



PM stresses need for strategic warehouses to meet vital sectors growth
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KUWAIT DRAWS RED LINE ON MILITARY USE OF TERRITORY

No war from Kuwait soil

Cabinet signals firm neutrality, sovereignty non-negotiable

KUWAIT CITY, April 15, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Cabinet reaffirmed Tuesday that Kuwait, as party to no conflict whether inside or outside the region, would never to allow its territory to be used for launching attacks on any country in keeping with its foreign policy.

This came during the Cabinet's weekly meeting, held under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The State of Kuwait pursues moderate foreign policy based on positive neutrality, and the principles of the international law and good neighborliness, the

Cabinet stressed.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Cabinet members were apprised of the letter sent to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah by Egyptian President AbdelFattah El-Sisi.

They were briefed about the phone call, initiated by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

During the conversation, His Highness Sheikh Sabah conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and reviewed the latest developments of the situation in the Gulf region.

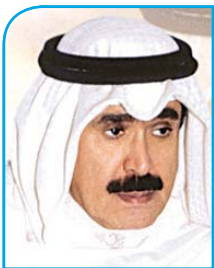
Both sides discussed the prospects of the ceasefire between the United States and Iran as well as the mediation efforts being made by Pakistan.

They reaffirmed the commitment of the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to supporting the endeavors aiming to strengthen security, stability and durable peace in the region.

His Highness the Prime Minister apprised the Cabinet members of the outcomes of the field visit he paid on Sunday to the supply and logistics authority of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense.

During the visit, His Highness the Prime Minister met Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdulla Al-Salem Al-Sabah and vice chairman of the authority Maj.-Gen. Staff Eng. Salah Saud Al-Azemi, and conveyed to them the appreciations of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince for

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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

Iran wants to toy with the negotiations

THE Iranian negotiator mistakenly assumes that the antiquated stratagems previously used with other counterparts can be directed at the American negotiator, believing that playing for time will secure his objectives. Such revolutionary delusions are destined to fail in the current landscape.

Regardless of the claims made about his ability to reshape the situation in his favor, he is attempting to collect water in a sieve.

The prevailing international climate has fundamentally shifted from the 19th century, as seen in the negotiations with the Russians over Ashuradeh Island—a process that lasted two centuries with seven years of daily sessions, which did not yield any resolution.

Even if the Soviet Union ceded the small island after getting weary of the protracted dialogue, the Qajar dynasty had already been forced to surrender the Caspian Sea, following a crushing military defeat.

A similar pattern of stagnation characterized the struggle for influence between the Persians and the Ottomans in the Middle East. A state of neither war nor peace persisted from 1514 until the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

Historically, this remains one of the most protracted border disputes, consuming vast ink, paper and diplomatic resources, more than the actual munitions at various junctures.

As we previously stated, international circumstances are entirely different today.

First, the strategic options of Tehran have become almost entirely ineffective. The forces currently dictating the terms of the conflict possess far greater capabilities than Tehran. The world has witnessed the extensive scale of ruin inflicted upon Iran.

Second, the global community has long stood in opposition to the current regime's pursuit of nuclear weaponry, as experience consistently demonstrated its reliance on terrorism to subdue others. Indeed, every European capital bears the bloody marks of Persian-sponsored terror.

In this regard, we recall the words of American President Donald Trump: "If Iran had a nuclear weapon, world leaders would be calling the Iranians 'Sir'."

Third, the attempt of Iran to utilize the Strait of Hormuz as leverage against the United States of America caused severe damage to the global economy.

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Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas during an inspection visit to several duty sites on Wednesday.

Kuwait reports 24-hour airspace calm

KNG reinforces readiness edge

KUWAIT CITY, April 15, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior on Wednesday reassured the public that the country's airspace was safe and unthreatened in the last 24 hours.

During the media briefing held at the Government Communication Center regarding current events, Spokesperson for the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior, Brig. Gen. Nasser Bouslaib, reaffirmed army and security forces' diligence in responding to all regional developments within a comprehensive coordination system and constant readiness among state institutions, which reflects an advanced level of operational efficiency and field preparedness.

He reiterated warning against violating the instructions issued regarding the prohibition of using drones, due to the danger they pose to the conduct of security and military operations. Bouslaib emphasized that necessary legal measures against violators.

He also stressed the necessity of adhering to pro-

cedures for securing home cameras, protecting them with strong passwords, and regularly updating their systems to protect privacy.

The existing level of readiness and integration reflects a profound societal awareness and national cohesion, supported by mutual trust between citizens and state, Bouslaib concluded.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Lieutenant General Hamad Al-Barjas conducted an inspection visit Wednesday to several duty sites secured by the National Guard.

In a press statement, Al-Barjas stressed the importance of maintaining the highest levels of readiness and discipline to enhance the ability of National Guard units to support state agencies and contribute to national security and stability.

He conveyed the greetings and appreciation of KNG

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Day by Day

IF you are asked about Lebanon, say, "It is as beautiful as Prophet Joseph."

If you are asked about its people, say, "They are as sorrowful as Prophet Jacob in his grief over his son Joseph."

If you are asked who governs Lebanon, say, "They are as corrupt as Joseph's brothers."

In Lebanon, every era has had its corrupt leaders.

The Lebanese use the term "daya'nah", meaning a hopeless case.

May God help Lebanon, whose light has dimmed due to a sect that has exploited all other sects.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Kuwait pulls citizenship from 146 in legal sweep

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Two decisions were issued by the Higher Committee for Kuwaiti Citizenship Investigation to revoke the citizenship of 146 individuals, and were published in the official gazette, "Kuwait al-Youm."

The first decision concerns the revocation of citizenship from one woman, based on Article 10 of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959 concerning the Kuwaiti Citizenship Law and its amendments.

The second decision concerns the revocation of citizenship from 145 individuals, based on Article 11 of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959 concerning the Kuwaiti Citizenship Law and its amendments.

Article 10 states that a Kuwaiti woman does not lose her Kuwaiti nationality upon marrying a foreigner unless she obtains her husband's nationality.

Article 11 stipulates that a Kuwaiti man loses his Kuwaiti citizenship if he voluntarily acquires a foreign nationality. His wife loses the citizenship if she was naturalized through

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Kuwait-wide raid nets 99 offenders

By Munif Naif and Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has launched an inspection campaign in Kabad, Jahra Governorate targeting undocumented workers, in coordination with the Public Security Sector at the Ministry of Interior.

In a press statement Wednesday, PAM announced that the campaign led to the arrest of 47 workers found to have violated the Labor Law. Legal measures were taken against them and they were referred to the competent authorities.

PAM stressed that the campaign aims to regulate the labor market and curb illegal employment, affirming that the inspection campaigns are continuing throughout the country in cooperation with the relevant authorities.

It called on both employers and workers to strictly comply with the applicable laws and regulations to avoid legal consequences, while reaffirming its commitment to enforce the law in order to guarantee justice and protect the rights of all parties.

Meanwhile, the General Traffic Department apprehended 52 individuals proven to have violated the Residency Law over the past 24 hours. It was revealed that arrest warrants were issued against some of them and are wanted by

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Gulf Bank deposits 3 million Kuwaiti Dinars into the accounts of the new AIDanah Millionaires



AI Ahli Bank of Kuwait achieves the global ISO 22301:2019 certification for Business Continuity Management System

NBK wins Kuwait's Best Retail Bank in Customer Service in 2025 by Service Hero

Kuwait storage shortage drives sharp rise in rents, land prices

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Real estate expert Fahad Al-Momen says the warehousing market in Kuwait faces a clear challenge - a shortage of storage space compared to growing demand.

He explained that the total current storage area is estimated at approximately 21 square kilometers, which is insufficient to meet actual market needs. This has directly impacted the rise in both the price of storage plots and rental rates.

This severe shortage in supply has led to a doubling

in the value of storage plots and rental prices, particularly in Ardiya, since the COVID-19 pandemic. Rental values have also witnessed a significant increase, especially after the Mangaf fire and the subsequent tightening of restrictions on storage in unlicensed locations, such as some investment properties.

Al-Momen stressed that the Cabinet's decisions regarding the inventory of unused land represent an important step in the right direction, but the market is still awaiting actual implementation.

He indicated that introducing new storage areas will contribute

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Kuwait water safety affirmed after tests

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Director of the Chemical Testing Department at the Environment Public Authority (EPA) Abdullah Al-Yateem reassured the public that the seawater and drinking water in the country are free of chemical pollutants, as confirmed by the results of continuous monitoring and analysis over the past six weeks.

In a televised interview, Al-Yateem stated that fish, shellfish and seabed sediments are safe as well, proving the stability of the

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HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

He ascended the throne at fourteen, but turned power into a farce

He tied women to chariots like horses and whipped them

He enjoyed throwing gold from the top of his towering turret and watching people fight over it

He built temples and colossal statues of himself, and claimed divinity

Women used to put doses of diluted poison in their husbands' breakfast

The longer the man was away from home, the stronger the poison's effect

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The Third Crusade was the most dangerous and violent

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The teacher to the mother, "He is disruptive during class, often interrupts the lesson, and does not learn."

The child, "It is very simple. I would make coffee for the teacher, and put the sedative in her cup."



Prayer Timings	
Fajr	04:00
Sunrise ..	05:22
Zohr	11:48
Asr	15:22
Maghrib ..	18:14
Isha	19:34

PM stresses need for strategic warehouses to meet vital sectors growth

KUWAIT CITY, April 15, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired a meeting on Wednesday to discuss ways to develop infrastructure and logistics, and to follow up on procedures for surveying, classifying, and utilizing land to establish strategic state warehouses belonging to the Kuwait Storage Company.

This will enhance supply centers, meet the growing needs of vital sectors, and secure supply chains against future challenges.

During the meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister instructed the completion of all technical data related to the allocated lands in preparation for further discussion and implementation, stressing the importance of adhering to timelines for periodic reporting.

The meeting was attended by Min-

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



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah chairs the meeting.

'Residence Dept' asked to accept expired passports

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: In a humanitarian gesture, Director General of the General Department of Residency Affairs Brigadier General Farid Al-Mutairi issued a circular to all departments under the General Department of Residency Affairs, instructing them to accept residents whose passports have expired and who were unable to renew them, but have had them extended through their embassies, reports Al-Anba daily.

The circular stated the following: Given the current situation in the country and the region, and to ensure the smooth operation of services and facilitate procedures for applicants, it has been decided to accept residents whose passports have expired and who were unable to renew them, but have had them extended, and to process their transactions using these passports. The extension must be stamped in the passport and accompanied by a letter from the resident's embassy in Kuwait, authenticated by Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, confirming the validity of the passport extension. All employees are hereby instructed to adhere to these instructions and not to deviate from them.

147 vie for 48 supervisory positions in co-ops: MoSA

Final round for selection of Kuwaitis begins

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Dr Khaled Al-Ajmi announced the start of final interviews for the second phase of the project to Kuwaitize supervisory positions in cooperative societies.



Dr. Al-Ajmi

He revealed that 809 citizens applied for the tests, of whom 147 passed and are now competing for 48 supervisory positions in 17 cooperative societies.

In a press statement issued during the ministry's reception of the successful candidates, Al-Ajmi explained that the evaluation process relies 90 percent on the results of written ex-

ams conducted at a private university and 10 percent on final personal interviews. Candidates with the highest scores are the most likely to secure these positions, unless significant issues arise during the interviews.

The third phase of the project will be launched immediately after the completion of the second phase results. It will include offering a larger number of supervisory positions and expanding to field and technical roles within the cooperative societies, such as market managers, branch managers, and warehouse managers.

Al-Ajmi affirmed that the ministry is working in coordination with relevant government agencies to implement an ambitious plan to achieve a qualitative leap in the cooperative sector and increase the participation of national talent in the next phase, adding that the ministry has adopted audio-visual documentation of all interviews conducted with applicants to promote integrity and transparency and to address any issues.

He explained that on the first day, the ministry received 75 candidates, including 10 women, for several supervisory positions, including

Director General, Deputy Director General for Administrative Affairs, and Deputy Director General for Commercial and Marketing Affairs, as well as heads of accounting, IT, legal, procurement, public relations, and investment branch departments in several cooperative societies, namely Shamiya, Shuwaikh, Sulaibikhat, Adan, Qusour, Mishref, Saad Al-Abdullah, Naseem, Zahraa, Rawda, Hawally, and Abdullah Al-Mubarak.

Al-Ajmi indicated that the interviews will continue the next day in eight other cooperative societies, with an opportunity for those who missed the first day to attend and complete the procedures.

He pointed out that the high number of applications reflects the attractiveness of these jobs in the cooperative sector, especially given the financial benefits offered, adding that the applicants' success rate is considered acceptable given the technical and sensitive nature of the tests.

Al-Ajmi confirmed that those who are successful in the application process, as well as those who do not pass the test, can reapply for future job vacancies.

'Emergency plan produced results'

'Education process on track despite current challenges'

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at the College of Nursing in the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr. Abdullah bin Awadh said the college maintains the stability and effectiveness of the educational process despite the current challenges.

In an interview with the newspaper, Awadh attributed this achievement to the blended learning model, development of the technological infrastructure, and continuation of field training as per the regulations that ensure the safety of students and the high quality of education.

He revealed that the academic emergency plans greatly contributed to the ongoing efforts to guarantee the continuity of education without affecting its outcomes. He stated that this is in addition to the provision of comprehensive student support and facilitating the summer term, in line with the commitment of the college to prepare qualified nursing professionals according to the international standards.

He said the college focuses on the quality of its educational outputs through strict compliance with international academic standards, regular update of its curricula, strengthening partnerships with healthcare institutions, and monitoring the performance of graduates in the job market. He clarified that this integration between the academic and practical aspects produced nurses capable of meeting the needs of the health sector and keeping pace with the rapid developments in the field.

Following are details of the interview:

Question: How do you assess the progress of the educational process under the current circumstances?

Answer: The educational process at the College of Nursing is proceeding steadily and effectively, thanks to the integrated efforts of its administration, faculty and training staff, in addition to the commitment of the students. Since the beginning of the conflict, the college has been keen on laying down plans to ensure the continuity of education, while maintaining the quality of educational outcomes and achieving academic goals.

Q: What are the difficult challenges that the students and faculty members are facing during this period?

A: These challenges include adapting to the rapid shift between different educational modes -- from in-person to online learning or vice versa. This necessitated extra effort from everyone. They also faced security and psychological challenges, as well as the field training requirements in sensitive healthcare environments. Another challenge is the psychological pressure resulting from the nature of this phase.

Q: How did the college deal with the shift between in-person and distance learning?

A: The college adopted the blended learning model, combining e-learning with in-person instruction for field training only. The theoretical and practical aspects were delivered remotely, while field training continued in person according to carefully considered guidelines that addressed the current circumstances and ensured the safety of 2,598 students.

The college also provided advanced technological infrastructure, along with ongoing technical support for students, faculty and trainers. Training workshops were organized to ensure the optimal use of educational platforms. This integration contributed to a smooth transition between different learning methods, without affecting the quality of the educational process.

Q: To what extent were the academic emergency plans successful in ensuring the continuity of education without affecting the outcomes?

A: Academic emergency plans have proven highly successful in ensuring the continuity of the educational process, without compromising the quality of outcomes. High flexibility was observed in class schedules and assessment methods were adopted in view of the circumstances, while maintaining the academic standards. Field training continued with the implementation of rigid precautionary measures.

Q: How do you ensure the continuity of high-quality practical training?

A: This is done through well-planned strategies implemented in coordination with health authorities. Students were assigned to various training sites like hospitals and health centers. The concerned academic and professional staff supervised the students to guarantee the achievement of educational objectives. Field training is vital in preparing nursing students, as it equips them with clinical and practical skills that can only be acquired through application in a work environment.

Q: What measures were taken to ensure student safety during training?

A: Several stringent measures were im-



Dr. Abdullah bin Awadh

plemented to ensure student safety, including providing a secure training environment, organizing transportation, equipping shelters, enhancing health and safety protocols, and full compliance with the instructions of the relevant health authorities.

Q: How are students assessed during their practical training?

A: Students are assessed in the hospitals according to the criteria that include clinical performance, professional commitment, and the ability to deal with patients. Current circumstances are also taken into consideration, while maintaining fairness and objectivity in the assessment to ensure the graduation of students with the required competence and skills.

Q: Are there plans to offer additional courses?

A: Yes, the college intends to offer additional courses during the summer term to expedite student graduation and minimize academic delays caused by the current circumstances. The summer term is carefully designed to meet students' needs and maximize the benefit of the summer period.

Q: Are there facilities for graduating students?

A: Yes, these facilities include flexibility in course registration, increased course load during the summer term and streamlined academic procedures. The exact number of graduating students is currently being determined and will be officially announced soon.

Q: What are the important services offered to students?

A: The Deanship of Student Affairs provides comprehensive support, including academic guidance, psychological and social support, and the organization of student activities. It eases academic and registration procedures, while improving communication channels with students to greatly contribute to their academic and psychological well-being.

Quality

Q: How does the college maintain the quality of its graduates?

A: The college is committed to maintaining the quality of its educational outcomes by adhering to the highest academic standards, continuously updating the curricula, enhancing practical training, and conducting periodic evaluations of academic and professional performance.

The college is also accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), an international body specializing in accrediting nursing programs. ACEN aims to ensure the quality of education and raise the level of academic programs according to rigorous global standards. This reflects the commitment of the college to produce qualified nursing professionals according to the best global practices and strengthen the job market's confidence in its graduates.

Q: Are there indicators to measure graduate readiness?

A: Yes, the college uses several indicators like performance evaluations during field training, feedback from employers, and professional exam pass rates. Graduates are also monitored after graduation to assess their integration into the job market, which helps in the continuous improvement of academic programs.

Q: What are the future development plans?

A: The college strives to develop its programs to align with the latest international standards by updating its curricula, introducing modern technologies, upgrading laboratories, and encouraging scientific research.

It also works hard to expand partnerships with healthcare institutions to produce nursing professionals capable of efficiently meeting the needs of the healthcare sector.

We affirm that the college remains committed to its educational and national mission, prioritizing student safety and the quality of education. It is dedicated to preparing qualified healthcare professionals who will serve the nation with utmost competence and capability.

KNG gives go ahead for new class of graduates

KUWAIT CITY, April 15, (KUNA): The Kuwait National Guard (KNG) General Headquarters announced on Wednesday the acceptance of a new class of Kuwaiti university graduates as cadets in the fields of human medicine and allied health sciences.

In a press statement, the KNG said that for human medicine applicants, conditions include obtaining a degree from Kuwait University with a minimum grade of "B" or its equivalent from other recognized universities, holding the title of assistant registrar, and not exceeding 35 years of age. Applicants with higher degrees (PhD) must not exceed 40 years of age as of April 18.

It added that for allied health medicine, applicants must have a degree from Kuwait University with a minimum grade of "B" or its equivalent from other recognized universities in one of the following specializations: emergency medical services, medical laboratories, health information management/hospital administration, physiotherapy, radiology, or nursing. Applicants must not exceed 30 years of age as of April 18.

The statement noted that applications will be accepted at the National Guard General Headquarters from April 19 to 23.



Jahra Governorate photo showing Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi receiving the Jahra Security Director Brigadier General Ziad Al-Khatib.

Jahra security situation discussed by governor

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habashi received the Jahra Security Director Brigadier General Ziad Al-Khatib to follow up on the security situation and review the level of preparedness and procedures implemented in the governorate.

According to a press release issued by Jahra Governorate, the governor, during the meeting, emphasized the pivotal role played by security forces in maintaining security and order and enhancing stability.

He commended the huge efforts exerted by security personnel and their high level of vigilance and efficiency in carrying out their duties and national responsibilities.

The governor was also briefed on the most prominent security measures and procedures adopted, as well as the plans in place to continue monitoring the security situation in Jahra Governorate, which contribute to the consolidation of security and stability and ensure the safety of all.

Meanwhile, Brigadier General Al-Khatib affirmed that the security forces continue to perform their duties with full readiness, through continuous monitoring of the field situation and taking all necessary measures and procedures to guarantee the security of the governorate and the safety of its residents.

He expressed his appreciation for the governor's support and ongoing attention to security matters.

Low turnout & lack of interest hinder distribution of houses

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Chairperson of the Women's Housing Committee at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) Sheikhha Bibi Al-Yousef confirmed that the committee has been facing recurring challenges regarding the non-compliance of some beneficiaries with procedures.

In a statement to Kuwait TV, Sheikhha Bibi Al-Yousef disclosed that 30 female citizens were summoned over the past three days, but only 15 responded despite having submitted housing applications before. She said PAHW is exerting tremendous efforts to fulfill requests and prepare housing units, but the failure of some of these citizens to attend or complete procedures hinders the workflow and affects the distribution mechanism.

She explained that amending the salary ceiling for rental housing applicants to a maximum of KD1,500 per month allows special cases whose salaries exceed this limit to submit a case study request with a maximum of KD2,000. She stated this is in consideration of living conditions, taking into account only the educational and health loans, excluding consumer loans.

She expressed her appreciation for women who bear the cost of their chil-

dren's education, while considering seeking medical treatment abroad a personal decision that does not affect eligibility criteria.

She emphasized the importance of beneficiaries actually residing in their allocated units, indicating that PAHW grants a two-month grace period for renovation and repair works, as some houses might not be in their final condition upon handover, until the move to affordable housing in 2028.

She said some applicants rejected their units after approval, although the locations are clearly specified in their applications, such as Sulaibiya and Taima. She asserted that this behavior deprives other eligible applicants of housing opportunities. She urged female citizens to clarify their position regarding housing applications, either by accepting and committing to the unit or by withdrawing early, to ensure fair distribution. She stressed that "patriotism is not expressed through slogans, but by respecting the rights of others."

She also confirmed the resumption of inspection campaigns in allocated units to ensure they are being used for residential purposes only. She underscored the importance of complying with this condition, adding that rejection or misuse deprives those most in need of their right to housing.

KU students urge admin to reconsider test procedures

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: With the end of the current academic year and the approach of final examinations at Kuwait University, a number of students have called on the university administration to reconsider exam procedures, particularly in the event that the electronic examination system is adopted.

The students argued that such reconsideration is necessary to ensure academic fairness and to take into account the exceptional circumstances they faced recently.

On their social media accounts, the students emphasized the importance of allowing the review of previous questions during online exams. They asserted that restricting this feature deprives them of the chance to review and verify their answers, which are considered an important aspect of fair assessment.

They also called for exams that are aligned with the current academic level, rather than those designed for normal circumstances. They stressed the need to limit exam access to a single device in order to avoid imposing additional technical or financial burdens on them and their

families. At the same time, they asked the academic departments and faculty members to streamline procedures and avoid unnecessary complexities in order to reduce psychological and academic pressure.

They pointed out that these demands concern thousands of students whose academic progress and future studies depend on the outcomes of this semester, particularly in relation to transfer and specialization decisions, and are not limited to a small group. They said this requires avoiding complications in the examination process or unjustified reduction in grades.

They also called for a reassessment of course prioritization for new batches, ensuring that students from previous batches who faced difficulties with certain courses due to certain challenges are not disadvantaged, thereby, guaranteeing equal opportunities for all.

They underscored the importance of adopting decisions that prioritize their best interests, while balancing the preservation of academic standards with current circumstances, in a manner that maintains the stability of the educational process and guarantees fair outcomes for everyone.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



He ascended the throne at fourteen, but turned power into a farce

HAVE you heard about one of the most notorious and controversial rulers in history?

He ascended the throne at the age of fourteen to lead a powerful empire, but he turned power into a farce. He appointed officials to sensitive positions based on the size of their genitals.

In his palace, he used to hold bizarre banquets, inviting only the fat, the short, and the bald. He tied women to chariots like horses and whipped them while they were dragged through the streets.

The ruler released enormous, venomous snakes into the audience stands and delighted in watching people suffer from the bites. He enjoyed throwing gold from the top of his towering turret and watching people fight over it. He disguised himself as a woman and frequented brothels, where he openly committed lewd acts with men. He built temples and colossal statues of himself, then claimed divinity and ordered the people to worship him.

The people could not bear his rule, and he was assassinated at the age of eighteen, after four years of reign, upon the orders of his grandmother, who had brought him to power.

That ruler was Elagabalus, the Roman emperor of Syrian origin.

French women and their husbands

In the Middle Ages, in a certain French town, women used to put doses of diluted poison in their husbands' breakfast. When the husbands returned home at night, the wives used to give them the antidote at the beginning of the night, so the poison would have no effect.

If the husband did not return home or stayed elsewhere, he would miss the antidote, and he would suffer from headaches, nausea, shortness of breath, depression, and pain.

The longer the man was away from home, the stronger the poison's effect. Upon his return, his wife would give him the antidote without his knowledge, and his condition would improve within minutes.

The man was deceived by this trick, thinking that being away from home caused him pain, depression, and nausea, thus increasing his attachment to his home and wife.

● He tied women to chariots like horses and whipped them

● He enjoyed throwing gold from the top of his towering turret and watching people fight over it

● He built temples and colossal statues of himself, and claimed divinity

● Women used to put doses of diluted poison in their husbands' breakfast

● The longer the man was away from home, the stronger the poison's effect

● He thought being away from home caused him pain, depression, and nausea

● The Third Crusade was the most dangerous and violent

● The outcome of the campaign was unsatisfactory for both the Europeans and the Muslims

● The teacher to the mother, "He is disruptive during class, often interrupts the lesson, and does not learn."

● The child, "It is very simple. I would make coffee for the teacher, and put the sedative in her cup."

Saladin's liberation of Jerusalem

As soon as news of Saladin's recapture of Jerusalem reached the Vatican, the Pope called for a new crusade campaign. It was the most dangerous and violent yet - the Third Crusade.

The greatest kings of Europe - Emperor of Germany Frederick Barbarossa, King of England Richard the Lionheart, and King of France Philip Augustus - set out at the head of massive armies that crossed land and sea.

However, the journey was not safe, as Barbarossa drowned before reaching Syria. Richard and Philip quarreled, and Philip returned to his homeland, leaving Richard the Lionheart to face Saladin alone.

Richard managed to defeat Saladin in several battles and succeeded in capturing some cities, such as Jaffa, Ascalon, and Acre, where he carried out a massacre of Muslims after their surrender.

However, Jerusalem remained unconquered, and the Crusaders failed to recapture the holy city. The campaign ended with the Treaty of Ramla in 588 AH (1180 CE), which confirmed Jerusalem in Muslim hands, and the Crusaders were confined to a limited coastal strip.

The outcome of the campaign was unsatisfactory for both the Europeans, who failed to recapture Jerusalem, and the Muslims, who lost some important coastal cities.

Saladin died shortly afterward, and the Crusaders rose up again. The story was not yet over.

The teacher and the student

The teacher summoned the mother of one of the students to the school to discuss her son's situation.

The teacher said, "I want you to understand that your son needs a sedative. It is medication for those who have difficulty concentrating and are hyperactive. He is disruptive during class, often interrupts the lesson, and does not learn."

The mother agreed to the teacher's suggestion, but the student said he was embarrassed to take the medication in front of his classmates.

The teacher suggested that the student go to the teachers' room to take the pill, get her coffee, and then return to class.

The student agreed, and things went as planned for a month.

The teacher called the mother in again and praised her son's behavior, noting how much he had improved, become calmer, and was learning. The mother was pleased to hear the teacher's words. Smiling, she said to her son, "It is wonderful that you are learning so much better now. Tell me about the changes you have experienced and your success."

The child told his mother, "It is very simple, Mom. I would go to the teachers' room, make coffee for the teacher, and put the sedative in her cup. That way, the teacher became calmer, and I could learn properly."

We shouldn't blame others. Sometimes, we are the ones who need to change.



The Persians have a way of deceiving their opponents, such as holding meetings that end without any results, just to buy time.



It is said that many countries have four classes, not three

- A class above the law that owns the country
- A class that conspires to plunder the country
- A class that pays the country's bills
- A class that only dreams of a passport to leave the country.



No one listens to you until you say something wrong. Then, people argue with you.



Wise people say, "It is better to cheat me on the price than on the product."



KUNA photo

Kuwait Ambassador to Egypt Ghanem Al-Ghanem meets Egypt's State Minister for Information, Daa Rashwan.

Kuwait, Egypt eye media boost in latest scenario

CAIRO, April 15, (KUNA): Kuwait Ambassador to Egypt Ghanem Al-Ghanem on Wednesday stressed boosting Kuwait-Egypt media cooperation to keep pace with regional developments and support Arab and regional issues.

Al-Ghanem said in a statement to KUNA after meeting Egypt's State Minister for Information, Daa Rashwan, that talks addressed enhancing bilateral media cooperation to achieve mutual interests.

He added discussions covered mechanisms to develop cooperation, including exchanging expertise, strengthening coordination in media coverage, and supporting training and capacity-building programs.

Al-Ghanem noted the meeting underlined the pivotal role of media in supporting Arab causes and addressing current challenges, particularly amid escalating regional developments, to promote awareness and stability.

He also congratulated Rashwan on assuming his post, wishing him success in his duties.

Al-Ghanem affirmed Kuwait's keenness to strengthen cooperation with Egypt across fields, particularly media, reflecting the deep ties between the two countries.

Nazaha, KTS join hands to fight rising corruption

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Dr. Rana Al-Fares, Chairperson of the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), met with Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS) Majid Al-Mutairi to discuss ways to enhance transparency and strengthen the principles of integrity, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

According to a press release issued by Nazaha on Tuesday, the meeting addressed ways to strengthen anti-corruption measures, thereby contributing to the consolidation of transparency and integrity principles in Kuwait and improving its ranking in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

The meeting also reviewed efforts to improve and strengthen international confidence in Kuwait's governance system.

Both sides emphasized the importance of integrating the roles of civil society organizations and government entities, and working together to achieve national anti-corruption goals. This collaboration is expected to have a positive impact on sustainable development and enhance Kuwait's reputation regionally and internationally.

Members of Nazaha's Board of Directors and members of the Kuwait Transparency Society's Board of Directors attended the meeting.

21 perished in Jan 'accidents'

110 citations in 24 hours

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Figures released by the Statistics and Research Department at the Ministry of Justice revealed that 515 traffic cases were registered in January 2026.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the statistics, indicating that Mubarak Al-Kabeer Traffic Court recorded the highest number of traffic cases with 31.5 percent, while the Hawally Traffic Court recorded the lowest at 0.4 percent.

According to the statistics, the number of pending cases reached 2,470. The Capital Traffic Court recorded the highest at 32.8 percent and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Traffic Court recorded the lowest at 11.5 percent.

The number of resolved cases reached 1,177. The Capital Traffic Court led with 28.3 percent, while the Farwaniya Traffic Court recorded the lowest at 12.1 percent.

The data showed that the overall completion rate reached 47.7 percent, with the Jahra Traffic Court achieving the highest rate at 57.2 percent, while the Capital Traffic Court is the lowest at 41.2 percent.

Regarding traffic rulings, 23 prison sentence rulings were issued. Hawally

Traffic Court led with 11, followed by Ahmadi with eight, the Capital with three and Jahra with one. The Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Farwaniya traffic courts did not impose a prison sentence.

The number of license suspension rulings reached 30, with Ahmadi Traffic Court recording the highest at eight, followed by the Capital and Jahra with seven each, Hawally with five, Farwaniya with two and Mubarak Al-Kabeer with one.

On serious accidents, the traffic courts recorded 21 fatalities. Jahra had the highest number with eight, followed by the Capital with six, Hawally and Ahmadi with three each and Farwaniya with one, while Mubarak Al-Kabeer had no fatalities.

Regarding fines, the total amounted to KD98,220 with Hawally Traffic Court collecting the highest at 28.7 percent, followed by the Capital at 21.8 percent, Mubarak Al-Kabeer at 20.2 percent, Ahmadi at 11.8 percent, Jahra at 11 percent and Farwaniya at 6.5 percent.

110 citations issued: Campaigns conducted by the General Traffic Department (GTD) in front of hospitals resulted in the issuance of 110 traffic violation citations for illegal parking and obstructing traffic within 24 hours

A security source told the newspaper that these campaigns aim to instill traffic discipline and ensure smooth traffic flow in front of healthcare facilities.

5 get 7 years for embezzlement

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: The Court of Appeals sentenced five individuals to seven years in prison with hard labor and fined them KD38,000 for money laundering, forgery and embezzlement.

This ruling concludes the case that started in 2022. The Court of First Instance initially acquitted the defendants, but the Public Prosecution appealed the decision.

Case files indicate that the defendants and an unidentified accomplice organized a criminal ring to defraud the victim. They orchestrated the scheme by presenting a fake investment opportunity and deceived her into installing software that gave them access to her personal banking informa-

tion. Through unauthorized money transfers, the group stole KD19,000 from the victim's account. These funds were deposited into the accounts of the defendant and were withdrawn in cash later. A portion of the stolen money was laundered abroad, while the rest was utilized for cryptocurrency purchases.

The court found the group guilty of falsifying bank documents and account statements. They were also convicted of manipulating withdrawal data in the automated banking system for their illicit transactions to look legitimate.

The Court of Appeals reversed the acquittal ruling issued by the First Instance Court, imposed the prison sentence, ordered the confiscation of all criminal proceeds and deportation of the main defendant upon completion of his prison term.

GCC to bolster customs arena ties

KUWAIT CITY, April 15, (KUNA): Chairman of Kuwait's General Administration of Customs Yousef Al-Nuwaif headed Kuwait's delegation partaking in the 17th meeting of the Executive Board of the GCC Customs Union, held via video-conference.

In a press release, the administration said that the heads and directors general of GCC customs authorities and departments looked into ways to unify Gulf efforts and cement joint coordination in various customs areas.

They also tackled an array of strategic issues, primarily completing the requirements for establishing the Customs Union under the GCC Supreme Council's decisions, arrangements for the forthcoming meeting of the Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee and mechanisms for developing transit and customs clearance procedures.

They further addressed ways and means of advancing the GCC customs system by reviewing greenfield joint ventures, chiefly a customs data exchange platform.

KCCI pushes to strengthen Kuwait-Saudi trade routes

NEOM links seen key to resilient supply chains

KUWAIT CITY, April 15, (KUNA): Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) stressed on Wednesday the importance of enhancing economic integration and logistics cooperation between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in light of exceptional regional challenges.

It called for stronger public-private coordination to ensure market stability and food security.

KCCI Director General Rabah Al-Rabah made the remarks during a meeting with a delegation from Saudi Arabia's NEOM Port, which discussed developments in transport and logistics and potential joint investment opportunities.

Al-Rabah said Kuwaiti government agencies are working to ensure supply chain stability, with security authorities protecting national security and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry facilitating the flow of goods and essential supplies.

He noted that efforts to explore alternative logistics routes through regional ports such as Fujairah, Khorfakkan, Abdullah Port, and Jeddah to strengthen supply chain resilience.

Referring to regional tensions, he said any disruption in the Strait of Hormuz would pose a major challenge to global supply chains, highlighting the need for strategic alternatives to secure imports and market needs. He praised Saudi Arabia's logistics development, describing NEOM as a strategic project with advanced infrastructure and a key location



Abdulaziz Al-Salama, Director General of Logistics Business Development at NEOM Port.

linking major global trade routes.

For his part, Director General of Logistics Business Development at the Saudi port of NEOM, Abdulaziz Al-Salama, emphasized in a similar statement the importance of strengthening partnerships in the fields of import and export and building an integrated supply chain system between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

He added that NEOM aims to develop a comprehensive logistics ecosystem and enhance trade routes between Kuwait and NEOM.

NEOM logistics executive Jan Willem said recent regional developments allowed greater flexibility in logistics operations, noting approval of a route via Egypt's Safaga Port to NEOM and onward to the Gulf.

He said initial shipments to Kuwait and the UAE have already been completed, with around 20 shipments recorded last week, and expected to increase gradually, offering an alternative route for high-value and perishable goods amid disruptions in traditional corridors.

Kuwait, Ghana FMs address regional stability and diplomatic cooperation

KUWAIT CITY, April 15, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday received a phone call from Foreign Minister of the friendly

Republic of Ghana Samuel Ablakwa. During the phone conversation, the two ministers discussed the latest regional developments and efforts exerted to address them.

Humanitarian bridge reaches 20 million

Kuwait leads relief efforts in Sudan as international engagement falters

KHARTOUM, April 15, (KUNA): Three years into the war, Sudan has become one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, with around 14 million people displaced and 30.4 million in need of aid, according to UN estimates, amid declining international engagement.

In this context, Kuwait has emerged as a key humanitarian supporter since the outbreak of the conflict. Kuwaiti Ambassador to Sudan Dr. Fahad Al-Dhafiri told KUNA that Kuwait -under directives of its leadership- has carried out one of the broadest relief operations, delivering more than 37 aid flights and three ships through a continuous air and sea bridge since the early days of the war, alongside multi-million-dollar projects by Kuwaiti charities.

He stressed that Kuwait's efforts reflect a sustained commitment rooted in strong bilateral ties, noting that true solidarity is measured through continuous action.

Then-Secretary-General of the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) Aida Al-Sayed Abdullah said that the Kuwaiti air bridge arrived at a critical moment when humanitarian stocks were depleted, making it the first response to meet urgent needs in Sudan.

Kuwait operated a continuous air bridge that transported hundreds of tons of food, medicine, and tents. Meanwhile, more than 70 percent of Sudan's hospitals went out of service, and the efficiency of about 45 percent of healthcare facilities declined, according to World Health Organization estimates. Nevertheless, medical services continued through more than 300 health facilities supported by the Kuwaiti Patients Helping Fund Society.

Head of the projects department at the

Direct Aid in Sudan, Ahmad Al-Sheikh told KUNA that the organization's interventions include healthcare initiatives carried out in partnership with Patients Helping Fund Society, implemented through an emergency humanitarian response project across seven states, involving mobile clinics, vector control programs, and support for primary healthcare services.

He added that the society operated sickle cell anemia treatment centers and therapeutic nutrition centers aiming to fill critical gaps in healthcare services, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. Around 70 medical camps were conducted, benefiting more than 240,000 people.

In Al-Fasher, western Sudan, where the siege intensified, medical teams affiliated with the Kuwaiti Patients Helping Fund Society continued to operate without closing their doors, providing treatment despite the loss of eight of their staff members while performing their duties.

According to Omar Abdulsayed, a media officer at the Patients Helping Fund (Sudan Office), these interventions reached approximately 20 million people across 13 states-nearly half the population.

Kuwait signed an agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide healthcare support to Sudan valued at USD 2 million.

Sudan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohi Al-Din Salem told KUNA that humanitarian resilience in the country is closely tied to Kuwait's support, particularly its ongoing air bridge, which has bolstered shelter, healthcare, and food security efforts and could serve as a foundation for recovery.

Kuwaiti aid has further included food and shelter distributions to hundreds of thousands, as well as livelihood support programs, water projects, and vocational training initiatives.

The continued Kuwaiti humanitarian bridge has made a tangible difference-restoring medical services, providing shelter, and sustaining lives amid ongoing hardship.



Dr. Al-Dhafiri

MEWRE sets up task force for utilities law

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Adel Al-Zamel issued a directive on the formation of a task force to develop legislation for regulating the electricity and water sector, marking a significant step in the institutional transformation of the ministry.

Al-Zamel heads the task force, which is composed of eight representatives from Kuwait In-



Dr. Al-Zamel

vestment Authority (KIA), Legal Advice and Legislation Department, and the ministry.

The main objectives of the task force are as follows:

1. Establish a general regulatory framework on financial sustainability, supply security and operational excellence,

2. Evaluate current legislation to identify overlaps or gaps and recommend legal revisions,

3. Design a sector-wide regulatory model that defines the authorities of policy-making bodies and organizes production, transmission and system operations,

4. Define fundamental principles for licensing, consumer protection, reliability enhancement and private sector engagement,

5. Produce the final draft law and supporting documentation through extensive consultations with the stakeholders.

MoC launches four new phone management services on Sahel

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Ministry of Communications (MoC) launched four new online services on Sahel application as part of the ongoing efforts to enhance digital transformation and streamline procedures for citizens and residents, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, the ministry explained that the new services allow users to view all phone numbers registered in their name and take several actions, including temporarily deactivating an active phone, permanently deactivating an active phone, reactivating a temporarily

deactivated phone, and permanently deactivating a number.

These services are available through the "Activate/Deactivate Existing Phones" option within the "Phone Services" section on the Sahel application, enabling subscribers to manage their phone numbers more easily and flexibly.

The ministry encouraged subscribers to take advantage of these services through the application, emphasizing its commitment to developing more online services to better meet user needs and improve the user experience.

Private Universities Council reviews AUK's institutional safety measures

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: The American University in Kuwait (AUK) received Dr. Jassem Al-Ali, representative of the General Secretariat of the Council of Private Universities, as part of field visits to higher education institutions, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This visit is part of ongoing efforts to monitor the implementation of emergency plans and precautionary measures to ensure the safety of the university environment and the continuity of the educational process.

Dr. Al-Ali was briefed on the preparations undertaken by AUK, as well as the operational procedures adopted to maintain a safe and stable university environment.

AUK officials presented a comprehensive overview of institutional preparedness plans and approved safety protocols, along with the mechanisms in place to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and administrative staff, while maintaining



AUK photo

Dr. Jassem Al-Ali and a delegation from the Private Universities Council during a visit to the American University.

the continuity of academic and administrative operations.

This visit reflects the level of coordination and ongoing cooperation between the General Secretariat of the Council of Private Universities and private higher education institutions in Kuwait, reinforcing their shared commitment to strengthening institutional safety standards and enhancing the academic sector's readiness to face various circumstances.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait pulls

him. His minor children also lose their Kuwaiti nationality if they acquire their father's new nationality under the law pertaining to that nationality. Those who are Kuwaiti citizens as per Article One of this law may declare to the Minister of Interior their desire to retain their Kuwaiti citizenship within one year of reaching the age of maturity.

By decree, based on the recommendation of the Minister of Interior and with the approval of the Supreme Committee for Kuwaiti Citizenship Verification, Kuwaiti citizenship may be restored to any Kuwaiti who lost it, under Article One of this law, provided they stayed legally in Kuwait for at least one year, request to regain their Kuwaiti citizenship, and renounce their foreign nationality.

Article One stipulates that Kuwaitis by origin are those who settled in Kuwait before 1920 and maintained their habitual residence therein until 14 Dec 1959. The residence of the ascendants is considered complementary to the residence of the descendants. A person is considered to have maintained his habitual residence in Kuwait even if he resides in another country, provided he retains the intention to return to

Kuwait. Anyone born in Kuwait or abroad to a Kuwaiti father by descent, and so on, is a Kuwaiti by origin.

Article 12 permits the reinstatement of Kuwaiti nationality to a Kuwaiti woman who lost it upon the dissolution of her marriage as per Article One of this law. The reinstatement is granted through a decree and with the approval of the Supreme Committee for Kuwaiti Citizenship Verification in accordance with Paragraph One of Article 10 of this law, provided that she requests it and that her habitual residence is in Kuwait, or she has returned to reside in Kuwait.

Kuwait-wide raid

law in absconding cases. A security source told the newspaper that these arrests are the result of intensified security deployment in various governorates. He indicated that the arrests took place during the inspection campaigns conducted throughout the country.

The source added that traffic and security campaigns are carried out on a daily basis to apprehend violators and lawbreakers, and to maintain security and safety nationwide.

The source indicated that traffic officers continue to carry out their duties with the highest level of vigilance and efficiency.



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Continued from Page 1

Iran wants to

Tehran sought to impose its vision not only on Washington, but on the entire world as well, attempting to extort the international community into submission. However, this thuggery was neutralized by the American naval blockade.

Today, the regime's leaders realized their precarious position, especially mindful of the Venezuela example, where the state collapsed like a house of cards at the first serious American intervention.

Consequently, no matter how much the regime attempts to project a facade of strength—whether by disseminating lies regarding its 'full force', claiming the destruction of the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln, or manipulating statements from the political opponents of President Trump—this will not alter the resolute American position.

This stance encompasses not only the nuclear file, but also the need to prevent future threats to the global economy through the Strait of Hormuz, in addition to decisively addressing regional proxies and the security of the Gulf states.

The typical game of the Persian carpet weaver is no longer effective against a tough American administration focused on its objectives, or against an international community, particularly the European nations, caught between the anvil of Iranian terrorism and the hammer of economic ruin.

This means that any future negotiations in Islamabad or Geneva will conclude with Iran admitting its total defeat. The regime has indeed failed and it would need another 25 years for recovery, by which time it will have collapsed irreversibly.

No war from

the selfless efforts being made by all sectors of the Kuwaiti Army to protect the national security and stability.

His Highness the Prime Minister also visited several vital facilities, including military vehicles, warehouses of food supplies and logistics, and got reassured about the preparedness for responding to any emergency under the current exceptional conditions.

In this context, the Cabinet heard a presentation by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousuf Saud Al-Sabah on the security operation that led to the aborting on Sunday of a terrorist design meant to destabilize the country.

The Cabinet appreciated the efforts of the security bodies to combat the terrorist cells.

The Cabinet also heard a presentation by Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on the latest military developments in the region, notably Iran's recent despicable attacks on Kuwait.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on Kuwait's latest diplomatic efforts on regional and international scales.

He told them of the summoning to the Foreign Ministry of Charge d'Affaires of Iraq Embassy in Kuwait Zaid Shansul over the acts of sabotage that targeted Kuwait Consulate in Basra City, south Iraq.

The Cabinet members condemned the attacks as serious violation of Iraq's commitments under Article 31 of Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (1963).

"The recurrence of the attacks on Kuwait diplomatic missions would impact negatively on the bilateral relations and could undermine mutual trust.

"Kuwait follows up closely the state of affairs and will not hesitate in adopting the necessary steps to protect its interests and diplomatic missions under the rules of international law," the Cabinet cautioned.

The Cabinet members thanked the sisterly countries and organizations for denouncing the incursions into, and sabotage at, its consulate in Basra.

They reiterated condemnation of the drone attacks launched by Iran and its loyal militias and proxies against several vital facilities in Kuwait last Thursday.

Those attacks represent a flagrant violation of international law, humanitarian law and the UN Charter, and risk undermining the regional and international efforts to strengthen the ceasefire between the United States and Iran, the cabinet warned.

The Cabinet members stressed the urgency of forcing Iran and its proxies into halting their attacks on Kuwait and other countries in the region unconditionally under the UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026).

Kuwait, reserving its right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, will take the necessary measures to protect its security, stability and sovereignty, they reaffirmed.

The Cabinet members decried as heinous the attacks launched by Iran on energy facilities in sisterly Saudi Arabia on Friday which left a martyr and several injured.

They underscored full solidarity with the sisterly kingdom in whatever steps it might take to protect its security and sovereignty.

The Cabinet strongly denounced the horrible attacks launched by the Israeli occupation forces on sisterly Lebanon which left scores of casualties, terming them as stark violation of the international law and the UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

The Israeli occupation attacks risk undermining the international efforts aiming to deescalate the conflict in the region, the Cabinet said.

Reiterating Kuwait's solidarity with Lebanon, the Cabinet urged the international community, particularly the UN Security Council, to shoulder their responsibility for forcing the Israeli occupation authorities into respecting the international legitimacy.

On the other hand, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on the content of the telephone conversations he conducted and received over the past few days with several foreign ministers of brotherly and friendly countries, discussing the latest regional developments.

He also informed the Cabinet of the outcomes of his meeting with his Egyptian counterpart Badr Abdelatty, during his official visit to Kuwait last week. The meeting addressed the strong fraternal relations between the two countries and their peoples, as well as ways to enhance and develop them across various fields.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet reviewed a visual presentation delivered by Chairman of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, outlining a few measures and key aspects related to safeguarding Kuwait's sovereignty, rights and airspace against blatant Iranian violations since the onset of the aggression on February 28.

This is being pursued in cooperation with international bodies and friendly countries by activating international agreements concluded with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

He also elaborated on the content of the official protest letter submitted by the Public Authority for Civil Aviation to the President of ICAO, in response to missile attacks and a series of drone incidents targeting Kuwait International Airport, passenger terminals, the air traffic control tower, radar systems, and aircraft fuel storage facilities. These attacks resulted in direct damage to key operational infrastructure at the airport.

He further noted that the ICAO Council convened a special meeting to review the protest letter and the joint working paper submitted by all the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states and Jordan, condemning the Iranian violations of their airspace and civil aviation facilities.

The ICAO Council issued a decision strongly condemning these violations, stressing that they endanger civil aviation safety, and called for an immediate cessation of all unlawful acts. The decision has been referred to the relevant bodies within the United Nations, and an official communication has been addressed to all concerned member states, including Iran, urging compliance with the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

Within the framework of the Cabinet's close follow-up of the work of ministries and government entities under the current circumstances, the Cabinet reviewed briefings submitted by ministers, in addition to reports from government agencies on the measures taken to raise readiness levels, ensuring the safety of citizens and residents and the provision of all essential needs in light of the ongoing military and security developments in Kuwait and the region.

Considering the rapidly evolving situation, the Cabinet remained in continuous session to monitor the latest developments at both local and regional levels.

Kuwait shortage

to addressing the current bottlenecks and reducing rental values, which will positively impact commodity prices and help stabilize them in the local market, as well as bolster the state's strategic reserves, especially during times of crisis.

Al-Momen stated that addressing the storage crisis requires practical solutions, primarily providing new storage spaces and offering them for investment under a usufruct system, similar to what is implemented in Mina Abdullah, in addition to reorganizing and utilizing existing storage areas.

Regarding the proliferation of unlicensed warehouses, Al-Momen warned of their negative impact on the market, noting that they create unfair competition between those adhering to official safety and security requirements and those operating outside the legal framework.

He stressed that the unlicensed warehouses are able to lower their prices due to reduced costs, which harms legitimate businesses.

Al-Momen emphasized that the use of unlicensed storage sites has been the cause of previous fires that claimed innocent lives, due to a lack of regulation and non-compliance with safety standards.

Meanwhile, real estate expert Eng. Hussam Al-Koulik said the recent regional developments, particularly geopolitical tensions in the region, have intensified the need to enhance storage capacity in order to improve preparedness and meet market demands, especially with regard to food security and the continuity of supply chains.

Al-Koulik explained in a press statement that current circumstances have reinforced the importance of expanding the construction of standardized warehouses that comply with technical requirements. This prompted the Cabinet to decide to inventory unused land and allocate it to support the warehousing sector.

The impact of these decisions will not be immediate, given the nature of the projects, which require timeframes for implementation. This necessitates adopting parallel solutions in the short term to ensure market stability.

Addressing current challenges requires expediting licensing procedures, reactivating unused land plots, and simplifying the regulatory process among relevant authorities. This also includes encouraging investment in modern, multi-use warehouses and classifying warehouses according to their activity.

Al-Koulik reiterated that the proliferation of unlicensed warehouses represents a major challenge, given its negative impact on safety standards, distortion of market indicators, and creation of unfair competition.

He emphasized that addressing this issue is a fundamental step toward ensur-

ing a healthy and sustainable investment environment.

Al-Koulik pointed out that market challenges are not limited to space scarcity, but are more pronounced in the shortage of organized and compliant storage, which has led to a significant increase in rents and greater reliance on informal storage solutions.

He noted that the warehousing sector in Kuwait is at a critical juncture, characterized by a clear gap between supply and demand.

Al-Koulik stated that demand is increasingly focused on specialized warehouses, particularly in the areas of food storage, refrigeration, and logistics, given the expansion of commercial activities and the increasing complexity of supply chains.

He explained that the recent fire in Mangaf served as a significant indicator of the risks associated with using unsuitable or unlicensed spaces for storage purposes, as well as the importance of adhering to technical requirements and safety standards.

The government's recent decision to tighten restrictions on the use of basements in the investment sector, while important and necessary for regulating the market and enhancing public safety, is not without its drawbacks.

Al-Koulik affirmed that the warehousing sector in Kuwait has promising growth opportunities, but achieving balance requires concerted efforts between government agencies and the private sector, with a focus on increasing regulatory supply, enhancing transparency, and raising operational efficiency.

Kuwait water

environmental situation. He said EPA continues its intensive efforts to monitor water quality, focusing on seawater, as it is the primary source of drinking water in the country.

He pointed out that these efforts are being exerted in coordination with other concerned authorities like the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy to ensure accurate and efficient monitoring and oversight procedures.

He revealed that EPA is using an integrated monitoring system, which combines fieldwork and laboratory analysis. He said the concerned teams conduct inspections regularly, covering the northern, central and southern marine areas, during which water samples are collected and measurements are taken, including temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen and pH levels. He explained these are the main indicators of the environment and water conditions.

On the testing mechanism at EPA laboratories, he disclosed that the collected samples are transported according to scientific procedures that ensure the preservation of their characteristics. He added that these samples undergo a series of advanced chemical analyses using modern, high-precision equipment, such as spectrometers and chromatographs, to detect traces of organic or inorganic pollutants like heavy metals, hydrocarbons and microchemical compounds.

He went on to say that rigorous quality control systems are applied in the laboratories, such as periodic calibration of equipment and the use of reference samples to ensure the accuracy and reliability of results according to international standards.

He clarified that monitoring programs are not limited to water, as they include analyzing fish and shellfish samples to detect pollutants in the marine food chain, in addition to examining seabed sediments, which serve as a long-term indicator of the condition of the marine environment. He pointed out that the sediments are considered an 'environmental record', which allows tracking changes or potential pollutants over an extended period.

He affirmed that EPA intensified its monitoring efforts in the seasonal transition from winter and spring to summer, a period that may witness increase in algal blooms and marine microorganisms. He reiterated that all indicators are within normal limits and no alarming phenomena have been recorded.

He said EPA keeps on developing its technical infrastructure and monitoring capabilities by upgrading laboratories and adopting the latest technologies in environmental analysis, along with training national personnel, to guarantee the preservation of water resources and marine environment. He stressed that the environmental situation is reassuring and it is subject to close monitoring round the clock.

KNG reinforces

leadership to the personnel, expressing pride in their national role and efforts across various operational sites.

Al-Barjas also praised their high morale, dedication, and sincerity in carrying out their duties.

In other news, Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij affirmed on Wednesday the continuation of coordination meetings among relevant government entities to enhance preparedness and monitor any potential environmental impacts amid current regional developments.

Speaking in the fourth coordination meeting at the Environment Public Authority (EPA), Al-Fulaij said that efforts focus on strengthening environmental monitoring, assessing developments, and updating response plans.

She stressed that joint action among entities boosts response efficiency, supports preventive measures, and ensures protection of the environment and public safety.

On her part, Acting EPA Director General Nouf Behbehani said the meetings help unify efforts, enhance emergency readiness, and support data-driven decisions through coordinated monitoring and early warning systems, with participation from several national entities.

MoCI adopts unified GCC commercial classifications

'Halal Consulting Activity' renamed

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 15 : The Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued Ministerial Decision No. 33/2026 regarding the amendment of a commercial business.

This decision comes following

the framework of updating and developing the classification of economic activities in line with the unified guide adopted in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

According to the decision, the name of the business "Halal Consulting for Food and Laboratory Equipment" has been changed to "Halal Consulting for Food,"

within the sector of professional, scientific, technical, and consulting activities and relevant services, under the supervision of the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN).

Following the amendment, the business is assigned the international code "74909101", and the decision is effective from its issuance date of April 12, 2026.



MoFA photo

Kuwait Ambassador to India, Meshal Al-Shamali, and members of the mission are wearing the Arfaj flower.

Kuwaiti Ambassador in New Delhi and Embassy staff wear Arfaj flower badge

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to India, Meshal Al-Shamali, and members of the mission participated in wearing the badge of Arfaj flower, which is the national flower of the State of Kuwait, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an official statement, the Kuwaiti Embassy in New Delhi stated that this gesture is "a symbolic expression of solidarity, loyalty, and appreciation for the sons of Kuwait

on the front lines and protectors of the homeland, who sacrificed their lives and worked diligently to protect the precious land and skies of Kuwait, its honorable people, and its residents. They are like the Arfaj flower in the depths of the desert, beautiful in its harshness, steadfast in its resilience, and blooming in adversity, safeguarding the homeland with unwavering resolve."

Namaa implements water wells in Tanzania

KHARTOUM, April 15, (KUNA): Kuwait's Namaa Charity has implemented three artesian wells in Tanzania, benefiting more than 1,500 people as part of its humanitarian efforts to enhance water security and provide safe water sources to the most vulnerable communities.

In a statement to KUNA on Sunday, Deputy CEO Abdulaziz Al-Kandari said the project is in response to urgent needs in several villages facing water scarcity and limited access to clean water sources, noting that the wells are a vital resource that contributes to improved health and living conditions.

Al-Kandari added that the projects are implemented with the support of donors and in coordination with local partners to ensure efficient delivery to beneficiaries, affirming Namaa Charity's continued commitment to carrying out water projects within its development programs in the neediest countries.

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INTERNATIONAL

GOP moves to fund DHS 'the hard way' after end of talks

WASHINGTON, April 15, (AP): Republicans in Congress are forging ahead with a risky go-it-alone strategy for fully funding the Department of Homeland Security, which has been shut down for almost two months as Democrats demand changes to President Donald Trump's broad campaign of immigration enforcement.



Thune

Senate Majority Leader **John Thune** said Tuesday that Republicans will try to pass the money for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Protection "the hard way." That means bypassing Democrats, who say a funding bill should place restraints on federal immigration authorities, including better identification for federal officers and more use of judicial warrants.

Democrats will now get "none of that," Thune said, after bipartisan negotiations stalled. Republicans are instead preparing a partisan bill that

they will try to pass under a complicated, time-consuming maneuver called budget reconciliation that only requires a simple majority vote in the 53-47 Senate.

The process could be messy. Thune, R-S.D., is pushing for a narrow bill that would only include money for ICE and CBP in an effort to reopen the department quickly. But some of his Republican colleagues are likely to push to add other unrelated priorities.

Democrats say they will continue to insist on reforms to the agencies. "Americans want ICE and Border Patrol reined in," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said. Thune and GOP leaders have said they want to speed the legislation through Congress with only the Homeland Security funding so that the department can reopen as quickly as possible.

Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, the No. 2 Republican, and Senate Budget Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., discussed that strategy with Trump at a White House meeting Friday. Barrasso posted afterward that "President Trump set a deadline of June 1 to get to his desk a focused reconciliation bill that funds ICE and Border Patrol."

Trump urges extending foreign surveillance program as some lawmakers push for US privacy protection

WASHINGTON, April 15, (AP): Congress is set to take up the reauthorization of a divisive program that lets US spy agencies pore over foreigners' calls, texts and emails, with supporters like President Donald Trump saying it has saved lives while critics point to longstanding concerns about warrantless surveillance of Americans.

A key provision of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act permits the CIA, National Security Agency, FBI and other agencies to collect and analyze vast amounts of overseas communications without a warrant. It incidentally sweeps up the conversations of any Americans who interact with those foreigners targeted for surveillance.

The program expires Monday, and critics want changes, including a requirement for warrants before authorities can access the emails, phone calls or text messages of Americans. They also want limits on the government's use of internet data brokers, who sell large volumes of personal information gleaned online, offering the government what critics say amounts to an end-run around the Constitution.

Despite bipartisan criticism, the chances of significant reforms dropped when Trump announced his support for the program's renewal, saying it had proven its worth in supplying information vital to recent U.S. actions



US President Donald Trump speaks outside the Oval Office of the White House on April 13, in Washington. (AP)

in Venezuela and Iran.

"The fact is, whether you like FISA or not, it is extremely important to our military," Trump said on social media Tuesday.

U.S. authorities say the program, known as Section 702 of the law, is vital to national security and has saved lives by uncovering terror plots. Critics question what they call a dangerous infringement on civil liberties and

privacy.

In a Truth Social post, Trump said a different FISA provision was used to spy on his 2016 campaign but that he supported Section 702's renewal despite misgivings that political adversaries could use parts of the law against him in the future. He called on lawmakers to extend the foreign surveillance program for another 18 months.

"My administration has worked tirelessly to ensure these FISA reforms are being aggressively executed at every level of the Executive Branch to keep Americans safe, while protecting our sacred Civil Liberties guaranteed by our Great Constitution," Trump wrote.

Trump is a longtime critic of the nation's intelligence services and was once opposed to Section 702 before he reversed himself. "KILL FISA," Trump posted on social media in 2024, when the provision was last reauthorized.

Trump isn't the only one-time critic to change their mind: Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard sponsored legislation to repeal Section 702 as a Hawaii congresswoman but now supports it after being tapped to coordinate the nation's 18 intelligence agencies.

Gabbard says new protections added since her time in Congress helped change her mind.

In addition to a requirement for a warrant to access Americans' data, critics also want greater protections on how the FBI or other agencies can search communications and how that is reported to the public.

"Journalists, foreign aid workers, people with family overseas, all could have their communications swept up in this surveillance merely because they talked to someone outside of this country," said Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

As Vance rallies with Turning Point, some supporters bristle at Trump's war and feuds

ATHENS, Georgia, April 15, (AP): Fresh from a marathon trip to Pakistan that failed to reach a deal for ending the war with Iran, Vice President JD Vance jetted to this Georgia college town for a campus tour organized by the conservative powerhouse Turning Point USA.

But instead of showcasing the youthful energy that the organization harnessed to return President Donald Trump to the White House less than two years ago, there was a mostly empty arena, awkward questions and unusually sharp criticism.

The event affirmed Trump's difficulty selling the war and how much he's complicated his own political fortunes by assailing Pope Leo XIV.

C.J. Santini, a recent graduate of Liberty University, an evangelical school in Virginia, said he didn't have an opinion on whether Iran was truly close to manufacturing a nuclear weapon and thus needed to be attacked. But he laughed and shook his head when asked about Trump attacking Leo.

Many of the college-age attendees donned Turning Point attire, Trump hats and red-white-and-blue paraphernalia for the event. Yet they were outnumbered more than 2-to-1 by empty seats in what is not even the largest arena on this sprawling campus that sits about a 90-minute drive from downtown Atlanta.

A Marine veteran who served in Iraq, Vance acknowledged that not all young conservatives are enamored with another



US Vice President JD Vance speaks with Andrew Kolvet at a Turning Point USA tour stop at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia on April 14. (AP)

US war in the Middle East.

"I'm not saying you have to agree with me on every issue," Vance told the young crowd. "What I'm saying," he added, "is don't get disengaged."

The vice president took questions from Turning Point executive Andrew Kolvet instead of Erika Kirk, who began leading the organization after the assassination of her husband Charlie Kirk. Kolvet said Erika Kirk canceled her plans to be on stage because of unspecified threats she had received.

Vance, whose presence ensured significant Secret Service and other law enforcement protection around the venue, said he'd been worried that the event would be canceled altogether.

Kolvet asked Vance directly about the war and Trump's back-and-forth with Leo. Audience questions were more aggressive. Vance jostled with at least one heckler over the war in Gaza, and he was pressed by another person over the administration's handling of the Jeffrey Epstein case files.

America

8 hospitalized in 70 vehicle pile-up disaster:

Crashes involving about 70 vehicles snarled a section of a snowy Colorado highway and sent eight people to the hospital.

The pileup Tuesday prompted officials to close the east-bound side of Interstate 70 in Clear Creek County, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) west of Denver, the Colorado State Patrol said in a statement.

Officials evaluated 19 people for injuries and took eight of them to the hospital, including one person who had "sustained serious bodily injuries," according to the state patrol.

Images online show multiple semitrucks involved in the pileup, with debris lining the roadway, fronts of vehicles smashed and at least one vehicle balanced partially off the ground.

It was not immediately clear what caused the pileup. (AP)



This grab from video shows traffic backed up after a multi-vehicle pile up on a section of a snowy highway in Clear Creek County, Colorado on April 14. (AP)

said. (AP)

Severe storms damage communities in Plains:

A day after severe storms damaged communities in the Plains and the Midwest, forecasters warned that storms could bring giant hail, tornadoes and severe wind gusts to the regions again on Tuesday afternoon and evening.

Authorities in Kansas reported several people with minor injuries after storms passed through on Monday. Three people were left with minor injuries in rural Franklin County, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southwest of Kansas City, according to the sheriff's office. In Ottawa, a city of about 13,000 people, officials said there was structural damage, but there were no deaths or injuries. Power lines and trees were damaged, as well as several businesses, including one where outside walls were gone.

A National Weather Service survey team will assess damage in the Ottawa area on Tuesday to determine whether a tornado passed through there, according to Chelsea Picha, a meteorologist with the weather service's office in Topeka.

In neighboring Miami County, two people reported minor injuries, several homes were destroyed and recreational vehicles and campers were overturned, according to the sheriff's office. Power lines were de-energized in Hillsdale until cleanup could be safely completed, the sheriff's office

Super Typhoon pounds remote US islands: A super typhoon steadily battered a pair of remote US islands in the Pacific Ocean with ferocious winds and relentless rains, shredding tin roofs and forcing residents to take cover from flying tree limbs.

Super Typhoon Sinlaku pounded the Northern Mariana Islands for hours before daybreak Wednesday, slowing just to inflict more damage across the islands of Tinian and Saipan, home to nearly 50,000 people.

In the village Susupe on Saipan, the wind tore the roof off a commercial building and broke tree branches. A blue sedan lay on its side.

Resident Dong Min Lee shot some video of a car sitting on top of two others in his apartment building's parking lot below. The winds also tore off part of his balcony railing.

"I hope people will take an interest and help. The damage is really huge here," Lee said in a Facebook message.

Preliminary reports include a lot of flooding, uprooted trees and downed power lines, said Jaden Sanchez, spokesperson for the Saipan mayor's office. There were no reports of deaths, he said.

Authorities were advising residents to remain indoors and away from strong winds, but Mayor Ramon "RB" Jose Blas Camacho was out in the community assessing the damage. Sanchez said. (AP)



Rescue workers try to put out a fire of a building burning after a Russian drone attack on Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine on April 13. (AP)

Zelenskyy pursues more arms deals with allies

KYIV, Ukraine, April 15, (AP): Ukraine's top diplomatic priority is securing its allies' help to buy and build more air defense systems, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday between meetings with European leaders, as Russia kept up its deadly attacks on civilians and public infrastructure.

Russian strikes hit more than a half-dozen areas of Ukraine behind the front line from Tuesday to Wednesday, killing an 8-year-old boy in the central Cherkasy region and a woman who was in a kiosk near a bus stop that was hit in southern Zaporizhzhia, according to Zelenskyy and local officials.

"Every day we need air defense missiles - every day Russia continues its strikes," Zelenskyy said in a post on the Telegram messaging app.

With no plans announced for further U.S.-mediated talks with Russia, Zelenskyy was visiting three European capitals in 48 hours, securing promises of further military and financial support from Germany and Norway ahead of his trip to Italy on Wednesday.

After more than four years of fighting Russia's full-scale invasion, Ukraine possesses battle-tested drone interceptor expertise and has developed groundbreaking air defense technology, but it lacks the money to scale up production to levels that would press its advantage.

Zelenskyy said he is asking European countries to keep adding money to a fund that allows the purchase from the United States of American-made weapons for Ukraine, especially the Patriot air defense system that can stop the Russian cruise and ballistic missiles hitting civilian areas.



People attend a protest organised by Progressive Slovakia in front of the Parliament in Bratislava, Slovakia on April 14. (AP)

Slovaks rally against PM plan to scrap mail voting from abroad

Thousands of protesters in Slovakia's capital and elsewhere in the country rallied on Tuesday against a controversial plan by populist Prime Minister Robert Fico to scrap mail voting for Slovaks living abroad.

The rally outside the Parliament in Bratislava, the Slovak capital, opened with applause for neighbor-

ing Hungary's weekend election that ousted populist leader Viktor Orban, rejecting his authoritarian rule in favor of a pro-Europe candidate.

Fico has been a divisive figure at home and abroad since returning to power in 2023. His pro-Russian and other policies prompted numerous protests. Critics say his

autocratic rule has been inspired by Orban.

Tuesday's protests were the latest in a string of demonstrations against Fico's policies. Opposition parties say his latest plan targets pro-Western voter while Fico claims the move is to "prevent fraud and manipulations." (AP)

Spain finalizes amnesty measure for up to hundreds of thousands of immigrants

MADRID, April 15, (AP): Spain's government on Tuesday finalized a migrant amnesty measure it announced earlier this year, paving the way for hundreds of thousands of immigrants living and working without authorization in the southern European nation to apply for legal status.

The approach differs sharply from prevailing attitudes on immigration in much of Europe, where governments are trying to reduce the number of arrivals and step up deportations, and contrasts with the harsh immigration policies of the Trump administration.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez hailed the measure as "an act of justice and a necessity." He reiterated his government's position that people who already live and work in Spain should "do so under equal conditions" and pay taxes.

"We recognize rights, but we also demand obligations," Sanchez wrote on social media.

An estimated half-million people living in Spain without authorization



Migrants sit together with their belongings after being evicted by police from an abandoned school where they had been living in Badalona, near Barcelona, Spain, on Dec 17, 2025. (AP)

could be eligible to apply, the government has said. Some analysts estimate up to 800,000 people live in the shadows of Spanish society.

Many immigrants from Latin America or African countries work in key sectors including agriculture, tourism and the service sector.

Hungary's Magyar says new govt could take power at beginning of May

BUDAPEST, Hungary, April 15, (AP): Hungarian opposition leader and election winner Peter Magyar said Wednesday that the country's president had assured him in a meeting that his new government could take power in the first week of May, an accelerated timeline for the end of Prime Minister Viktor Orban's 16-year reign.

Following Magyar and his center-right Tisza party's landslide victory in Sunday's election in which it won a two-thirds parliamentary majority, the opposition leader has pushed for the transfer of power to occur as quickly as possible. Under Hungarian law, the inaugural session of the new parliament, which must elect a



Peter Magyar speaks to the media in Budapest, Hungary on April 13, after defeating Prime Minister Viktor Orban's party in the country's parliamentary elections. (AP)

new prime minister, must occur no later than May 12.

Following a private consultation with President Tamás Sulyok on Wednesday, Magyar told reporters outside the presidential palace in Budapest that Sulyok had assured him that Magyar would be his nominee for the next prime minister, and that the inaugural session would likely be scheduled for the 6th or 7th of May.

"(The president) thinks, and I think everyone thinks, that it's in the interests of the Hungarian nation that after such an overwhelming mandate from the voters, a change in government and a change of regime should happen as quickly as possible," Magyar said.

INTERNATIONAL

Xi calls China-Russia ties 'precious' in current international context

BEIJING, April 15, (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping said Wednesday that the stability and certainty of China-Russia relations are particularly "precious" in the face of an international landscape intertwined with change and chaos.

During a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Beijing, Xi said the strong vitality and exemplary significance of the friendship treaty between the two countries stand out even more under such a backdrop.

Xi said China and Russia need to use closer and stronger strategic collaboration to defend the legitimate interests of both nations and safeguard the unity of Global South countries, the state broadcaster CCTV reported. He also called for two countries to showcase the responsibility and commitment of major powers and permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, the report said.

"Firmly uphold and practice multilateralism, work together to revitalize the authority and vitality of the United Nations," he was quoted as saying.

"Promote the development of the international order in a more just and reasonable direction."

Xi touted the value of the two nations' ties, but he did not specify what he referred to as chaos and changes in the international context. His remarks came as uncertainty still lingers about how long the Iran war would last.

In clips from an interview with the Fox Business Network, US President Donald Trump said Tuesday the war was "close to over." Trump has repeatedly declared a U.S. victory in Iran after the war started - even as the reality on the ground has been far more complicated.

Relations between China and Russia have deepened in recent years, particularly following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022. Trump's unorthodox approach to the war in Ukraine has added a twist to the relationship but doesn't appear to have fundamentally changed it.

When Putin visited China in September, Xi welcomed his counterpart

as an "old friend." Putin also addressed Xi as "dear friend."

Xi on Wednesday said foreign ministries from both countries would need to fully implement the consensus reached between him and Russian President Vladimir Putin, calling for strengthening strategic communication and close diplomatic coordination. He also urged them to promote the comprehensive strategic partnership between Beijing and Moscow to "stand higher, walk more steadily and go further."

CCTV reported that Lavrov said Russian-Chinese relations demonstrated high resilience in a complex external environment, pointing to good momentum in trade and investment cooperation and close coordination in the UN and other multilateral platforms.

He said Russia is willing to work with China to uphold international fairness and justice, push their ties to achieve greater development and make greater contributions to world peace, among other goals, CCTV said.



Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, second left, and China's President Xi Jinping, center, hold a talk at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China on April 15. (AP)

Pope heads to Cameroon as separatists announce three-day pause in fighting

ALGIERS, Algeria, April 15, (AP) — Pope Leo XIV is heading to the central African nation of Cameroon with a message of peace for its separatist region and for talks with President Paul Biya, the 93-year-old leader whose grip on power was extended for an eighth term in a widely disputed election last year.

The Vatican says fighting corruption in the mineral-rich country and insisting on the correct uses of political authority are expected to be themes of Leo's visit, which starts Wednesday with his arrival in Yaounde, the capital. Leo was traveling to Cameroon from Algeria, the first stop on his four-nation Africa tour.

The Vatican has made clear that Catholic social teaching disapproves of the types of authoritarian leaders that Leo is encountering on his visit, the first to the continent by history's first American pope.

Biya is the world's oldest leader and has led the central African nation since 1982.

Leo will meet with Biya upon arrival at the presidential palace in the capital Yaounde. He'll then address Cameroon government authorities, civil service representatives and diplomats before visiting an orphanage run by a Catholic religious order of nuns.

Cameroon authorities made a last-



A general view of Bamenda, Cameroon on April 14. (AP)

minute change to the program, the Vatican said Wednesday. Biya, and not the prime minister, will now deliver a speech before Leo addresses government authorities and the encounter will occur in the presidential palace, not a conference center.

Cameroon's opposition has contested the result of the Oct. 12 election that secured the victory for Biya. His election rival, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, claims to have won and has called on Cameroonians to reject the official re-

sult.

Just this week, Leo issued an unrelated message on the correct role of political leaders and the need for "authentic democracy" to legitimize their authority and act as a "guardrail against the abuse of power."

In a message to a Vatican academy for social science, Leo wrote that democracy remains healthy only when it is driven by morality and a vision of humanity that respects the dignity of everyone.

Mexico takes firmer stance toward US over migrant deaths and Cuba

MEXICO CITY, April 15, (AP) — The Mexican government has protested the deaths of its citizens in US immigration custody as President Claudia Sheinbaum pushes back against US President Donald Trump's policies on multiple fronts.

The progressive Mexican leader has walked a careful line with Trump for more than a year, addressing provocations with a measured tone and meeting US requests to crack down on criminal cartels more so than her predecessors, in an effort to offset threats of tariffs and US military action against the gangs.

But in the wake of mounting deaths of Mexican citizens in custody of immigration officials and the Trump administration's decision to impose an energy blockade on Cuba - a key Mexican ally - Sheinbaum has taken a harder line.

"We've seen the president raise her tone," said Palmira Tapia, an analyst for Mexico's Center for Economic Research and Teaching. "There's been a shift, and we've seen Sheinbaum be more vocal than before."

Sheinbaum's latest rebuke came on Tuesday, a day after 49-year-old Mexican citizen Alejandro Cabrera Clemente died in a detention center in Louisiana of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, or



Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum gives her daily, morning news conference at the National Palace in Mexico City on Feb 23. (AP)

ICE, the fifteenth death of a Mexican citizen in U.S. custody in little over a year.

Mexico's government quickly called the deaths "unacceptable" and the ICE detention centers "incompatible with human rights standards and the protection of life."

During a Tuesday press briefing Sheinbaum added that she requested investigations into the deaths of the 15 migrants, and instructed Mexican consulates to visit detention centers daily.

She said her government would raise the deaths in detention centers to Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and was considering appealing to the United Nations. Her government already said it would support lawsuits in the U.S. filed by detainees over poor conditions.

"We are going to defend Mexicans at every level," Sheinbaum said, adding that "there are many Mexicans whose only crime is not having papers."



Fishing boats sit on a beach in Teknaf, Bangladesh, on March 9, 2023. (AP)

250 missing after boat sinks in Andaman Sea

At least 250 people, including Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals, were missing after a boat capsized in the Andaman Sea recently on the way to Malaysia, according to the United Nations' refugee and migration agencies.

While details remained sketchy, Bangladesh Coast Guard spokesperson Lt. Com. Sabbir Alam Su-

zan told The Associated Press on Wednesday that nine people, including three Rohingya and six Bangladeshis, were rescued on April 9. Suzan said the Bangladesh flag carrier M.T. Meghna Pride rescued the nine people when the crew found them floating at sea after the capsizing.

When the boat sank and the sta-

tus of any search Wednesday were unclear.

The U.N. high commissioner for refugees and the International Organization for Migration in a joint statement said Tuesday that the trawler departed from Teknaf in the southern Bangladeshi district of Cox's Bazar carrying a large number of passengers to Malaysia. (AP)

India power plant explosion kills 9

PATNA, India, April 15, (AP) — An explosion at a privately-owned power plant in India's central Chhattisgarh state on Tuesday killed at least nine workers and injured 15 others, police said.

The blast occurred in a boiler tube at a power plant operated by Vedanta Limited, in Chhattisgarh state's Sakti district, senior police officer Praful Thakur said. The cause of the explosion was not immediately clear.

Officials said rescue teams were searching the blast site for any trapped workers.

In a statement, the plant's management said its immediate priority was to provide medical care to those affected and that it was working closely with local authorities. It added that an investigation had been opened into the cause of the blast.

Chhattisgarh state's Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai described the incident as "extremely tragic" and said authorities were providing assistance to the families of those killed.

Industrial accidents are common in India and often blamed on people flouting safety norms, as well as lax inspections by government officials.

'Abandoned crisis' Sudan enters fourth year of war

CAIRO, April 15, (AP) — Famine, massacres. And now badly needed food and other supplies are under strain. Sudan on Wednesday enters a fourth year of war that's being called an "abandoned crisis," as a new conflict in the Middle East throws into shadow the fighting that has forced 13 million people to flee their homes.

Sudan has been described as the world's largest humanitarian challenge, notably in terms of displacement and hunger. There is no end in sight to the fighting between the military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces that witnesses and aid groups say has laid waste to parts of the vast Darfur region.

Growing evidence shows regional powers like the United Arab Emirates backing combatants behind the scenes. Attempts by the United States and re-

gional powers, now distracted by the Iran war, have failed to establish a ceasefire.

"This grim and chastening anniversary marks another year when the world has failed to meet the test of Sudan," United Nations humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher said.

At least 59,000 people have been killed. At least 6,000 died over three days as the RSF rampaged through the Darfur outpost of el-Fasher in October, according to the U.N., with U.N.-backed experts concluding the offensive bore "the defining characteristics of genocide."

The war has pushed parts of Sudan into famine. The number of people with severe acute malnutrition, the most dangerous and deadly kind, is expected to increase to 800,000, the world's foremost experts on food security, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, said in February.

About 34 million people, or almost two of every three Sudanese, need assistance, the UN says. Only 63% of health facilities remain fully or partially functional amid disease outbreaks including cholera, according to the World Health Organization.



Fletcher

Peru faces presidential runoff

LIMA, Peru, April 15, (AP) — Peruvians will vote in a presidential runoff in two months after none of the 35 candidates secured an outright victory in the weekend election, though by Tuesday afternoon, the two contenders in the June vote were still unconfirmed.

Electoral authorities continued to count the ballots for a third straight day as authorities were forced to extend voting into Monday after ballots had not been delivered in time to polling stations.

With 77% of ballots tallied, official results on Tuesday showed Keiko Fujimori, the conservative daughter of a disgraced former president, leading the count with 16.86% of the votes, while Rafael López Aliaga, the ultraconservative former mayor of Peru's capital, Lima, earned 12.66%.

Jorge Nieto Montesinos was close in the third place, with 11.74% of the vote, maintaining a narrow chance of making it into the June 7 runoff.

The sluggish pace of the count mirrored Peru's 2021 presidential election, a contest where final tallies weren't completed until five days after polls closed. A presidential candidate needs more

than 50% of votes to win outright. The two candidates with the most votes in a first round advance to the runoff. The winner will be Peru's ninth president in just 10 years.

A European Union election observation mission said Tuesday it didn't see "sufficient grounds" supporting claims of fraud, following allegations by López Aliaga, who described the election - without providing evidence - as a "fraud of a kind unique in the world."

The election has been mired with logistical issues that left thousands in the country and abroad unable to cast ballots. That prompted authorities to allow more than 52,000 residents of Lima to vote on Monday. The extension, announced after vote counting had begun Sunday evening, also covered Peruvians registered to vote in Orlando, Florida, and Paterson, New Jersey.

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

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

The election took place amid a surge in violent crime and corruption that has fueled widespread discontent among voters, who largely view candidates as dishonest and unprepared for the presidency.

Benin Finance Min elected president

COTONOU, Benin, April 15, (AP) — Benin Finance Minister Romuald Wadagni won the country's presidential election held Sunday with over 94% of votes, according to election officials, fulfilling the expectation he was the anointed successor after President Patrice Talon's decade in power.

The outcome was based on more than 90% of votes counted with voter turnout of 58.75%. Sacca Lafia, head of the West African country's independent electoral commission, announced on national television late Monday.

The final results must be confirmed by Benin's constitutional court and are expected in the coming weeks.

Paul Houkpe, the sole opposition candidate who received 5.95% of votes, conceded defeat ahead of the announcement Monday.

Wadagni, 49, was considered the chosen heir to Talon, who is stepping down at the end of May after serving in office from 2016 to 2026. Analysts had predicted a sidelined opposition would result in Wadagni's win.

Talon leaves a mixed legacy of economic growth, a growing jihadi insurgency in the north and the suppression of opposition critics. While Benin has historically been among the most stable democracies in Africa, opposition leaders and human rights organizations have accused Talon of using the justice system as a tool to sideline political opponents.

Lat/Am

Heavy rains in Haiti kill 12: Heavy rains over the past few days in northwestern Haiti have killed at least 12 people, flooded farmland and damaged hundreds of homes, authorities said Tuesday.

The rains flooded a local hospital and more than 900 homes. They also destroyed a bridge, dozens of roads and crops in a country where more than half of its nearly 12 million inhabitants face high levels of acute food insecurity.

The rains began on Saturday and continued through Monday, according to a statement from Haiti's Civil Protection Agency. The hardest hit towns include Port-de-Paix, Saint Louis du Nord and Anse-a-Fleur. (AP)

Haiti mayor appeals for govt help: The mayor of a commune in southern Haiti appealed for central government help on Tuesday after a gang attack left seven people dead.

A police station in Seguin, in the commune of Marigot, was also set on fire in the incident overnight on Monday as armed men expand their reach into new territory.

Marigot Mayor René Danneau criticized the authorities for not responding quickly enough.

Danneau said the victims were young men who worked alongside police and gathered information for them to help protect the population. (AP)



A youth using an umbrella to shade himself plays at a shelter for families displaced by gang violence in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on April 13. (AP)

US strike on boat in e.Pacific kills 4: The US military launched a strike on another boat accused of carrying drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean on Tuesday, killing four people in the fourth such attack announced in the past few days.

The operation is the latest in a series of strikes on vessels that the Trump administration says were trafficking drugs in Latin American waters, a campaign that began more than seven months ago and continues even as the military has been preoccupied with the Iran war.

The latest strike brings the death toll to 175 since the operations began in early September. The US Coast Guard has suspended the search for one survivor from an attack Saturday. (AP)



Fujimori

US dollar stable, Euro rises to KD 0.361

KUWAIT CITY, April 15, (KUNA): The US dollar exchange rate against the Kuwaiti dinar settled at KD 0.306 on Wednesday, while the Euro rose by 0.17 percent to reach KD 0.361, compared to Tuesday's prices, said Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

CBK added in its daily bulletin that the ex-

change rate of the pound sterling rose by 0.36 percent to KD 0.415, while the Swiss franc rose by 0.20 percent to reach KD 0.392, and the Japanese settled at KD 0.002.

Exchange rates declared by the CBK reflect average prices and not rates of actual transactions.

Business

KD 2 million awarded to Nadia AlSulaimani and KD1 million to Dr. Mohamed Basheer

Gulf Bank deposits 3 million Kuwaiti Dinars into the accounts of the new AlDanah Millionaires



A group photo of the winner Nadia AlSulaimani with her family, alongside Najla Aleisa and Basel Al Assad.



The winner of the million dinar prize, Dr. Mohamed Basheer, with Najla Aleisa and Basel Al Assad.



The winner and Najla Aleisa are pictured on the right with Maha Alhazza, Executive Director of Marketing, and on the left with the Assistant General Manager of Banking Services.

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Gulf Bank welcomed Ms. Nadia Atallah Saad AlSulaimani, winner of the world's largest cash prize of KD2,000,000, following the postponed 2025 draws of the AlDanah Millionaire Account at the Bank's Private Banking Branch at Crystal Tower in Kuwait City. The draw was held at the Bank's headquarters under the supervision of global audit firms and was broadcast live across Gulf Bank's social media platforms.

Welcoming the winner, who became the 25th millionaire in the history of AlDanah Millionaire draws, were Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking Mr. Basel Al Assad, Chief Marketing Officer Mrs. Najla Aleisa, and a number of Gulf Bank senior representatives.

Following the completion of prize handover procedures and the deposit of the KD2

Million prize directly into her personal account, Ms. AlSulaimani was joined by a large group of family members and relatives who expressed their shared joy at this exceptional occasion. The winner conveyed her appreciation to Gulf Bank for its continued commitment to rewarding customers, and praised the high level of transparency and integrity reflected in the draw procedures. She encouraged customers to open an AlDanah Millionaire account for the opportunity to become the next winner in upcoming draws, and shared her personal savings journey with Gulf Bank.

Gulf Bank also welcomed Dr. Mohamed Jassim Basheer Ahamed, who was named the winner of the KD1,000,000 prize in the postponed 2025 draws. Dr. Basheer visited the Bank's headquarters following a live

on-air announcement of his win, becoming the 24th millionaire in the history of AlDanah Millionaire draws. He shared his feelings upon receiving the news and reflected on his experience with the AlDanah Millionaire account, noting that he opened the account on the advice of his father, who has lived in Kuwait for decades and had consistently recommended AlDanah Millionaire as offering the best winning opportunities among all draws in the country.

On this occasion, Gulf Bank's Chief Marketing Officer, Mrs. Najla Aleisa, congratulated the new AlDanah Millionaires and reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to delivering a distinctive banking experience, while continuing to reward savers and promote a culture of financial well being as part of its broader social responsibility.

Mrs. Aleisa noted that Gulf Bank further offers distinguished wealth management services tailored to customers seeking premium solutions, supported by a comprehensive suite of products, personalized advisory support, and specialized investment services.

She added that Gulf Bank's journey of rewarding customers continues, with further opportunities to win across the remaining 2026 draws and through the new prize scheme taking effect in September. Under the new format, total prize value will increase to KD3,500,000, comprising a Grand Prize of KD1,500,000, a Semi Annual Prize of KD1,000,000, and five individual prizes of KD200,000 each distributed across five separate draws throughout the year.

Mrs. Aleisa stated: "We are proud to continue rewarding our customers for their com-

mitment to saving through their AlDanah Millionaire accounts, and we encourage everyone to continue saving and maximize their chances of winning in the upcoming draws."

The AlDanah Millionaire account is available to all segments of society, including Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents across all professions, and can be opened by visiting any Gulf Bank branch or through the Gulf Bank App with a minimum deposit of KD200. Customers must maintain the same balance to remain automatically eligible for upcoming AlDanah Millionaire draws, including the KD1 Million prize draw on 8 July 2026. Account holders are also encouraged to increase their chances of winning by growing the balance in their accounts, which can be easily done through the Gulf Bank App.

General index inclines 67.80 points

Global supply plunges 10.1 mb/d

Boursa Kuwait closes trading higher

KUWAIT CITY, April 15, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed trading on Wednesday with its general index inclining by 67.80 points, or 0.78 percent, to reach 8,773.34 points, with 410.7 million shares traded through 25,958 cash deals, valued at KD 106.4 million (about USD 344.3 million).

The Main Market Index inclined by 101.40 points, or 1.27 percent, to reach 8,105.52 points, through trading of 255.9 million shares across 13,652 cash deals, valued at KD 33.8 million (about USD 109.2 million).



Boursa Kuwait

The Premier Market Index also inclined by 64.15 points, or 0.69 percent, to reach 9,370.71 points, through trading of 154.8 million shares across 12,306 deals, valued at KD 72.6 million (about USD 234.8 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index was higher by 147.25 points, or 1.68 percent, to reach 8,902.63 points, through trading of 236 million shares across 11,508 cash deals, valued at KD 31 million (about USD 100.3 million).

Nghi Son Refinery raises capacity to 125% in 2025

Kuwait Petroleum International says Nghi Son processed 500 million barrels of Kuwaiti crude

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: After overcoming losses and achieving leadership in operational capacity and high quality, official information issued by Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) confirms that the Kuwaiti-Vietnamese Nghi Son Refinery has processed more than 500 million barrels of Kuwaiti crude oil, valued at \$37 billion, from 2017 until September 2025.

According to the KPI information, the Nghi Son Refinery gradually increased its operational production capacity in 2025, reaching 125 percent. The refinery had already reached a production capacity of 120 percent in 2023 after completing its first maintenance operation.

The Nghi Son Refinery has made significant progress in the periodic maintenance of its two Residual Hydrodesulfurization (RHDS) units to ensure the efficiency and reliability of operations.

Reports issued by Nghi Son stated that the refinery received approximately 45 shipments of crude oil in 2025.

Its production in 2025 reached approximately 12 million tons, providing a consistent supply of

up to 40 percent of the local market.

Meanwhile, a recent report by KPI Europe stated that 2025 saw the redesign of the Zeebrugge station to support the ambitions of the Q8truck station dedicated to truck drivers in Zeebrugge, Belgium. The redesign included a new identity and significant upgrades, representing a strategic step toward achieving its goals.

Q8truck has set an ambitious strategy to double its business within five years and transition from a traditional fuel supplier supporting international road transport companies into a comprehensive transportation services provider.

The report stated that KPI Europe offers enhanced services for truck drivers and expedites the refueling process. The benefits of this service are not limited to increased efficiency and a wider selection, as the introduction of hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO), a sustainable alternative fuel, highlights Q8truck's commitment to low-carbon solutions.

The company provides fully automated, high-speed fuel pumps available 24/7. The site also includes a convenience store, restaurant, café, truck wash, and parking facilities.

KPI announced in a report on its European companies website that the first quarter of 2026 saw the signing of a new partnership agreement with Swedish energy technology company Rebaba to enhance charging infrastructure and energy solutions.

This collaboration will lead to the widespread use of so-called "second-life" batteries - high-quality electric vehicle batteries that are recovered when vehicles are taken out of service and reused for stationary energy storage.

Rebaba is now the preferred supplier of battery storage systems, which can be used in KPI's own facilities and for its corporate clients, such as property owners, warehouses, and energy producers. This battery storage enables the provision of energy when needed, reduces peak demand, and improves the performance of electrical systems.

For customers of the global oil company, this solution offers new opportunities to buy, store, and sell electricity, as batteries can be used independently or integrated into larger energy systems, for example with solar panels or properties, to increase self-consumption of electricity, enhance power capacity, and reduce costs.

Iran war pushes global oil demand into decline

PARIS, April 15, (KUNA): Oil demand is expected to contract by 80 kb/d this year, as the Iran war upends global outlook, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in their Oil Market report Tuesday.

The thorough report said, this is 730 kb/d less than in last months Report and a forecast 1.5 mb/d 2Q26 decline would be the sharpest since Covid-19 slashed fuel consumption. Initially, the deepest cuts in oil use have come in the Middle East and Asia Pacific, mainly for naphtha, LPG and jet fuel.

However, demand destruction will spread as scarcity and higher prices persist.

Global oil supply plummeted by 10.1 mb/d to 97 mb/d in March, with continued attacks on energy infrastructure in the Middle East and ongoing restrictions to tanker movements through the Strait of Hormuz leading to the largest disruption in history.

OPEC+ production fell 9.4 mb/d m-o-m to 42.4 mb/d while non-OPEC+ supply declined 770 kb/d m-o-m to 54.7 mb/d, as lower Qatari output offset gains in Brazil and the United States.

Global crude throughputs continue to struggle with disruptions to feedstock supplies and infrastructure damage that are tightening global product markets.

In April, Middle East and feedstock-constrained refineries in Asia have cut runs by around 6 mb/d, to 77.2 mb/d.

Global crude runs are now expected to decline by 1 mb/d on average in 2026, to 82.9 mb/d. Refining margins temporarily surged as middle distillate cracks reached all-time highs.

Global observed oil inventories fell by 85 mb in March, with stocks outside of the Middle East Gulf drawn down by a significant 205 mb (-6.6 mb/d) as flows through the Strait of Hormuz were choked off.

At the same time, with limited outlets after the effective closure of the Strait, floating storage of crude and oil products in the Middle East rose by 100 mb and onshore crude stocks in the region were up by 20 mb. China added 40 mb of crude to tanks.

Oil prices posted their largest-ever monthly gain in March in the wake of the most severe oil supply shock in history.

Spot crude benchmarks and differentials soared, outpacing futures markets, as refiners anxiously scrambled to replace locked in Middle Eastern cargoes.

At the time of writing, North Sea Dated crude was trading around USD 130/bbl - USD 60/bbl above pre-conflict levels.

The announcement last week of a two-week ceasefire in the conflict in the Middle East provided some welcome respite to global oil markets just as the impact of disruptions to supply and trade were spreading globally.

However, at the time of writing, it remains unclear whether the ceasefire will turn into a lasting peace and a return to regular shipping flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

With oil-importing nations scrambling to source replacement barrels from an increasingly shrinking pool of supply, physical crude oil prices surged to record levels near USD 150/bbl, far above the prices in futures markets, with the physical-futures disconnect becoming increasingly acute.

Even steeper gains have been seen for refined products, with middle distillate prices in Singapore reaching all-time highs above USD 290/bbl.

Resuming flows through the Strait of Hormuz remains the single most important variable in easing the pressure on energy supplies, prices and the global economy.

The latest development in the fast-evolving situation is the announced US blockade on vessels entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas, which was due to go into effect soon after the time of writing.

In early April, shipments through the Strait remained severely restricted, with loadings of crude, natural gas liquids and refined products averaging around 3.8 mb/d, compared with more than 20 mb/d in February ahead of the crisis.

Exports through alternative routes - most notably from the west coast of Saudi Arabia and Fujairah on the east coast of the UAE, as well as the ITP pipeline that runs from Iraq to Ceyhan in Türkiye - had increased to 7.2 mb/d from less than 4 mb/d before the war.

The overall loss in oil exports exceeds 13 mb/d, with associated production curtailment and damage to energy infrastructure in the region resulting in cumulative supply losses of more than 360 mb in March and 440 mb projected for April.

Consumers and refiners alike are tapping into oil inventories to mitigate the immediate impact of supply disruptions.

In March, global observed oil stocks fell by 85 mb despite an accumulation of both on-land and offshore inventories in the Middle East and further builds in China.

The largest decline came from oil on water following the near halt to sailings from Gulf producers dependent on the Strait. Crude oil stocks in importing countries in Asia dropped by 31 mb, with further declines expected in April.

Where oil inventories could not bridge the gap, demand has taken a hit. Most notably, Asian petrochemical producers have curtailed operating rates as feedstock supply dried up.

Households and businesses using LPG have also been impacted, while flight cancellations across the Middle East, parts of Asia and Europe have led to a sharp drop in jet fuel consumption.

A growing number of countries have implemented policies to reduce demand, while others have put in place measures to shield consumers from the full impact of rising fuel prices.

Overall, global oil demand is estimated to contract by 800 kb/d year-on-year in March and by 2.3 mb/d in April.

Fund pushes flexible, digital support for entrepreneurs

National Fund explains role in empowering SMEs

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: As part of its commitment to strengthening community engagement and highlighting its role in supporting the entrepreneurial ecosystem, the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development (National Fund) participated in the "Hour" (Sa'aa) initiative, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This national platform showcases impactful initiatives, highlights success stories, and underscores the importance of empowering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Dalal Hussein, Public Relations Officer at the National Fund, emphasized that the National Fund's participation stems from its national responsibility and ongoing commitment to supporting entrepreneurs and SMEs, particularly given current circumstances in Kuwait and the direct challenges they pose to the SME sector.

She explained that the National Fund continues to fulfill its role as an institutional partner supporting Kuwaiti entrepreneurs by monitoring their needs, identifying the challenges they face, and developing practical solutions and services that enhance their ability to thrive and adapt to changing circumstances.

Supporting this sector is not a temporary measure but a consistent approach and a firm national commitment reflecting the state's direction towards supporting entrepreneurship and diversifying income

sources.

The National Fund is committed during this phase to providing a more flexible and responsive environment for entrepreneurs, while continuing to offer its electronic services to ensure uninterrupted access to services and support.

One of the most prominent services offered by the National Fund is registration in the National Register of Small and Medium Enterprises, which is an official and accredited register that allows business owners to benefit from a range of advantages.

These advantages include preferential pricing when bidding on government tenders, priority in purchasing from public entities according to approved regulations, easier access to the Central Authority for Public Tenders' classifications, and the ability to showcase products and services through platforms dedicated to SMEs.

The initiative highlights successful models of projects financed by the National Fund, reflecting a high level of preparedness, professionalism, and adaptability to the requirements of this phase.

Among these models is the "Beit Nasser" project, which specializes in early intervention services and the care and rehabilitation of people with disabilities.

The project has provided a comprehensive community initiative to support the mental health of children and their families. It also includes "Baby Tum-

my," which specializes in preparing healthy and fresh children's meals and presents a remarkable model of innovation and responsiveness to market needs by developing a practical product that meets the needs of Kuwaiti families.

The participation of these projects in the initiative reflects the support provided by the National Fund to promising projects, not only through empowerment and institutional support, but also through promoting them, highlighting their success stories, and helping them strengthen their market position.

The National Fund believes the current stage requires greater awareness of changes, an accurate reading of market needs, and early preparation for economic transformations.

Hussain emphasized that National Fund's participation in the "Hour" initiative reflects its belief in the importance of an active institutional presence in community and national initiatives, and its commitment to conveying a clear message that supporting SMEs is an ongoing priority.

She stressed that the National Fund will continue to work alongside entrepreneurs and business owners, and to promote partnerships and initiatives that serve this vital sector, in order to help establish a culture of entrepreneurship, support the national economy, and enable Kuwaiti youth to turn their ideas and projects into sustainable success stories.

Reinforcing trust in secure, uninterrupted banking services

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait achieves the global ISO 22301:2019 certification for Business Continuity Management System

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has officially obtained the internationally recognised ISO 22301:2019 certification for its Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) from the globally renowned certification body TÜV Rheinland, in a step that further strengthens its position as one of the region's leading banking institutions.

This achievement reflects the Bank's success in implementing international best practices and standards to ensure the continuity of critical operations under various conditions and challenges. The certification scope covered key functions and activities related to the Bank's Operations, Treasury & Investments, Retail Banking and Information Technology divisions.

The certificate was presented in the presence of Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol, Group Chief Executive Officer; Abdulla Al Sumait, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer; Gaurav Dhingra, Group Chief Risk Officer; along with representatives from the Bank's Risk Management team and TÜV Rheinland.

On this occasion, Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol, Group Chief Executive Officer, stated that receiving this certification reflects ABK's strong readiness to address potential risks and ensure uninterrupted banking services for its customers, further reinforcing confidence in the strength and resilience of its infrastructure as well as its technological and administrative systems.

He added, "Achieving ISO 22301:2019 certification is not merely a technical milestone, but a reflection of ABK's institutional culture, which places the security and continuity of customer services at the forefront of its priorities. We recognise that the banking sector requires the highest levels of preparedness and uninterrupted service delivery. This international certification confirms our ability to efficiently address operational and technological challenges, further strengthening the trust and credibility we have built with our shareholders and customers over decades."

Van Der Tol further noted that this certification emphasizes the efforts of the Bank's teams across Operations, Treasury & Investments, Retail Banking and Information Technology, who have worked to develop a flexible business continuity management system capable of responding rapidly to changes, in line with the Bank's vision for sustainable growth and secure



Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol, Group Chief Executive Officer



Abdulla Al Sumait, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer



Gaurav Dhingra, Group Chief Risk Officer



ABK team receiving the certificate.

digital transformation.

From his side, Abdulla Al Sumait, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer, commented, "This achievement clearly aligns with the directives of regulatory authorities aimed at enhancing risk management efficiency within financial institutions. It reflects our success in building an integrated framework across the Bank's di-

visions, ensuring immediate response and rapid recovery from any unforeseen challenges."

He also expressed pride in ABK's continued efforts to set new benchmarks for excellence, strengthening its competitive position as a safe and stable banking partner across all levels.

On his part, Gaurav Dhingra, Group Chief Risk Officer said "ABK's operations under-

went a comprehensive and rigorous audit by TÜV Rheinland to ensure alignment with the latest international standards. This strengthens the Bank's operational resilience and confirms our strong capabilities in maintaining business continuity and restoring operations and data within record time and with the highest levels of accuracy."

He concluded, "Obtaining this certification reflects our success in embedding a culture of business continuity into the daily operations of every employee, rather than treating it merely as emergency procedures documented in records. This provides our stakeholders and customers with complete assurance that their data and banking transactions are protected by a global system designed to operate efficiently even under the most complex conditions and scenarios."

Rigorous Standards

ISO 22301:2019 is considered the leading global standard for business continuity management and requires organisations to undergo stringent audits to ensure their ability to identify potential crises, prepare for them, respond effectively and recover with minimal impact on customers, shareholders and stakeholders.

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Wealth Management.

Across the region, the Bank offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 46 branches.

This is in addition to ABK's three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in the United Arab Emirates, servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

ABK is a strong supporter of Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' awareness campaign. Through its various initiatives, the Bank aims to promote financial inclusion by educating Kuwaiti society about customer rights, responsibilities, and the different types of banking and special needs services. Additionally, ABK consistently provides strategic information on how to avoid banking and financial fraud, loan application requirements, digital services, and more.

For more information about ABK, please follow the Bank's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit ahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.

Shareholders approve 2025 dividend and board elections

Kamco Invest pays 10% cash dividend, distributes KD 3.4 million

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, held its Annual General Meeting for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2025 where shareholders approved all agenda items including the Board of Director's recommendation to distribute 10% cash dividends (10 Fils per share), amounting to KWD3.4mn.

Shareholders also elected the Board of Directors for the next three-year term, comprising Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Sheikh Dana Nasser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Sheikh Talal Ali Abdullah Al Jaber Al Sabah, Samer Mohammad Emad Abbouchi, Haya Ayman Boodai (Independent Director), and Reem Saud Al Hajeri (Independent Alternate Director). Following the AGM, the newly elected Board convened and appointed Sheikh Talal Ali Abdullah Al Jaber Al Sabah as Chairman and Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah as Vice Chairman, in addition to the formation of Board committees.

The AGM was chaired by the Company's Chairman, Sheikh Talal Ali Abdullah Al Jaber Al Sabah, who began the meeting by expressing his sincere gratitude and appreciation to all those who continue to protect our beloved nation with courage and dedication. He also extended his deepest condolences to the families of the martyrs who lost their lives as a result of the recent aggression, praying for mercy upon their souls.

He further wished a swift recovery to those injured in the unjustified attacks, while expressing his hopes for the continued safety and protection of Kuwait, the GCC countries, and the wider Arab region.

Talal Al-Ali presented the Board of Directors' report covering the key events of 2025 and the Company's achievements. He reviewed global market performance, which was strong but uneven, with equities delivering the best returns in six years despite geopolitical tensions, trade policy uncertainty, and changing monetary expectations. Global equities posted double-digit gains supported by resilient economic growth, strong corporate earnings, easing monetary policy, and continued investment in transformative technologies, especially AI.

On the other hand, regional markets in the GCC underperformed the global rally, weighed down by geopolitical developments and weaker oil prices, although underlying economic fundamentals remained resilient, supported by diversification initiatives, sustained non-oil growth, and a strong long-term project pipeline.

Talal Al-Ali said, "Kamco Invest achieved a net profit of KWD9.2mn (EPS: 26.78 fils), an increase from KWD 4.4mn (EPS: 12.72 fils) in 2024. Total revenue during the year increased to KWD33.7mn (2024: KWD25.4mn), while revenue from fees and commission grew by 10.3% to reach KWD18.6mn, representing 55.2% of the total income reported during 2025."

He added, "We have consistently prioritized the quality of earnings, with a strategic focus on growing fee-based income, which remained the largest contributor to the Company's revenue base. We remain committed to further strengthening our liquidity position to support our growth ambitions and drive the expansion of our fee-generating business lines, particularly asset management and investment banking."

The Company enjoys a solid financial position with KWD69.5mn in shareholders' equity as of 31 December 2025. In its most recent review dated in May 2025, Capital Intelligence maintained its "BBB" long-term credit rating and "A3" short-term rating with a stable outlook.

Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, Chief Executive Officer, provided a detailed presentation of the operational performance for the year, which witnessed numerous milestones and achievements across various fields. Wealth managers worked closely with various business sectors, leveraging their diversified in-house expertise to provide clients with customized solutions and advice. This has resulted in attracting new clients, strengthening relationships with existing clients and raising funds for new and existing products.

Sarkhou said, "The Company achieved strong per-



Kamco Invest's annual general meeting.

Talal Al-Ali:

■ Supported by a strong foundation and an experienced team, we remain confident in our ability to build on our progress and further strengthen our position among the leading regional investment companies

Sarkhou:

■ Throughout the year, we further strengthened our strategic relationship with Burgan Bank, launching several initiatives between the two institutions

formance across all key business areas, including client acquisitions, capital raising, and product performance. Throughout the year, it successfully raised over USD1.5bn across various products and transactions, while its assets under management grew by USD626mn, an increase of 3.9%, reaching USD16.5bn as of 31 December 2025.

It was also an exceptional year for Investment Banking, in which the team successfully executed 14 landmark transactions across the GCC region with a total value of USD7.0bn. This brings the total value of Investment Banking mandates executed since inception to USD48.3bn across equity capital markets, debt capital markets and mergers & acquisitions."

Sarkhou added, "Kamco Invest and Burgan Bank strengthened their strategic partnership following the Bank's acquisition of United Gulf Bank, Kamco Invest's major shareholder. This collaboration unites two institutions with proven expertise and track records, enabling us to offer an integrated suite of investment and commercial banking solutions."

The partnership enhances client access to comprehensive financial services and positions us for sustainable growth in a dynamic market. Furthermore, we secured banking facilities from Burgan Bank totaling KWD87mn, structured across multiple instruments to support operational, investment, and refinancing needs."

Equity funds and portfolios managed by Kamco Invest continued to demonstrate strong outperformance relative to their peers and respective benchmarks. During the year, the Kamco Investment Fund delivered an impressive return of 20.71% and was recognized across six categories at the LSEG Lipper Fund Awards, underscoring the fund's exceptional performance and consistent risk-adjusted returns.

At the beginning of the year, Kamco Invest expanded its presence in the Saudi market with the launch of two Shariah-compliant funds: the Kamco Freestyle Saudi Equity Fund and the Kamco SAR Murabaha Fund. In addition, the Kamco Saudi Equity Fund and the Kamco Freestyle Saudi Equity Fund ranked among the top performers in their respective categories in the Saudi mar-

ket in 2025, based on published performance data on the Saudi Exchange website. These achievements reflect the strength of Kamco Invest's investment capabilities and disciplined portfolio management approach.

On the Alternative Investments side, which includes real estate, private equity, and structured products, the team continued to broaden its platform and enhance its value proposition to clients. During the year, the team launched new products and entered into key partnerships, further diversifying their offerings. In addition, USD82.0mn was distributed to investors across its products, underscoring the platform's ability to generate realizations and deliver tangible returns.

Kamco Invest further reinforced its footprint in the technology investment space through the innovative strategy pursued by its closed-ended JEDI Fund, which is now mostly deployed. During the year, the private equity team also launched a GCC-focused pre-IPO tech fund and completed two strategic investments in Saudi Arabia that included Foodics, the region's leading cloud-based technology and payments platform for restaurants, and Unifonic, a prominent communications platform that enhances engagement between businesses and their customers.

During the year, the team entered into a strategic partnership with Flexam Invest, part of the New York Life Investment Management group, to expand its private debt platform into leasing-focused investment strategies. This collaboration further diversifies Kamco Invest's alternative offerings and enhances access to specialized asset classes. The first fund under this partnership was successfully launched and achieved its initial closing during the year, marking an important milestone in building this new vertical.

Despite headwinds in regional capital markets and sustained high interest rates, 2025 has been another outstanding year for the Company's Investment Banking business. The team successfully executed 14 landmark transactions totaling USD7.0bn, reinforcing the Company's leadership in capital markets. The transactions consisted of 13 sukuk and bond issuances worth USD6.7bn for financial institutions and corporates in

- Net profit more than doubled to reach KD 9.2 mn
- AUM reached \$16.5 bln, an increase of 3.9%
- Raised over \$1.5 bln for several products and transactions

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar in addition to one liquidity management transaction for USD304mn for a Kuwaiti company.

Kamco Invest maintained a strong focus on expanding its presence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates and accelerating business growth, in line with its long-term strategy of strengthening its presence across leading financial and commercial centers. The Company broadened its reach and enhanced its service capabilities to continue delivering integrated, client-centric solutions that address evolving investment needs. This strategic expansion further supported the growth of fee-based revenues and contributed to the resilience and sustainability of its income streams.

The company's brokerage arm, First Securities Brokerage Company (Oula Wasata), continued to expand its client base by leveraging its online trading platforms. Supported by the strong performance of Bursa Kuwait, Oula Wasata recorded a 55% increase in turnover. During the year, it also obtained the Qualified Broker License after fulfilling all regulatory requirements and successfully completing the Market-Wide Tests.

Kamco Invest remains committed to integrating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles across its operations to support long-term sustainable growth and value creation. Key initiatives centered on employee well-being and health awareness, youth empowerment, and deeper community engagement through sports and cultural activities. The internship program continued to serve as a cornerstone of this strategy, expanding from 47 interns in 2024 to 79 interns in 2025. The program provides structured rotational exposure, mentorship, and hands-on experience across core business functions, with continued emphasis on Kuwaiti talent.

As part of its technology and digital transformation roadmap, the Company successfully implemented Bloomberg AIM & PORT, an integrated suite of buy-side tools that automates and streamlines portfolio, fund, and trading operations. In parallel, the implementation of the Core Asset Management System is ongoing, establishing a foundation to enhance operational resilience, reinforce security and regulatory compliance, and enable seamless integration with emerging technologies. Together, these initiatives are creating a seamless end-to-end investment and trading lifecycle with straight-through processing (STP), enhancing efficiency, data integrity, decision-making, and client service through integrated client lifecycle and relationship management tools.

In closing, the Chairman reaffirmed that the Company would continue to closely monitor the economic implications arising from the military conflict in the region, heightened geopolitical risks, and increased volatility across global financial markets, while remaining focused on prudent risk management and protecting the interests of clients and shareholders.

He said, "Supported by a strong foundation and an experienced team, we remain confident in our ability to build on our progress and further strengthen our position among the leading regional investment companies."

The Chairman concluded by extending his sincere appreciation to the regulatory authorities for their continued guidance and constructive collaboration. He also thanked the Company's clients and shareholders for their trust and loyalty, emphasizing that their ongoing support remains a driving force behind Kamco Invest's ongoing growth, resilience, and ambition to achieve greater milestones in the years ahead.

For the 15th consecutive year

NBK wins Kuwait's Best Retail Bank in Customer Service in 2025 by Service Hero

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: In recognition of its excellence and leadership in customer experience and service quality, as well as its commitment to prioritizing customer satisfaction, National Bank of Kuwait won, for the 15th consecutive year, the award of Best Retail Bank in the field of Customer Service in 2025 as part of Service Hero consumer-driven Customer Satisfaction Index.

In this light, a delegation from Service Hero Index visited the Bank's headquarters to present the award, with the attendance of senior executives from NBK's Consumer Banking Group.

The award for Best Retail Bank in Kuwait in Customer Service, according to Service Hero Index, is based on an evaluation done by survey participants, encompassing a set of sub-criteria, including trust in products, speed of service, product quality, value for money, company location, employee behavior, call center, and website, in addition to overall customer satisfaction.

Customer Centricity is one of NBK's top priorities that it strives



Mohammed Al-Othman receives the award from Faten Abu-Ghazaleh.

to achieve through diligent work and continuous launching of products and campaigns to reach maximum levels of customer satisfaction, in addition to customer-centered initiatives that aim to meet their needs all year round. NBK's prioritization of customer satisfaction is evident in the deep studies it conducts prior to launching new products and services, as a specialized team of experts identify the

customers' reactions, evaluate the service quality, and work on enhancing it in a way that exceeds the customer's expectations.

On this occasion, NBK hosted a panel discussion that brought together the Service Hero delegation of officials along with senior leaders from the Bank's Consumer Banking Group, which included in-depth discussions about customer experience trends in Kuwait, es-



Mohammed Al-Othman, Hisham Al-Nisf, and Faten Abu-Ghazaleh are pictured with the leaders of the Consumer Banking Group at the National Bank of Kuwait.

pecially in the banking sector, in addition to knowledge exchange on ways for NBK to maintain its customer satisfaction leadership, and providing expert insights into the key challenges and opportunities facing the banking sector, as well as emerging efforts to enhance customer satisfaction and propel innovation in banking services.

It is worth noting that this session highlights NBK's unwavering

commitment to providing its customers with the best banking experience, as seen in the impressive record of awards and accolades it holds. Moreover, the Bank is keen to maintain this commitment by continuously adopting the latest digital solutions and customer-centric initiatives to ensure an exceptional banking experience.

The Service Hero Index is the only index in the Middle East that

measures customer satisfaction, adhering to the protocols of the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR), along with the principles and guidelines of the Global Organization for Self-Regulation and Ethical Practice. Additionally, an independent advisory board oversees the index to ensure neutral and objective results that accurately reflect consumer preferences.

No evidence of crime found

Prosecutors' Fed visit deepens Powell probe

WASHINGTON, April 15, (AP): Federal prosecutors made an unannounced visit this week to a construction site at Federal Reserve headquarters that is the focus of an investigation into a \$2.5 billion renovation project, according to two people familiar with the visit.

Two prosecutors and an investigator from U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro's office were turned away on Tuesday by a building contractor and referred to Fed attorneys, one of the people said. The two people familiar with the visit spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to publicly discuss an ongoing investigation.

Last month, during a closed-door hearing before a federal judge, a top deputy from Pirro's office conceded that they hadn't found any evidence of a crime in their investigation of the headquarters project.

The investigation has faced bipartisan opposition in Congress. It also has delayed Senate consideration of Kevin Warsh, President Donald Trump's pick to replace Fed chairman Jerome Powell when his term ends May 15.

Robert Hur, an attorney for the Federal Reserve board of governors, sent an email to Pirro's prosecutors about their visit and their request for a "tour" to "check on progress" at the construction site. Hur's email, which The Associated Press has viewed, noted that U.S. District Judge James Boasberg concluded that their interest in the Federal Reserve's renovation project was "pretextual."

"Should you wish to challenge that finding, the courts provide an avenue for you; it is not appropriate for you to try to circumvent it," Hur wrote.

Sen. Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican who is a key member of the Senate Banking Committee,

posted a link on social media to The Wall Street Journal's article on the visit below an image of the Three Stooges and wrote, "The U.S. Attorney's Office for D.C. at the crime scene."

The investigation by Pirro's office centered on brief testimony last June by Powell before the Senate Banking Committee, when he was asked about cost overruns on the Fed's extensive building renovations. The most recent estimates from the Fed suggest the current estimated cost of \$2.5 billion is about \$600 million higher than a 2022 estimate of \$1.9 billion.

News of the unannounced visit by prosecutors comes as Trump has again threatened to fire Powell, if the Federal Reserve Chair decides to stay on the central bank's governing board after his term as chair expires next month.

"Well then I'll have to fire him, OK?" Trump told Fox Business in an interview that aired Wednesday when reminded that Powell has said he won't leave the Fed while the Justice Department investigates a \$2.5 billion renovation project at the bank.

Trump has for months wanted to remove Powell as chair of the Fed, saying he has been too slow in orchestrating interest rate cuts that would give the U.S. economy a quick boost. Powell has said the investigation is a pretext to undermine the Fed's independence to set rates.

Powell's term as Fed governor expires May 15, but his term as a Fed board member lasts until January 2028.

Warsh's confirmation to succeed Powell has been delayed. Tillis, a North Carolina Republican, has said he won't vote to confirm any Fed nominees until the investigation is dropped.

As part of its ongoing efforts to offer innovative banking services and products

Warba Bank enhances financial inclusion with a first-of-its-kind digital savings account for SiDi customers

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Warba Bank has announced the launch of a new savings account feature for SiDi customers, in a move that marks a first-of-its-kind offering in the Kuwaiti banking sector for this segment. The new feature comes as part of the bank's strategy to promote a culture of saving among customers with modest incomes who often have limited access to financial and banking services tailored to their specific needs, while enabling them to manage their savings through a simple, secure and Sharia-compliant digital solution.

Mr. Hamad Mohammad Ashkanani, Senior Director Business Excellence at Warba Bank, said that the introduction of the savings account for SiDi customers reflects the bank's commitment to developing targeted banking products that directly address the needs of this segment, while also encouraging saving and financial planning in a practical manner that aligns with their day-to-day use of digital banking services.

He added that one of the account's key features is the ease with which it can be opened and managed entirely digitally through the SiDi app, providing a seamless



Hamad Ashkanani

and integrated banking experience. He noted that the account is available exclusively to SiDi customers who already have an active account and is offered as an additional product linked to the customer's existing SiDi account through the app.

Ashkanani explained that the account does not require a minimum savings balance, and that customers may also request an ATM card linked to the savings account if they wish, giving them greater flexibility in accessing and managing their savings. He stressed that this product was specifically designed to help SiDi customers build savings gradually and sustainably. The savings account also enables customers to benefit from returns calculated and announced in accordance with the Bank's policies and the principles of Sharia, supporting the gradual growth of savings and contributing to the promotion of a savings culture over the medium and long term.

Concluding his remarks, Ashkanani affirmed that the launch of the SiDi savings account reflects Warba Bank's commitment to offering innovative and targeted digital banking solutions that combine simplicity, flexibility, and compliance with the principles of Sharia.

He highlighted that the new offering enhances the experience of SiDi customers and reinforces the bank's position as a pioneering banking institution in developing products that serve this segment, while also contributing to greater financial literacy and stronger financial inclusion across all segments of society.

Warba Bank is among the banks that have achieved significant success in a short period of time, securing a leading position in Islamic digital banking services. It is also one of the local banks with the largest number of shareholders, which keeps it closely connected to all segments of society. This achievement once again underscores the bank's position as a trusted banking partner that combines innovation with social responsibility in delivering the best financial services and products.

Community initiative honors Kuwait and frontline heroes

stc invites the community to participate in "لكويت كلمة" initiative

A national responsibility

Commenting on the initiative, Ahmed AlNowaibet, Director of Public Relations and Social Media at stc, said, "This initiative reflects stc's ongoing commitment to playing an active role in the community while promoting national pride and unity. Through this creative concept, we aim to spread positivity, inspire hope, and show our support for frontliners, following the series of initiatives that we have launched with a similar objective."

AlNowaibet added, "At stc, we believe that every individual carries a deeply personal message for Kuwait, and our responsibility lies in creating meaningful opportunities for the community to express their emotions and stand united in support of the nation. It is without a doubt that the remarkable engagement we are witnessing everyday reflects the spirit of unity that has always defined the people of Kuwait in every circumstance."

He further noted that the activation also serves as a message of appreciation to the frontline heroes who have set an exemplary model of dedication and commitment, reaffirming the Company's ongoing efforts to launch national initiatives that raise awareness and support both official and community-led efforts.

The "لكويت كلمة" initiative is part of a broader series of activations launched by stc over the recent period, all aimed at strengthening its connection with the community. The Company continues to harness its technical expertise and human capabilities to serve the nation and support the community across at all times.

To find out more about stc's events, promotions, and sponsorships, follow stc's official social media platforms, visit one of stc's branches, download mystc mobile application, visit www.stc.com.kw or contact the customer service center by dialing 102 for around the clock assistance.

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of its latest "لكويت كلمة" initiative that will be taking place at The Avenues - Phase III. The activation aims to provide visitors with an opportunity to share their messages and heartfelt appreciation to their beloved country, especially in light of the ongoing circumstances. The initiative also comes as part of a series of national events and programs led by stc to reflect the community's solidarity and spirit of unity during these times.

Taking place on Friday and Saturday, 17th and 18th April, the activation is expected to witness the active participation of various segments of the community. stc will be dedicating an interactive space where visitors can express their emotions, love for the nation, and their support for the frontline heroes who continue their efforts to protect Kuwait and its people. The messages will be captured through spontaneous live interviews with visitors, as well as through other forms of expressions that best reflect their feelings and support for Kuwait, its leadership, and its people.



Ahmed AlNowaibet

Tax Day 2026: Millions claim Trump tax breaks

WASHINGTON, April 15, (AP): It's Tax Day on Wednesday, the deadline for most Americans to file taxes, and the Trump administration says millions of people have already used new breaks such as no tax on tips and overtime, exemptions for interest on certain car loans, deductions for some seniors, and Trump Accounts for children's savings.

More than 53 million filers claimed a deduction under one of those provisions from Republicans' massive tax and spending law, a Treasury official told reporters Tuesday before the deadline, with 6 million people claiming no tax on tips, 21 million claiming the overtime deduction and 30 million older Americans claiming the enhanced deduc-

tion. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to preview the numbers, said the 2026 filing season was a success from the administration's perspective.

Still, the latest data comes as most Americans, or 7 in 10, still think their taxes are too high, according to recent polling, despite the passage of the Republican tax law which promised big savings for taxpayers.

As the tax season kicked off in January, the White House boasted that average refunds were projected to rise by at least \$1,000. But currently, the average refund amount is \$3,462, according to the latest IRS data, which is up 11% or about \$350 from last tax year's \$3,116 average refund payment.

Citigroup, Wells Fargo, Goldman lift quarterly earnings on trading boom

Banks see a 'resilient' US economy but warn of negative impacts from rising energy prices

NEW YORK, April 15, (AP): The nation's biggest banks posted another quarter of strong profits, helped by a resilient economy and a flurry of dealmaking for their investment banking units.

But the strong profits were clouded by the bank's outlook for 2026, as bank executives warned how high oil prices were starting to negatively impact the consumer and further geopolitical uncertainty could hamper economic growth as the year progresses.

"There is an increasingly complex set of risks," Jamie Dimon, CEO and chairman of JPMorgan Chase, said in a statement, referencing to wars, energy prices and trade wars as some of the current risks in the global economy. In response, the bank slightly lowered its full-year profit forecast.

Dimon further called these tensions as "significant and they reinforce why we prepare the firm for a wide range of environments."

This quarter, it was the investment banks at all of the major banks that drove revenue to Wall Street during the first three months of the year. JPMorgan reported a 30% jump in investment banking fees, while Citigroup reported a 12% rise in advisory fees.

The rise in markets and investment banking fees was not a surprise. Markets have been intensely volatile in the first three months of the year,

and those swings of volatility are great for the professional trading desks stationed at all the major banks. Further, many companies are pursuing mergers, acquisitions or going public, which has provided another stream of revenue for Wall Street.

However, bank executives warned that the extreme swings could have downstream impacts to the U.S. economy, particularly energy prices. In a call with reporters, Wells Fargo Chief Financial Officer Mike Santomassimo said the bank was seeing customers was spending 30% to 40% more toward gas on their debit cards, while cutting back on discretionary purchases. CEO Charlie Scharf added to those comments in a call with investors, saying higher energy prices were putting pressure on some of its lower income customers.

While Dimon described the economy as "resilient" he also said, "the impact of higher oil prices will likely take some time to materialize" in the economy if it lingers.

The American consumer also continues to spend more on their credit cards as well as add to their balances on those accounts. JPMorgan said credit card loans were up 7% from a year ago, while Citigroup also saw its credit card loans rise by a lesser 2%.

JPMorgan posted a profit of \$16.49 billion, up 13% from a year earlier.

On a per-share basis, the bank earned \$5.94. Wells Fargo earned a profit of \$5.25 billion and Citigroup had a profit of \$5.79 billion.

Wells Fargo said that it had roughly \$36 billion in exposure to private credit loans, but that those loans are still performing well. Investors have been concerned about Wall Street's exposure to private credit, which are loans made between a bank or private credit fund to companies that became a popular form of financing in the last several years. But those private credit loans have been showing signs of deterioration, and there have been some private credit funds that have had investors asking for their money back.

JPMorgan and Citi also said they had \$50 billion and \$22 billion in exposure to private credit loans, respectively.

In a call with investors, JPMorgan's Chief Financial Officer Jeffrey Barnum said the bank remains "broadly comfortable" with the private credit loans on its books.

On Monday, Goldman Sachs reported first-quarter net earnings of \$5.6 billion, or \$17.55 per share, on net revenue of \$17.2 billion, as strength in its trading and investment banking businesses also lifted its results.



Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, right, and President Donald Trump look over a document of cost figures during a visit to the Federal Reserve, Thursday, July 24, 2025, in Washington. (AP)



Anne Hathaway attends the special screening of 'Mother Mary' at Metrograph on Monday, April 13, in New York. (AP)

Hathaway delivers indelible take on artistic ego

'Mother Mary' stitches a drama from a dress

LOS ANGELES, April 15, (AP): A pop star's need for a new dress sets in motion David Lowery's "Mother Mary," a fitfully spellbinding chamber drama that grows more operatic with every stitch.

What might be a fairly routine affair - some performers change outfits nearly every song - is in Lowery's latest taken to beguiling extremes when the pop star Mother Mary (Anne Hathaway) turns up wet and forlorn at the studio of her former fashion designer Sam Anselm (Michaela Coel).

Their reunion, after more than a decade of estrangement, reopens old wounds, stirs reinvention and spawns a ghost story sewn together, you could say, by phantom threads. It's best at its least adorned, when Lowery leaves it to Hathaway and Coel, in a grand, shadowy workroom to work through their past. As the movie grows more abstract, it loses momentum. But an impassioned melodrama and a curiously sincere belief in the transformative power of pop music wrap "Mother Mary" in a gothic garb all its own.

It is, at the least, the first movie that could be called an earnest attempt to meld Taylor Swift's Eras Tour with "A Christmas Carol." Yet Lowery, whose previous films include "A Ghost Story," "The Green Knight" and "Ain't Them Bodies Saints," took real inspiration from Swift in fashioning Mother Mary, an arena-playing star whose faithful following has spiritual dimensions made explicit by her trademark halo. (The devil may wear Prada but Mother Mary doesn't.) Her songs in the film - written by Charli xcx, Jack Antonoff, and FKA twigs, who also



This image released by A24 shows Michaela Coel, (left), and Anne Hathaway in a scene from 'Mother Mary.' (AP)

co-stars - also have real pop bona fides.

In the movie's heightened opening, Sam senses her impending approach instinctively. "I could tell she was coming from a thousand miles away," she narrates. When she does turn up, Sam is offish and reluctant but too curious not to pepper and prod Mary with questions. The many attending assistants around her eventually disperse - a little hesitantly because Sam is in the middle of preparing a new show - and the two withdraw to Sam's cavernous studio.

"I need a dress," says Mary. "Will you let me do whatever I like?" asks Sam.

The charged dialogue that follows teases out their past. The two are identified as former best friends in the press

notes, but, by the sharpness of feeling, I assumed they were once lovers. More importantly, perhaps, is that they were intense collaborators. Sam was with her from the beginning and helped turn Mother Mary into the icon she's become. As she develops a concept for a new outfit, Sam envisions a train made up of each era's celebrated looks.

The shedding of some past skin seems paramount, and it's Sam's artistry that enables it. Mary, in a crisis that goes beyond any outfit, struggles to articulate what she's looking for. But Sam puts her finger on it: Clarity. In three days time, Mary is to perform her first concert since a fall on stage that's rendered more like a near suicide.

Hathaway makes not just a believable pop star but an indelible portrait

of an artist's ego in extremes. Her on-stage power is massive - she tells Sam her new song "might be the greatest song in the history of songs" - but it's derived from acutely apparent sensitivity and pain.

Still, the movie belongs to Coel, the creator of "I May Destroy You." "Mother Mary" is the story of an exorcism, and she's the exorcist. Charged with pulling out of Mary the hurt inside, Coel exquisitely performs the task with the precision of an elite surgeon.

As it happens, "Mother Mary" is one of two two-handers starring Coel out now, along with Steven Soderbergh's "The Christophers," with Ian McKellen. Both depend extensively on two performers in a single location mulling the making of art. But while "The Christophers" has the conviction to stick with its bare-bones set up, "Mother Mary" grows increasingly surreal, sliding into body horror to unwrap a spiraling psychodrama.

Emotional wounds turn physical. The characters even walk through their past in Dickens-styled flashbacks. "Mother Mary" gets more visually captivating but more tiresome. It puts on a fancy dress when threadbare worked just fine.

"Mother Mary," an A24 release opening in theaters Friday, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for some violent content and language. Running time: 110 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Variety

SALT LAKE CITY: Taylor Frankie Paul, a star of "The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives" and a recently scrubbed season of "The Bachelorette," will not be charged in recent fights with her former partner, the Salt Lake County District Attorney's Office said Tuesday.

Police in the Salt Lake City suburbs of Draper City and West Jordan have been investigating claims of domestic violence in 2024 and this February from Paul's ex-partner Dakota Mortensen, the father of her 2-year-old son. Paul has also made allegations against Mortensen, but those were not addressed in the documents.

Any new charges against Paul would have violated her probation, which stemmed from a 2023 assault on Mortensen.

The pair has filed dueling petitions for protective orders against one another that will be the subject of an upcoming hearing.

"Several incidents that were submitted do not rise to the level of criminal offenses. The remaining incidents lack sufficient evidence to support filing criminal charges," Breaune Miller, a lawyer in the district attorney's Family Protection Unit, wrote in a memo explaining that Paul would not be charged.

She noted that some reported incidents occurred more than three years ago and fell outside the legal time frame for review.

The decline in charges does not have a direct effect on Mortensen's protective order against Paul, which has been temporarily granted and could become long-term at an April 30 hearing. But the lack of prosecution could help Paul and her lawyers make her case to a court commissioner who at an earlier hearing ordered that she could have visits with her son only if they were supervised.

Eric Swinyard, a lawyer for Paul, argued at an April 7 hearing that Mortensen was the aggressor in a February fight that the lawyer called "the truck tussle." (AP)

NEW YORK: After years of #MeToo infamy, legal peril and prison, Harvey Weinstein is again going on trial on a rape charge in New York City.

Jury selection started Tuesday in the onetime movie mogul's latest retrial, where jurors will weigh - for the third time - whether he raped hairstylist and Jessica Mann in a Manhattan hotel in 2013.

It's a more streamlined proceeding than the array of allegations that were aired at Weinstein's previous trials in New York and Los Angeles. The Oscar-winning producer denies all the accusations and declared in court this winter that he had "acted wrongly, but I never assaulted anyone."

Still, the retrial is expected to last up to six weeks. Questioned about the length of the proceeding and whether they could be fair and impartial about the much-publicized case, more than 80 people asked to be excused during initial screening Tuesday morning. The day ended with no jurors chosen.

The process was scheduled to resume Wednesday with prospective jurors being questioned individually in private about their knowledge of the case and Weinstein. Wider-ranging questioning in court should follow eventually. (AP)

CinemaCon

Cruise, Kidman, Chalamet lead upcoming films showcase

Warner Bros puts on a starry CinemaCon show

LAS VEGAS, April 15, (AP): Warner Bros. put on a big show hyping their upcoming films for theater owners Tuesday in Las Vegas, with the help of stars like Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, Timothée Chalamet, Zendaya, Sandra Bullock and Jason Momoa.

The audience at CinemaCon got previews of J.J. Abrams' original science fiction thriller "The Great Beyond," with Glen Powell and Jenna Ortega, Cruise with a potbelly in "Digger," the Owens sisters in "Practical Magic 2," Milly Alcock's "Supergirl" in an intergalactic fight and the first seven minutes of Denis Villeneuve's "Dune: Part Three."

Villeneuve said this third film is a "thriller" that is "more intense and definitely more emotional" than the previous films, while Chalamet spoke about how his character has become his worst vision 17 years after "Part Two."

The studio saved "Dune: Part Three" for the epic finale, but there were highlights throughout the nearly two and a half hour showcase.

Bullock even got Kidman to say her iconic AMC Theaters line, "we come to this place for magic," which she reluctantly did to much applause in the room of exhibitors.

"I didn't think anyone would clap," Kidman said with a laugh.

The two reunite for the "Practical Magic" sequel, which opens in September.

Earlier in the presentation, Cruise also got a big reception from the audience in a rare standing ovation as a devoted and vocal advocate of the big screen experience. This time he doesn't have a "Top Gun" or a "Mission: Impossible," but a boisterous satire in Alejandro G. Iñárritu's "Digger," opening in October.

"The movie is wild. It's funny," said Cruise.

Iñárritu called Cruise's performance "a high-wire act."

"We know that he's fearless - the stunts, the planes, the jumps - but I have to say embodying this character, this is another kind of fearless," Iñárritu said. "This role could possibly be the most challenging."

Pam Abdy and Mike DeLuca, the co-chairs and CEOs of the studio's motion picture group, kicked off the presentation reflecting on their suc-



Cast members Sandra Bullock, (left), and Nicole Kidman of the upcoming film 'Practical Magic 2' speak during the Warner Bros. presentation at CinemaCon on April 14, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (AP)

cesses since coming into the job in 2022 and their vision for the future with a mix of franchises and original films.

The studio is coming off a banner year, with over \$4.4 billion in global box office with hits like "Sinners," "A Minecraft Movie" and "Weapons," and multiple Oscar wins, including best picture and best director for "One Battle After Another" as well as best actor for Michael B. Jordan.

"Originality is not risky," DeLuca said. "Derivative sameness is."

Abdy noted that not everything is going to work, either, but that just comes with taking big swings. One thing they're especially optimistic

about is Generation Alpha's enthusiasm for the movie theater experience.

"We are at a crucial, critical moment in time with this audience," Abdy said. "The Letterboxd generation is only growing."

They announced that Warner Bros. will be releasing Sean Baker's follow-up to "Anora," "TI AMO!" under their new label Clockwork next year.

There was also a breakneck video rundown of their 2027 releases, with stars and filmmakers getting about 30 seconds each, often from set, to tease their films: Margot Robbie on her "Ocean's" prequel set in 1962; Keanu Reeves, floating in the wa-



Cast members Timothée Chalamet, (left), and Zendaya of the upcoming film 'Dune: Part Three' speak during the Warner Bros. presentation at CinemaCon. (AP)

ter in the Dominican Republic, on getting eaten by sharks in "Shiver"; Gollum being, well, Gollum; and Nancy Meyers on the set of her romantic comedy that she called "a bit of a love letter to the world of making movies."

This year is not just business as usual, with its pending acquisition by another legacy studio, Paramount, looming.

Both Villeneuve and Abrams were among the over 1,000 signers of an open letter published Monday to a website called BlockTheMerger.com. Some attendees at the convention have also been wearing #blockthemerger pins as well.

Nothing was discussed from the stage Tuesday. Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav did not make an appearance during the program either. But it's something that's on the minds of many at the convention.

Greg Marcus, whose company's Marcus Theaters is the fourth largest theater circuit in the United States with 78 locations in 17 states told The Associated Press on Monday that he was concerned as well for what it means for moviegoers and the price of tickets.

"The concentration of power at the studio level has allowed them to

raise the cost of going to the movies to the consumer quite significantly," Marcus said. "Our margins are no better. We're not making more money. And yet the cost to the consumer has far outpaced inflation."

Michael O'Leary, the president and CEO of the movie theater trade organization, reiterated his group's opposition to the merger Tuesday morning.

"Consolidation results in fewer films being produced for movie theaters," he said. "We believe this transaction will be harmful to exhibition, consumers and the entire industry."

O'Leary told reporters that the decision is in the hands of regulators now.

Not everyone in the business of making and releasing movies is opposed to a Paramount-owned Warner Bros. James Cameron is, in fact, a supporter. He also publicly opposed the idea of a Netflix-owned Warner Bros. because of the possible implications for theaters. But he doesn't have the same fears with Paramount.

Speaking to the AP last week on behalf of the upcoming big screen concert film "Billie Eilish - Hit Me Hard and Soft: The Tour (Live in 3D)," which is being released by Paramount, Cameron said "I'm a supporter of it. I know it's controversial."

Cameron worked with Paramount Skydance chair and CEO David Ellison closely on "Terminator: Dark Fate." Ellison has promised to grow the combined Paramount-Warner Bros. slates to some 30 theatrical releases a year.

"I know David quite well. And I know that he really cares about movies. And he's a natural born storyteller and thinks like almost an old school entrepreneurial producer that was a storyteller that loves storytelling and loved putting on spectacular shows," Cameron said. "He's the right man for the job to run a major studio, and now it looks like he's going to have two of them, you know, swept under his leadership, which doesn't bother me at all."



Left photo: Cast member Tom Cruise, (left), and director Alejandro González Iñárritu of the upcoming film 'Digger' speak at the Warner Bros. presentation. Right photo: Cast members Milly Alcock, left, and Jason Momoa of the upcoming film 'Supergirl' speak during the Warner Bros. presentation at CinemaCon on Tuesday, April 14, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (AP)





Peri Cochin, (right), founder of '1 Picasso for 100 euros,' speaks next to the painting 'Head of a Woman' by Pablo Picasso, painted in 1941, during the raffle draw at Christie's in Paris, April 14, in support of Alzheimer's research. (AP)

Charity raffle raises millions for Alzheimer's research

Raffle winner thrilled to claim a \$1M Picasso for \$117

PARIS, April 15, (AP) — A Parisian art enthusiast could not believe his luck when he found out Tuesday he'd won a Pablo Picasso painting worth \$1 million with a \$117 raffle ticket.

"How do I check that it's not a hoax?" said Ari Hodara, 58, after organizers called him following the draw at Christie's auction house in the French capital.

Hodara described himself as an art amateur fond of Picasso and said he bought his ticket over the weekend after finding out about the charity raffle by chance during a meal in a restaurant.

"First, I will tell the news to my wife, who has yet to return from work," said Hodara, a sales engineer. "And at first, I think I'll take advantage of it and keep it."

The third iteration of the "1 Picasso for 100 euros" lottery was for Picasso's "Head of a Woman," a

portrait of Picasso's longtime muse and partner Dora Maar. The gouache-on-paper was painted by the artist in 1941.

The online draw offered the chance to win a \$1 million portrait by the Spanish artist in aid of Alzheimer's research.

Organizers said all 120,000 tickets were sold worldwide, netting 12 million euros (\$14 million). Of that, 1 million euros will be paid to the Opera Gallery, an international art dealership that owned the painting.

Gilles Dyan, the gallery founder, said he offered a preferential price for the painting, with the public price at 1.45 million euros.

The first raffle in 2013 saw a Pennsylvania man who worked at a fire-sprinkler business win "Man in the Opera Hat," which the Spanish master painted in 1914 during his Cubist period.

The oil-on-canvas "Still Life" was raffled off in 2020 and won by Claudia Borgogno, an accountant in Italy whose son bought her the ticket as a Christmas present.

Painted in 1921, that painting was purchased for the raffle from billionaire art collector David Nahmad, who argued in an interview with The Associated Press that Picasso would have approved of his work being raffled. Picasso died in 1973.

The Alzheimer Research Foundation, the charity raffle's organizer, is based in one of Paris' leading public hospitals and says it has become France's leading private financier of Alzheimer-related medical research since its founding in 2004.

Organizers said the two previous Picasso raffles raised a total of more than 10 million euros for cultural work in Lebanon and water and hygiene programs in Africa.

From script meetings to real friendship

Ian McKellen and Michaela Coel mirror art and life in 'Christophers'

NEW YORK, April 15, (AP) — Ian McKellen and Michaela Coel met like their characters in "The Christophers" do, with a knock on the door.

Coel, taking a break from writing her upcoming BBC-HBO series "First Day on Earth" in Ghana, turned up at McKellen's house in London to go over the script with him and screenwriter Ed Solomon.

"I walked into your house," Coel recalls in an interview alongside McKellen. "I knew who you were. You were like, 'Hello! What are you? What are you then?'"

"You looked interesting and beautiful," says McKellen, smiling. "And you are."

On-screen chemistry can be elusive, especially when two characters are intended to be diametric opposites. In "The Christophers," McKellen stars as the artist Julian Sklar, a David Hockney-like star who hasn't painted in years and now spends much of his days grousing in his disheveled townhouse while filming personalized videos that trade on his celebrity. Coel, the creative force behind "I May Destroy You," plays Lori Butler, an art restorer hired to be Julian's assistant with the tacit task, while she's there, of forging additional paintings of "the Christophers," Julian's most famous and highly lucrative series.

The movie, crafty and charming, is almost entirely a two-hander. It belongs to McKellen and Coel and the charged interplay between them. They are bitter foes, scheming co-conspirators and fellow artists weighing the erratic value of their work.

As screen presences and cultural figures, McKellen, 86, and Coel, 38, could hardly be more different. McKellen, a titan of Shakespeare, Gandalf of the big screen, is more than twice the age of Coel, the multihyphenate whose autobiography-tinged work has made her a voice of a much different generation.

Memorable

Yet in "The Christophers," they make one of the more memorable on-screen pairs in years, matching McKellen's warm grandiosity with Coel's cool cunning. (The difference in cheekbones, alone, is vast.) And as they showed on a recent day in downtown New York, they are also now great chums. If "The Christophers" is about two artists from wildly different backgrounds finding an understanding, its stars have gone a few steps further.

"We're a bit silly about each other," grants McKellen.

"Yes, we are," agrees Coel. "It's morning kisses. It's cuddles. It's 'Oh should we have a nap?' We buddied up very much."

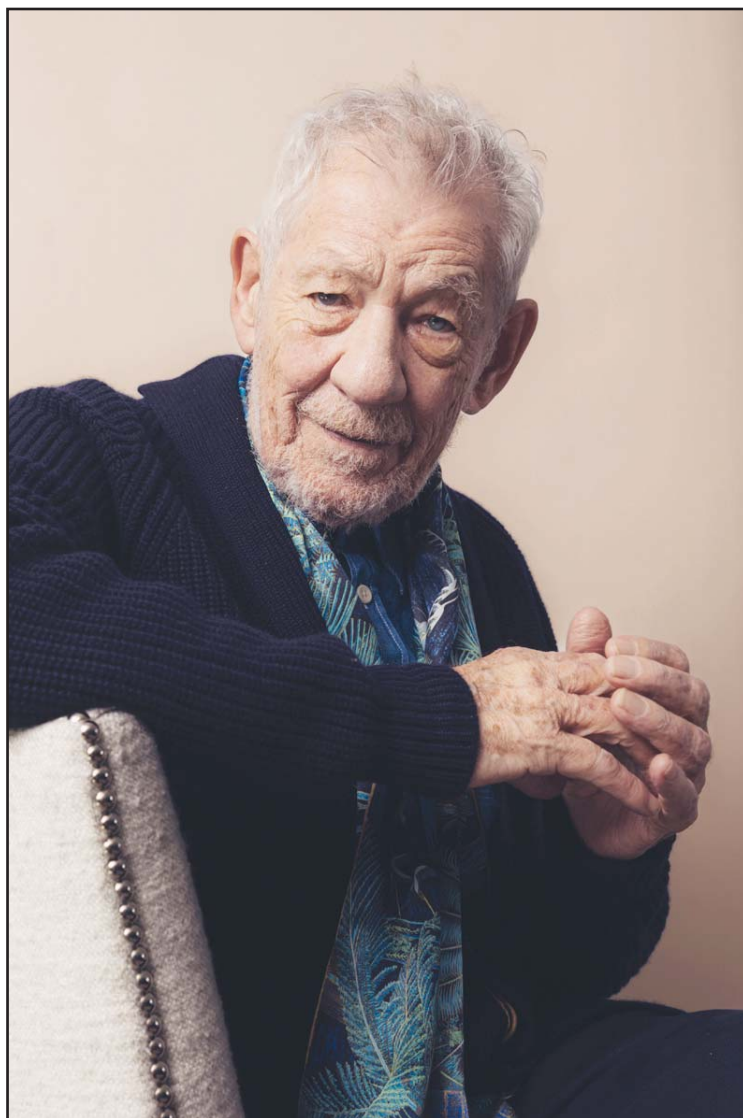
Steven Soderbergh, the restless, mercurial director of "Out of Sight," "Ocean's Eleven" and "Black Bag," has found himself increasingly focused, he says, on distilling something to its absolute essence. "The Christophers," which Soderbergh kick-started by throwing a few ideas at Solomon, was conceived with an old-fashioned set up.

"Two people in a room together is where life starts," says Soderbergh.

His guiding principle in shooting "The Christophers" was not to interfere with the magnetism of his lead performers. Soderbergh serves as his own cameraman, making him essentially the third player in every scene.

"There's something about the two of them together that adds up to more than the two of them," the director says. "My job was to be sure I'm in the right place, always, to capture it and not indulge in any kind of trickery that would distract or diminish what they're doing. So you have to be secure in the material and the performers and not try to tart it up because you're worried about boring people."

While McKellen and Coel's differ-



Actor Ian McKellen poses for a portrait to promote 'The Christophers' on Thursday, April 9, in New York. (AP)



Michaela Coel poses for a portrait to promote 'The Christophers.' (AP)

ences might be glaring, the two quickly found common ground.

"Guess what we've got in common," McKellen says. "We're neighbors."

Both McKellen and Coel live in East London, about a 15 minute walk from each other. McKellen remembers being curious about the nearby Catholic school Coel attended as a girl.

"I promise you I've loved to look inside there," McKellen says. "I wonder who those kids are?"

"Maybe I've been on the bus when you've been walking past," says Coel, smiling.

They are also both, in their own way, novices when it comes to film acting. Coel has only appeared in a handful of movies; her last one was "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever," a big-budget experience she's said she wasn't ready for. McKellen, of course, has acted in many more films - among them "Gods and Monsters," the "X-Men" films and "Mr. Holmes." But he begins every movie by asking his directors how to act in front of a camera.

"And they've never given me an an-

swer," says McKellen. "Martin Mann, John Schlesinger, Bill Condon, Peter Jackson, now Soderbergh."

Coel is confused. "Are you tricking them with this question?"

"No, it's a genuine question," McKellen replies. "There must be a technique for acting in front of the camera. All I know is what I've heard Michael Caine say in chat show interviews."

Caine's advice was technical; in close-up, talk to the eye closer to the camera. And Kenneth Branagh once gave him a note: "Don't move your head so much." But as an actor most home on the stage, the camera remains mystifying to McKellen.

"Having done so much theater where the audience is present, you can hear the audience. You can detect when they're bored, when they're excited," McKellen says. "You're controlling them in a sense. You're the master of ceremonies. They're there. Making a film, they're not there. The real audience doesn't get there until the actors have gone on to the next job or died."

Variety

PARIS: The rapper formerly known as Kanye West postponed his upcoming show in the city of Marseille after French authorities said they would seek to ban the concert.

The decision by Ye came a week after he was banned from entering the UK, where he was scheduled to headline the Wireless Festival in July, following a backlash over the artist's history of antisemitic remarks.

"After much thought and consideration, it is my sole decision to postpone my show in Marseille, France until further notice," Ye wrote Wednesday on the social network X. "I know it takes time to understand the sincerity of my commitment to make amends."

The rapper, who changed his name in 2021, had been expected to play at Marseille's Stade Vélodrome on June 11.

French Interior minister Laurent Nuñez had pledged to explore "all possibilities" to make sure the show would not go on as planned, according to his office. (AP)

West

WASHINGTON: This Earth Month, National Geographic is giving one lucky winner and up to three guests the chance to choose their own adventure into some of the most extraordinary places in the world. As part of Disney's Earth Month campaign, National Geographic launches the third annual Earth Month sweepstakes, giving fans the opportunity to win a once-in-a-lifetime prize trip with National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions.

The winner and their guests will have the opportunity to explore either the awe-inspiring landscapes and wildlife of Alaska, where glaciers and vast wilderness redefine what's possible, or the legendary Galápagos Islands, a sanctuary for unique species found nowhere else on the planet. This is wonder, in its most natural form. Each trip is designed to spark curiosity and discovery, immersing travelers in these extraordinary places and bringing them closer to the natural world. With access to remote locations and expertly led exploration, every experience captures the spirit of National Geographic - where adventure meets storytelling, and every moment feels like stepping into wonder. (AP)

Chelsey Crisp (top) and Eva De Dominici arrives at the premiere of 'Balls Up' on Tuesday, April 14, at Harmony Gold in Los Angeles. (AP)



A good page turner

Winfrey picks Semple's 'Go Gentle' for book club

NEW YORK, April 15, (AP) — Maria Semple's "Go Gentle," a comic novel about a Stoic philosopher and single mother in Manhattan who finds herself caught up in events that challenge her capacity for acceptance, is Oprah Winfrey's new book club pick.

"For all those who crave a good page turner, this is one wild ride of a story that carries equal parts wit and wisdom," Winfrey said in a statement Tuesday. "I learned so much about Stoicism - I laughed out loud for real. And underneath the humor there was always something tender ... a quiet truth about relationships, identity, and what it means to find peace with yourself."

Semple, whose new book was published this week, is best known for such bestsellers as "Today



This cover image released by G.P. Putnam's Sons shows 'Go Gentle' by Maria Semple. (AP)

Will Be Different" and "Where'd You Go, Bernadette." Her interview with Winfrey was taped for the "Oprah Book Club Podcast," which can be seen through Winfrey's YouTube channel.

"To authors, 'to get the call' means one thing: Oprah has phoned out of the blue and made you a book club pick," Semple said in a statement. "Truth is, I should have been prepared, considering the countless hours I'd spent in fantasyland imagining it happening to me ... before scolding myself that it was an honor bestowed on other, more serious writers. When, while tidying the kitchen, I heard her voice for the first time, I hit the ceiling in bewildered, grateful, joy. I'm still there."

Actor invites audience inside '860'

Crystal set for Broadway return in show on LA wildfire loss

NEW YORK, April 15, (AP) — Billy Crystal will return to Broadway this fall in a very intimate one-man show that will take the audience into his family's longtime Los Angeles home that was leveled in wildfires.

"860," written and performed by the Tony- and Emmy-winner, will begin previews this October at a theater to be revealed later. The title comes from the street address for the home Crystal and his family lived in for 46 years, a house lost in last year's devastating Palisades fires.

"I invite you to come inside 860 and I'll tell you all the funny and touching things that happened there, not only in my career but to our family," Crystal said in a statement. "It's a joyous and heartfelt visit, about

how with the love of family and friends and your inner strength, you can get through tough times."

This is Crystal's first return to Broadway following his "Mr. Saturday Night," which he premiered in 2022 and earned Tony nominations for best book and lead actor in a musical. Scott Ellis will direct his new work.

Crystal has had success with one-man shows before. He turned his memoir "700 Sundays" into a stage show - in 2004 and revived in 2013 - that won him a Drama Desk Award in 2005.

The Palisades and Eaton fires erupted in Jan. 7, 2025, killing 31 people and destroying about 13,000 homes and other residential properties. The fires burned for more than three weeks and clean-up ef-

forts took about seven months.

At the televised fundraising concert FireAid, held at the end of January, 2025, Crystal appeared as the first host in the same clothes he was wearing when he fled his family home.

Crystal said he returned to the wreckage of his home and began to wail: "I had not cried like that since I was 15 and I was told that my father had just died." His daughters soon found a rock in the wreckage with the word "Laughter" engraved in it.

Crystal made a name for himself first in comedy, from stand-up to TV's "Soap" to the films "When Harry Met Sally" and "City Slickers." Then in 1992, he got serious with the movie "Mr. Saturday Night," which he directed, co-wrote and starred in.



Billy Crystal arrives at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party on March 2, 2025, at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills, Calif. (AP)

'AI tool is an assistant but not an expert'

Why many Americans turn to AI for health advice: polls

NEW YORK, April 15, (AP) — When Tiffany Davis has a question about a symptom from the weight-loss injections she's taking, she doesn't call her doctor. She pulls out her phone and consults ChatGPT.

"I'll just basically let ChatGPT know my status, how I'm feeling," said the 42-year-old in Mesquite, Texas. "I use it for anything that I'm experiencing."

Turning to artificial intelligence tools for health advice has become a habit for Davis and many other Americans, according to a Gallup poll published Wednesday. The poll, conducted in late 2025 and backed up by at least three other recent surveys with similar findings, found that roughly one-quarter of US adults had used an AI tool for health information or advice in the past 30 days.

Dr. Karandeep Singh, chief health AI officer at the University of California San Diego Health, said AI tools, many of which now incorporate web search, are an upgraded version of Google health searches that Americans have been doing for decades.

"I almost view it like a better entry portal into web search," he said. "Instead of someone having to comb through the top, you know, 10, 20, 30 links in a web search, they can now have an executive summary."

Most Americans using AI tools for health purposes say they want immediate answers. In some cases, it helps them evaluate what kind of medical attention they need.

"It'll let me know if something's serious or not," Davis said of ChatGPT, which she typically consults before scheduling medical appointments.

The Gallup survey found about 7 in 10 US adults who have used AI for health research in the past 30 days say they wanted quick answers, additional information or were simply curious. Majorities used it for research before seeing a



The OpenAI logo is seen on a mobile phone in front of a computer screen which displays the ChatGPT home screen, March 17, 2023, in Boston. (AP)

doctor or after an appointment.

Rakesia Wilson, 39, in Theodore, Alabama, said she recently used AI to better understand her lab results after an endocrinologist visit. She also regularly uses ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot to decide whether she needs to take time off for a doctor's appointment or can simply monitor an ailment.

"I just don't necessarily have the time if it's something that I feel is minor," said Wilson, who said she sometimes works up to 70-hour weeks as an assistant principal.

On the whole, the findings suggest that the rise of AI tools

hasn't stopped people from seeking professional medical care. About 8 in 10 US adults say they have sought out a doctor or other health care professional for health information in the past year, while about 3 in 10 say that about AI tools and chatbots, according to a KFF poll conducted in late February.

Similarly, a Pew Research Center survey conducted in October found that about 2 in 10 US adults say they get health information at least sometimes from AI chatbots, while about 85% said the same about health care providers.

But there are indications that some Americans are using AI for health advice because they are struggling to obtain professional medical care, at a time when federal policy and market factors are worsening health costs and creating obstacles to access around the country.

A small but significant share of respondents in the Gallup study say they used AI because accessing health care was too expensive or inconvenient. About 4 in 10 wanted help outside of normal business hours, while about 3 in 10 did not want to pay for a doctor's visit. Roughly 2 in 10 did not have time to make an appointment, had felt ignored or dismissed by a provider in the past or were too embarrassed to talk to a person.

The KFF survey found that younger adults and lower-income people were more likely to say they used an AI tool or chatbot for health information because they could not afford the cost of seeing a provider or were having trouble accessing health care.

Tech experts often warn that AI chatbots don't think for themselves - and therefore can sometimes spout false information. Those concerns have trickled down even to frequent AI users.

About one-third of adults who had recently used AI for

health information said they "strongly" or "somewhat" trust the accuracy of health information and advice generated by AI tools, according to the Gallup poll. About the same share, 34%, distrusted it, and another 33% neither trusted it nor distrusted it.

Dr. Bobby Mukkamala, an ear, nose and throat doctor and the president of the American Medical Association, said he loves when patients come in and have "more evolved questions than they used to have" because they used AI for research. But he said AI should be considered a tool and not a stand-in for medical care.

"It is an assistant but not an expert, and that's why physicians need to be involved in that care," he said.

There are also concerns about privacy, according to KFF. About three-quarters of U.S. adults said they are "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" about the privacy of personal medical or health information that people provide to AI tools or chatbots.

Singh, of UC San Diego Health, said most AI tools have settings users can toggle to prevent their data from being used to train future models. But that requires user vigilance - and not being careful can have consequences.

Last summer, for example, internet sleuths on Google discovered private ChatGPT conversations that had been indexed on a public website without the users realizing it.

Tamara Ruppert, a 47-year-old director in Los Angeles, said she is lucky enough to have doctors in her husband's family that she contacts instead of turning to AI. With her family history of breast cancer, using a chatbot for health advice feels too risky.

"Health care is something that's pretty serious," she said. "And if it's wrong, you could really hurt yourself."

Study highlights how bacteria respond to antibiotics

Infection treatment goes beyond stopping bacterial growth: study

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



By Panteha Torabian

Rochester Institute of Technology

Antibiotics are designed to kill harmful bacteria and help the body recover from infection. But some antibiotics may also push bacteria to release tiny particles that can make inflammation worse.

While inflammation is part of the body's natural defense against infection, too much inflammation can damage healthy tissue and interfere with healing. In severe cases, excessive inflammation can become life-threatening.

These particles are called bacterial extracellular vesicles, or BEVs. These microscopic, bubblelike structures carry proteins, toxins and other molecular signals that influence how the immune system of the host responds. Bacteria naturally release BEVs into their surroundings as a way to communicate with their environment, remove damaged cellular material and interact with host cells.

Although incredibly small, these structures can have powerful effects on the human body. When BEVs enter the bloodstream, they can interact with cells that line blood vessels and trigger an immune response. In some cases, this can increase inflammation and lead to sepsis, a condition where the body's response to infection becomes dangerously uncontrolled, damaging tissues and sometimes leading to organ failure.

I am a biomedical engineer studying how bacterial extracellular vesicles influence inflammation during infection. In my recently published research, I found that certain types of antibiotic cause bacteria to release significantly more of these vesicles than others. This finding suggests that the way an antibiotic kills bacteria may also influence how much inflammatory material is released into the body.

Antibiotics work in different ways. Some target the bacterial cell wall, weakening it until the cell breaks apart and dies. Others interfere with key cellular processes such as protein production or DNA replication, preventing bacteria from growing. Whatever their mechanism, antibiotics control infection by killing the bacteria that are causing it.

But antibiotics also place bacteria under stress, and that stress can cause bacteria to release more extracellular vesicles carrying inflammatory molecules. To explore this process, I exposed the bacteria *E. coli* to

several commonly used antibiotics and measured how many vesicles they made. The goal was simple: Compare how different types of antibiotics influence vesicle release and determine whether the way an antibiotic kills bacteria affects vesicle production.

The results showed that not all antibiotics have the same effect on the vesicles bacteria produce.

Antibiotics that target the bacterial cell wall, including a widely used group of drugs known as beta-lactams, led to a noticeable increase in vesicle production. In contrast, antibiotics that act on protein or DNA processes showed a much smaller effect.

This difference likely reflects how bacteria respond to damage. When the bacteria's cell wall is disrupted, bacteria may release more vesicles as a way to shed damaged material or adapt to stress. The inflammatory molecules these vesicles carry can further activate the body's immune response.

This raises an important question: Could some antibiotics unintentionally amplify inflammation and make an infection worse?

My findings do not show that antibiotics directly contribute to infections, but they do suggest that antibiotic type could potentially influence not only how effectively bacteria are killed but also how the body responds to the infection. More research is needed to understand how these bacterial responses affect patients during severe infections, such as sepsis.

It is important to emphasize that antibiotics remain one of the most effective and lifesaving tools in modern medicine. This research does not suggest they should be avoided. Instead, it highlights that bacteria are not passive targets. They actively respond to treatment, and those responses can have additional effects on the body.

Understanding how bacteria react to antibiotics could help researchers and clinicians better evaluate how different treatments influence both infection and inflammation. In situations where controlling inflammation is critical, such as severe infections, these differences may become especially important.

This work also reflects a broader shift in how scientists think about infection. Rather than focusing only on killing bacteria, researchers are increasingly studying how bacteria communicate, respond to stress and interact with the human body.

As scientists continue to uncover how bacteria behave under antibiotic pressure, it becomes clear that treating infection is not only about stopping bacterial growth but also about understanding the signals bacteria leave behind. (AP)

Project seen as model for tackling desertification

China's tech innovation in tree planting reshapes efforts to 'green' arid land

TAIYUAN, April 15, (Xinhua) — In a remote stretch of the Sahara Desert, rows of young fruit trees are taking root in shifting sands, an unusual sight in one of the world's harshest environments.

Planted by teams from China and Mauritania, the orange and pomegranate trees are part of a pilot project under the China-Africa Green Technology Park. Local residents say the trees require minimal maintenance and could begin bearing fruit as early as next year.

The project has been described as a potential model for tackling desertification and promoting green development across sub-Saharan Africa.

At the center of the effort is a device known as SHUBAO, developed by 67-year-old Chinese inventor Zhao Shuhai. Buried near plant roots, it collects and stores moisture from the surrounding environment, releasing it gradually during dry periods to sustain growth with minimal irrigation.

The technology has already shown results in China, offering a glimpse of its potential abroad.

In Yuncheng, a city in north China's Shanxi Province, trees planted five years ago at a former mining site using the same technology are now thriving, helping restore degraded land.

"One water charge in SHUBAO can sustain a tree for three to four months," Zhao said. In places like Yuncheng, which receive around 400 to 500 millimeters of rainfall a year, he said, natural precipitation alone can significantly improve tree survival rates when combined with the device.

China's broader efforts to curb desertification have increasingly relied on technological solutions, providing a foundation for innovations like SHUBAO.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), China launched major programs to protect and restore key ecosystems, with desertification and sandification areas continuing to shrink.

A total of 549 million mu (36.6 million hectares) of land underwent afforestation, over 4.34 million mu of wetlands were restored, and 152 million mu of desertified land were treated during the period, official data showed.

The technology has also gained wider international recognition.

SHUBAO was showcased at the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in 2024 as one of China's selected solutions for desert control.

Following the event, Zhao was invited to Saudi Arabia to present the technology to local stakeholders.

The Saudi Green Initiative aims to plant 10 billion trees, equivalent to rehabilitating 40 million hectares across the country.

"Our region is arid and receives little rainfall, so we rely on drip irrigation, and even groundwater is scarce. SHUBAO is highly suitable for our conditions," said a farm manager who observed the device in use.

Zhao said the technology's applications go beyond tree planting. "It has delivered promising results in promoting fruit tree growth and greenhouse cultivation," he said. "The device can also help reduce groundwater extraction and cut down on fertilizer use, which is significant for developing organic dryland agriculture and increasing farmers' incomes."

Before retiring, Zhao worked at the power supply bureau in Yuncheng, where he developed a habit of solving practical problems through hands-on experimentation. Over the past three decades, he has filed a total of 90 patent applications.

SHUBAO has applied for patents in over 70 countries, including China, the United States, Canada and parts of Africa.

"I will continue promoting this technology around the world," Zhao said. "I hope it can support greening efforts, especially in arid regions."



A Lijian-1 Y12 carrier rocket carrying eight satellites blasts off from the Dongfeng commercial space innovation pilot zone in northwest China, April 14. (Xinhua)

China launches Lijian-1 Y12 rocket to send 8 satellites into space

China on Tuesday launched the Lijian-1 Y12 carrier rocket to send eight satellites into space.

The rocket blasted off at 12:03 p.m. (Beijing Time) from the Dongfeng commercial space innovation pilot zone in northwest China. It successfully sent the satellites into their planned orbits. This launch marked the 12th flight mission of the Lijian-1 carrier rocket series.

The Lijian-1 carrier rocket series was developed by CAS Space, a commercial spaceflight company founded by the Institute of Mechanics under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The Lijian-1 rocket was developed to serve the mi-

cro-satellite launch market, providing diversified launch services for varying numbers of satellites, according to Lijian-1 chief designer Shi Xiaoning.

To date, the rocket series has successfully sent more than 90 satellites into space, with a total orbital payload mass exceeding 12 tonnes.

By now, Lijian-1's annual production capacity exceeds 10 rockets, and the assembly and testing cycle has been shortened to 1 month. Its launch frequency will continue to increase, and its first sea-based launch is also being planned, according to the developer. (Xinhua)

Tech solution to skills gaps

Africa urged to adopt tech to strengthen health systems

NAIROBI, April 15, (Xinhua) — The resilience of Africa's public health systems depends on the rapid adoption of digital tools like artificial intelligence, drones, and data analytics to enhance disease surveillance, diagnosis, and treatment, experts said on Tuesday.

Caroline Kisia, Africa director for Project ECHO, an international healthcare training and mentoring platform, said that new technologies and innovations are crucial to revamping health systems on the continent amid perennial challenges like underfunding and skills gaps.

"Technological platforms that can support a nurse, doctor, or midwife on the frontlines to help improve service delivery should be adopted at scale across the continent," Kisia said at a media roundtable in Nairobi, which served as a precursor to the World Health Summit Regional Meeting to be held in the Kenyan capital from April 27 to 29.

Fight chronic diseases

Indonesia unveils front-of-pack nutrition labels to curb risks

JAKARTA, April 15, (Xinhua) — Indonesia's Ministry of Health has introduced a front-of-pack nutrition labeling policy aimed at helping consumers identify levels of sugar, salt and fat in processed foods and beverages, as part of efforts to reduce the prevalence of major non-communicable diseases.

Announced at a press conference in Jakarta on Tuesday, the policy requires labels to be displayed prominently on the front of product packaging, based on standards set by the World Health Organization.

Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sa-

dikin said excessive intake of sugar, salt and fat is a key driver of diseases with the highest mortality rates in the country, including stroke, heart disease, diabetes and kidney disease. He added that such conditions have also placed a heavy financial burden on the national health insurance system.

As an initial phase, the policy will be implemented on a voluntary basis within the processed beverage industry. The government plans to make the labeling mandatory and extend it to processed food products within the next two years.

Free health-care

Senegal honors Chinese doctors

DAKAR, April 15, (Xinhua) — The Senegalese government on Monday honored all members of the 20th Chinese medical team to Senegal with the National Order of the Lion and certificates of honor in recognition of their contributions to the country's healthcare development.

The 20th Chinese medical team, composed of 14 members, arrived in Senegal in April 2024 for a two-year mission. During their stay, the team treated more than 20,000 outpatients at Diambiadi Children's Hospital and carried out 29 free medical outreach activities across the country, benefiting over 10,000 local residents.

At the ceremony held in the capital of Dakar, Senegalese Minister of Health and Social Action Ibrahima Sy presented the honors and certificates to the team members. He said the Chinese medical team helped strengthen local capacity in pediatric care and made positive contributions to medical training, clinical practice and professional exchanges.

Chinese Ambassador to Senegal Li Zhigang said the team has brought not only advanced medical expertise and much-needed medicines, but also demonstrated the compassion and humanitarian spirit of Chinese medical workers, making important contributions to deepening the traditional friendship between China and Senegal and advancing bilateral cooperation in the health sector.

Also:

ACCRA: Ghanaian Health Minister Kwabena Mintah Akandoh said on Monday that Ghana is about to roll out the planned free primary health care program to help the country achieve universal health coverage.

Akandoh said during the Government Accountability Series at the presidency that the phased implementation of the initiative would begin with 150 districts.

"We shall begin with 150 out of the 261 districts, selecting underserved districts in every region. The ultimate aim is to get the whole country covered," the minister said.

According to him, the government requires at least 1.2 billion Ghana cedis (about 109 million U.S. dollars) annually for the program's successful implementation.

Chennai spin show sinks Kolkata

Knight Riders still searching for first win

CHENNAI, India, April 15, (AP): Left-arm spinners Noor Ahmad and Akeal Hosein made full use of a slow wicket and led Chennai Super Kings to a 32-run victory over winless Kolkata Knight Riders in the Indian Premier League.

Ahmad (3-21) grabbed all his wickets in space of seven balls and Hosein tied down batters with a tidy spell of 1-26 to restrict Kolkata at 160-7.

Kolkata is still searching for its first win in the tournament after four losses and one point from a rain-abandoned game.

Chennai, at No. 8 in the table after back-to-back wins, had earlier posted 192-5 mainly due to its strong finish of 72-2 in the power play when Ayush Mhatre made 38 off 17 balls and Sanju Samson started the innings with three successive boundaries on the off side against fast bowler Vaibhav Arora (1-55).

Chennai buckled down Kolkata to 36-2 in the power play despite Ajinkya Rahane demoting himself down the order after the skipper struggled to give his team strong starts.

The promotion of Sunil Narine saw the left-hander score 24 off 17 balls with two fours and two sixes, but Finn Allen (1) yet again perished inside the power play when he skied a simple catch to point.

Narine got a life when captain Ruturaj Gaikwad dropped a straightforward catch, but couldn't capitalize and sliced a low full toss of Khaleel Ahmed to short third in the fifth over.

Ahmad then ran through the middle-order with the wickets of Rahane



Chennai Super Kings' Jamie Overton plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders in Chennai, India. (AP)

and Kolkata's million-dollar signing Cameron Green of successive balls when he bowled the tall Australian with a quicker delivery.

Rinku Singh denied Ahmad a hat trick but perished soon after when he attempted a big shot against the left-arm Afghan spinner but holed out at mid-on.

Ramandeep Singh (35) and Rovman Powell (31 not out) never looked to threaten the target against

some disciplined Chennai bowling with fast bowler Anshul Kamboj (2-32) and Ahmed (1-24) also among the wickets.

Earlier, spinners played pivotal role in pulling things for Kolkata when Narine (1-21) and Varun Chakrvarthy (0-26) squeezed the runs in the middle overs.

Samson, who also struck three sixes, fell to the pace of Karik Tyagi in the 12th over when the fast bowler

rattled the stumps of a delivery that clocked 148.1kph.

Dewald Brevis (41) and Sarfaraz Khan (23) shared a 51-run stand before Narine finished of his spell by clean bowling Khan in the 17th over. Tyagi followed with the wicket of Brevis when the South African batter sliced a tame catch to short third and Kolkata added 50 of the final five overs.

It could be played on San Siro field

Italy to host new grass-court event as Wimbledon tuneup from 2028

ROME, April 15, (AP): The ATP Finals. The Davis Cup Finals. And now a Wimbledon tuneup on grass courts that could be played on the soccer pitch inside Milan's San Siro stadium.

Led by top-ranked Jannik Sinner, who won Wimbledon last year, the Italian tennis movement keeps on adding new events.

The Italian Tennis and Padel Federation has purchased the rights for a 250-level ATP Tour tournament in Brussels that is held in October, federation president Angelo Binaghi announced Tuesday.

The event will be held each June starting in 2028.

"There's still time to decide where to play it," Binaghi said. "For climate reasons, it will probably be held in northern Italy."

Binaghi noted that the Madrid Open is introducing practice courts inside Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu stadium, so the San Siro could be an option: "For once, we wouldn't be the first to do it."

Italy previously hosted a WTA tournament on grass in Gaiba from 2022-24. The federation is also hosting the ATP Finals, currently in Turin, through 2030 and the Davis Cup Finals in Bologna through next year.

Meanwhile, the federation is preparing to host the Italian Open next month.

After Sinner beat Carlos Alcaraz in the Monte Carlo Masters final on Sunday, organizers are optimistic that he could become the first Italian man to claim the singles title at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta 50 years ago.

"We've got to try and win the men's singles. The time is right," Binaghi said at the tournament



Spain's Paula Badosa returns the ball to Germany's Eva Lys during their first round tennis match at the Stuttgart Open tennis tournament in Stuttgart, Germany. (AP)

presentation, noting that Italy has three other players ranked in the top 25: No. 9 Lorenzo Musetti, No. 16 Flavio Cobolli and No. 21 Luciano Darderi.

Alcaraz beat Sinner in last year's Rome final in Sinner's first tournament back from a three-month doping ban; while Jasmine Paolini earned Italy the titles in both women's singles and doubles (with partner Sara Errani).

Work on a retractable roof for Campo Centrale is slated to start immediately after this year's Italian Open and be ready for the 2028 edition.

Capacity for the revised stadium will increase from 10,500 to 12,400 for tennis; and more for other sports such as basketball.

Binaghi also said he still hopes to make the Italian Open a fifth Grand Slam to join the Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon and the U.S. Open as the sport's biggest tournaments.

L AFC eliminates defending champion Cruz Azul

Nashville reaches first Champions Cup semifinals behind Mukhtar's winner

MEXICO CITY, April 15, (AP): Nashville SC defeated Club America 1-0 on Hany Mukhtar's second-half goal to qualify for the CONCACAF Champions Cup semifinals for the first time.

Mukhtar scored in the 51st minute to secure a spot in the final four against the winner of the series between the Seattle Sounders and the UANL Tigres.

The first leg ended with a scoreless draw a week ago in Nashville.

Club America, a seven-time Champions Cup winner, was aiming for its first regional title since 2016.

In the second half, referee Walter Lopez stopped the game a couple of times when Club America fans shouted a homophobic chant against goalkeeper Brian Schwake.

The chant became an issue for the sport in the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

Dennis Bouanga scored a late penalty to help LAFC draw 1-1 with defending champion Cruz Azul and advance to the semifinals.

Gabriel Fernandez converted a penalty kick in the 18th to put the home team ahead, but Bouanga equalized with a right-foot shot from the spot deep in stoppage time.

LAFC, which won the first leg 3-0 with two goals from David Martinez, will play the winner of the series between Toluca FC and LA Galaxy.

"I know we eliminated a great club, a great champion, and a team that gave us a lot of trouble. Qualifying was tough," LAFC coach Marc Dos Santos said. "Now there are no favorites. Everyone who makes it to the semifinals is strong."

Former Tottenham goalkeeper Hugo Lloris finished the match with eight saves for LAFC, which is aiming for its third final in the tournament after losing in the championship deciders in 2020 and 2023.

The eight saves from the 39-year-old Frenchman were the most in his 102 matches with the LAFC in all competitions.

Cruz Azul finished the match with 10 men after Gonzalo Piovi was sent off in the 90th minute after tackling Bouanga.

"Today we had 31 shots, we faced a world champion goalkeeper who prevented us from having a great night," Cruz Azul coach Nicolas Larcomon said. The Mexican club, a seven-time Champions Cup winner, was aiming to emulate Club America, the last team to clinch back-to-back titles in the 2014-15 and 2015-16.



Son Heung-Min of the United States' Los Angeles FC, center, dribbles the ball challenged by Carlos Rodriguez of Mexico's Cruz Azul during a CONCACAF Champions Cup quarterfinal second leg soccer match in Puebla, Mexico. (AP)

Japan snaps US 10-game winning streak

New Zealand qualifies for Women's World Cup

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, April 15, (AP): New Zealand will play at next year's Women's Soccer World Cup in Brazil after beating Papua New Guinea 1-0 Wednesday in the final of the Oceania Confederation Qualifying Series.

Sunderland midfielder Katie Kitching scored the only goal of the match in the 55th minute, sending New Zealand to a World Cup for the seventh time.

Papua New Guinea still has a chance to qualify through an inter-continental playoff during the international window in November or December.

New Zealand was denied twice by VAR, four times by the woodwork and repeatedly by Papua New Guinea goalkeeper Betty Sam who was outstanding in a hard-working defense.

Deven Jackson appeared to have scored from Rebecca Stott's through ball in the 32nd minute but the VAR showed Jackson had been caught by PNG's offside trap.

New Zealand was awarded a penalty in first half stoppage time after Maya Hahn was brought down in the box but the decision was overturned after the officials considered replays for more than five minutes.

New Zealand's finishing let it down on numerous occasions, notably when Jackson missed an open goal in the 51st minute.

"It's amazing. We had a job that we had to get done tonight and we did what we needed to do to get the result," New Zealand coach Michael Mayne said. "We're over the moon with going

to the World Cup and now we can plan and see what we have to do this year to get ready for the World Cup.

"At halftime we spoke about our finishing. Frustration had to be tempered. We were creating, we felt a goal was going to come and it was one of those games in which we had opportunities but weren't clinical when we needed to be."

Papua New Guinea didn't have a shot on goal but it's defense was superb. It earned its place in the final with a 1-0 win over giant-killers American Samoa while New Zealand beat Fiji 5-0 in the semifinals.

"I'm very proud of the girls," Papua New Guinea coach Ericson Komeng said. "We weren't clinical enough tonight to compete with New Zealand but I'm proud of the girls for all the hard work they put in today."

"We just have to go back and work on little things and get ready for the playoff."

Maika Hamano scored and Japan beat the U.S. women's national team 1-0 in a friendly to snap the Americans' 10-game winning streak.

The loss was the first for the U.S. since Oct. 23, 2025, a 2-1 setback to Portugal, and marked the first time the Americans lost in a shutout in 42 games.

The U.S. had won 10 straight matches for the first time since 2023 after its 2-1 victory against Japan on Saturday.

Before Saturday, Japan had won the last

meeting with the United States 2-1 in the 2025 SheBelieves Cup final.

Hamano fooled Lilly Reale, and then booted a left-footed shot over goalkeeper Phallon Tullis-Joyce's outstretched left hand in the 27th minute.

U.S. coach Emma Hayes made sweeping changes to the lineup she had used on Saturday in San Jose, resting players including Sophia Wilson and Trinity Rodman, who started in the previous game.

Wilson and Rodman entered as substitutes in the 65th minute, as did Tierna Davidson and Gisele Thompson. Davidson had not played for the United States since February 2025, after tearing her ACL in a match with Gotham FC last March.

Wilson played for the second straight match after the birth of her daughter. She had not played for the U.S. since October 2024.

Tuesday marked the first time the U.S. women's national team played on the new grass that has been installed at Lumen Field for this summer's World Cup. The women's team had not been to Lumen since 2017 because of the stadium's artificial turf.

The announced crowd was 36,128 for the game, which broke the record for a standalone women's match in Seattle. Megan Rapinoe's retirement match with the Seattle Reign in 2023 drew 34,130 fans.

The finale of the three-game series between the U.S. and Japan is slated for Friday in Commerce City, Colorado.



United States forward Ally Sentnor (9) and Japan defender Moeka Minami (3) go up for the ball during the first half of an international friendly soccer match in Seattle. (AP)

Ivory Coast returns, Caicedo key to Ecuador's hopes

Germany seeks redemption, Curacao eyes dream World Cup debut

BERLIN, April 15, (AP) — Four-time World Cup champion Germany and newcomer Curacao sit at opposite ends of the global soccer spectrum.

In June they will be facing each other in Group E, which also includes Ivory Coast and Ecuador.

Germany will be under pressure not to fall at the first hurdle again after failing to advance from the group stage in back-to-back tournaments since winning the World Cup in 2014.

Liverpool playmaker Florian Wirtz is at the heart of everything Germany does under coach Julian Nagelsmann. At 6-foot-6 (1.98 meters) striker Nick Woltemade is hard for defenses to handle. Meanwhile, 18-year-old midfielder Lennart Karl could be the tournament's breakout star.

Still, conceding three goals in a 4-3 friendly win over Switzerland in March revived concerns over Germany's defensive robustness and doubts over Nagelsmann's insistence on using Real Madrid center back Antonio Rüdiger as a bench player. Germany hasn't faced top-level opponents since losses to France and Portugal last year. There isn't a reliable goalkeeper successor to Manuel Neuer, either.

Defender Nathaniel Brown adds an American connection. He was eligible for the United States but chose Germany, his birthplace, instead.

With a population of about 156,000, Curacao is the smallest nation ever to qualify for the World Cup. An opening game against the mighty Germany will be a daunting introduction.

Its preparations have not gone to plan after veteran Dutch coach Dick Advocaat quit in February due to his daughter's health issues.

He was replaced by Fred Rutten, a former coach at FC Twente, PSV and



In this file photo, Germany's Antonio Rudiger, foreground, stops Denmark's Jannik Vestergaard during a round of sixteen match between Germany and Denmark at the Euro 2024 soccer tournament in Dortmund, Germany. (AP)

Feyenoord in the Netherlands and Schalke 04 in Germany.

Curacao, a Caribbean island country which for centuries was under Dutch colonial rule, relies heavily on players born and raised in the Netherlands.

The Ivory Coast is back at the World Cup for the first time since 2014 and long after the retirement of national icons Didier Drogba and Yaya Toure.

It has been a long wait for the Ivorians, having struggled without its golden generation of star players.

Now a new generation has emerged, winning the African Cup of Nations in 2024 and securing a return to the World Cup by qualifying top of its group.

Ivory Coast has made three previous appearances at the World Cup, but has never advanced beyond the group stage.

Coach Emerse Fae was appointed midway through the 2024 AFCON and went on to lead his nation to the trophy.

Manchester United forward Amad Diallo is one of the stars of the new generation.

Moises Caicedo became the most expensive player in the history of British soccer when joining Chelsea from Brighton for \$146 million in 2023.

The midfielder will be key to Ecuador's hopes of advancing beyond the group stage for the first time in 20 years and only the second time in its history.

It qualified in second place behind defending champion Argentina, despite starting the campaign with a three-point deduction for a false document being used to get a passport for a player during qualifying for the 2022 World Cup.

Forward Enner Valencia was Ecuador's top scorer in qualifying, with six of his country's 14 goals.

Avdija drops 41 in postseason debut as Trail Blazers clinch playoff berth



Phoenix Suns guard Devin Booker (1) gets fouled by Portland Trail Blazers forward Deni Avdija (8) during the second half of an NBA playoff tournament basketball game in Phoenix. (AP)

Bridges' block at buzzer gives Hornets win over Heat

PHOENIX, April 15, (AP) — Deni Avdija showed he's got a little bit of the clutch gene in his initial foray into postseason basketball.

The first-time All-Star followed a breakout regular season with a fantastic all-around performance in NBA play-in tournament, scoring 41 points to lead the Portland Trail Blazers over the Phoenix Suns for a 114-110 win to clinch the No. 7 seed in the Western Conference playoffs.

The Blazers are back in the playoffs for the first time since 2021 after clawing back from an 11-point deficit in the fourth quarter. They'll face the No. 2 seed San Antonio Spurs in the first round.

"It's the best thing that's ever happened to me in my career so far," Avdija said.

The 25-year-old Avdija had never played in the NBA's postseason until Tuesday - toiling for more than five years on mediocre teams in Washington and Portland - but looked comfortable on the bigger stage. He had the winning three-point play with 16.1 seconds left, scoring on a physical take to the rim while being fouled and then converting the free throw.

Blazers guard Jrue Holiday - a two-time NBA champion with Milwaukee and Boston - was impressed with Avdija's composure. He shot 15 of 22 from the field while adding 12 assists and seven rebounds.

Holiday said the best part of Avdija's performance was it was "kind of an off night."

Avdija and the rest of the young Blazers kept their cool during a physical game that featured



Charlotte Hornets forward Miles Bridges, back, and Miami Heat guard Tyler Herro (14) battle for a loose ball during the first half of an NBA play-in tournament basketball game in Charlotte, N.C. (AP)

plenty of hard fouls. Holiday finished with 21 points and Jerami Grant returned from a calf injury to score 16.

Blazers coach Tiago Splitter agreed that Avdija didn't have his best night despite the big numbers. He said the 6-foot-8 forward's next test will be facing a Spurs team that will throw different looks at him on defense in a playoff series.

LaMelo Ball made a layup with 4.7 seconds left in overtime, Miles Bridges blocked Davion Mitchell's attempt at a winning layup at the buzzer, and the Charlotte Hornets beat Miami 127-126 in a wild start to the NBA's play-in games, eliminating the Heat from the playoffs.

Ball finished with 30 points and 10 assists and Bridges had 28 points and nine rebounds as the Hornets won their first postseason home game in

a decade. Coby White had 19 points, including a turnaround 3 with 10.8 second left in regulation to send the game to OT.

Mitchell scored 28 points and Andrew Wiggins added 27 for the Heat, who lost Bam Adebayo to a lower back injury when Ball tripped him in the second quarter.

Ball's driving layup put the Hornets up by five with 26 seconds left in OT. But he made two critical mistakes after that.

Tyler Herro, who scored 23 points for Miami, hit a twisting, corner 3, and Ball then turned the ball over in the backcourt and fouled Herro on a 3-point shot. Herro made all three free throws to give Miami a 126-125 lead with 8.7 seconds left.

After a timeout, Ball drove the right side of the lane and made a leaning, right-handed layup to give Charlotte the lead. Miami, without any timeouts, pushed the ball up the court and Bridges chased down Mitchell to block his layup attempt, setting off a frenzied celebration.

Ball flexed at midcourt as players mobbed each other.

Despite the loss of Adebayo, the Heat remained in control until late in the third quarter, when White banked in a 3-pointer and then added another 3 at the top of the key as part of a 10-0 Charlotte run.

White, acquired in a midseason trade with Chicago, drained another 3 in the closing seconds of the third quarter to give Charlotte a 89-83 lead.

The Heat then built a 102-95 lead in the fourth quarter behind two 3s from Wiggins.

The Hornets tied it when White caught an in-bounds pass and made a unbalanced 3 from the corner. Herro had a chance to win it in regulation but hit the back iron on a 3-point try.

'Difficult and heartbreaking decision'

Moana Pasifika to disband after season unless new owners found

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, April 15, (AP) — The Moana Pasifika Super Rugby franchise will disband at the end of the season unless new owners can be found.

Moana Pasifika chairman Dr. Kiki Maoate on Wednesday said he'd made the "difficult and heartbreaking decision" that after five seasons in Super Rugby the team can no longer continue.

The club said the decision was based on the financial, operational and strategic realities facing the team which is in last place in the championship standings after nine rounds.

"This is one of the hardest decisions we have ever made. We are immensely proud of our players, staff and the community who have supported our team over the years," Maoate said.

"Across our rugby, pathways and community programs, we have been able to support a growing hub of Pacific talent across multiple sporting codes, both locally and in the Pacific region. This is something we are extremely proud of and will continue to support and advocate for as best we can."

Maoate said the club's commitment now "is to ensure a smooth transition for everyone affected and to celebrate our legacy by finishing the season strong."

Players have been told the owners will meet their financial obligations for the remainder of the 2026 season and support players to find new opportunities.

Moana Pasifika was admitted to Super Rugby along with the Fijian Drua in 2022, joining long-established teams based in

Australia and New Zealand. Over the past four seasons they have finished 12th, 12th, 11th and seventh.

Supporters argue the team has been at a disadvantage from the start, unable to recruit the top Pasifika talent in New Zealand because of the number of players committed to other teams and by being based in Auckland, where the Blues already dominate the local market.

Unless new owners step forward to take up the estimated \$7 million annual operating costs, Super Rugby will become a 10-team competition next season. The Southern Hemisphere tournament currently has 11

teams after the dissolution of the Melbourne Rebels, also for financial reasons.

The head coach of Moana Pasifika this season is former New Zealand All Blacks captain Tana Umaga, who is leaving to become an assistant to new All Blacks head coach Dave Rennie.

Moana Pasifika was intended to offer more opportunities for players of Samoan and Tongan heritage to play professional rugby in the region and hoped eventually to be based in Samoa.

That wasn't possible and the team found it difficult to establish a regular headquarters and fan base.



Umaga

Options for Iraola in England and Spain

MADRID, April 15, (Xinhua) — Bournemouth manager Andoni Iraola's decision to leave the Premier League club at the end of the season could trigger a coaching shake-up in England and Spain.

Iraola departs after three years on the south coast having earned praise for the energetic football Bournemouth produced under his leadership and for maintaining results despite the sale of key players such as Antoine Semenyo, Dominic Solanke and Milos Kerkez.

The 43-year-old has already been linked by British media with several Premier League clubs, including Crystal Palace, Newcastle United, Chelsea, Manchester United, Manchester City and Liverpool.

Newcastle has sought to cool speculation over interest in Iraola, although questions remain over Eddie Howe's future after a disappointing season at St James' Park.

Liverpool could also look to former player Xabi Alonso if Arne Slot is dispensed with after an underwhelming campaign.

Manchester City's situation depends on whether Pep Guardiola decides to remain at

the club. Iraola's past connection with the City Football Group, having ended his playing career at New York City FC, could count in his favor if City needs a successor.

Manchester United's performances between now and the end of the season will shape whether it continues with Michael Carrick or turns to another coach, with Iraola likely to be among the names under consideration.

Chelsea has also been mentioned as a possible destination, with Liam Rosenior reportedly under pressure after only three and a half months in charge. However, the club's recent turnover and the limited control its coaches have over first-team affairs may make the job less attractive.

British media has also suggested Iraola's decision is influenced by a desire to return to Spain. He is known to have strong ties to his native Basque region.

Iraola is a club icon at Athletic Club, where he came through the youth system and made 510 first-team appearances. With Ernesto Valverde set to step down at the end of the season, Iraola would be a natural candidate to replace him.

Crocker quits as US Soccer Federation sporting director 2 months before WC

NEW YORK, April 15, (AP) — Matt Crocker quit as sporting director of the U.S. Soccer Federation on Tuesday, just two months ahead of the World Cup, to take a new job in Saudi Arabia.

The USSF said Crocker was leaving to pursue an unidentified international soccer opportunity, and a person familiar with the decision, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because Crocker's new job was not announced, said he will work in Saudi Arabia. His hiring by Saudis was first reported by Fox.

Crocker's departure was a surprise, given the U.S. is co-host of the World Cup starting June 11 and the contract of men's coach Mauricio Pochettino ends after the tournament. The USSF next month will open its 200-acre, 17-field training

center and office complex in Fayetteville, Georgia, an Atlanta suburb.

Former U.S. defender Alexi Lalas, now Fox's lead soccer analyst, called Crocker's departure "an own goal" for the USSF.

"It's a strange and negative message to be sending out to America and the soccer community 59 days or whatever it is before we play," Lalas said. "Obviously Matt Crocker is not going to kick a soccer ball this summer for the United States or for Saudi Arabia, but he is the architect of what we are going to see this summer, and at a time where there is I think fair criticism and concern relative to this team, it's just an unnecessary message to be sending out. A sporting director is kind of like a general manager. For a general manager to leave right before

the most important moment would be strange in any sport."

USFF President Cindy Parlow Cone did not respond to a request for comment.

"This is one that makes zero sense. Why now?" said former American goalkeeper Kasey Keller, now an ESPN analyst. "Saudi Arabia isn't changing anything that a sport director is going to do for the World Cup. You could bring somebody in and say: OK, we want this long plan now for the next four, six, eight years, but that can wait 'till July. It truly is really, really strange."

Dan Helfrich, hired as the U.S. federation's chief operating officer in November, "will provide executive oversight and support across the federation's sporting operations," the USSF said in a statement. Helfrich will work with assistant sport-

ing director Oguchi Onyewu - a former national team defender - and Tracey Kevins, head of development for the women's youth national team.

Crocker, a 51-year-old Welshman, was hired by the USSF in April 2023 after serving as Southampton's director of football since February 2020.

Crocker oversaw the decisions to rehire Gregg Berhalter as men's coach in June 2023, to fire Berhalter in July 2024 after first-round elimination at the Copa America and to hire Pochettino that September.

He also made the recommendation to hire Emma Hayes as women's national team coach starting in the spring of 2024. Hayes led the women's team to the Olympic gold medal.

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Qadsia team holds training session as part of Gulf Champions League preparations.

Sports

Kuwait Club, Qadsia step up preparations for key clashes

By Hassan Mosa
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

DOHA, April 15: Kuwait Club has begun final preparations in Bishkek ahead of its AFC Challenge League quarterfinal against Oman's Al-Shabab on Sunday.

The team arrived in Kyrgyzstan after completing a training camp in Dammam, where it recorded a 6-1 win over Al-Taraji and a 1-1 draw with Al-Fateh. Three training sessions are scheduled before the decisive encounter as the squad looks to fine-tune its readiness.

Despite missing Sami Al-Sanea, Fahad Hammoud and Ahmad Al-Zanki, Kuwait enters the match in high spirits under Montenegrin coach Nebojsa Jovicic.

In Doha, Qadsia has also intensified preparations for its Gulf Champions League semifinal against Al-Rayyan. Coach Nabil Maaloul and his staff closely monitored Al-Rayyan during the Qatar Stars Cup final to gain tactical insights ahead of the showdown.

Qadsia played one friendly match during the camp, drawing 0-0 with Al-Bidaa, after adjustments to its program caused by earlier travel delays.

The team will be without several key players, including Bader Al-Mutawa, Khaled Ibrahim and Talal Al-Fadhel, along with Abdulaziz Wadi and Mubarak Al-Faneni, due to work commitments. The absences add to the challenge for the technical staff, particularly after a prolonged break from competitive matches.

Kuwait Club team manager Mohammed Al-Hajri praised the support of Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Dr. Tareq Al-Jalah and Public Authority for Sport Director Bashar Abdullah during the Dammam camp.

He highlighted the club's strong continental record - four finals and three titles - and stressed the team's ambition to secure a fourth.

Al-Hajri acknowledged the impact of the recent suspension of sports activity but expressed confidence in the players' determination to overcome the disruption and compete strongly.

He confirmed the squad has now arrived in Kyrgyzstan and will complete three training sessions before facing Al-Shabab on April 19.

Vice President race intensifies

Sheikh Al-Yousef set for unopposed re-election

By Khaled Al-Enezi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 15: Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef is set to retain the presidency of the Kuwait Football Association (KFA) after emerging as the sole candidate following the close of nominations for the 2026-2030 board elections. With no challengers, his re-election will come by acclamation.

In contrast, the battle for the vice presidency is shaping up to be highly competitive. Four candidates have entered the race: Sheikh Nasser Al-Adhbi (Qadsia), Deyaan Al-Deyaana (Kuwait Club), Khaled Al-Qabandi (Al-Arabi), and Ayman Al-Husseini (Kazma). The presence of multiple contenders is expected to split votes among member clubs, raising the possibility of a closely fought outcome.

For board membership, Dalal Al-Mudhaf stands unopposed for the women's seat, securing her place



The Kuwait Football Association headquarters.

automatically. Other candidates include Fahad Al-Hemlan (Al-Fahaheel), Salem Saadoun (Al-Tadamon), Ahmad Ajab (Al-Sahel),

Nasser Al-Adwani (Al-Nasr), Dr. Adel Al-Adwani (Burgan), and Nawaf Anad (Al-Sulaibikhat).

The election committee has be-

gun reviewing applications ahead of formally approving the candidate list for the vote, scheduled for May 20.

Sheikh Al-Yousef had earlier announced a proposed slate that included Mubarak Abdulaziz (vice president for financial and administrative affairs) and Ayman Al-Husseini (vice president for technical affairs), along with Fahad Al-Hemlan, Majed Awad, Dr. Ahmad Ajab, and Dalal Al-Mudhaf as board members. However, changes have since occurred, with some names withdrawing and others entering the race.

Sheikh Al-Yousef has been leading the KFA in an interim capacity since October 2024, following the resignation of the previous board headed by Abdullah Al-Shahin. The current board has also seen departures, including Osama Hussein and Hanan Al-Hardan.

Atlético survives Barça blitz to reach semis

PSG dumps out Liverpool to book Champions League last four berth

MADRID, April 15, (AP): Long after the game against Barcelona ended, Atletico Madrid players were back on the field at the Metropolitano stadium to celebrate.

They chanted along with the fans, and jumped and danced among themselves.

It was a big night for Atletico.

Diego Simeone's team held on after an early charge by Barcelona to make it back to the semifinals of the Champions League for the first time in nearly a decade.

Atletico lost 2-1 but advanced 3-2 on aggregate after having won the first leg 2-0 in Barcelona last week. It will be the team's first last-four appearance in the European competition since 2017.

"To play in a Champions League semifinal, how nice, how nice..." said Simeone, who was visibly moved after the thrilling back-and-forth game.

"It's been 14 years and honestly, seeing the team still competing really moves me," Simeone said. "The players have changed, we've had to start over many times and yet here we are again among the top four in Europe."

Simeone has been in charge of the club since late 2011. Atletico, seeking its first Champions League title, lost in the 2017 semifinals to Real Madrid. It also lost to Madrid in both finals it played against the city rival in the Champions League, in 2014 and 2016.

Barcelona, trying to return to the last four for the second season in a row, scored twice in the first 24 minutes to even the series, with Lamine Yamal and Ferran Torres finding the net.

Atletico struck back still in the first half with a goal by Ademola Lookman.

The Catalan club played a man down from the 79th after defender Eric Garcia was shown a red card for fouling Alexander Sorloth to stop a breakaway.



PSG's Lucas Hernandez, left, and Liverpool's Mohamed Salah battle for the ball during the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Liverpool and Paris Saint-Germain in Liverpool, England. (AP)

The game in Madrid was stopped for several moments near the 70th minute because Atletico defender Matteo Ruggeri sustained a cut on his forehead after being elbowed by Barcelona midfielder Gavi during a dispute for the ball.

Yamal opened the scoring four minutes into the match at Metropolitano stadium, entering the area free

through ball by Dani Olmo and finding the top corner by the far post.

Paris Saint-Germain's grip on the Champions League trophy remains strong.

The defending champion advanced to the semifinals of European club soccer's biggest competition by dumping out six-time winner Liverpool.

A 2-0 win at Anfield sealed a 4-0 aggregate victory and moved PSG a step closer to becoming only the second club to retain the trophy in the modern era after all-time king of Europe Real Madrid.

Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembele scored two second-half goals to kill off Liverpool's fight and book a semifinal clash against either Bayern

Munich or Madrid.

It takes something special to hold onto the Champions League and PSG is a special team. Madrid won a hat trick of titles between 2016-18, but no other team has managed back-to-back wins since the European Cup was rebranded in 1992.

Munich or Madrid.

It takes something special to hold onto the Champions League and PSG is a special team. Madrid won a hat trick of titles between 2016-18, but no other team has managed back-to-back wins since the European Cup was rebranded in 1992.

PSG is out to make history after ending its long wait to conquer Europe for the first time last year. It is the second time in as many seasons that the French giant has knocked out Liverpool, which was in search of another famous Champions League comeback and dominated PSG for periods.

Dembele's first goal ended Liverpool's hopes - a left-footed shot from the edge of the area in the 72nd minute. His second came at the end of a sweeping move in stoppage time.

Dembele had been guilty of wasting chances in the first leg to effectively put the tie to bed and he failed to capitalize on two more first-half opportunities to put the French champion further ahead at Anfield.

But his opening goal was dispatched with precision - nestling in the bottom corner. His second was a clinical finish from close range.

Liverpool had been dominated in Paris last week. But the Merseyside club knows all about comebacks in this competition.

It was 3-0 down to AC Milan in the 2005 final and powered back to win on penalties. More recently, it routed Barcelona 4-0 in the 2019 semifinals to overturn a 3-0 first-leg loss and go on to lift the trophy.

Anfield is famed for its white-hot atmosphere, especially on European nights, and the PSG team bus was greeted by red flares as it approached the ground. But inside, the French fans more than held their own - singing loudly in the away section as the home crowd seemed strangely subdued at times.

Liverpool had its chances despite losing Hugo Ekitike to an early injury. Virgil van Dijk was denied a first-half tap-in when Marquinhos pulled off a last-ditch goal.

AFC moves Asian Cup draw to May 9 in Diriyah

RIYADH, April 15: The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has confirmed that the draw for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia will now take place on May 9 in Riyadh's historic Diriyah district, specifically at the UNESCO-listed At-Turaif site.

The draw had originally been scheduled for April 11 but was postponed to ensure full participation from all member associations, stakeholders, and tournament partners.

In its statement, the AFC thanked the Local Organizing Committee and the Asian football community for their cooperation and understanding, noting that further details on the ceremony schedule will be announced in due course.

The draw will place the 24 qualified teams into six groups of four, setting the pathway for the tournament, which Saudi Arabia will host for the first time from January 7 to February 5, 2027.



The official logo of the 2027 Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia.

So far, 23 teams have secured

their places at the finals, with the final slot to be decided on June 4 when Lebanon face Yemen in a playoff for qualification.

New trial over Maradona's death resumes in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, April 15, (AP): The trial of seven health care professionals accused of negligence in the death of soccer great Diego Maradona resumed, nearly a year after the original proceedings collapsed when a presiding judge stepped down after appearing in a documentary about the case.

The negligence case centers on seven medical professionals accused of failing to provide adequate care in the weeks leading up to Maradona's death five years ago at a home outside Buenos Aires. Maradona, widely regarded as one of the greatest soccer players of all time, died at age 60 from cardiac arrest while recovering from a procedure to treat a blood clot on his brain.

The seven defendants are charged with culpable homicide, a crime similar to involuntary manslaughter, which alleges that the accused were aware that their reckless conduct posed a risk and failed to prevent it. If convicted, they face prison sentences ranging from eight to 25 years.

"Maradona was abandoned to his fate, condemned to death," said Patricio Ferrari, one of the prosecutors. He added that with the evidence, the judges "will see that the defendants were a group of ill-prepared professionals" who "did nothing to prevent Maradona from dying."

Among those on trial are physician Leopoldo Luque,

Maradona's personal doctor during the final years of his life, psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov and psychologist Carlos Diaz.

Defense attorneys argue that the captain of Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning team suffered from multiple serious medical conditions and that no crime was committed.

Maradona had suffered a series of medical problems, some because of an excess of drug and alcohol consumption. He was reportedly near death in 2000 and 2004.

"Beyond the factual, medical and scientific issues, there is also a matter arising from the autopsy. The defense will prove that, unfortunately, Mr. Maradona's death was the result of a progressive deterioration of his health that at one point simply gave out," said Vadim Mischanchuk, Cosachov's attorney.

Hearings will take place twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Slightly less than 100 witnesses are expected to testify, including family members, people close to the former player, medical professionals and police officers. Judges Alberto Gaig, Alberto Ortolani and Pablo Rolón are expected to deliver a verdict in early June.