theaters on July 31.

Sony Pictures has for years kicked off the annual conference and trade show for movie theater owners, where throughout the week Hollywood's major studios bring out stars and new footage hoping to wow the people putting their films on the big screen. The studio announced the development of an R-rated adaptation of the video game "Bloodborne," and the release date of "Godzilla Minus One" director Takashi Yamazaki's English language debut, "Grand Gear," which will begin filming soon. It's scheduled to hit theaters on Feb. 18, 2028.



Directors Justin K. Thompson, (left), and Bob Persichetti, (third from left), pose with writers Chris Miller, (second from left), and Phil Lord while speaking about the upcoming film "Spider-Man: Beyond the Spider-Verse," during opening night and the Sony Pictures Entertainment presentation at CinemaCon on Monday, April 14, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (AP)

They also debuted new footage from the "Spider-Verse" finale, revealed the title of the next "Jumanji" movie - "Open World" - previewed "Weapons" filmmaker Zach Cregger's "Resident Evil," and gave the audience a first look at Jeremy Strong playing Mark Zuckerberg in Aaron Sorkin's "The Social Reckoning," a companion piece to "The Social Network."

Oscar-winner Mikey Madison ("Anora") plays Facebook engineer Frances Haugen and Jeremy Allen White is then-Wall Street Journal reporter Jeff Horwitz in the film, which comes out in October. Haugen leaked thousands of pages of internal Facebook records to the Journal, yielding a 2021 investigation known as the "Facebook Files." The series of stories alleged the social media giant was prioritizing profits over safety and hiding its own research from investors and the public.

"It was time to say more," said Sorkin, who described this film as "a real David and Goliath story."

In the footage, Strong's Zuckerberg quips that he's "a professional defendant" and pushes back on an adviser saying, "I'm not two years out of a dorm room anymore."

Sony Chairman and CEO Tom Rothman said he believes "it's going to be an Olympic level movie year overall" while also acknowledging the industry's "serious challenges" including that admissions have been down since before the pandemic.

Studios, he said, need to deliver a variety of great films for all audiences. He also made some recommendations for theaters, imploring them to enforce longer theatrical windows "even if that means you cannot play every film," to get rid of endless advertising before films and making going to the theater more affordable. "I'm not heckling," Rothman said. "I'm rooting for you."

Variety

NEW YORK: Sid Krofft, the Canadian-born entertainment wizard who teamed with his brother and fellow puppeteer Marty Krofft to create such cult favorites as children's 1960s TV show "H.R. Pufnstuf," has died at age 96.

Krofft's death, which came three years after the death of Marty Krofft, was announced on Instagram by his friend and business partner Kelly Killian. Additional details were not immediately available.



Sid

of Hollywood, the magic of the stage, and the depth and complexity of human nature. I wish so very much that I had more time with him."

The Kroffts popularized cultural figures ranging from the inept Weenie the Genie to siblings Donny and Marie Osmond.

TV fans of a certain age would long remember "H.R. Pufnstuf," the live-action puppet series with its cheerful theme song, the dragon who gave the show its name - and served as Mayor of Living Island - and such memorable, supporting characters as the larcenous witch Wilhelmina W. Witchiepoo, and her patented Vroom Broom. "H.R. Pufnstuf" only aired for 17 episodes, in 1969, but lived on for decades in reruns and syndication. It ranked 27th in a 2007 TV Guide poll of all-time cult favorites. (AP)

MELBOURNE, Australia: Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, arrived in Melbourne on Tuesday for their first Australian visit since their official royal tour in 2018.

The lower-key four-day Australian visit comes after the couple announced in 2020 they planned to "step back" as senior royals and to become financially independent in their Californian base.

The Sussexes describe their visit as privately funded, and they flew to Melbourne business class from Los Angeles on a commercial Qantas Airways flight. But there have been public complaints about the added security costs for police agencies as the couple visits Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney.

The cost of security explains why the couple won't be greeted by thousands of people at public events as they were during their 16-day tour as newlyweds in 2018 to Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga.

The couple's children Prince Archie, 6, and Princess Lilibet, 4, are not traveling with them. Meghan announced she was pregnant with their first child while she was in Sydney in 2018. (AP)

Melbourne's Herald Sun newspaper described the latest visit as a "faux royal tour to shore up Brand Sussex."

There have been criticisms of the couple attending paid ticketed events while in Australia. (AP)



Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, visit the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Australia Tuesday, April 14. (AP)

CinemaCon



Jack Black, (from left), Dwayne Johnson, and Kevin Hart, cast members in the upcoming film 'Jumanji 3,' appear during opening night and the Sony Pictures Entertainment presentation at CinemaCon on Monday, April 14, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (AP)



Kristine Belson, president of Sony Pictures Animation, speaks during opening night and the Sony Pictures Entertainment presentation at CinemaCon. (AP)



Aaron Sorkin, writer/director of the upcoming film 'The Social Reckoning,' speaks during opening night at CinemaCon. (AP)



Mandy Moore, a cast member of the upcoming film 'The Breadwinner,' appears during opening night and the Sony Pictures Entertainment presentation at CinemaCon on Monday, April 14, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (AP)

Hollywood unites to defend cinema experience in changing era

CinemaCon kicks off as industry faces defining test

LAS VEGAS, April 14, (AP) — The future of theatrical moviegoing is at a critical moment. More people have been going to movie theaters this year than last, but the foundation is delicate.

Annual domestic box-office grosses are still down about 20% from pre-pandemic levels, competition from streaming has only intensified and there are very real worries about what consolidation might mean for the release schedule as Warner Bros. stares down new ownership under Paramount.

It's under these precarious conditions that Hollywood executives and movie theater owners are gathering this week in Las Vegas for CinemaCon, the annual exhibition and trade show made famous - or at least slightly less obscure - by Seth Rogen's show "The Studio" and his "old school Hollywood buffet." Real-life Hollywood executives have bigger concerns than throwing a party, however.

As "FI" and "Top Gun: Maverick" producer Jerry Bruckheimer said last week in a statement: "We are at a defining point in the future of this industry."

Bruckheimer, "Oppenheimer" producer Emma Thomas and "Sinners" director Ryan Coogler are teaming up to do something about it. Just last week, Cinema United, the trade organization representing some 60,000 movie screens in the US and abroad, announced that Bruckheimer would be chairing their newly established filmmaker leadership council, with Thomas as vice chair and Coogler as one of its inaugural members.

Other members include Brad Bird, Celine Song and Jason Reitman, who will advise on issues facing theatrical moviegoing, including windows, referring to the number of days films play exclusively in movie theaters before being available to buy or rent at home, and consolidation.

"Our industry is strongest when it works together to promote the singular experience of seeing a movie on the big screen," Cinema United president and CEO Michael O'Leary said in a statement. "The importance of having Jerry and Emma at the helm of this initiative, at such a critical time for our industry, cannot be overstated."

Much of the public and private handwringing will revolve around Paramount's pending acquisition of Warner Bros. Both studios will be hyping their upcoming slates to theater owners, in separate presentations: Warner Bros. is planned for Tuesday and Paramount is on Thursday. The question is how much, if at all, executives from either company will address the elephant in the room from the stage as former 20th Century Fox Chair and CEO Stacey Snider did in 2018 with the Disney acquisition looming.

While Paramount Skydance chairman and CEO David Ellison has said that he would like to grow the combined Paramount and Warner Bros. slate to more than 30 movies a year, there are lingering concerns from organizations such as Cinema United.

Historically, fewer standalone studios have meant fewer movies made for theaters, and between the pandemic, the strikes, the ramping up of streaming services and general financial instability, the release schedule has taken the hit. In 2019, there were 112 wide releases, or films released in over 2,000 theaters. This year, for the first time since the pandemic, that number is up to 115, according to Comscore.

On Monday morning, more than a thousand Hollywood professionals, including Denis Villeneuve, Kristen Stewart, J.J. Abrams and Joaquin Phoenix came out against the merger in an open letter arguing that it would only further reduce jobs.

Doom and gloom is hardly ever the prevailing mood at CinemaCon, however. The studios wouldn't shell out big bucks to bring out their stars and footage if there weren't some optimism and excitement about what's to come.

Universal's president of domestic distribution Jim Orr said he thinks the mood going into the conference is "very optimistic."

"The first part of the year we've seen some extraordinary titles and great business, including our own 'Super Mario Galaxy Movie,'" Orr said. "I think it should be quite the celebration in Vegas

Industry warns deal could deepen job and production cuts

Hollywood heavyweights oppose Paramount-Warner merger in open letter

NEW YORK, April 14, (AP) — More than a thousand movie stars, writers, directors and other Hollywood professionals announced their "unequivocal opposition" to the proposed Paramount merger with Warner Bros. Discovery in an open letter published Monday.

A large swath of the movie industry, including Denis Villeneuve, Kristen Stewart, J.J. Abrams and Joaquin Phoenix came out forcefully against the \$11 billion deal that would consolidate two legacy studios into one, arguing that it further reduce jobs and movies in an already downsized Hollywood.

"The result will be fewer opportunities for creators, fewer jobs across the production ecosystem, higher costs, and less choice for audiences in the United States and around the world," reads the letter, posted on BlocktheMerger.com. "Alarming, this merger would reduce the number of major US film studios to just four."

In late February, David Ellison's Paramount Skydance reached a deal to acquire Warner Bros. Discovery in one of the largest media mergers ever. The deal awaits a shareholder vote later this month

and government regulatory approval. Paramount's victory came after months of negotiations and a rival bid by Netflix that ultimately fell short.

The deal was only the latest massive merger to rock Hollywood. In 2019, 20th Century Fox was acquired by The Walt Disney Co. for \$71.3 billion.

Ellison, chief executive of Paramount Skydance, has pledged to keep Paramount and Warner Bros. as stand-alone movie studio operations, and vowed to release a combined 30 movies a year in theaters. Though the merger will result in considerable cuts because of duplication of roles, Paramount has contended the fusion of Paramount and Warner Bros. Discovery "strengthens the overall job market."

But many in the film industry believe a merger will mean extensive job losses and a consolidation of power.

"We are deeply concerned by indications of support for this merger that prioritize the interests of a small group of powerful stakeholders over the broader public good," read the letter. "The in-

tegrity, independence, and diversity of our industry would be grievously compromised."

A coalition of advocacy groups organized the letter, including the Committee for the First Amendment - a free speech group led by Jane Fonda - as well as the Democracy Defenders Fund and the Future Film Coalition. Other signatories include: Ben Stiller, Don Cheadle, Javier Bardem, Lily Gladstone, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Tiffany Haddish and Ted Danson.

On Monday, one signee, Damon Lindelof, detailed his decision on Instagram. Lindelof, the creator of "Watchmen" and the co-creator of "Lost," has an overall deal with Warner Bros. Discovery.

"Hollywood mergers mean fewer movies and fewer TV shows and that means fewer jobs," wrote Lindelof. "When two storied backlots are owned by the same company, the outcome is intuitive - one becomes a Ghost Town. I'm scared. But I'm not a ghost. And a fight is already lost if it's never fought."

Representatives for Paramount and Warner Bros. didn't immediately respond to requests for comment on the letter.

Reality star expands criminal justice reform work beyond policy advocacy

Kardashian steps into Broadway as producer of 'The Fear of 13'

NEW YORK, April 14, (AP) — Kim Kardashian is adding to her resume the title of Broadway producer.

The reality TV star and entrepreneur has signed on to help produce the play "The Fear of 13," about the true story of Nick Yarris, a man who spent more than two decades on death row for a murder he insists he did not commit.

"My commitment to criminal justice reform has always been about more than just policy - it's

about people. I've learned that sometimes the most effective way to change minds is through a powerful story. "The Fear of 13" is that story," she said in a statement.

Kardashian has in the past few years used her spotlight to shine a light on the wrongfully convicted. She has gone to the White House during President Donald Trump's first term and during President Joe Biden's term to lobby for criminal justice reform and the president's clemency powers.

Kardashian lobbied Trump to commute the life sentence of Alice Marie Johnson, who spent more than 20 years in prison for drug offenses. Johnson was released in June 2018 and later, in August 2020, received a full pardon from Trump and had her rights restored.

"The Fear of 13," written by Lindsey Ferrentino, stars Adrien Brody and Tessa Thompson, and is directed by Tony Award-winner David Cromer. Opening night is set for Wednesday.



Kim Kardashian arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles. (AP)

Music



Members of the British heavy metal band Iron Maiden, (from left), Dave Murray, Nicko McBrian, Bruce Dickinson, Steve Harris, Janick Gers and Adrian Smith hold up their hands after being inducted into Hollywood's Rockwalk in Los Angeles on Aug. 19, 2005. (AP)



This combination of images show, (from left), Phil Collins, Billy Idol, Queen Latifah, Sade and Luther Vandross. (AP)

Queen Latifah named early influence inductee

Phil Collins, Iron Maiden, Oasis, Sade, Wu-Tang Clan, Vandross join Rock Hall

NEW YORK, April 14, (AP) — Phil Collins, Iron Maiden, Billy Idol, Queen Latifah, Oasis, Sade and Joy Division/New Order will be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, along with first-time nominees Wu-Tang Clan and the late Luther Vandross.

The list was revealed on Monday night's airing of "American Idol." Artists must have released their first commercial recording at least 25 years before they're eligible for induction. Nominees were voted on by more than 1,200 artists, historians and music industry professionals.

Soft rocker Collins, who already is in the hall as a member of Genesis, has had such solo hits as "In the Air Tonight" and "One More Night," and has earned eight Grammys, including album of the year in 1985 for "No Jacket Required." Collins got in the first time he appeared on the ballot.

Soul-jazz vocalist Sade, also nominated in 2024, had such soft rock hits as "Smooth Operator" and "The Sweetest Taboo." The Wu-Tang Clan have been hailed as rap innovators since their game-changing 1993 debut album "Enter the Wu-Tang."

Iron Maiden, nominated twice before, helped power the new wave of British heavy metal with iconic albums like "The Number of the Beast." Vandross, who sold more than 25 million albums and had the hits "Here and Now" and "Any Love," died in 2005 and inspired Kendrick Lamar and SZA's "Luther."

This year, the hall will open its arms to the sounds of Manchester, England, inducting post-punk pioneers Joy Division and New Order - which shared most of the same members - as well as Britpop's recently reunited Oasis, made up of

Noel and Liam Gallagher. Idol, also English, has brought a punky sneer to pop with songs like "White Wedding" and "Rebel Yell."

The induction will be held Nov. 14 at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles. A TV presentation will air in December on ABC and Disney+. Next year, the ceremony will return to the hall's home of Cleveland.

Those nominated this year but who came up short for the class of 2026 include Mariah Carey, Lauryn Hill, INXS, Melissa Etheridge, Jeff Buckley, Pink, New Edition and Shakira.

In addition to the performer category, inductees entering the hall can arrive under three special committee categories: early influence, musical excellence and the Ahmet Ertegun Non-Performer Award.

The early influence award this year will honor Queen Latifah, Cuban singer Celia Cruz, Nigerian musician Fela Kuti, rapper MC Lyte and country rocker Gram Parsons. The musical excellence will honor songwriter Linda Creed and producers Arif Mardin, Jimmy Miller and Rick Rubin.

More than 50 years after his death, Ed Sullivan, the legendary host of his self-titled appointment-viewing TV show, will go into the hall with the Ahmet Ertegun Non-Performer Award. It's a recognition of how important his Sunday night stage became as a launchpad for nearly every musical icon of the 1950s and '60s and of how his show helped break racial barriers in American entertainment.

Last year, Cyndi Lauper, Outkast, Bad Company, Chubby Checker, Soundgarden, Joe Cocker, Salt-N-Pepa, The White Stripes, Carol Kaye, Nicky Hopkins, Lenny Waronker, Thom Bell and Warren Zevon all were inducted.

Comedian finds clarity in Yellow Springs life

Chappelle stands firm amid backlash and mulls revisiting 'Chappelle's Show'

YELLOW SPRINGS, Ohio, April 14, (AP) — Dave Chappelle strolled through the Ohio village's downtown like he always does: unbothered, unhurried and unmistakably himself.

There was no stage, no spotlight - just Yellow Springs, where he's lived for decades, a place he spent summers as a child while his father worked as dean of students at nearby Antioch College.

It's in places like this, away from the glare, where Chappelle finds clarity and continues to sharpen a comedic voice that has sparked debate, drawn criticism and, through it all, refused to bend.

"I've had a lot of support from my people," said Chappelle, an Emmy and Grammy winner. "That's what's sustained me."

He sat down with The Associated Press before walking through the town, where he'd recently participated in the ribbon-cutting for a restored 19th-century schoolhouse that now houses a public radio station and will serve as office space for his company, Pilot Boy Productions.

Chappelle said he didn't initially expect his voice to carry the weight it does today.

"Sometimes people will attach things to your voice that don't necessarily have anything to do with you," he said. "Your responsibility is to be true to yourself and your work."

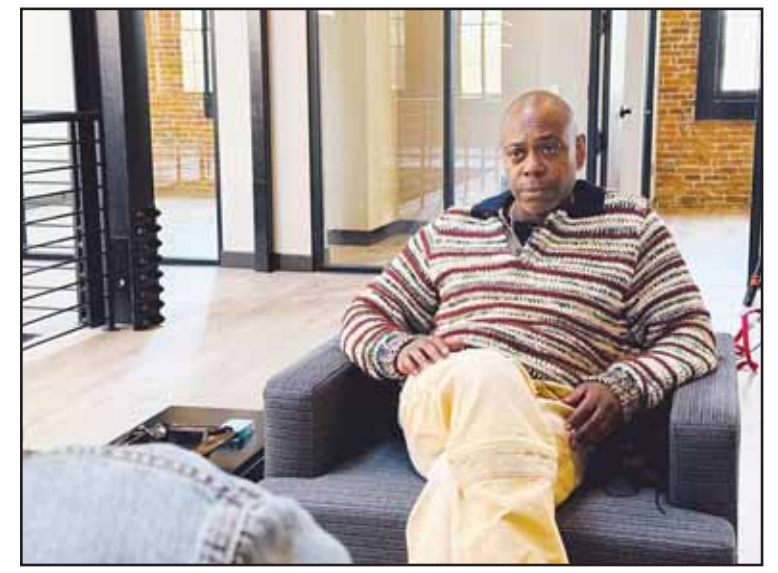
That voice has become one of the most scrutinized in comedy, particularly after criticism of jokes about transgender people in his Netflix specials. The backlash surrounding "The Closer" in 2021 drew protests and internal pushback at Netflix, turning his work into a flashpoint in broader debates over comedy, culture and free speech.

Chappelle said he has never set out to provoke controversy, describing his work as an extension of the same stand-up he has always done. He said the reaction often felt disconnected from the audiences who continue to show up.

"The media used to talk (expletive) about jokes that I did ... and none of that stuff swayed my audience," he said. "So I feel like I need to be true to something."

Chappelle said being in Yellow Springs allows him a different perspective without the pressures of the entertainment industry.

"One of the best sovereignties that a person can enjoy is the sovereignty of their mind," he said. "Just the idea of knowing where you land and the rest of



Comedian Dave Chappelle appears during an interview in Yellow Springs, Ohio on April 8. (AP)

the world begins."

For many fans, Chappelle's voice is still tied to "Chappelle's Show," the Comedy Central series that premiered in 2003 and quickly became a cultural force with its sharp satire on race, politics and pop culture.

The show ran for two full seasons with an abbreviated third season released in 2006 after Chappelle walked away during production. It was a decision he later attributed to burnout and concerns about the show's direction.

Now, Chappelle says he's at least open to the idea of revisiting it.

"If you'd asked me that question a year ago, I'd have told you absolutely not," he said. "But in the last few weeks ... I'm considering it."

Chappelle acknowledged the comedy landscape has shifted, with digital platforms and social media creating new pathways for humor and a new generation of creators shaping the conversation in real time.

As he walked through town, Chappelle framed criticism less as a verdict than something to endure. He pointed to "The Muhammad Ali Reader," a collection that documents the intense criticism the late boxing legend faced during his career.

"It's every negative thing they said about him," he said. "And history proved him to be absolutely right. ... As bad as that weather was, there's another side to it."

Chappelle framed the tension around his work in a broader cultural context.

"Black life in America, there's always an 'or else' to all of it," he said. "Don't say this or else; don't do that or else. And then there's those few brave people who say, 'Or else what?'"

Even as he reflects on his own career, Chappelle said he's paying close attention to the next generation of comedians. He pointed to Druski as part of a new wave showing how audiences engage with comedy.

"I love what he does," Chappelle said before drawing a distinction between digital success and stand-up. That freedom to fail, he suggested, is essential to the development as a comedian - which can be harder to find in today's fast-moving digital landscape.

"One of the worst things that can happen to a comedian is becoming successful before they get good," Chappelle said. "Because you miss the part where you get to explore and make mistakes."

Chappelle remains active onstage, including upcoming performances tied to the Netflix Is a Joke Fest in Los Angeles in May.

Back home, he continues to perform at his own comedy club - which used to be a firehouse - in Yellow Springs, where he has hosted surprise sets and brought in high-profile guests, including Travis Scott, Lizzo, Wyclef Jean, Marsha Ambrosius, Clipse, 50 Cent and Christopher Cross.

Whoopi Goldberg launches WhoopInk imprint

NEW YORK, April 14, (AP) — After having more than a dozen books of her own published, Whoopi Goldberg wants to help others do the same.

The Oscar-winning actor and co-host of "The View" has launched the imprint WhoopInk, a partnership with Blackstone Publishing that will focus on bringing "fresh, diverse new talent to the marketplace" and on works spanning across genres. According to Blackstone, Goldberg will be "intimately involved" with the imprint, on everything from cover design to promotion.

At least one WhoopInk author already is well known to Goldberg - Rick Bleiweiss, a Blackstone executive who signed up

Goldberg's "Bits and Pieces: My Mother, My Brother, and Me" for the publisher. Goldberg plans to publish the next novel in Bleiweiss' "Pignon Scorpion & the Barber-shop Detectives" mystery series and to release some of her own books, including a collaboration with longtime business partner Tom Leonard and a follow-up to "Bits and Pieces," a bestselling memoir that comes out in paperback this week.

"I am personally looking forward to finding new authors, working with established authors, and bringing influential voices into this curated imprint," Goldberg said in a statement Monday.

Numerous other celebrities have overseen their own imprints in recent years, including Sarah Jessica Parker, John Legend and Questlove. Reese Witherspoon, Dakota Johnson and Dua Lipa are among the public figures who have formed their own book clubs.



Goldberg



From left: A humanoid robot squares off against a visitor, a humanoid robot performs and humanoid robots demonstrate a music performance at an exhibition in Hong Kong on Monday, April 13. (AP)

Humanoid robots show off their language and boxing skills in HK

HONG KONG, April 14, (AP) — A humanoid robot about the size of a primary school student had something to share in Hong Kong - it sang songs and spoke to people in Mandarin and English, answering whatever questions they posed and delighting the audience around it.

More than 100 robots were showcased at two exhibitions starting Monday at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center. The X2 Ultra robot from China's prominent humanoid robot manufacturer AGIBOT Innovation (Shanghai) Technology Co. was among them.

When asked about its hobbies, the robot's list went from doing sports and dancing to studying technology and listening to music. Describing the people in front of it is no challenge either: "a woman holding a phone, a woman holding a bag and a phone, a man holding a camera," it said at one point.

Calvin Chiu, the chief operating officer of Novautek Au-

tonomous Driving, AGIBOT's agent in Hong Kong, said that the robot can provide emotional satisfaction to humans through conversations and serve as a teacher to older adults and children. Different robots can be programmed with different personalities, too.

"It would be like a friend," Chiu said. In China, technology has evolved into an area of competition with the U.S., with national security implications. Beijing's latest five-year plan vows to "target the frontiers of science and technology." Speeding up the development of products like humanoid robots and their applications is part of the 2026-2030 plan for the world's second-largest economy.

Official data showed China had more than 140 humanoid-robot manufacturers and more than 330 models in 2025.

London-based technology research and advisory group Omdia recently ranked three of them - AGIBOT, Unitree

Robotics and UBTECH Robotics Corp. - as the only first-tier vendors in its global assessment in terms of shipment numbers. They all shipped more than 1,000 units of general-purpose embodied intelligent robots last year, with the first two companies shipping more than 5,000 units, the report said.

In February, humanoid robots were among the highlights of the CCTV Spring Festival gala in China, a television show celebrating the Lunar New Year. A martial arts performance by children and robots stole the spotlight.

Some Chinese exhibitors flexed their advances at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center on Monday, showing robotic capabilities that ranged from talking to humans, punching and sand painting to doing backflips and catching suspects with nets during security patrol demonstrations.

Robert Chan, global strategy officer at EngineAI, based in Shenzhen, brought its PM01 robot to showcase its mobility,

including doing a front flip. His company plans to launch two factories in China for mass production this year.

He said that China enjoys advantages in certain areas, such as low-cost engineering. He also pointed to the pattern of sharing know-how between companies, unlike in the United States and Europe, where companies typically shield their own technology.

Chan foresaw that the next stage of robotics would move toward robots featuring bodies looking like people, with more emotional exchanges and facial expressions, or even looking like they can breathe. That is about plugging the gap in robots' interactions with humans, he said.

"The warmth and emotion exchange with the human being. Besides, helping humans to make the decision and helping humans to complete their task," he said.

One company in the exhibition appears to be moving toward that direction.

Feeling 'not yourself' may signal early mental health struggle

How to spot and help someone in a mental health crisis

NEW YORK, April 14, (AP) — Experts wish more people spotted the signs earlier: feeling overwhelmed, not feeling "like yourself," shifts in sleep, behavior and mood.

The United States has a mental health problem, data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show. More young people, especially girls, are reporting poor mental health. And while the national suicide rate fell slightly in 2024, it did so from one of its highest levels ever reported.

Mental health crises can happen abruptly or build to a tipping point over time. They can be fueled by a sudden loss or traumatic event, personal or societal upheaval, underlying health conditions, or any combination of factors. Whatever the cause, experts say the best thing to do is to spark a conversation as early as possible and connect to a broader support system.

Mental health professionals say what constitutes a crisis varies from person to person. But there are some key signals that could indicate someone is struggling, and they can be subtle at first.

"My crisis might not be your crisis, but what we do know is that - however people define crisis - there is a change in how they're feeling, a change in how they're behaving," said Dr. Theresa Miskimen Rivera, president of the American Psychiatric Association.

Crisis can start as someone feeling



A student views her cell phone at Ronald McNair Sr. High School, Aug 7, 2025, in Atlanta. (AP)

depression or anxiety but not quite being able to pinpoint the cause, Miskimen Rivera said.

Other signs can include:

- Not enjoying or engaging in things they used to like.
- Engaging less socially.
- Sleep irregularities.
- Decreased hygiene.
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs.

■ Extreme mood swings.

■ Talking about being a burden on others.

■ Feeling hopeless, wanting to die or kill themselves, having no reason to live.

If you see these changes, it's time for a conversation, experts say.

Crisis intervention experts recommend taking a moment to do some research and prepare before jumping into

a conversation with someone in crisis.

Tips and resources can be found on the websites of organizations including the National Alliance on Mental Illness, The Trevor Project, the American Psychological Association and 988, the US mental health crisis hotline. You can also call, text or chat with crisis hotline to get guidance on how to start a conversation. "We get more than 10 million calls, chats and texts a year, and a lot of those are actually people just looking for resources for someone in their life that's struggling," said Tia Dole, who oversees the lifeline.

Alex Boyd, director of crisis intervention at The Trevor Project, which runs a suicide prevention hotline for youth, breaks the initial conversation into four parts:

■ Start with an open-ended question that acknowledges the shift in behavior. For example: "I noticed you haven't been showing up to (the space we share) recently. I want to check in. What's going on?"

■ Express your care and concern for the person.

■ Ask what the crisis looks like for them. "What's been going on for you that has led you to (name the change in behavior)? What's changed for you? What are you concerned about?"

■ Acknowledge it is a tough time and ask directly: Are you having

thoughts of suicide or self-harm? At this point, you should also think about other support and resources for the person. Your job is to support them, not treat them. Ask them: What would feel helpful right now?"

It's a common myth that asking someone about whether they are contemplating suicide can put the thought in their mind, experts said.

It may seem awkward or scary, but it's very important to ask people directly if they have plans to harm or kill themselves and if they intend to act on them.

If they have a plan, Boyd recommends saying something like: "What would lead you to actually take that step? Because that sounds scary. I don't want that to happen. What would lead you to feel more escalated to act on the plan?"

If someone is in immediate danger of harming themselves or others, seek professional help immediately. Ideally, you can do this in collaboration with the person in crisis, with the goal of giving them agency and build their confidence to ask for help, Boyd said.

Calling 988 or another helpline can connect you to available crisis intervention teams or other specialized resources.

Phoning 911 or going to an emergency room are options, experts say, though not all emergency medical service personnel or dispatchers are

trained in mental health intervention.

Mental health crises are complex, experts say, and it is critical to understand cultural stigmas and other barriers that might be at play in starting a conversation.

For some, jumping right in with diagnostic words like "depression" and "anxiety" can cause the person to shut down, Dole said. Others might not say anything the first time you try to have a conversation, but come back days or weeks later to talk.

Dole recommends using "parallel activities" to take the pressure off the conversation. Creating space for a conversation about mental health while taking a walk or during a car ride can allow someone to open up without forcing eye contact or formality, she said.

It's important to validate and normalize the person's experience without minimizing it, experts said. Don't write anything off as "just a phase." Sharing your own experience can be helpful to a degree, but make sure not to make the conversation all about yourself.

Your loved one may also need support as they navigate years of care and the complexities of the mental health care system. Their options may be limited based on whether they have insurance, where they live or their personal identity. They may have to try several therapists before they find the best fit.

Fluoride shortage crisis

Iran war ripples into US drinking water utilities

NEW YORK, April 14, (AP) — It's not just gas prices: Some US water utilities are reporting the Middle East war is disrupting their ability to maintain recommended fluoride levels in the drinking water.

Over the past few weeks, a few water utilities have said their supply had been disrupted, according to the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies. Fluoride is used in water systems as a public health measure to prevent tooth decay.

Here's what to know.

Israel is one of the world's top exporters of fluorosilicic acid, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency. EPA data also shows the US is among the world's top five importers of the product.

At least one Israeli supplier has been facing workforce challenges because many employees have been called into active military service, said Dan Hartnett, chief policy officer for the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies.

"That has led to decreased production, and supply shortages for the U.S. market," he said.

The number of water utilities affected so far is small, but the shortage is affecting hundreds of thousands of people. As the conflict continues, "there will likely be additional stressors placed on the supply chain, leading to shortages in additional communities," Hartnett said.

The country's eighth largest water and wastewater utility, WSSC Water in Maryland, is among those facing a shortage. On April 7, utility officials said they were lowering the level of fluoride in the water to 0.4 milligrams per liter, down from the recommended 0.7 milligrams per liter.

Chuck Brown, spokesperson for the utility serving 1.9 million customers, said officials did not know how long the shortage would last, "but we feel confident that we'll be able to stretch that out for a couple more months."

In Pennsylvania, the borough of Lititz told its water customers it had to halt fluoridation for a couple weeks last month because of supply issues.

Water utilities add fluoride voluntarily to improve communities' oral health, so lower levels have no effect on drinking water safety.

A few months' drop in fluoride levels is probably not a cause for concern for most people, said Dr. Scott Tomar, an American Dental Association community water fluoridation expert.

Research from places that stopped fluoridating their water - Calgary, Canada; Juneau, Alaska; and Israel - has found that lower levels can have an impact over the span of years.

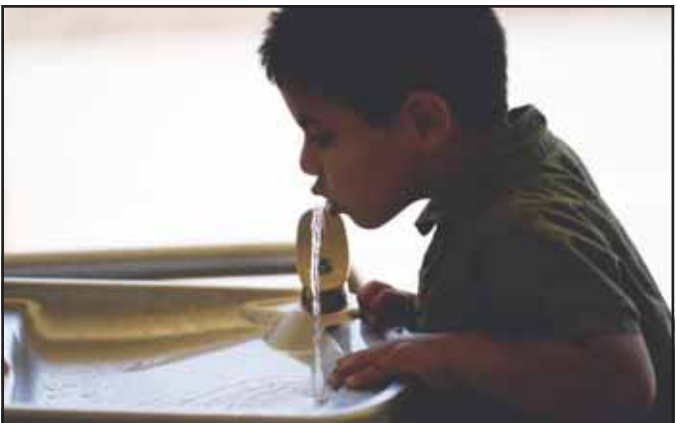
"Based on the best available information we have, below about 0.5 milligrams per liter, you're probably not going to see effective preventive exposure," he said.

Tomar said younger children would be the first to experience tooth decay, because the fluoride strengthens enamel as their teeth are developing and once they've grown in.

He recommends people in shortage areas brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and keep up with their routine dental appointments. If people are concerned they aren't getting enough fluoride, they should talk to their dentist before taking a fluoride supplement or other treatment.

Research shows water fluoridation is beneficial even when it is also available through toothpaste and other means. Nearly two-thirds of the U.S. population gets fluoridated drinking water, according to CDC data.

The addition of low levels of fluoride to drinking water was long considered one of the greatest public health achievements of the last century. The American Dental Association credits it with reducing tooth decay by more than 25% in children and adults.



A student drinks from a water fountain inside Cuyama Elementary School, Sept. 20, 2023, in New Cuyama, Calif. (AP)

Botswana intensifies response amid widespread FMD outbreak

GABORONE, April 14, (Xinhua) — The Botswana government has strengthened its response to foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) following the detection of the disease in the southern and southeastern part of the country, a senior official said on Monday.

Speaking during a press conference held at the FMD National Emergency Operations Center in Gaborone, Acting Minister of Lands and Agriculture Edwin Dikoloti said that the disease was first detected at the Ramatlabama National Artificial Insemination Center in southern Botswana, affecting 65 bulls that had been selected for semen collection, and a further 53 animals in different locations within a 10 km radius of the area.

The government has allocated 97 million Botswana pula (about 7.2

million U.S. dollars) toward combating the outbreak, with about 30 million pula already utilized for surveillance, vaccination and bio-security interventions, said Dikoloti.

The outbreak has also disrupted operations at the Botswana Meat Commission, resulting in the suspension of exports to the European Union with a financial strain on farmers, the ministry said on its official social media account.

The government continues to work closely with farmers, traditional leaders and regional partners to contain the outbreak, including vaccination programs and cross-border cooperation. Botswana has also donated 50,000 vaccine doses to Zimbabwe to strengthen protection along shared borders, it added.



In these images provided by NASA, Artemis II Pilot Victor Glover (left) is photographed in the Orion spacecraft and the Artemis II crew (right) photographed a wedge of the Moon in nighttime is visible in the foreground, as the Sun is setting on the opposite side on Monday, April 6. (AP)



Left: The Artemis II crew captured this image of the Milky Way on April 7. Right: the Earth is seen from the Artemis II Orion capsule as it enters the atmosphere for splashdown in the Pacific Ocean. (AP)



Space photos show emotional power beyond tech

Artemis II crew brought a human eye and storytelling vision to their mission photos

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

□ □ □

By **Christy Sisson**
Rochester Institute of Technology

In early April 2026, the Artemis II mission captivated me and millions of people watching from across the world. The crew's courage, skill and infectious wonder served as tangible proof of human persistence and technological achievement, all against the mysterious backdrop of space.

People back on Earth got to witness the mission through remarkable photos of space captured by astronauts. Images created and shared by astronauts underscore how photography builds a powerful, authentic connection that goes beyond what technology alone can capture.

As a photographer and the director of the Rochester Institute of Technology's School of Photographic Arts and Sciences, I am especially drawn to how these photographs have been at the center of the public's collective experience of this mission.

In an era when image authenticity is often questioned and with the capabilities of autonomous, AI-driven imaging, NASA's choice to train astronauts in photography has placed meaning over convenience and prioritized their human perspectives and creativity.

Photography was not originally placed as a high priority in NASA's Apollo era. The astronauts only took photographs if they had the chance and all their other tasks were complete.

Thanks largely in part to public response to those images from Apollo, including "Earthrise" and the

"Blue Marble" being widely credited for helping catalyze the modern environmental movement, NASA shifted its approach to utilize photography to help capture the public's imagination by training their astronauts in photographic practices.

The Artemis II mission's photographs have helped cut through the increasing volume of artificially generated images circulating on social media. NASA's social media releases of the crew's photographs have garnered thousands of shares and comments.

This excitement could be explained by the novelty of photos from space, but these images also distinguish themselves as products of astronauts experiencing these sights and interpreting them through their photographs. These differences require an important distinction around where technology ends and humanity begins.

Photography has long integrated AI-powered software and data-driven tools in a variety of ways: to process raw images, fill in missing color information, drive precise focus and guide image editing, among others. These modern technological assists help human photographers realize their vision.

Artificial intelligence is also increasingly capable of operating machinery competently and autonomously, from cars to drones and cameras.

And AI can generate convincing, realistic images and videos from nothing more than a text prompt, using readily available tools.

Researchers train AI to mimic patterns informed by millions of sample images, and the algorithm can then either take or create a photograph based on what it predicts would be the most likely version of a successful, believable image.

Human-created photos are rooted in direct observation, intent and lived experience, while AI images - or choices made by AI-driven tools - are not. While

both can produce compelling and believable visuals, the human photographs carry emotional power because the photographer is drawing from their experiences and perspective in that moment to tell an authentic story.

Artemis II photographs resonate, not only because they are historic, but because they reflect the deliberate choices and intent of a human being in that specific moment and context. The exposure, camera setting, lens choice and composition are all dictated by the astronaut's vision, skill, perspective and experience. Each image is unique in comparison with the others. These choices give the images narrative power, anchoring them in human perspective.

Photographers choose what to include in the final version of their image to tell a story. In the Artemis II images, this human perspective comes out. In the "Earthset" photo, you see a striking juxtaposition of the Moon's monochromatic, textured surface in the foreground against a sliver of, bright Earth.

The choice to include both in the frame contrasts these objects literally and figuratively, inviting comparison. It creates a narrative where Earth is contrasted against the Moon - life is contrasted against the absence of it.

Another photo shows the nightside of the whole Earth, featuring the Sun's halo, auroras and city lights. The choice to include the subtle framing of the window of the capsule in the lower left corner reminds the viewer where and how this image was captured: by a human, inside a capsule, hurtling through space. That detail grounds the photograph in the human perspective.

Both photos are reminiscent of Earthrise and the Blue Marble. These past images hold a place in the global collective consciousness, shaped by a shared historical moment. (AP)

Even low 'forever chemical' exposure can harm embryos

PFAS in tap water may disrupt female fertility: study

CANBERRA, April 14, (Xinhua) — Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) found in tap water, at levels currently deemed safe, could harm embryos and impair female fertility, a new Australian study reveals.

The concerning findings, which examined the effects of tap water on female mice following daily consumption for four weeks or six months, showed exposure to PFAS chemicals disrupts female fertility, causing cellular damage to ovulated eggs and embryos, said a statement released Tuesday by Australia's Adelaide University.

"Our study shows just four weeks of consuming

regular tap water with low levels of PFAS chemicals was enough to reduce the number of cells and their function in embryos, causing DNA damage and impairing the viability of the embryo," said the study's lead author Yasmyin Winstanley from Adelaide University's Robinson Research Institute.

"These effects were more obvious after six months of drinking tap water, with reductions in the fetal weight of the offspring after maternal exposure," Winstanley said, adding that low birth weight has been linked to obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease later in life.

The damage appeared irreversible and was passed

down across generations, according to the findings published in the journal Environmental Research.

PFAS, known as "forever chemicals," are man-made chemicals that persist in the environment and have contaminated food and drinking water worldwide.

The study tested water sampled from the Australian city of Adelaide's municipal supply and modelled exposure using three common PFAS compounds -- PFOS, PFOA and PFHxS.

Researchers also found that carbon filtration was able to remove PFAS levels, protecting the mouse embryos from contamination.

Hyderabad hands Rajasthan first defeat

Dream debuts for Hinge and Hussain

HYDERABAD, India, April 14, (AP): Hyderabad Sunrisers fast bowlers Praful Hinge and Sakib Hussain made dream debuts as they gave Rajasthan Royals their first defeat in the Indian Premier League.

Hussain picked up 4-24, and Hinge took 4-34 but enjoyed the more unforgettable performance as he became the first bowler in IPL history to grab three wickets in the first over of an innings.

Hyderabad emphatically won



Sunrisers Hyderabad's Heinrich Klaassen plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Rajasthan Royals in Hyderabad, India. (AP)

by 57 runs after Rajasthan was bowled out for 159 in 19 overs.

"They bowled beautifully," Rajasthan captain Riyan Parag said of the unheralded debutants. "The pressure they had, with the home crowd chanting their name, the way they bowled, it was beautiful."

The lanky Hinge was playing only his second Twenty20 at the senior level, and given the daunting job of opening the bowling against Rajasthan's menacing openers, Vaibhav Suryavanshi and Yashasvi Jaiswal.

But Hinge broke Rajasthan's chase in that first over when he dismissed Suryavanshi to an edge behind off the first delivery, Dhruv Jurel when he dragged on, and Lhuan-dre Pretorius to a flick to deep fine leg.

Hinge shocked again when he returned and took out Parag and collapsed Rajasthan to 9-5 in the third over.

Meanwhile, Hussain, who was picked by Kolkata in 2024 but didn't play, bagged Yashasvi Jaiswal in his first over and took three late wickets, including Rajasthan top-scorer Donovan Ferreira on 69 off 44 balls.

"I manifested this," Hinge said after receiving the player-of-the-match award. "I had written somewhere that I would take four to five wickets on my debut. I thought of dominating the power play. (My favorite wicket was) Suryavanshi. I told people that I would bowl a bouncer to him and get him out. I just wanted to get him out."

Hussain said, "Every player wishes for a debut like this. It feels very nice."

Earlier, Hyderabad posted 216-6 after captain Ishan Kishan's



Sunrisers Hyderabad's Sakib Hussain drops a catch of Rajasthan Royals' Donovan Ferreira during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Rajasthan Royals in Hyderabad, India. (AP)

blistering 91 off 44 balls and late cameos from Nitesh Kumar Reddy (28) and Salil Arora (24).

Kishan smashed six sixes and

eight boundaries and regained the momentum in the middle overs with Heinrich Klaassen, who made 40 off 26 balls.

Kishan looked set to score a century but skewed a return catch to fast bowler Sandeep Sharma in the 14th over.

Abhishek Sharma was out for a duck for the seventh time in T20s this year, slicing the first ball from Jofra Archer to deep backward point.

India works to clear tax hurdles for F1 comeback

NEW DELHI, April 14, (AP): India is working on removing tax hurdles to ease Formula 1's return, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said. Taxes plagued the series' term in India from 2011-13.

"It will take another six months to work out the modalities," Mandaviya said. "The government will help in getting tax relaxations that had become a bone of contention so that it is a viable venture for the organizers."

"Given the global situation due to the ongoing Iran war, India is being seen as a safe and viable venue for sporting events, including F1. We plan to have a MotoGP event before F1 returns. The Federation of Motor Sports Club of India is in talks with Formula 1 right now - we will be facilitators."

All three Indian Grands Prix at Buddh International Circuit (BIC) on the outskirts of New Delhi were won by Sebastian Vettel.

However, organizer Jaypee Sports Group had money issues from the outset and F1 left after the 2013 race. A key point of contention was the state government taxing F1 as entertainment and not sport, and duties levied on teams' freight was a significant dampener as well.

The federal government is keen to remove any such obstacles.

"If the entertainment tax cannot be altogether repealed, we will try to ensure that reimbursements are provided to incentivize the project for the organizers," Mandaviya said. "Discussions are ongoing on the issue - it is an inter-ministerial matter and we are trying our best to make it attractive for F1."

The BIC was a favorite among the drivers for its fast corners and flowing design. Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton has expressed his desire for F1's return to India.

F1 is broadcast in India via digital sports platform FanCode, boasting a strong fan base of 79 million and growing. The races are broadcast in English as well as in local languages Hindi and Tamil.

It costs about \$50 million-\$70 million in hosting fees for a grand prix. India's richest business conglomerate Adani Group is exploring opportunities to acquire the BIC and adjoining Jaypee Group businesses, and could spur the movement to bring F1 back to India.

Best of the Rest

US defender Tolkin out injured: United States defender John Tolkin will be out for "the coming weeks" with a knee ligament injury, his German club said, less than two months before the World Cup.

Holstein Kiel said Tolkin injured the medial collateral ligament in a second-division game against Fortuna Dueseldorf on Friday and was "being treated conservatively."

"As a result, the 23-year-old will not be available to us in the coming weeks," Kiel posted on X. "We wish you a speedy recovery, dear John!" (AP)

Medvedev fined \$7,000: Former No. 1 Daniil Medvedev was fined 6,000 euros (\$7,000) for unsportsmanlike conduct after he smashed his racket seven times during a 6-0, 6-0 loss to Matteo Berrettini at the Monte Carlo Masters last week, the ATP Tour confirmed to The Associated Press on Monday.

Medvedev, who is currently ranked 10th, received a code violation for unsportsmanlike conduct by the chair umpire for his actions early in the second set of Wednesday's match. (AP)

'There's a momentum and a confidence'

Curry hopes to lead surprise Warriors playoff run now that he's healthy after knee injury

SAN FRANCISCO, April 14, (AP): Stephen Curry practically glared in delight when he scored and fouled in his first game back after missing more than two months because of a knee injury. He brought back his celebratory shimmy, shaking his upper body after being sent to the floor on that play following a layup when he drove past former teammate Kevin Durant.

Curry's pregame dribbling and shooting routine had fans showing up early again in the regular-season's final week at Chase Center just for a glimpse, phone cameras held high - including by the rehabbing Jimmy Butler - to capture the must-see moments as everyone suddenly realizes No. 30 is hardly immortal, as much as it used to seem.

And it might be short-lived, for this season anyway. These injury-plagued Golden State Warriors are a long shot, even if Curry hopes to save the day on his troublesome right knee.

The two-time MVP and his Warriors have a daunting task just to get into the playoffs: They are the tenth seed in the Western Conference and need to win a pair of elimination games on the road to earn the eighth seed and a chance to face defending champion and No. 1 Oklahoma City.

Golden State will play Wednesday night against the Clippers in Los Angeles.

"Until we get bounced from whatever this is, we're going to approach it the same way: dignity, competitiveness and confidence that you can win any game," Curry said. "That's just the mentality we have."

And Curry never considered saying forget about it and sitting out the rest of the way, though there were some rough times alone in the training room.



Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (30) goes to the basket against the Los Angeles Clippers center Brook Lopez (11) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

He wanted to come back and try. He knows these opportunities won't last forever, having turned 38 last month and finishing up a 17th NBA season that hardly has gone as planned.

But, with Curry, there is renewed hope.

"There's a momentum and a confidence," coach Steve Kerr said. "He's Steph Curry for a reason."

Guard Gary Payton II put the Warriors' chances this way: "Whatever we put our mind to - now that Superman's back."

Backcourt mate Butler went down in January against his former Heat team with a torn ACL in his right knee that required surgery. There has been a long list of other injured players, too. That meant continuity was lacking much of the season. The Warriors traded away Jonathan Kuminga and Buddy Hield to Atlanta for Kristaps

Porzingis at the trade deadline, yet the big man also had his health challenges that limited his availability.

"There's a level of dignity and a level of competition that we can't run from, the way that we approach things," Curry said. "The fact that I have a chance to play and the fact that I'm out there, that comes with expectations. Whether you achieve them or not, the energy you put into it makes you who you are - whether you win or you lose. You're chasing championships or not."

Draymond Green has provided some continuity to Kerr's rotation, appearing in 68 games. Green and Curry have captured four championships together under Kerr, but they all know their time is fleeting.

Ahead of Curry's 29-point performance against Durant and the Rockets in a one-point loss last weekend in his comeback, Kerr called his super-

star "the greatest face of a franchise in any sport I've ever seen."

"He's one of the most beloved players in league history, Bay Area history, any sport," Kerr added. "So tonight's a special night because we're reminded how lucky we've been and how lucky we still are."

Curry came off the bench to rousing standing ovations in his first two home games before returning to the starting five for Friday night's loss at Sacramento. Before the Houston game, he hadn't played since Jan. 30, missing 27 games.

The Warriors went 9-18 during that stretch with him sidelined by patellofemoral pain syndrome.

Just having Curry back and healthy means so much no matter the role - to the game on the court, yes, but also the mood and morale in the locker room.

"He makes the game a lot easier for everybody," Green said. "Things just kind of fit into their normal spots. The familiarity looked more like the team I'm accustomed to seeing. The spacing is different, he obviously draws two or three people, so just having different reads to make, different things opening up because he's on the floor I think is probably the biggest difference. And also the confidence level of our group is probably the biggest difference. He comes on the court you just think you can win."

The message from Curry remains simple about why he wants to be out there.

"I love playing basketball," he said. "It's what I get paid to do."

"... Our season's been different than we expected, but the fact that there is something to still play for gives all of us a lot of confidence down the stretch to make something out of it, and I want to be a part of that."

\$500,000 payday waiting

Dallas Wings select Fudd of UConn No. 1 in WNBA draft

NEW YORK, April 14, (AP): Azzi Fudd is on her way to Dallas as the No. 1 pick in the WNBA draft with a \$500,000 payday waiting for the former UConn star. A record-setting six UCLA players followed her into the league.

"I'm not really sure I have words to describe that feeling, what that meant," Fudd said of getting drafted. "I don't think it's fully sunk in. It's nothing I could have imagined. The feeling of sitting with my family, with Morgan (Valley), hearing your name called, go up there. Such a surreal feeling."

Fudd will pair again with former Huskies teammate Paige Bueckers, who was the Wings' top pick last year. Bueckers - who along with Fudd gave UConn a record seven No. 1 selections - was in attendance at the draft along with Fudd's Huskies teammates.

"Paige is an incredible player, everyone knows that," Fudd said. "She's someone that makes playing basketball with easy."

UCLA stars Lauren Betts and Gabriela Jaquez went in the top five, a little over a week after leading the Bruins to their first NCAA championship.

Their teammate, Kiki Rice, went sixth to Toronto, the first pick for the expansion franchise. The Tempo chose to have the higher pick in the college draft after winning a coin toss, giving the Portland Fire the top choice in the expansion draft earlier this month.



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NOTICE

07 April, 2026

Mr. Predesh Adimathara Prasad, son of Mr. Prasad Mudisseril Kesavan, resident of Adimathara House, Velloor PO, Kottayam, PIN: 686003, Kerala, India, and Ms. Remya Prabhakaran, daughter of Mr. Prabhakaran Puthuchirayil Velayudhan, resident of Puthuchirayil House, Olyappuram PO, Koothattukulam, Ernakulam Dist, Kerala 686 679, both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).



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Tchouameni's absence a significant setback

Pressure mounts on Arbeloa as Madrid chases Champions League turnaround

MADRID, April 14, (Xinhua): Real Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa faces the most important game of his coaching career on Wednesday when his side travels to Bayern Munich for the second leg of its Champions League quarterfinal, needing to overturn a 2-1 deficit from the first leg.

Kylian Mbappe's goal at the Santiago Bernabeu last Tuesday gave Madrid hope after Luis Diaz and Harry Kane had put Bayern 2-0 ahead, but history offers little encouragement. Madrid has lost the first leg of a European knockout tie at home seven times and has overturned the deficit away only once, in the 1970 European Cup Winners' Cup.

Bayern, meanwhile, has a strong record of protecting an advantage, progressing on 30 of the 31 occasions it has won the first leg away, with the only exception coming against Inter Milan in 2011.

Arbeloa is set to recall Jude Bellingham and Eder Militao to the starting lineup after both were limited to substitute appearances in the first leg, but midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni is suspended.

Tchouameni's absence is a significant setback given his form in a holding role this season, particularly against Bayern's attacking strength. Eduardo Camavinga struggled for consistency in recent weeks and faced criticism.

Central defender Raul Asencio is also unavailable due to illness, while left-back Ferland Mendy has been included in the squad but is unlikely to start.

Madrid's 1-1 draw with Girona on Friday left the club nine points behind FC Barcelona in La Liga with seven games remaining, and the team was booted off at the Bernabeu.

Arbeloa's first match in charge after replacing Xabi Alonso in January ended in a Copa del Rey defeat to second-tier Albacete. With the league title all but out of reach and the Spanish Super Cup already lost to Barcelona, the Champions League represents Madrid's only realistic chance of silverware.

Elimination in Munich would leave the club without a trophy this season and turn the remaining fixtures into a formality, an outcome that would carry significant consequences for a club of Madrid's stature and for president Florentino Perez, who said at the weekend: "Real Madrid never gives in." Arbeloa's future may depend on producing a comeback, while his players have an opportunity to demonstrate their backing for the coach, although Bayern will be confident of finishing the job.

Brazil, Morocco headline Group C as Scotland & Haiti return to World Cup



In this file photo, Denmark's Patrick Dorgu, left, and Scotland's Kieran Tierney battle for the ball during the 2026 World Cup European Qualifying soccer match between Scotland and Denmark at Hampden Park, Glasgow, Scotland. (AP)

Vinicius Júnior and Raphinha to lead the Samba Boys

WASHINGTON, April 14, (AP): Five-time champion Brazil faces African powerhouse Morocco in Group C, which also includes Scotland and Haiti - two teams returning to the World Cup after long absences.

All matches will be played in the United States, with Brazil playing in New York, Philadelphia and Miami. Scotland will face both Haiti and Morocco in Boston, while Haiti and Morocco will play each other in Atlanta.

Brazil, the most successful nation in World Cup history, last won the title in 2002.

Since then it has been eliminated in the quarterfinal stage at every tournament except in 2014, when as host it reached the final four, but suffered a humiliating 7-1 loss to Germany.

Croatia sent the Brazilians home in a penalty shootout four years ago in Qatar.

This time Brazil will be led by Real Madrid's Vinicius Júnior and Barcelona's Raphinha. Madrid forward Rodrygo has been ruled out of the World Cup because of a knee injury.

The team was underperforming in World Cup qualifiers, including stinging losses to archrival Argentina, when the Brazilian soccer confederation recruited veteran coach



In this file photo, Brazil's Raphinha scores his side's opening goal against Colombia from the penalty spot during a FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifying soccer match at Mane Garrincha stadium in Brasilia, Brazil. (AP)

Carlo Ancelotti from Real Madrid. Though he guided the team across the finish line, Brazil finished only fifth in South American qualifying.

Ancelotti has won five Champions League titles but at the World Cup his only coaching experience was as an assistant manager for Italy under Arrigo Sacchi during the 1994 tournament in the United States, when the Italians lost the final to Brazil.

Morocco finished fourth at the last World Cup - the best result ever by an African team. It beat Spain in the round of 16 and Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal in the quarterfinals before falling to eventual runner-up France in the last four.

The team is entering the World

make its second World Cup appearance, and first since 1974, after winning its CONCACAF qualifying group.

In 1974, Haiti was eliminated after three consecutive losses against Italy, Poland and Argentina. The team is likely to struggle against its group-stage opponents this time around as well.

Coached by Frenchman Sebastien Migne, Haiti currently sits in 83rd place in FIFA's world rankings, ahead of only New Zealand among the 48 teams that have qualified for the World Cup.

The team will be led by 32-year-old Duckens Nazon, the joint-top scorer in CONCACAF qualifying with six goals, including a hat-trick while coming off the bench in a 3-3 draw at Costa Rica.

Scotland will be playing in its first World Cup since 1998 thanks to a late win over Denmark in its final qualifier last year.

The team will be led by Scott McTominay, who scored one of the goals in the dramatic 4-2 win over Denmark that sealed Scotland's return.

Coach Steve Clarke has been in charge since 2019 and will be the first man to lead the nation at three major tournaments. Scotland was eliminated in the group stage at the 2020 and 2024 European Championships.

It has never made it past the group stage in its eight previous World Cup appearances. It also faced Brazil in 1998, being narrowly beaten 2-1 by the then defending champion.

Italian sets sights on the French Open

Sinner reclaims the No. 1 ranking from Alcaraz

ROME, April 14, (AP): Sure, Jannik Sinner is pleased to have the No. 1 ranking back.

His biggest takeaways from a victory over Carlos Alcaraz in the Monte Carlo Masters final, though, were finally winning a big clay-court title and doing it by beating his biggest rival on his most challenging surface.

"It means a lot to me, because it means I'm progressing," Sinner said.

For Sinner, it was a first step toward achieving his main goal for 2026: winning the French Open to complete a career Grand Slam. That's an achievement that Alcaraz completed when he won the Australian Open in January - making him at 22 the youngest man to have held aloft all four major trophies.

"Winning a big tournament on clay was one of our goals for this year so there's no better way to start," said Simone Vagnozzi, who coaches the 24-year-old Sinner alongside Darren Cahill.

Sunday's meeting was the first on clay between the top two men's tennis players since Alcaraz saved three match points and came back to beat Sinner in a fifth-set tiebreaker in last year's French Open final.

"I'm not surprised," Alcaraz said. "We've already seen his level on this surface and he's improving a lot year after year. He can win any tournament on any surface. He understands the game very well on clay."

While Alcaraz claimed this year's first major in Australia, Sinner has now followed up his "Sunshine Double" of hard-court titles in Indian



In this file photo, Jannik Sinner of Italy returns a ball against Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic in the men's singles final at the Miami Open tennis tournament in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)

Wells, California, and Miami with another Masters series trophy. Sinner is on a 17-match winning streak during which he has dropped only one set - in the third round in Monte Carlo against Tomas Machac.

In the new rankings released Monday, Sinner moved 110 points ahead of Alcaraz, who had been No. 1 since November.

"It's nice, obviously. I would be a liar to say anything else," Sinner said. "But it doesn't change my thought process. I'm playing to win tournaments and Carlos and I are very close, so the rank-

ings can change from one week to the next.

"There are two big Slams coming up, Paris and London. Let's see where we are after those tournaments," Sinner added. "Right now, I'm focusing more on those than on the ranking. But waking up again as No. 1 is pretty nice."

In a measure of how far ahead of the rest of the field Sinner and Alcaraz are, third-ranked Alexander Zverev trails Sinner by a whopping 7,795 points.

When will Sinner and Alcaraz meet again? Well, the next Masters Series event is the Madrid Open starting next week but Sinner is not committing to that tournament.

"Now it's important to rest," Sinner said. "So now I'll take two or three days without even thinking about tennis and then we'll decide whether or not to play Madrid."

The Madrid Open and the Italian Open are the only Masters titles that Sinner hasn't won and he is making the Rome tournament in May another of his priorities after losing before his home fans at Alcaraz in the Foro Italico final, too, last year upon his return from a three-month doping ban.

Alcaraz's plan is to get back on court on home Spanish soil at this week's Barcelona Open - where he can reclaim the No. 1 ranking if he wins the title since Sinner is not entered.

"The goal is to play the entire clay-court calendar. That was the plan last year, too, but unfortunately it wasn't possible," Alcaraz said, referring to how he had to withdraw from Madrid in 2025 due to muscle injuries.

Levante rises off bottom of La Liga

Fiorentina allays relegation fears

FLORENCE, Italy, April 14, (AP): Fiorentina beat Lazio 1-0 and moved eight points clear of the Serie A relegation zone.

Fiorentina's season-best five-game unbeaten run lifted Paolo Vanoli's men above Cagliari into 15th place.

Robin Gosens got the only goal in the 28th minute when he headed home a cross from Jack Harrison, the winger on loan from Leeds United.

Lazio lost for the first time since March 1. Lazio dominated the match, particularly in the first half. It remained in ninth place.

In Spain (AP) - Carlos Espi scored his seventh goal in six games as Levante beat Getafe 1-0 and moved off the bottom of La Liga.

The 20-year-old Espi had an early

let off after eight minutes when the referee downgraded a red card to a yellow and he was decisive with eight minutes left when he stooped to head home the only goal.

Levante should have wrapped up the points more easily but Getafe goalkeeper David Soria saved two penalties, one from Adrián Dela after an hour and then again from Ivan Romero in stoppage time.

To make matters worse for Getafe, Zaid Romero was sent off in the dying seconds.

The result lifted Levante off the bottom of the table and continued a recent revival that has seen Levante take 11 points from a possible last 18.

It was two points ahead of Oviedo. Elche was third to last. The bottom three go down.



Fiorentina's Robin Everardus Gosens celebrates with Fiorentina's Roberto Piccoli, right, after scoring their side's first goal of the game during the Serie A soccer match between Fiorentina and Lazio in Florence, Italy. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Guardeño remains critical 2 weeks after crash: Young Spanish rider Jaime Guardeño remains in a critical condition in hospital two weeks after a crash while training.

"Jaime continues his fight in the intensive care unit of Taulí Hospital in Sabadell, where he's been since March 31, when he suffered an accident while training," the Caja Rural-Seguros RGA team said in a statement on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old Guardeño sustained serious injuries when he collided with a vehicle, reportedly head injuries after his bicycle struck a rock, days after he finished 29th in the Volta a Catalunya race.

Guardeño finished 14th in the Spanish Vuelta last year, and Caja Rural-Seguros RGA is due to make its Tour de France debut this year.

"His condition remains critical, although stable within the seriousness of his condition. He is under constant monitoring and is scheduled to undergo further procedures in the coming days to aid his recovery," the team added.

Cycling is enjoying a resurgence in popularity thanks to young riders Tadej Pogacar, Mathieu van der Poel, Wout van Aert, Remco Evenepoel and Jonas Vingegaard, but dangers remain. Last month, Olympic champion Tom Pidcock pulled out of the Volta a Catalunya after crashing down a ravine, and Italian cyclist Debora Silvestri was hospitalized after crashing during the women's Milan-San Remo one-day classic. (AP)

Coach admits using a false vaccine certificate: Swiss ice hockey coach Patrick Fischer has admitted he used a certificate falsely claiming he'd been vaccinated against COVID-19 to get around China's travel restrictions for the 2022 Winter Olympics.

In a statement late Monday, Fischer said he made a "serious mistake in this matter" by traveling to Beijing with the Switzerland men's team using false paperwork.

"I'm very sorry if I've disappointed people with this situation," Fischer said. "I was in an extraordinary personal crisis because I didn't want to be vaccinated. At the same time I certainly didn't want to let my team down at the Olympic Games."

Swiss public broadcaster SRF said it confronted Fischer with documents showing he was fined nearly 39,000 Swiss francs (\$50,000) by local authorities in 2023 for document forgery after buying the certificate on social media. SRF said he went public with his admission shortly after. (AP)

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AFC Champions League Elite trophy displayed ahead of the continental competition.

Sports

Ahli, Sadd reach Elite Champions League quarters

AFC moves to expand CL to 32 teams

RIYADH, April 14: Riyad Mahrez struck a brilliant late free-kick in extra time to send defending champion Al Ahli into the quarter-finals of the AFC Champions League Elite with a 1-0 victory over Qatar's Al Duhail.

The Round of 16 clash was tightly contested, with both sides missing several chances in normal time. Al Duhail hit the woodwork twice, while Al Ahli also came close on multiple occasions, forcing the match into extra time.

Al Ahli thought it had won it earlier when it was awarded a penalty in first-half stoppage time of extra time, but Salah Zakaria produced a save to deny Ivan Toney.

However, with penalties looming, Mahrez delivered the decisive moment, curling a free-kick into the net with just minutes remaining to seal qualification and set up a quarter-final meeting with Malaysia's Johor Darul Ta'zim.

In the other match, Al Sadd edged Al Hilal 4-2 on penalties after a dramatic 3-3 draw following extra time.



Riyad Mahrez strikes a brilliant late free-kick.

Akram Afif converted the decisive spot-kick for Al Sadd, who had battled back repeatedly in a thrilling encounter.

The shootout saw misses from Roberto Firmino for Al Sadd, while Karim Benzema and Simon Banza were denied for Al Hilal.

Meanwhile, the Competitions Committee of the Asian Football Confederation has approved a series of major structural reforms to the AFC Elite Champions League, aimed at boosting both competitiveness and commercial value, starting from the 2026-27 season.

Central to the changes is an expansion of the tournament from 24 to 32 clubs. The new format will split teams evenly, with 16 clubs each from the West and East regions, creating more opportunities for top sides to meet earlier in the competition and encouraging higher professional standards across domestic leagues.

Further adjustments will be introduced to the knockout qualification system in seasons following the 2026-27 edition. Teams finishing from first to sixth in each region will qualify directly for the round of 16.

Clubs placed seventh to tenth will enter a newly introduced playoff round to determine the remaining spots in the knockout stage. Teams finishing seventh and eighth will host their playoff matches, rewarding stronger group-stage performances.

The proposals are subject to final approval by the AFC Executive Committee. If ratified, the changes are expected to mark a significant step in elevating the competition's global standing and commercial appeal.

Al-Qadsia draws with Al-Bidda as Kuwait Club heads to Kyrgyzstan

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times

DOHA, April 14: Al Qadsia was held to a goalless draw by Qatar's Al Bidda in a friendly match held in Doha, as the Kuwaiti side continues preparations for its Gulf Club Champions League semi-final against Al Rayyan.

The match formed part of the team's training camp in Qatar ahead of Sunday's semi-final clash. Doha is hosting the remaining stages of the competition, with the other semi-final featuring Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab against Iraq's Zakho, and the final scheduled for April 23.

Head coach Nabil Maoulouf used the friendly to rotate his squad and assess player fitness, with several key absences affecting selection. Bader Al-Mutawa, Talal Al-Fadhel, and Khaled Ibrahim did not travel due to work commitments, while Abdu-

lazz Wadi is sidelined through injury. Mubarak Al-Faneeni is also reportedly doubtful.

Al Qadsia are set to resume training as they complete final preparations, with no further warm-up matches planned due to time constraints.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Club has departed for Bishkek after concluding its training camp in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, ahead of its AFC Challenge League quarter-final against Oman's Al Shabab on April 19.

The match will be played at the Dolon Omurzakov Stadium in Bishkek at 12:00 pm Kuwait time.

Kuwait Club warmed up with two friendlies in Dammam, defeating Al Ettifaq 6-1 before drawing 1-1 with Al Fateh.

Oman's Al Shabab has already arrived in Bishkek with a 25-player squad led by Dutch coach Ilco Schattorie.



Al Qadsia player controls the ball as Al Bidda player defends during the friendly encounter.

Bucks' disappointing finish raises Giannis future questions

MILWAUKEE, April 14, (AP): The postseason is starting without the Milwaukee Bucks for the first time in a decade.

How soon Milwaukee gets back to the playoffs could depend on an offseason that's shaping up to be among the most critical in franchise history due to Giannis Antetokounmpo's uncertain future.

Has the two-time MVP played his last game in a Bucks uniform? "I don't know," Antetokounmpo said Sunday after a 126-106 loss at Philadelphia that capped the Bucks' 32-50 season. "It's not up to me. We'll see."

Antetokounmpo, 31, has spent his entire 13-year career in Milwaukee, which selected the 6-foot-11 forward with the 15th pick in the 2013 draft. Antetokounmpo led the Bucks to their first title in half a century in 2021, and he owns franchise career records in virtually every major statistical category.

He's eligible to become a free agent after next season if he doesn't sign a four-year, \$275 million contract extension in October. Or the Bucks could trade him beforehand if they don't believe he will sign that extension. That uncertainty helps explain why Antetokounmpo was the center of attention at this season's trade deadline though the Bucks ultimately kept him.

Antetokounmpo was asked Sunday whether he'd sign an extension. "It's something I have to sit down with my family and see what's best for me, what's best for my family," he replied.

Doc Rivers, who announced Monday that he's stepping down as the Bucks' coach, said he just wants a positive resolution for both parties.

"Giannis and this franchise won a title together, and to me, that should never be lost, no matter how this ends up," Rivers said. "As I said, Giannis is a fantastic person. I've been lucky to coach a lot of stars, and he's right at the top as far as just good people. I want good people to be taken care of."

This crossroads arrives at a time when the relationship between Antetokounmpo and the front office is at its most fragile.

Antetokounmpo's final game of the season came March 15 when an awkward fall on a dunk caused him to leave a victory over the Indiana Pacers. He averaged 27.6 points, 9.8 rebounds and 5.4 assists in a career-low 36 games.

He wanted to play the last couple of weeks and believed he was healthy enough to do so. Team officials continued to hold him out while saying he had a left knee hyperextension and bone bruise. The NBA is investigating the situation.

If the Bucks do lose Antetokounmpo, they could face a long rebuild because of their lack of draft assets.

The Bucks will have a lottery pick this year either in their own spot or in New Orleans' spot - they'll pick in the less favorable of those two positions. But they don't have first-round selections in 2027 or 2029. They've agreed to pick swaps that could negatively impact their draft position in 2028 and 2030.

Okafor nets decisive double

Leeds stuns Man U to boost survival hopes



Manchester United's Lisandro Martinez, left, and Leeds' Dominic Calvert-Lewin fight for the ball during the Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Leeds in Manchester, England. (AP)

MANCHESTER, England, April 14, (AP): Noah Okafor scored twice in the first half hour as Leeds United beat Manchester United 2-1 at Old Trafford to climb six points clear of the Premier League relegation zone.

It was the first time Leeds has won a league match at Old Trafford since 1981 and the Yorkshire club moved up to 16th place in the 20-team table.

"I feel tired and relieved but also proud of the boys," Leeds coach Daniel Farke said. "It was a fantastic performance. We are into the crunch time of the season and you have to keep your nerve and stick to your plan."

Manchester remained in third but missed a chance to move clear of Aston Villa, with which it is tied on points.

Leeds started on the front foot and almost scored in the second minute but Senne Lammers made an excellent point-blank save from Dominic Calvert-Lewin.



Leeds' Noah Okafor celebrates after scoring during the Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Leeds in Manchester, England. (AP)

However, its pressure paid off two minutes later when Okafor side-footed home with style after everyone missed Jayden Bogle's deep cross from the right.

Leeds was all over United during the opening half hour and a second arrived in the 29th. A ball was half cleared to Okafor, whose first-time shot from outside the box took a slight deflection as it flew past Lammers and into the far corner.

United interim coach Michael Carrick had never lost a game at home since replacing Ruben Amorim in mid-January and his task got even harder 10 minutes into the second period when Lisandro Martinez was sent off for pulling Calvert-Lewin's hair.

However, the 10 men kept plugging away in what was a pulsating end-to-end encounter and got a goal back after 68 minutes when Casemiro bulleted a header past Karl Darlow from a Ruben Fernandes cross.

Both sides had more chances in a thrilling last 20 minutes. United had two shots knocked off the goal-line and Leeds failed to make the most of its frequent counterattacks but neither could find the net again.

"We didn't start the game particularly well," Carrick said. "We didn't quite have the rhythm or click."

"I'm pleased the way we went about the second half but it was more difficult when you are a man down."

Farke, meanwhile, was ecstatic at taking all three points from one of Leeds' fiercest rivals at such a crucial juncture in a testing campaign.

"A win is always good for the mood and the confidence. It is also good for the table," he said.

"A few more points are needed but tonight we edge three points closer. Nothing is achieved yet. We have to stay humbled, grounded and hungry to make sure we get as many points as possible."

Ghana turns to Queiroz as coach just weeks out from WC

ACCRA, Ghana, April 14, (AP): World Cup-bound Ghana appointed Carlos Queiroz as the new men's national coach, less than two months out from the tournament.

"Coach Queiroz begins work immediately," the Ghana Football Association said in a statement.

Ghana opens its World Cup campaign in Group L against Panama on June 17 in Toronto, then faces England outside Boston and Croatia in Philadelphia.

The Black Stars also have warmups against Mexico on May 22 and Wales on June 2.

"This is not just another job - it is a mission," Queiroz said in a statement on the GFA website. "And I

am ready to give everything of my experience and knowledge once again, in service of the game and the happiness of People."

Queiroz was chosen from more than 600 local and foreign applications because of his extensive World Cup experience.

He qualified South Africa for the 2002 World Cup, guided his native Portugal to the knockout phase in 2010, and coached Iran at the 2014 and 2018 tournaments.

Queiroz was most recently in charge of Oman, which failed to qualify for the World Cup. He stepped down three weeks ago.

He's replaced Otto Addo, who was fired on March 31 after four straight losses in warmup games.



In this file photo, Iran's head coach Carlos Queiroz looks ahead of the start of the World Cup Group B soccer match between Wales and Iran at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, in Al Rayyan, Qatar. (AP)