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Kuwait, Bahrain reaffirm full-spectrum coordination

## Bahrain King, Kuwait FM tackle regional flashpoints

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa discussed on Wednesday with Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah the regional developments and efforts regarding them.

This was announced during King's reception of Sheikh Jarrah on his official visit to the Kingdom, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. During the meeting, the King and Sheikh Jarrah reviewed the deep-rooted relations between the two

sterly countries and their peoples and means of strengthening them in different fields, it added. The Kuwaiti minister conveyed the greetings of His

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo

Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa receives Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah during official talks in Manama, reviewing regional developments and bilateral ties.

## Kuwait maintains fiscal course amid turbulence

By Fawaz Karami

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): Amid escalating regional challenges and geopolitical tensions with varying economic impacts, the State of Kuwait continues its balanced approach to managing public finances, based on a strategic vision that enhances stability and limits effects of external fluctuations.

The decision to keep budget estimates for fiscal year (2026-27) unchanged confirms this approach, which relies on long-term planning and structural reform rather than reacting to short-term fluctuations, while increasing investment spending.

This reflects the state's commitment to advancing development, implementing vital projects, strengthening infrastructure and stimulating sustainable economic growth.

This approach comes despite complex geopolitical conditions in the region and their potential effects on energy markets and infrastructure.

Experts believe the budget was not a tool for immediate response but rather a medium-term planning framework aimed at achieving financial sustainability and strengthening confidence in national economy.

Kuwaiti economists and academics affirmed that maintaining current fiscal year (2026-27) budget estimates fall within the framework of structural reform of the Kuwaiti economy, despite regional conflict and Iranian attacks on infrastructure, especially since budget has seen a significant increase in investment spending on development projects.

In separate statements to KUNA, they agreed this spending was not expansionary in practice but rather corrective, compensating years of slow implementation.

The Ministry of Finance views the budget as a medium-term planning tool, not a platform for daily reactions to geopolitical developments. They also emphasized that the Finance Minister's assurance of deposit guarantees sends a clear message to banks and financial institutions that bank deposits were fully guaranteed under Law No. 30 (2008), making Kuwait one of the few countries in the world offering full guarantees. Professor of Economics at Kuwait University, Dr.

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# Kuwait opens time-bound job shift in select sectors

Worker transfers in SMEs, industrial and agricultural unlocked

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, in his capacity as

Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), issued a decision allowing the transfer of expatriate workers in several previously restricted sectors.

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Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

Kuwait City fades into a haze as dusty winds sweep through on Thursday, wrapping the skyline in a muted veil of sand and low visibility.

## Kuwait in for heat, haze and a hint of rain

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): The acting Director of the Meteorological Department, Dhirar Al-Ali, expects the country to be affected by hot to warm, partly cloudy to cloudy weather during the daytime, and moderate conditions at night during the weekend, with chances of rainfall of varying intensity, occasionally thundery, starting from Saturday evening and continuing until Wednesday.

Al-Ali explained to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Thursday that the expected rainfall over the coming days

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Hajj protocols

## No job, no entry

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Ministry of Health announced the provision of vaccination services and issuance of health certificates for pilgrims through the preventive health departments in 40 primary healthcare centers, in addition to the general hospitals and specialized centers in Sabah Health District.

This is part of preparations for the 1447 AH Hajj season, and as per the recommendations

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'Kuwaiti society bound by unity in challenging times'



Warba Bank's 'Al Sunbulla' draws resume following system enhancements



Kuwait Finance House launches the largest national campaign of its kind

## Traffic ops arrest 46 across Kuwait

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The General Traffic Department at the Interior Ministry continued its traffic campaigns in the governorates, resulting in the arrest of 46 violators, including those who violated the Residency and Labor laws and those wanted by law for committing various crimes.

A security source confirmed that the violators of different nationalities were apprehended in several areas during the recent campaigns. All those arrested were referred to the concerned authorities.

## Trump brokers Israel, Lebanon ten-day 'pause'

CAIRO, April 16, (AP): Israel and Lebanon have agreed to a 10-day ceasefire, President Donald Trump announced Thursday, two days after the countries held their first direct diplomatic talks in decades in Washington.

The truce that Trump said was scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. Eastern follows more than a month of war between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon.

Lebanon has insisted on a ceasefire to stop the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah before engaging in more talks, while vowing to commit to disarming the group.

## Kuwait banks at 100% capacity, reinforcing institutional strength

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Chairman of Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) and Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq announced that local banks have resumed full operational capacity at 100 percent.

In a press statement, Al-Marzouq stressed that achieving this level of performance proves the institutional strength of the banking sector and its ability to effectively handle regional developments, reinforcing its role as the pillar of the financial and economic stability of Kuwait.

He revealed that the Kuwaiti banking sector, operating under the strict supervision of the Central Bank of Kuwait, efficiently dealt with various developments. He pointed out that through the use of advanced infrastructure and the capabilities of highly qualified national personnel, banks ensured the continuous provision of high-quality services and maintained uninterrupted business operations despite the exceptional circumstances.

He confirmed that returning to full operational capacity proves a high degree of readiness to support the development agenda of the country by financing projects and supporting the private sector. He clarified that this approach is intended to boost confidence in the national financial system and push sustainable economic growth in line with the strategic vision of the country.



Al-Marzouq



Al-Saqer

He added that KBA prioritizes institutional coordination with the relevant authorities to consolidate its position as a stable regional financial center capable of adapting to global economic changes.

On the other hand, Vice Chairman of KBA and Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Bank of Kuwait Group Essam Jassim Al-Saqer stated that the restoration of full operations is a manifestation of the strong level of preparedness in the banking sector.

Al-Saqer indicated that the next phase will focus on institutional excellence by accelerating digital transformation and advancing innovation in banking services. He said these initiatives are designed to surpass customer expectations and ensure that Kuwaiti banking practices remain aligned with leading international standards, regardless of surrounding challenges.

He stressed that the sector remains committed to its role as a strategic partner in national development, channeling resources into productive sectors and promoting financial inclusion to preserve economic stability and strengthen Kuwait's global competitiveness.

He confirmed that local banks continue to uphold their national responsibilities, using their financial capabilities and institutional expertise

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## French envoy decorates Kuwait professor with Academic Palms

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Ambassador of the French Republic to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin presented the Order of Academic Palms with the rank of Knight to Professor Dr. Kamel Rouabah during an official ceremony with several academicians in attendance.

Gauvin disclosed that the Order of Academic Palms is one of the prestigious French decorations, established in 1808 at the initiative of Napoleon Bonaparte, to honor those who excelled in education, scientific research and knowledge dissemination.

He praised the outstanding academic and scientific contributions of Rouabah, indicating that his career is a combination of high-level scientific



Dr. Kamel Rouabah presented the Order of Academic Palms with the rank of Knight.

training and international experience. Rouabah studied in Algeria before pursuing postgraduate studies in France, where he earned his masteral and doctorate degrees in Information Systems.

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Photos from the ceremony show French Ambassador Olivier Gauvin with Professor Kamel Rouabah and attendees.



### Prayer Timings

Fajr ..... 03:59    Asr ..... 15:22  
 Sunrise .. 05:21    Maghrib .. 18:15  
 Zohr ..... 11:48    Isha ..... 19:35

## Kuwait PM stresses enhanced efforts to execute major development projects



PM Diwan photo  
 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the 48th ministerial committee meeting to follow up on major development projects.

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chaired Thursday the 48th ministerial committee meeting to follow up on major development projects.

His Highness lauded the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his close follow-up on completing strategic development projects.

He stressed intensifying coordination among committee members and state entities to achieve set plans, meet timelines, and proceed according to approved development priorities.

He called for precautionary measures to address challenges through realistic visions and studied plans while maintaining essential services and continuing project execution.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia Affairs and committee rapporteur Ambassador Sameeh Hayat said the meeting reviewed technical reports and topics to advance economic and investment cooperation with several governments.

He said talks with global companies continued despite exceptional regional conditions, focusing on removing obstacles to investment flows under existing agreements.

He added discussions covered major development projects at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, cooperation in electricity systems and renewable energy, low-carbon waste recycling, housing development, environmental infrastructure for wastewater treatment, environment and afforestation.

It also included follow-up on Kuwait International Airport project, railway links with Saudi Arabia and GCC states and labor cities.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister of Public Works Dr. Nora Al-Mashaan, and Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs Abdullah Al-Meshari.

Also present were Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem, Minister of State for Development and Sustainability Dr. Reem Al-Fulaj, and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulaziz Al-Marzouq.

Attendees further included Minister of Finance Dr. Yaqoub Al-Refaei, Prime Minister adviser Dr. Khaled Al-Fadhel, KDIPA chief Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Premier Diwan Chief Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, and Fatwa and Legislation head Salah Al-Majed.

## 3,795 teachers face sack

MoE to phase out surplus expats in 5 years

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: As part of measures to regulate the educational labor market and strengthen the localization policy, a new initiative has been launched for restructuring some educational specializations to align with local educational outcomes and field needs, and to enhance employment opportunities for national talent in the coming years, reports Al-Rai daily quoting informed sources.

They explained that the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has requested the Ministry of Education to terminate the services of non-Kuwaiti teachers in eight educational specializations that are experiencing a surplus of teachers. These specializations include Islamic Education, Physical Education, French Language, Home Economics, Art Education,

Kindergarten, Psychology, and Social Studies. The termination will be implemented over a five-year period, beginning at the end of the 2026-2027 academic year.

The number of teachers affected by the replacement policy in these specializations is 3,795, comprising 3,757 female teachers and 38 male teachers. Their services will be terminated gradually, according to a five-year timeline, with the aim of achieving a zero surplus of non-Kuwaiti teachers in these specializations by the end of the period.

According to the plan prepared by CSC and submitted to the Ministry of Education, 766 teachers will have their services terminated annually for four consecutive years, with 731 teachers to be terminated during the fifth and final year, thus completing the full implementation of the replacement policy in the eight specializations.

This plan was developed in response to a previous request from the Ministry of Education to halt the nomination of graduates from certain specializations at the College of Education at Kuwait

University and the College of Basic Education at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET). The ministry would instead focus on accepting graduates from previous years and current students enrolled in these colleges, without opening new nominations.

CSC studied the issue based on data extracted from integrated teacher training systems, which revealed a surplus of teachers in some subjects within the aforementioned specializations. A portion of this surplus is filled by non-Kuwaiti teachers, necessitating the gradual application of the replacement policy to them.

The number of non-Kuwaiti teachers included in the replacement program:

- Physical Education: 1,744 (male and female)
- French Language: 204 (female)
- Home Economics: 91 (female)
- Islamic Education: 1,083 (female)
- Art Education: 148 (female)
- Kindergarten: 285 (female)
- Psychology: 24 (female)
- Social Studies: 216 (female)



Photos by Rizk Taufiq

Top and above: Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of the Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah meets Kuwaitis from different spheres of life during his visit to the office of Nahas Al-Enezi, legal advisor and owner of Al-Masougha Law Firm and Legal Consultations.



Kuwait envoy Ziad Al-Anbaei



FM Jose Manuel Albares



KUNA photos  
 Spanish FM Jose Manuel Albares, Arab ambassadors and the Arabian House manager.

## Spain calls for ME peace, no to military escalation

MADRID, April 16, (KUNA): Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs Jose Manuel Albares reaffirmed Spain's commitment to strengthening dialogue with Arab countries and expanding political, economic, and cultural cooperation during an event marking the 20th anniversary of establishing Arabian House (Casa Arabe).

He said Spain considers the Arab world a key partner based on deep historical and cultural ties, describing Spain as a "bridge between Europe and the Arab region" and stressing its intention to further enhance this role amid current geopolitical developments.

On the Middle East situation, Albares reiterated Spain's support for a just and lasting peace through negotiations rather than military escalation, stressing that stability requires a fair solution to the Palestinian issue. He also expressed support for mediation efforts aimed at reducing regional tensions and upholding international law.

The anniversary ceremony brought together officials, diplomats, and Arab ambassadors, including Kuwait's Ambassador Ziad Al-Anbaei, alongside senior international and Spanish officials.

Albares highlighted that the Arabian House as an important diplomatic and cultural platform that promotes dialogue, hosts academic and artistic exchange, and strengthens mutual understanding between Spain and the Arab world.

Al-Anbaei, in a statement for KUNA, praised the institution's role in presenting Arab culture in Spain and emphasized the depth of Kuwaiti-Spanish relations, which span more than six decades and continue to grow across political, economic, and cultural fields.

The event also featured an exhibition showcasing key milestones in Arab-Spanish relations, including historical and contemporary Kuwait-related moments such as high-level meetings and the launch of a direct Kuwait Airways route to Madrid.



Sheikha Adana



Dr. Al-Awadhi

## AUK appoints Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi as President

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Board of Trustees of the American University of Kuwait (AUK), chaired by Sheikha Adana Nasser Al-Sabah, announced the appointment of Dr. Aseel Al-Awadhi as President of the university, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This appointment reflects AUK's commitment to institutional development and academic advancement.

The appointment of Dr. Al-Awadhi underscores AUK's dedication to continuing its path of excellence in education, research, and community service, drawing on her extensive academic and leadership experience.

It is worth highlighting that Dr. Al-Awadhi has dedicated her career to higher education. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to developing the educational process, enhancing the quality of education, and empowering youth through intellectual development and active participation in society.

As President, Dr. Al-Awadhi will continue the university's journey of excellence and strengthen AUK's position as a leading institution of higher education in Kuwait and the region by developing academic programs, supporting faculty development, expanding strategic partnerships, and enhancing educational outcomes and the academic environment.

## SAB approves MEW KD 5.775m water supply deal for KOC plant

By Mohammad Ghanem  
 Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: In confirmation of the article titled "MEWRE returns agreement to KOC for treated water supply at KD 5.775 million" published by the daily on Wednesday, April 1, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy received approval from the State Audit Bureau (SAB) recently to contract a service agreement for operating and supplying seawater from the Subiya power generation and water desalination plant to the Kuwait Oil Company's water treatment plant in Subiya, at a total cost of KD 5.775 million.

It is worth noting that the ministry had returned the agreement to SAB on March 31 for review, auditing, and approval before signing.

In another development, the Planning, Training, and Information Systems Sector at the ministry has included eight contracts in its plan for the 2026/2027 fiscal year,

as part of efforts to develop and modernize work mechanisms within the ministry and its affiliated departments and divisions.

The eight contracts will be tendered through the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT), given that the estimated cost of each contract exceeds KD 75,000, which requires CAPT to issue the contracts in accordance with applicable laws.

In line with established procedures, the ministry will request CAPT to invite qualified companies to submit bids. CAPT will open the bids and forward them to the ministry for review and the preparation of a technical recommendation. Based on this recommendation, the ministry will award the contracts to the best bids that meet the technical requirements.

Among the important contracts is one for the maintenance and upgrading of the Geographic Information System (GIS), which serves as a strategic technical platform for managing assets and infrastructure for electricity, water, and renewable energy networks.

## Appeals dismisses divorce case

## Cryptocurrency gang jailed for 10 years

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Criminal Court sentenced members of a gang involved in cryptocurrency and gold trading fraud to 10 years in prison and fined them KD157,000 -- the amount they stole from the victim.

Case details indicate that the defendants lured a retired citizen through a fake advertisement promising quick profits from investing in cryptocurrencies and gold. This prompted the victim to borrow money, hoping for a substantial return. However, after transferring the funds, he discovered he was swindled.

The defendants took the money without a real invest-

ment. The authorities then arrested them and referred them for trial.

**Divorce case dismissed:** The Court of Appeals overturned the ruling of a lower court that granted a woman divorce from her husband, and then dismissed her case, as she claimed that her husband divorced her over the phone.

According to the case file, the plaintiff stated that she is married to the defendant by virtue of a valid Islamic marriage contract and that he previously divorced her twice and then took her back twice before remarrying her.

## 'Kuwaiti society bound by unity in challenging times'

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of the Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah visited the office of Nahas Al-Enezi, legal advisor and owner of Al-Masougha Law Firm and Legal Consultations, in Hatteen on Wednesday evening, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The diverse group of visitors exemplified the open and harmonious spirit of the Kuwaiti people.

The gathering served as a powerful reminder of the nation's unity and the deep sense of belonging that binds Kuwaiti society during good and challenging times.

Prominent figures, including former ministers, members of parliament, business leaders, politicians, legal experts and intellectuals, participated in the discussions, which included heartfelt reflections on significant Kuwaiti memories and historical occasions that remain vivid in the minds of those present.

The event was distinguished by its fraternal atmosphere, made even more special by the hospitality of the host, Abu Hamoud, who shared his joy in welcoming the guests.

They collectively stressed the importance of continuing such gatherings to strengthen social ties and improve communal communication.

## Disinformation deadlier than slaughter in battle

"DISINFORMATION is a hallmark of early warfare, used by warring powers to undermine the morale of armies and sow confusion among populations, thereby weakening the resolve of combatants," columnist Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"This tactic is particularly advantageous for the weaker side, as it allows them to appear victorious in the eyes of both their own population and that of the enemy, often leading to distrust in official state media.

"This approach is known as psychological warfare, which relies on propaganda, rumors, and psychological manipulation to influence the emotions, morale, and behavior of the enemy, as well as allies and neutral parties. Its objective is to achieve victory without direct military confrontation, often by breaking the enemy's will, spreading panic, and eroding confidence in leadership.

"Therefore, in the recent war between the US and Israel on one side and Iran on the other, numerous rumors were circulated to portray Iran as having the upper hand and being in control. There are many among Arabs who, driven by financial gain, have spread false information, often attributing it to foreign media outlets, knowing that many readers will not verify it or do not speak English or French.



Adel Al-Kharafi

"We have seen social media posts falsely attributed to The Washington Post, Axios, or The Times being widely circulated. At times, some Arab media outlets fall into this trap to the extent that such fabricated news becomes accepted as fact in the public mind, with opinions formed based on it. In ancient wars, deception relied on various tactics to mislead the enemy. During World War II, a famous saying attributed to the Nazi German propaganda minister, Goebbels, was, "Lie... lie... and lie until people believe you."

"The late Egyptian broadcaster Ahmed Saaded became particularly notorious for spreading misinformation during the 1967 war. He used to broadcast false news on the Voice of the Arabs radio station, claiming that the Arabs had achieved major victories while Israeli forces were advancing into Sinai. While he spoke of destroying enemy aircraft, Arab planes were in fact being destroyed on the ground.

"In the recent war, some Arab social media users deliberately spread stories claiming they were taken from Western newspapers. Upon verification, none of these claims proved to be true. Despite this, the disinformation campaign continued, to the point that many Arabs came to believe that Iran had won and that the United States was desperately seeking negotiations. In this context, the position of either the United States or Iran is ultimately irrelevant.

"What concerns us is the Gulf states, which have suffered greatly from misinformation on social media. Despite the significant damage inflicted on civilian infrastructure in these states by Iranian attacks, some people were still misled by Iranian propaganda. Addressing this issue requires specialized teams capable of debunking rumors. Why are there no experts actively working to refute false information on social media? There are many qualified experts in this field who should be given the opportunity to take on this role."

### Also:

"It is sometimes said that harm can be beneficial. One example of this is how the Iranian threat has contributed to greater unity among the Gulf states," columnist Bassam Fahad Thunayan Al-Ghanim wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"In times of major crises, the true nature of nations is revealed, and the strength and sincerity of the bonds between peoples and states are tested.

"The dangerous regional escalation in the Iranian-American confrontation, along with the direct and indirect threats to the Gulf states, is not merely a passing event, but a pivotal moment that has reshaped priorities and strengthened a sense of unity within the Gulf consciousness.

"Unity among the Gulf states has always existed, but today it has become more visible and resilient. Both leadership and people in the Gulf states have come to realize that when danger approaches, it does not distinguish between them, but instead reaches everyone without exception.

"Therefore, the Gulf response has been collective and cohesive rather than individual, reflecting a deep awareness that security is indivisible, destiny is shared, and danger affects all alike. The Gulf unity we see today is an extension of deep historical roots, strengthened by a shared destiny, common identity, customs, traditions, and strong social and cultural bonds, despite occasional differing political views.

"Recent challenges have refined this unity into a more mature and realistic form, transforming it from a sentimental feeling into a practical and strategic approach.

"The recent crisis has proven that when the Gulf states stand together, they not only protect themselves but also help establish a new balance of power in the region.

"Security coordination, economic integration, a unified political discourse, and a strengthened internal front have come to embody the features of a new era under the slogan "The Gulf First... and the Gulf Together."

"One of the most significant gains of

this phase is that it has refuted the predictions of those who expected the Gulf states to suffer disintegration or estrangement, and has confirmed that the Gulf family, despite any differences it may experience, is capable of regrouping when necessary.

"This war revealed that the strength of the Gulf states lies not only in their resources, but also in their unity and their ability to transform threats into opportunities.

"Looking deeper, it can be said that what happened reshaped Gulf consciousness, not only at the official level but also among the people, who expressed their solidarity in a remarkable way, whether through the media, community initiatives, or public discourse. The feeling that we are "one body" was reinforced, not as a slogan, but as a reality reflected in actions.

"The war, which aimed to destabilize the region, instead strengthened cohesion. The threat reinforced mutual trust rather than instilling fear. The challenge, which many thought would weaken us, proved instead to strengthen us. However, despite these positive aspects, the current phase requires sustained awareness of the importance of unity, not merely as a temporary reaction. Unity among the Gulf states must be a lasting path on which the region's future is built.

"The challenges are not over. International changes are accelerating, and there is no place for anyone except those who possess unity, a clear vision, and decisive action. In conclusion, it can be said that the Gulf today stands at a turning point marked by risk, yet full of opportunities that must be seized."



"During periods of geopolitical tension, public discourse tends to focus on military strategy and political alliances," academic researcher and assistant dean at the College of Business Administration Dr. Randa Diab Bahman wrote for Al-Seyassah daily.

"At times, the conversation expands to include humanitarian issues such as displacement and the protection of civilians, but the quieter changes occurring within households before war erupts receive far less attention. In these private spaces, women often carry a burden that remains largely unseen.

"The mere prospect of war alters the emotional climate of families, and uncertainty may begin to affect daily life, shifting the tone of conversations as people try to make sense of rapidly unfolding events. In many families, women naturally assume the role of emotional stabilizers. They are expected to maintain children's routines, reassure anxious family members, absorb prevailing fears within the household, and transform them into a source of comfort.

"Children often turn to them for comfort at the sound of air raid sirens and explosions, while husbands rely on them to maintain calm, especially if the husband is called up for military service. Often, women continue to juggle their professional responsibilities alongside these expectations, in addition to their children's remote learning.

"Beyond this emotional role, there is also a practical one. Preparing the home for any potential disruption requires constant organization and attention. Women often coordinate the daily logistics that allow families to function despite the risks, while also caring for relatives who may be more vulnerable to stress or instability.

"These responsibilities create physical and cognitive strain that is rarely acknowledged. Societal expectations play a significant role in perpetuating this dynamic. Emotional caregiving within the family is often treated as a natural extension of women's roles, rather than as a form of work with psychological consequences. The expectation to remain calm while supporting others places women in a position where their own concerns are often overlooked.

"Another important issue is the lack of support for women themselves. While they are expected to reassure those around them, their own need for emotional support is rarely recognized.

Cultural norms often encourage women to demonstrate resilience even when they experience the same anxieties as other family members. "This imbalance is also reflected in academic discourse. While

conflict studies have extensively documented women's exposure to violence during war, the emotional and cognitive responsibilities women bear in the period leading up to conflict remain under-researched, and the quiet management of family stability is rarely considered a crucial component of societal resilience.

"When the prospect of war dominates public discourse, attention naturally turns to political leaders and military strategy. However, within many homes, women are already managing the emotional impact of this fear. Their role may remain largely invisible, but it is essential to sustaining the resilience of families and communities.

"Recognizing this role would encourage a broader dialogue about support systems and mental health during times of crisis. Societies striving for stability during periods of tension must also acknowledge the emotional effort that sustains family life. May God bless our mothers, and all mothers who maintain peace in their homes, while keeping their fears between themselves and God."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

## Qurain landfill reinstatement on cards

# 'Breakwaters' eyed to avert coastline erosion

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Environment Affairs Committee at the Municipal Council, chaired by Alia Al-Farsi, approved the request of the Construction Department at the Kuwait Municipality to study the breakwaters in Messilah (Blocks Six and Seven) during its meeting on Monday.

The committee made this decision due to the importance of the breakwaters in protecting the coastline from erosion, mitigating wave impact on residential areas, and supporting environmental stability efforts in coastal regions.

In another development, the committee referred the proposal of a consulting firm to rehabilitate the Qurain landfill to the



Alia Al-Farsi

executive branch for further study. This is a step towards addressing the environmental impact of old landfills and repurposing waste sites in a sustainable manner to reduce the health and environmental risks.

On the coordination meeting to discuss recommendations stated in the minutes of the first workshop of the committee on the specifications and uses of recycled materials, the committee sug-

gested holding preliminary coordination meetings to implement these recommendations and translate them into actionable procedures in coordination with the relevant authorities.

The recommendations include forming a national specifications committee, led by the Municipality with 12 governmental and academic bodies as members, to prepare unified technical specifications for recycled materials, issue an updated national guidance manual, develop supportive legislative and regulatory frameworks, establish a monitoring system to ensure material quality, and support scientific and technical research in recycling.

## Custody case decided

# Mom looks after, while dad pays kids expense

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Family Court ruled in favor of a mother, granting her custody of her children, while instructing the father to fulfill his financial obligations to her and the children.

The court obligated the father to pay spousal support of KD70 monthly, child support (food and clothing) of KD150 per month, KD100 housemaid salary per month and KD70 monthly rental for the residential unit where the children reside or a total of KD390 per month. This takes effect from the date the lawsuit was filed.

In addition, the court ordered the father to pay a lump sum of KD750 for the expenses of hiring a housemaid, in addition to KD1,000 for furnishing the residence of the children.

The ruling in the case filed by Attorney Israa Al-Haddad also ordered the father to shoulder the court costs and KD50 legal fees, while the other claims were dismissed.

## News in Brief

# Nazaha, SAB in joint effort to battle graft

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Chairperson of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Dr. Rana Al-Fares conducted a visit to the State Audit Bureau (SAB) on Thursday, accompanied by Vice Chairperson Dr. Majed Al-Daihani and members of the Board of Directors, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Dr. Al-Fares and the accompanying delegation were received by SAB Chairman Essam Al-Roumi, SAB Undersecretary Yousef Al-Mazroui, and assistant undersecretaries. In an official statement, Nazaha explained that they discussed ways to enhance cooperation and joint coordination between the two sides in various areas related to oversight and anti-corruption efforts, contributing to achieving the highest levels of integrity and transparency and reinforcing effective partnership among oversight institutions. The meeting was held within the framework of strengthening institutional partnership and integrating oversight roles.

**Workplace discipline:** As part of efforts to strengthen workplace discipline in government agencies, the Director General of Kuwait Municipality, Eng. Manal Al-Asfour, conducted an inspection tour of several municipality departments to ensure employees' compliance with working hours and relevant regulations, reports Al-Anba daily.

In an official statement, the municipality explained that the tour focused on monitoring workflow on the ground and ensuring the application of discipline standards, in addition to identifying any observations or violations that could affect institutional performance quality. The inspection tour is part of the municipality's plan to develop the work environment and improve the efficiency of the administrative system, as workplace discipline is considered a fundamental pillar in enhancing the quality of services provided to citizens and residents.

The tour is part of a comprehensive plan implemented by Kuwait Municipality to develop its administrative system and increase productivity by strengthening internal oversight and applying performance standards across government operations. Such inspections reflect a firm commitment to enhancing internal monitoring and establishing a culture of compliance, which contributes to improved performance and the achievement of development goals.

**Raids to continue:** Kuwait Municipality confirmed the continuation of inspection campaigns by engineers and supervisors in all six governorates to monitor construction activities, reports Al-Rai daily.

These campaigns aim to enforce building regulations and ensure compliance with their requirements and standards for all uses, including private residential, industrial, commercial, agricultural, investment, and craft properties. Field work by inspection teams continues throughout the month, utilizing the efforts of national staff.

The municipality explained that the fourth campaign, conducted by the Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department in Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate, targeted building violations in West Abu Futaira Industrial on Wednesday. All necessary regulatory measures were taken against violators to ensure adherence to the relevant regulations and systems.

The campaign, carried out by the specialized inspection team, resulted in the issuance of two violations and six warnings for building code violations in the West Abu Futaira Industrial Area.

The campaign will be followed by several field visits to all governorates according to a scheduled plan that includes the dates of the field campaigns. This schedule was prepared by the Public Relations Department in coordination with the relevant departments to implement these campaigns over the coming weeks.

# Arab worker perishes in fall at Mutla'a site

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: A 29-year-old Arab worker died after falling from a height at the site of the company where he worked in Al-Mutla'a, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources, the Operations Room of the Ministry of Interior received a report at 9:00 am on Tuesday that an expatriate worker had been brought to the local clinic by two colleagues but he was already deceased. His colleagues stated that he had fallen from a water tank project site and that they had administered first aid.

A case of falling from a height resulting in death was registered at the Al-Mutla'a Police Station.

# Defense of oil sector priority

## Strategic action plan eyed

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): The task force overseeing the establishment of the National Crisis Management Center (AMAN) discussed on Tuesday with Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil, Sheikh Dr. Nimr Fahad Al-Malek A l - S a b a h , mechanisms for integrating the center with entities within the oil sector.

In a statement, the AMAN task force said the meeting reviewed ways to enhance cooperation and integration among oil sector entities, as well as the project's framework and objectives, in-



Al-Sabah

cluding the creation of a national center operating in line with international best practices in crisis and emergency management.

The discussions also focused on leveraging modern technologies, improving decision-making mechanisms, and enabling real-time, accurate information exchange.

The statement stressed the pivotal role of the oil sector in the crisis management system, given its sensitivity and direct impact on the national economy.

Both sides agreed to continue coordination and to form specialized teams to study technical and operational aspects, and to develop a clear action plan to support the establishment of the center and achieve its strategic goals.

The meeting is part of a series of engagements aimed at building an integrated national crisis management system focused on enhancing response efficiency, strengthening inter-agency coordination, and ensuring business continuity under various conditions.

## Tenants' trust exploited

# 'Haris' probed for embezzlement

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Hawally detectives have referred an expatriate building caretaker to the Public Prosecution over charges of fraud and embezzlement, after allegedly exploiting his position and tenants' trust to collect rent payments, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to the complaint, two Egyptian expatriates reported being defrauded after being asked to repay overdue rent, despite having already handed their monthly payments to their building caretaker without receiving official receipts. They said they trusted him due to his age and long service at the building, where

they had lived for nearly 20 years. One tenant also stated that another resident had witnessed him receiving rent on multiple occasions during the disputed period.

A case was registered and referred to the Criminal Security Sector, and detectives launched an investigation. When confronted, the accused reportedly confessed to receiving the money without passing it on to the landlord.

Investigations found that a total of KD 3,150 had been embezzled from the complainants. The case was referred to the competent authorities for legal proceedings.

# MoHE reviews GCC research center and funding proposal

Proposal aims to boost scientific collaboration

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

**KUWAIT CITY, April 16:** The Ministry of Higher Education held a coordination meeting chaired by Undersecretary Dr. Bader Al-Basiri, and attended by Assistant Undersecretary for Scholarships, Equivalencies, and Cultural Relations Dr. Faisal Al-Adwani.

Representatives from several educational and research institutions participated in the meeting to discuss the memorandum submitted by the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) regarding the feasibility study for establishing a research center and a research finance fund affiliated with the GCC.

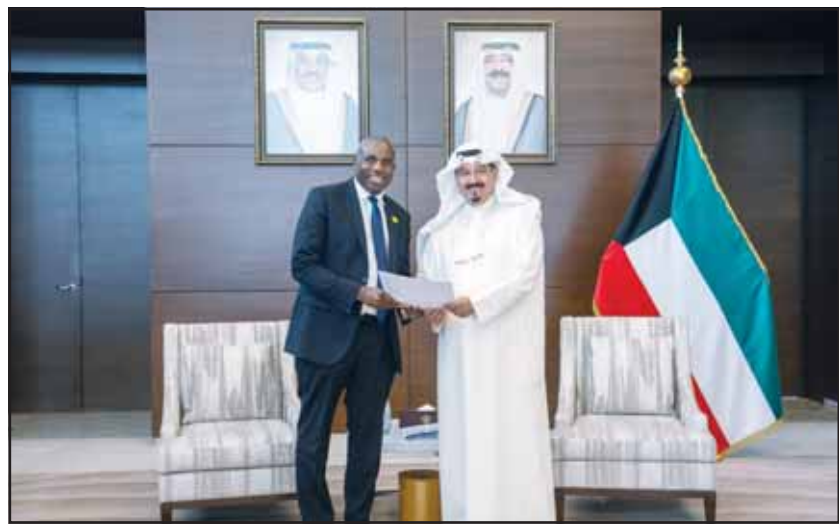
The attendees discussed the draft proposal approved by the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council, which aims to enhance research cooperation among GCC countries and provide sustainable funding mechanisms to support scientific and innovative projects across the Gulf region.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Director General for Scientific Programs at the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Dr. Fahad Al-Fadhli, the acting Executive Director of the Science and Technology Sector at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Dr. Abdulmajid Hussein, and Director of the Research and Consulting Department at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr. Saleh Al-Hajri.



MoHE photo  
A scene from the coordination meeting at the Ministry of Higher Education, attended by Undersecretary Dr. Bader Al-Basiri and Assistant Undersecretary for Scholarships, Equivalencies and Cultural Relations Dr. Faisal Al-Adwani.

Also participating in the meeting were the Assistant to the Vice President for Research at Kuwait University Dr. Abdullah Al-Sultan, Dr. Makhout Al-Dousari, and Cultural Relations Supervisor at the Ministry of Higher Education Ali Al-Asassani.



PM Diwan photo  
His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, during his reception of the Lord Chancellor, Minister of Justice and Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

## Kuwait PM receives UK Deputy PM

**KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA):** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on Thursday Lord Chancellor, Secretary of State for Justice and Deputy Prime Minister of the UK David Lammy.

Lammy, according to a government statement, handed a letter from Prime Minister Keir Starmer to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

During the meeting, mutual interests

were discussed, as well as latest regional and international developments.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, KDIPA chief Sheikh Dr. Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Premier Diwan Chief Sheikh Khaled Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Ambassador Sadeq Maarafi and UK Ambassador to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed.

## Kuwait FM receives UK Deputy PM

**KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA):** Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received on Thursday Lord Chancellor, Secretary of State for Justice and Deputy Prime Minister of the UK David Lammy.

Historic bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and means to develop them on all levels, in addition to issues of common interest and latest regional developments and diplomatic efforts exerted were discussed during the meeting, with both sides reaffirming support to all endeavors aiming at supporting pillars of safety and security on regional and global scales.

Both sides also emphasized necessity to ensure freedom of maritime navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and all vital water corridors, read a ministry statement.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo  
Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives Lord Chancellor, Minister of Justice and Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, David Lammy.

## Faster response, stronger safeguards

# KBA boosts Virtual Central Room to combat e-fraud

**KUWAIT CITY, April 16:** The Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) continues to activate and develop the role of the Virtual Central Room in dealing with electronic fraud as per the directive of the Central Bank of Kuwait and as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the anti-financial fraud system, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement, Chairman of the Fraud Prevention Committee at KBA Abdulwahab Al-Duaij revealed that the Virtual Central Room is an advanced, sovereign operational system for managing and combating

electronic financial fraud crimes, in coordination with the security and judicial authorities, particularly the Ministry of Interior and Public Prosecution.

Al-Duaij explained that the room operates through an immediate and



Al-Duaij

direct coordination mechanism between banks and the relevant authorities, enabling instant action to stop fraudulent operations, track funds, and take legal action promptly. He attributed this coordination to the high level of national preparedness in protecting customer funds and maintaining the stability of the financial system.

He pointed out that the room is not just an operational tool, as it is an advanced platform for monitoring and addressing emerging fraud patterns. He asserted this is crucial due to the

increase in fraudulent methods targeting customers through bogus calls, fake data update links, misleading advertisements and false claims of prizes.

He emphasized that quick decision-making is no longer an option, but a vital security measure. He stated that the current system has so far reduced response times and raised the efficiency of handling reports to an unprecedented degree, thus, minimizing losses and safeguarding customer rights within the legal frameworks.

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Ministry of Social Affairs photo  
A scene from the meeting between Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah, Director General of the Authority Dr. Dalal Al-Othman, and a number of leaders.

## Al-Huwailah calls for stricter oversight

# MoSA reviews disability education funding and spending mechanisms

**KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA):** Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah reviewed on Thursday financial aspects, cost mechanisms and oversight of educational allocations files for persons with disabilities.

The Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) said in a statement that the discussion came during a meeting with the Director General Dalal Al-Othman and senior officials on improving disbursement systems and simplifying procedures.

Al-Huwailah stressed the importance of strengthening financial oversight and moni-

toring spending to ensure optimal allocation of resources serving students with disabilities.

She emphasized following regulations and using modern auditing to ensure transparent, efficient, and timely public fund management.

She also highlighted the need for integration across financial, administrative, technical and educational aspects.

The meeting reviewed plans to develop educational services, including supporting specialized programs, improving service quality and enhancing institutional performance to meet beneficiaries' needs.

## MoCI launches first phase of 'QAYD' project for electronic financial filing

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

**KUWAIT CITY, April 16:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in cooperation with the Kuwait Association of Accountants and Auditors, announced the launch of the first phase - the "Enabling Phase" - of the "QAYD" project for the electronic filing of financial statements using the XBRL system.

The ministry explained that this phase targets all legal entities, offering voluntary electronic filing during 2026 through the project's dedicated portal - Qayd.moci.gov.kw - while continuing to submit financial statements using the current method, which will remain mandatory during the same period. The electronic filing system will become mandatory for all companies starting in January 2027.

# MoSA approves promotion lists

**KUWAIT CITY, April 16:** The Ministry of Social Affairs' Personnel Affairs Committee, chaired by Undersecretary Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi and with assistant undersecretaries as members, approved the promotion lists by selection for eligible employees in its various organizational units, in accordance with the requirements and regulations of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), reports Al-Jarida daily.

This follows the completion of the process of identifying eligible employees and ensuring the integrity of the procedures followed, particularly as each department within the ministry has a specific quota of promotions based on its staffing levels.

The ministry announced that promotions will be disbursed with the May salaries, retroactive to this month.

According to sources at the Ministry of Social Affairs, following the completion of annual employee evaluations and the disbursement of outstanding performance bonuses to eligible employees, the ministry will be among the first government ministries to implement promotions by selection.

The sources confirmed that the financial entitlements for those promoted will be disbursed with their May salaries, retroactive to this month, after their data is updated on the Civil Service Integrated Information System.

Continued from Page 1

**Kuwait opens**

This is considered a strategic move aimed at improving the labor market and to better serve the public.

Article One of the decision stipulates that as an exception to Ministerial Resolution No. 9/2016 and PAM Resolution No. 842/2015, expatriate workers are now allowed to transfer from certain sectors to another, provided they obtain the consent of the original employer. These include small and medium enterprises (SMEs), industrial, agricultural, livestock and fishing sectors, leading to a more dynamic personnel transition in vital economic fields.

Article Two states that the decision shall be effective from May 1 to June 30, 2026.

It mandates the relevant authorities to ensure the implementation of the decision upon its publication in the official gazette, 'Kuwait Al-Yaum', in order contribute to the realization of the labor market governance vision of the country.

**Bahrain King,**

Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to King Hamad, expressing their wishes for his continued good health and further progress and prosperity for the people of Bahrain, it stated.

Earlier, Sheikh Jarrah also met with Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Abdullah Al-Zayani, with talks focusing on the repercussions of recent Iranian attacks and regional developments.

During the meeting, both sides discussed the consequences of the brutal Iranian attacks and the latest regional developments as well as diplomatic efforts exerted for them, Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

They stressed the importance of these efforts culminating in a comprehensive and lasting settlement that would promote security and stability in the region, it added.

The two ministers reviewed the deep-rooted historical relations between the two sisterly countries and their peoples.

Both sides also stressed the significance of continuing efforts to strengthen frameworks of cooperation and coordination across various fields and at all levels, in implementation of the visions and aspirations of the wise leaderships of the two countries, it stated.

In addition, they affirmed their commitment to continued Kuwaiti-

Bahraini coordination across all levels, in light of the sensitive regional circumstances, out of their shared destiny and common history, to further strengthen efforts to confront current challenges.

**French envoy**

Gauvin commended Rouibah's research contributions, which resulted in more than 80 scientific papers published in prestigious international journals, in addition to his participation in European research projects and his contributions to business intelligence, digital technologies and human-machine interaction.

He also praised Rouibah's more than two decades of service at Kuwait University and its students, his role in developing generations of talent, his contribution to the advancement of scientific research in information systems, and his role in building cooperation bridges between academic institutions in Kuwait and France.

He highlighted the role of Rouibah in supporting student exchange programs between the two countries and facilitating the access of Kuwaiti students to scholarships in France despite the challenges, which opened new academic horizons for them.

He affirmed that this recognition is in line with the commitment of France to strengthen academic and scientific cooperation with Kuwait, particularly in digital transformation and innovation, while underscoring the importance of academic expertise in supporting development initiatives.

**Kuwait banks**

to better serve the community and contribute to the country's path toward prosperity under its wise leadership.

Moreover, KBA praised the dedication of all employees in the sector. The association expressed pride in their strong sense of national duty and professionalism, which played a vital role in maintaining service quality and the stability of the financial environment during this period. It reiterated that the performance of this national workforce remains the foundation of the sector's success, praying that Allah continues to Kuwait and bestow upon it the blessings of security and safety.

**Kuwait in for**

will be intermittent, ranging from light to moderate, and may be thundery in some areas, with active winds that could raise dust, particularly in open areas.

Friday will be hot during the day

with scattered clouds, while at night the weather will be moderate with clouds gradually increasing.

Saturday's weather will be hot to warm and cloudy with active winds and a chance of dust, while at night it will be moderate and cloudy with a chance of scattered rain, which may occasionally be thundery.

**No job,**

of the health authorities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to guarantee the safety of pilgrims and to curb the spread of diseases during Hajj rituals.

The ministry confirmed the availability of two types of vaccinations -- essential vaccinations that pilgrims must obtain before traveling, most notably the meningitis vaccine, which is mandatory for all pilgrims, and the COVID-19 vaccine for those most vulnerable to complications, such as pregnant women, those more than 65 years old, those with chronic diseases like heart, respiratory, kidney and nervous system issues, those with hereditary blood disorders such as thalassemia and sickle cell anemia, and those with weak immune system.

It indicated that the proof of protection against COVID-19 is sufficient provided they received an updated dose for the 2025/2026 season, completed the required doses from previous years or recovered from a laboratory-confirmed infection in 2025.

Regarding the second type of vaccination, it cited several recommended vaccinations to guarantee prevention like the seasonal influenza vaccine and pneumococcal vaccine, given their role in reducing the likelihood of health complications during the Hajj season, which witnesses high population density.

It stressed the importance of vaccinating the close contacts of pilgrims, particularly those did not previously received the meningitis vaccine or whose last dose was more than five years ago, to prevent the spread of infection.

It clarified that all vaccines provided at health centers are approved by the health authorities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, indicating the pilgrims must be vaccinated at least 10 days before travel to ensure vaccine effectiveness and a complete immune response.

It also stressed the importance of adhering to the health guidelines and reiterated that vaccinations are a prerequisite for obtaining health certificates to perform Hajj.

It also pointed out that these measures are part of a comprehensive system aimed at protecting the health of pilgrims and ensuring a safe and healthy Hajj season.

**Kuwait maintains**

Riyadh Al-Faras, said the sharp increase in investment spending in the current fiscal budget was notable and has positive effects, particularly as it rose by 36.8 percent compared to the previous fiscal year.

He said capital expenditure within total government spending increased from 9.1 percent to 11.8 percent during the same period. Construction and major maintenance projects constitute the largest portion of capital spending, amounting to about two billion Kuwaiti dinars (approximately USD 6.6 billion), covering government buildings, civil and social service facilities, industrial buildings and infrastructure assets such as roads, ports, sewage systems and electricity networks.

This is followed by spending on the acquisition of non-financial assets, valued at KD 625 million (about USD two billion), including land, buildings, machinery and transport equipment.

He noted that rising capital expenditure was a positive indicator of continued budgetary corrective transformation by directing financial resources toward increasing capital formation in the economy. Unlike current spending, it generates economic returns in the form of financial cash flows as well as social returns such as improvements in health care and education.

Asked why the Ministry of Finance did not change budget estimates for expenditures, revenues or oil prices despite recent regional developments, Al-Faras attributed this decision to two reasons: first, the war began in the final month of the previous fiscal year and its effects will be reflected there, second there is optimism the war will end soon.

He added that public spending will undoubtedly rise, particularly in military and security sectors, in addition to increased subsidies, including fuel and electricity costs due to the sharp rise in oil prices.

On the importance of the Finance Minister Dr. Yaqoub Al-Refai's confirmation of deposit guarantees, Al-Faras said it reassured banks, financial institutions and the public that deposits were protected under Law No. 30 (2008).

He noted Kuwait was among few countries offering full deposit guarantees without a ceiling, unlike the US, for example, where insured deposits are capped at USD 250,000.

He stressed there was no need to move deposits abroad, convert them into other currencies, or withdraw them in cash.

He also pointed out that this announcement coincides with stimulus measures taken by the Central Bank of Kuwait to enhance liquidity in local banks and ensure continued financing of economic activities to avoid any decline in credit levels, which are a key driver of the economy.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sadeq Al-Bassam, Head of the Accounting Department at Kuwait University's College of Business Administration, said the current capital expenditure plan, estimated at KD three billion (USD 10 billion), was directed toward major projects despite projected fiscal deficit, which requires continued structural reforms.

He explained total expenditures were estimated at KD 26.1 billion (about USD 86 billion), a 6.2 percent increase over the previous budget.

Salaries and subsidies account for 76 percent of spending, totaling KD 19.8 billion (USD 65 billion). He noted that capital spending rose by about one-third due to major projects such as Kuwait International Airport, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port and the Kabd Port.

He stressed the importance of confirming deposit guarantees, noting that capital needed safe environment, and such assurances strengthen confidence in Kuwaiti banks and the resilience of the country's financial buffers, as well as government support for the banking sector.

He added that earlier forecasts showed strong economic recovery this year, with growth between 3.8 and 3.9 percent, driven by increased oil production after easing OPEC+ cuts and growth in non-oil sectors.

However, these positive expectations turned negative due to war and repeated Iranian attacks on Kuwaiti oil, gas and petrochemical infrastructure, as well as closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which halted crude and petroleum products exports.

He noted that non-oil sectors were expected to grow between 2.6-3 percent, supported by project activity and economic diversification efforts, especially since the current budget includes 117 new projects and 551 ongoing ones with total costs of about KD three billion.

Al-Bassam expects inflation to rise to around three percent this year, noting that key structural reforms include taxation, with multinational corporate tax implemented since 2025 - expected to boost non-oil revenues in 2026.

He emphasized that implementing reforms and accelerating structural and legislative changes remain crucial for long-term diversification, especially since the current downside scenario is "a prolonged war."

For his part, Secretary-General of the Kuwaiti Economic Society, Mohammad Al-Jouan, said the increase in investment spending reflects a strategic shift in public finance management toward stimulating growth rather than merely managing deficits. It supports three balanced directions: accelerating delayed projects, addressing infrastructure gaps and preparing the economy for potential recession.

He described the spending as "corrective rather than expansionary," noting that the real modernization lies not in the size of spending but in its efficiency, with productivity for every dinar invested being the decisive factor.

Regarding unchanged budget estimates despite geopolitical conditions, he said this reflects a conservative approach focused on financial stability and avoiding short-term volatility. "The Ministry treats the budget as a medium-term planning tool, not a reactive platform. Fixing oil price assumptions also enhances fiscal credibility and avoids sending mixed signals to markets," he added.

He said maintaining estimates prioritizes continuity and discipline over immediate reaction, a coherent approach if supported by strong financial reserves.

He added that the minister's confirmation of deposit guarantees was a clear sovereign message to strengthen confidence in the banking system, especially in a volatile regional environment, reducing the risks on bank and enhancing financial stability, which directly affects financing costs and liquidity.

He stressed that this step was not merely precautionary but a tool to protect confidence, the most important intangible asset in any banking system.

Earlier this month, Minister Al-Refai affirmed the stability of the country's financial and banking conditions, noting that money transfers inside and outside Kuwait were proceeding normally without obstacles, liquidity was available and there were no delays in salaries.

In an interview with Kuwait TV, he said the Central Bank guarantees bank deposits for both citizens and residents, covering all types of accounts, describing this guarantee as a reassuring message that enhances confidence and stability in the banking sector.

He added that the Central Bank has taken measures to enhance banks' flexibility in managing liquidity by adjusting certain capital adequacy requirements, giving the banking sector greater capacity to deal with financial changes.



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## INTERNATIONAL



A team of assorted municipality workers clear debris from the Boardman River Weir that was blocking the flow of the flooded Boardman/Ottaway River on April 15 in downtown Traverse City, Mich. (AP)

## Floodwaters inundate Wisconsin streets

Floodwaters from record rainfall in Wisconsin inundated streets Wednesday, trapping drivers and forcing officials to close sections of a highway, as other Midwestern states worked to rebuild after storms.

Cars were stranded in high floodwater on a highway in Milwaukee and video shared by the Milwaukee Jour-

nal Sentinel showed a woman and child being rescued from a vehicle.

The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office posted online to urge people not to drive in southeast Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers declared a state of emergency after overnight storms damaged two ice arenas, flooded streets and uprooted trees. (AP)

strong winds, hail and heavy rain. At least three tornadoes were confirmed and more severe weather was expected.

Meanwhile, communities in Michigan were recovering after powerful overnight storms damaged two ice arenas, flooded streets and uprooted trees. (AP)



The USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier leaves Naval Station Norfolk on June 23, 2025, in Norfolk, Va. (AP)

## US aircraft carrier breaks record for longest deployment

The world's largest aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, broke the US record Wednesday for the longest post-Vietnam War deployment, a nearly 10-month span that saw it take part in both the military raid in Venezuela and the Iran war.

The ship's 295th day at sea sur-

passed the previous longest deployment by an aircraft carrier in the past 50 years, when the USS Abraham Lincoln was sent out for 294 days in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to data compiled by US Naval Institute News, a news outlet run by the US Naval Institute, a nonprofit organi-

zation.

It raises questions about the impact on service members away from home for long periods as well as increasing strain on the ship and its equipment, with the carrier already enduring a fire that forced it to undergo lengthy repairs. (AP)

House Dems will try anti-corruption message to gain traction against Trump

## Senate GOP rejects effort to halt Iran war, but some eye future war powers votes

WASHINGTON, April 16, (AP): The Republican-led Senate on Wednesday rejected the latest Democratic attempt to halt President Donald Trump's war in Iran, turning aside a resolution that would require the U.S. to withdraw forces from the conflict until Congress authorizes further action.

The 47-52 vote was the fourth time this year that the Senate has voted to cede its war powers to the president in a conflict that Democrats say is illegal and unjustified. Republicans say they will keep faith in Trump's wartime leadership, for now, citing Iran's nuclear capabilities, the potential for ongoing talks and the high stakes of withdrawal.

Still, GOP lawmakers are anxious for the conflict to end, and some are eyeing future votes that could become an important test for the president if the war drags on. And the outcome of a war powers vote in the House, expected this week, is uncertain.

Under the War Powers Act of 1973, Congress must declare war or authorize use of force within 60 days of its start - a deadline that will arrive at the

end of this month. The law provides for a potential 30-day extension of that deadline, but lawmakers have made clear that they want the administration to soon lay out a plan for the end of the conflict.

After the 60-day or 90-day deadline, "it's time to fish or cut bait," said Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina. "I think that the administration would be wise to put together what would look like a well-founded authorization of military force and a funding strategy."

While voting against the Democratic effort to stop the war, Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, has been talking to her GOP colleagues about a resolution that would authorize the conflict beyond the 60-day deadline.

She said last month that the Democratic measures would hurt the troops by prompting an abrupt withdrawal. But she said that Congress should eventually draft an authorization of force and vote on it "so the American people know the limits and objectives of this military operation."

"There is no question that the presi-



US Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, listens during a news conference after a policy luncheon on Capitol Hill on April 14, in Washington. (AP)

dent should have sought authorization from Congress before striking Iran on this scale, likewise bringing in our allies ahead of time as they now are equally in danger," she said at the be-

ginning of March.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said that with gas prices climbing, "the American people literally cannot afford for Republicans to forgo

another opportunity to work with Democrats to end Trump's disastrous war."

Utah Sen. John Curtis said Wednesday that he had looked at Murkowski's draft and provided feedback, but would not share details. "I think we are all watching" the war and its timeline, Curtis said, adding that he hopes it ends before the deadline.

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., also said he would like to see the war end in the coming weeks. If not, he said, "at the end of 60 days, I think we need to vote on a military authorization."

Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine said that the president's power "is not unlimited as commander in chief."

It remains unclear if Republican leaders would go along with a vote to authorize the war. Senate Majority Leader John Thune said this week that "at this point most of us I think feel pretty good about what the military has achieved" in Iran.

Also:

WASHINGTON: Days after Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was

ousted by an opposition campaign with an anti-corruption message, Democrats want to try the same playbook against President Donald Trump before the midterm elections.

House Democrats launched Wednesday what they call a task force to overhaul ethics rules and protect access to the ballot. They also want to highlight the Trump family's business dealings and the president's transformation of the federal government.

The task force, which will include a mix of progressive and moderate members, could become a central part of Democrats' messaging as they try to claw back control of Congress from Republicans.

Rep. Joe Morelle, top Democrat on the House Administration Committee and a longtime ally of House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, will spearhead the effort. He said Jeffries "fears that we're losing Americans' faith and trust in government and institutions" because so often "decisions are made based on the personal interests of the members or the president and with little regard for Americans."



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Service, firefighters put out a fire following a Russian attack in Dnipro, Ukraine on April 16. (AP)

Zelenskyy receives international prize

## Russia's massive strikes kill 16 in Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine, April 16, (AP): Russia hammered civilian areas of Ukraine with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles in an attack that stretched for hours from daytime into the night, killing at least 16 people and injuring more than 80 others as terrified residents covered in their homes, officials said Thursday.

Russia launched nearly 700 drones and dozens of ballistic and cruise missiles, primarily targeting civilians, in its biggest aerial barrage in almost two weeks, authorities said.

Tetiana Sokol, a 54-year-old resident of Kyiv, said two missiles hit near her home and she took cover with her dog in the hallway as flashes lit up the night and windows shattered from the blast wave.

"On the third attack everything broke, everything flew, we were shocked, we didn't know where to run. I grabbed whatever came to hand and ran away with the dog," she told The Associated Press. "I still can't find the cats in the house, they climbed out somewhere, I don't even know. No windows, nothing, the dog is still walking around in stress."

Moscow's forces have hit civilian areas almost daily since its all-out invasion of its neighbor more than four years ago, with the regular assaults occasionally punctuated by massive



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, (center), receives the Freedom Medal of the International Four Freedoms Award from Elizabeth Roosevelt Johnston, (left), and Rob Jetten, (right), Prime Minister of the Netherlands during a ceremony in Middelburg, Netherlands on April 16. (AP)

attacks. More than 15,000 Ukrainian civilians have died in the strikes, the United Nations says.

Also:

MIDDELBURG, Netherlands: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was awarded the prestigious International Four Freedoms Award at a ceremony Thursday for his and his nation's courage and resilience in resisting the

full-scale invasion launched more than four years ago by Russia.

The honor was bestowed by the Roosevelt Foundation that was created in 1982 to present awards honoring the Four Freedoms outlined by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his 1941 State of the Union address - freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

## Trump slams Italian Premier Meloni over lack of support for Iran war

MILAN, April 16, (AP): Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni was supposed to be Europe's bridge to US President Donald Trump. It may be burning.

After chastising Pope Leo XIV, Trump turned his ire on Meloni, long one of his closest European allies, for calling his papal broadside "unacceptable" and not backing the US-Israel war on Iran.

"I thought she had courage," Trump said in an interview with leading Italian daily Corriere della Sera. "I was wrong."

Meloni has not directly responded to Trump's attacks. But they may be to her advantage as she recovers from a decisive referendum defeat last month and as she seeks to dull the impact of the deeply unpopular Iran war, including higher energy prices.

"I actually think this is a godsend for her," said Nathalie Tocci, a professor at Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe and the director of the International Affairs Institute. "Trump has become completely toxic across Europe, across much of the world, including Italy."

Trump doubled down on Wednesday, saying their bond had frayed. "She's been negative," Trump told Fox News. "Anybody that turned us down to helping with this Iran situation, we do not have the same relationship."

The only European Union leader invited to Trump's second inauguration, Meloni was expected to leverage her strong ties with him once he returned to office 15 months ago. The two had a perceived natural alliance, with nationalistic tendencies and similarly hardline stances on immigration.

But Italy was not spared the pain of Trump's tariffs, and some may argue she has gotten little out of the relationship. When asked if they had spoken this month, Trump told Corriere, "No, not in a long time."



US President Donald Trump greets Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during a summit to support ending the more than two-year Israel-Hamas war in Gaza after a breakthrough ceasefire deal on Oct 13, 2025, in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. (AP)

After an uncomfortable appearance in the Oval Office a year ago when she avoided directly confronting Trump on tariffs, the distance grew over the Iran war. Meloni has stated Italy will not participate in the war and the country last month refused US bombers the authorization to land at a pivotal air base in Sicily.

Meloni's statement this week calling Trump's attack on the pope "unacceptable" was the most direct criticism of the president yet.

"It's been building up over time, not so much because she is moving away from him but because he has become increasingly unhinged," Tocci said.

Cabinet minister Adolfo Urso, a member of Meloni's far-right Brothers of Italy, said US-Italy relations would not be shaken by the flap.

"Italy and the United States are allied

countries and maintain their relationship and alliance within international institutions, starting obviously with the Atlantic Alliance," he told Radio 24, adding that the church's moral teachings "cannot crack relationships consecrated in alliances signed a few decades ago."

Mariangela Zappia, president of the ISPI think tank and a former Italian ambassador to the US, said Trump's "hot-blooded" reaction could be attributed to his frustration with Europe, not just Italy. Besides not getting support for the Iran war, Trump lost a strong ally with Viktor Orbán's electoral defeat in the Hungarian elections this weekend.

Still, she said Trump's personal outburst aimed at Meloni should not be construed as damaging the alliance as a whole.

## Student kills 9 in Turkey's second school shooting

ANKARA, Turkey, April 16, (AP): A student opened fire on two classrooms at a middle school in Turkey on Wednesday, killing nine people and wounding 13 others, the interior minister said, in the country's second such shooting in two days.

The 14-year-old gunman was killed. He arrived at the school armed with guns believed to belong to his father, a retired police officer, Kahramanmaraş provincial Gov. Mukerrem Unluer said. He was carrying five firearms and seven magazines.

The motive of the attack wasn't immediately known. It was not clear whether the gunman was killed by police or killed himself.



Turkish security forces and emergency staff stand in the courtyard of a secondary school where an assailant opened fire, in Kahramanmaraş, Turkey on April 15. (AP)

Pilot injured in light plane crash southwest of Sydney

## Australia's government boosts military spending as Iran war makes global impact

MELBOURNE, Australia, April 16, (Agencies): The Iran war had greatly complicated the global strategic landscape, Defense Minister Richard Marles said Thursday as he announced a major increase in Australian military spending.

Marles released the latest two-year update of Australia's defense strategy and said an additional 53 billion Australian dollars (\$38 billion) in spending on defense was planned over the next decade.

Australia's defense budget would grow from 2.8% of GDP this year to 3% by 2033 as "Australia faces its most complex and threatening strategic circumstances since the end of World War II," Marles said.

Asked how much more complex and threatening Australia's circumstances were since the United States and Israel attacked Iran in February, Marles told reporters: "I don't think anyone could honestly answer that question."

"It greatly complicates the global strategic landscape," Marles said. "The world feels less safe."

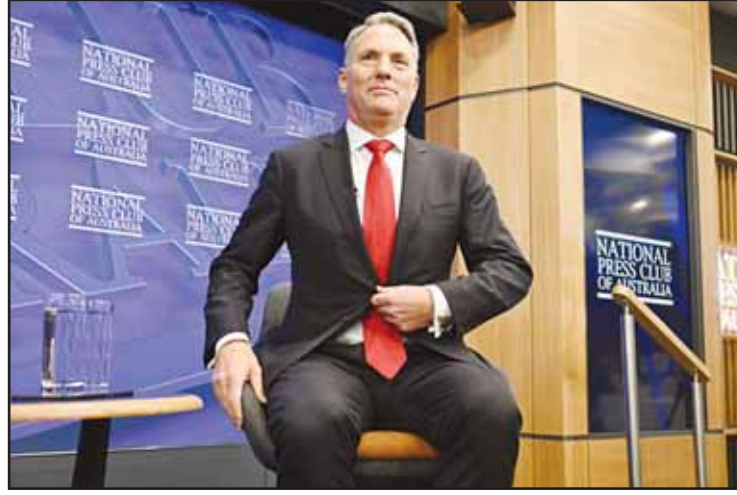
"Having said that, we do very much support the strategic objective of denying Iran a deployable nuclear weapon," Marles added.

The latest strategy expands the military's adoption of autonomous and uncrewed systems on land, sea and air, including the Australian-developed Ghost Bat uncrewed jet aircraft and Ghost Shark underwater drone.

The strategy also expands the military's long-range strike capabilities and accelerates the introduction of integrated air and missile defense systems.

Marles said his government's decision to increase defense spending to 3% of GDP was not a response to pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump's administration.

The Pentagon released its own National Defense Strategy in January that chastised U.S. allies to take control of their own security.



Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles prepares to address the National Press Club in Canberra on April 16. (AP)

The Australian government was making its own resourcing decisions, Marles said.

"What that has yielded to date is, under our government, the biggest peacetime

increase in defense spending that our nation has seen," Marles said.

The latest spending strategy would focus on Australian self-reliance, which should not be confused with military self-sufficiency, Marles said.

"This is not about jettisoning alliance relationships. To the contrary, alliances, especially with the United States, will always be fundamental to Australia's defense," Marles said.

Australia's largest-ever defense investment is expected to be a fleet of at least eight submarines powered by U.S. nuclear technology provided through the AUKUS partnership with the United States and Britain.

Australia expects the subs would cost between AU\$268 billion (\$193 billion) and AU\$368 billion (\$264 billion) over three decades.

### Also:

**SYDNEY:** A pilot was injured after a light plane crashed southwest of Sydney in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) on Thursday morning.

Emergency services were called to the crash in a field near the small town of Berrima, 105 km southwest of Sydney, around 7:50 a.m. and arrived to find the pilot trapped in the wreckage.

The pilot, a man aged in his 50s who was the sole occupant of the aircraft, was freed and treated at the scene by ambulance paramedics.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported that he is expected to be airlifted to a Sydney hospital.

A minor fuel leak from the aircraft was isolated and firefighters were deployed to the scene as a precaution.

Police said aviation authorities had been notified and that an investigation has commenced.

### 'First overseas trip'

## Vietnam's new leader meets China's Xi

BEIJING, April 16, (Agencies): Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday called on Beijing and Hanoi to prioritize advancing infrastructure connectivity and strengthen their collaborations in emerging fields like artificial intelligence and semiconductors during a meeting with Vietnam's newly elected president, the state broadcaster reported.

To Lam's four-day trip to China, which began on Tuesday, is his first overseas trip since he was elected last week. That signaled Lam's foreign policy priorities and stronger ties between the two Communist nations.

CCTV reported that Xi said defending the socialist system and the Communist Party's ruling position is the greatest common strategic interest between the two parties during their meeting.

He also urged both sides to firmly uphold confidence in their paths and systems and persist in reform without changing direction, the report said.

Lam said Vietnam would regard developing relations with China as its objective need, strategic choice and topic priority. He also said the country is willing to enhance the level of cooperation in various areas, including trade, investment, railways and other infrastructure, CCTV added. (AP)

Meanwhile, China's top political advisor Wang Huning met with General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee and Vietnamese President To Lam in Beijing on Tuesday.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), welcomed To Lam's visit to China, saying that in recent years, the top leaders of the two parties and countries have maintained close strategic communication, providing fundamental and strategic guidance for the development of China-Vietnam relations.

China is willing to work with Vietnam to implement the important consensus reached by the general secretaries of the two parties, carry out in-depth exchanges and mutual learning of theories and experiences in party and state governance, promote the development of a China-Vietnam community with a shared future, and advance the steady and long-term development of bilateral relations, said Wang, adding that the CPPCC National Committee is willing to make contributions in this regard.

To Lam said Vietnam has always followed and sincerely congratulated China on its theoretical explorations and practical achievements in reform, opening up and socialist modernization.

In the new era, Vietnam stands ready to deepen political mutual trust, strengthen strategic alignment, and consolidate traditional friendship with China to help both sides achieve new development goals, he added.



Chinese Premier Li Qiang meets with General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee and Vietnamese President To Lam, who is on a state visit to China, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China on April 15. (AP)

### Change carries symbolic weight

## PM Modi pushing to get more women into India's Parliament

NEW DELHI, April 16, (AP): India's Parliament opened debate Thursday on a landmark bill to reserve one-third of legislative seats for women, which could set off a sweeping redrawing of voting boundaries that could sharpen political tensions nationwide.

If passed, the bill would fast-track a 2023 law mandating 33% reservation for women in Parliament and state legislatures. It would be one of the most consequential shifts in political representation since India's independence and potentially widen female participation in a system where women remain underrepresented.

The quota, however, is linked to a controversial separate bill to change voting boundaries, a process that could increase the number of seats in the lower house from 543 to about 850.

While there appears to be a broad bipartisan support for putting more women into Parliament, opposition parties have raised concerns over changing voting boundaries, warning it could tilt the political balance in favor of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party.

The bills are being taken up during a three-day special session of Parliament and will require a two-thirds majority in both houses to pass. Modi's ruling National Democratic Alliance holds 293 seats in Parliament, while a two-thirds majority would require 360 seats.

Several Asian countries, including India's neighbors like Nepal and Bangladesh, have similar quotas for women in national legislatures. India already mandates that one-third of seats be set aside for women in local



Communist Party of India member Annie Raja, (left), activist Padma Singh, (center), and writer Radha Kumar address a press conference after sending a petition on women's reservation to the parliamentarians in New Delhi, India on April 16. (AP)

governance bodies, but women currently hold only about 14% of seats in the lower house of Parliament.

The quota could bring hundreds more women into legislative politics, which supporters say could redirect policy attention toward women's health, education and gender-based violence. It is unclear how seats would be allocated to women in an expanded Parliament.

Ranjana Kumari, a women's rights advocate, said the move would make India's "democracy truly representative" and force political parties to field more female candidates.

"(The) door is little open. Women

will enter and fill the room slowly," Kumari said.

For many young Indian women, the change also carries symbolic weight.

Pranita Gupta, a 23-year-old law graduate, said it will instill "a sense of confidence that we can participate in politics and we can be part of Parliament not only as an exception but as well as a norm."

The rollout of the quota is tied to a population-based redrawing of voting boundaries using data from the last completed census in 2011. While the timeline for this process remains unclear, the proposal has already triggered political debate.

Opposition parties warn that basing constituencies on population could shift political power toward faster-growing northern states, while diminishing the parliamentary representation, seat share and overall influence of southern regions. They also argue it could benefit Modi's party, which has strong support in the northern states.

India's Constitution mandates that parliamentary seats be allocated by population and revised after each census. However, boundaries have not been redrawn since the 1971 census, as successive governments delayed the process over concerns about uneven population growth.

Leaders in southern states, where birthrates have declined more sharply, say a population-based delimitation exercise could increase seats in the north and disadvantage southern regions that have slowed population growth and built stronger economies.

Modi's party has pushed back on the criticism against the bill, with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju on Wednesday describing the concerns as misleading.

But early opposition surfaced Thursday, as Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin burned a copy of the bill and raised a black flag in protest. He urged people across the state to do the same.

Some leaders from southern states also turned up in Parliament dressed in black as a mark of protest.

India's opposition leader Rahul Gandhi alleged the exercise could be used to "gerrymander" parliamentary constituencies in favor of Modi's party ahead of the 2029 national elections.

### Subcontinent

**Pakistan navy test-fires anti-ship missile:** Pakistan's military said Thursday the navy successfully test-fired a new locally developed ship-launched anti-ship missile.

In a statement, the military said the missile "accurately engaged its target with high speed at extended range" during a live firing exercise witnessed by Chief of the Naval Staff Adm. Naveed Ashraf, along with scientists and engineers involved in the program. (AP)

**House collapse kills 1, injures 5 in Afghanistan:** A man was killed and five others sustained injuries as their house collapsed following rains and windstorms in eastern Afghanistan's Laghman province on Thursday, provincial police spokesman Mohammad Yunus Yusufzai said.

The incident took place in Dawlat Shah district early Thursday morning, the official confirmed without giving further details.

Nearly 200 people had been killed and more than 250 others injured due to rains and flooding since March 25 in Afghanistan. (Xinhua)

### Lat/Am

**Brazil's Lula defends Pope Leo:** Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said on Wednesday that Pope Leo XIV should be defended from "powerful people" who have recently criticized him. The leftist leader's comments come amid a tense exchange of attacks between the pontiff and US President Donald Trump. Earlier Wednesday, during his trip to Cameroon, the first US-born pope insisted that "the message the world needs to hear today" is one of peace and dialogue. In recent days, Trump has doubled down on his criticism of Leo's comments against the war in Iran.

The 80-year-old Lula, who is running for reelection in October, spoke in a video message sent to a gathering of Brazil's national conference of bishops. (AP)

**Allies of ex-presidents lead in Peru election:** Keiko Fujimori, the conservative daughter of a disgraced former Peruvian president, and Roberto Sánchez, a nationalist congressman and former minister, were leading in the race for Peru's next president as ballots were being tallied on Wednesday for a fourth straight day. Voting in Sunday's election had been extended into Monday after ballots were not delivered in time to polling stations.

With 90% of the ballots counted, official results on Wednesday showed Fujimori leading with 16.98% of the votes, while Sánchez had earned 12.04%. Trailing narrowly in third place was Rafael López Aliaga, the ultraconservative former mayor of Peru's capital, Lima, with 11.90%. (AP)

### Large-scale attack on airport, prison

## Nigerian security forces on high alert

ABUJA, Nigeria, April 16, (AP): Nigeria's security forces are on high alert over a planned attack by Islamist militants on public infrastructure in Abuja and Niger states, an internal memo dated April 13 obtained from the Nigeria Customs Service by The Associated Press on Wednesday showed.

The planned targets include the international airport and a prison facility in the capital city of Abuja, as well as a military detention center in neighboring Niger state.

"Their intention is to release detained terrorists and inflict significant damage on critical aviation infrastructure," the memo reads.

The plan mirrors a similar attack in Niger Republic in January, in which Islamist terrorists attacked an air force base in Niamey, the memo read in a warning to customs service personnel.

"An analysis of the report reveals a concerning correlation between the potential targeting of the Nnamdi Azikiwe Airport Abuja and recent large-scale attacks on aviation facilities in Niger Republic, notably in Niamey and Tahoua. This suggests a possible intent by terrorists to replicate the attack patterns within Nigeria," according to the memo.

In 2022, an attack on the aforementioned



Patients receive treatment at a hospital in Damaturu after Nigerian Air Force strikes targeting jihadi rebels hit a local market Saturday in north-eastern Nigeria on April 12. (AP)

prison led to the escape of 879 inmates, including 64 members of the Islamic State West Africa Province, which claimed responsibility for the attack.

"The military and paramilitary forces are all on high alert and ready to forestall the attack," an senior customs service personnel member who is not authorized to speak to journalists told AP.

The customs service and the Nigerian military have not responded to AP's request for comments.

Nigeria, which is Africa's most populous country, is battling a complex security crisis, especially in the north, where there is a decade-long insurgency and several armed groups that kidnap for ransom.

## Bukele signs reforms allowing life prison sentences for people as young as 12

SAN SALVADOR, April 16, (AP): El Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele on Wednesday signed into law constitutional reforms to permit life prison sentences for people as young as 12, a contentious reform that follows other heavy-handed measures pushed through by the populist leader.

The change was passed last month by the Legislative Assembly, which is controlled by Bukele's party, and would apply to people convicted of committing or acting as an accomplice to crimes including homicide, femicide, rape and gang membership. The measure was pushed forward by Bukele's cabinet.

Previously, the maximum sentence in El Salvador was 60 years for adults and less for youths. The reforms slated to take effect April 26 would create new criminal courts to try cases. They also stipulate a mandatory review of life terms decades into the sentences, depending on the age of the convict and the gravity of their crimes.

Critics say the reforms are just the latest harsh move by Bukele more than four years into his war on gangs.

Following a burst of gang violence in 2022, Bukele announced a then-temporary state of emergency, which



El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele gives a speech during the inauguration of an industrial data center in Ciudad Arce, El Salvador on July 16, 2024. (AP)

has become the new normal in the Central American nation as it's been extended for years. He suspended constitutional rights and locked up more than 1% of El Salvador's population, often on vague charges with little evidence. Prisoners are often judged in mass trials and lawyers regularly lose

track of where their clients are. In one mass trial last year, alleged gang members were handed sentences of hundreds of years.

Officials in Bukele's government have previously vowed that gang members detained "will never return" to the streets.

## Kuwait crude falls \$2 to \$101.54

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): Kuwait crude oil dropped USD two during Wednesday trading to reach USD 101.54 per barrel compared with USD 103.54 pb the day before, Ku-

wait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Thursday. Brent futures edged 14 cents higher to USD 94.93 pb and West Texas Intermediate gain one cent to USD 91.29 pb.

General index inclines 129.35 points

## Boursa Kuwait closes Thurs trading higher

KUWAIT CITY, April 16, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed trading on Thursday with its general index inclining by 129.35 points, or 1.47 percent, to reach 8,902.69 points, with 560.19 million shares traded through 33,694 cash deals, valued at KD 144.2 million (about USD 441.2 million).

The Main Market Index inclined by 98.53 points, or 1.22 percent, to reach 8,204.05 points, through trading of 309.6 million shares across 17,008 cash deals, valued at KD 43.4 million

(about USD 132.8 million).

The Premier Market Index also increased by 142.63 points, or 1.52 percent, to reach 9,513.34 points, through trading of 250.5 million shares across 16,686 deals, valued at KD 100.7 million (about USD 308.14 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index was higher by 91.54 points, or 1.03 percent, to reach 9,994.17 points, through trading of 280.5 million shares across 14,094 cash deals, valued at KD 39.6 million (about USD 121.17 million).



Boursa Kuwait

## Why Boursa Kuwait's profits slipped after a strong year?

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Despite the strong performance of the Kuwaiti market in 2025, ranking second only to Oman in terms of overall performance, why did the net profits of companies listed on Boursa Kuwait decline in the last quarter of 2025?

Will profits decline further in the first half of 2026 amid rising local and global inflation rates driven by ongoing conflict?

Economic expert and financial analyst Sultan Al-Jazzaf attributed the decline in the profits of listed companies in the last quarter of 2025 to several factors, most notably the escalation of geopolitical tensions and the threat of war between the United States and Iran during that period.

He stressed that strong profit-taking by most listed companies during the first nine months of 2025, a period in which stock market indices recorded notable gains, led to a slowdown in the last quarter, driven by increased spending on operating expenses by banks and companies.

Al-Jazzaf predicted that the profits of listed companies are likely to decline further in the first half of 2026 due to rising domestic and global inflation resulting from the war, in addition to disruptions in oil and gas exports, which have exacerbated inflationary pressures.

erbed inflationary pressures.

He indicated that the declaration of a ceasefire would not bring an end to geopolitical risks, as concerns are expected to continue dominating the landscape throughout the year.

Al-Jazzaf explained that foreign investors and local companies are likely to increase hedging by investing in gold and real estate. The current slowdown in Kuwait's growth rate, at around 3.5 percent, could contribute to a decline in the net profits of listed companies in the first half of the year, especially given the drop in all indicators in March 2026 compared to February.

The decline in the overall performance of the Kuwaiti market would likely extend to most Gulf financial markets, with the exception of Oman, which has not been directly affected by the war and benefits from a strategic location that allows it to export oil without disruption through the Strait of Hormuz.

He highlighted that the continuation of the war would continue to pose a threat to the global economy due to rising energy costs and increasing pressure on various economies in all other sectors in most countries.

Al-Jazzaf pointed out that efforts by the United States to secure supply chains in the Strait of Hormuz will not resolve disruptions immediately, indicating that the negative impact is likely to persist for more than a year.

## Aayan buys 51.96% of Dar Al-Shifa

## CPA green lights deals in healthcare and education

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Competition Protection Authority (CPA) announced its approval of several economic concentration requests, including acquisitions and joint control deals in various sectors, most notably healthcare and education.

The decisions included approval of Aayan Leasing and Investment Company's acquisition of 51.96 percent of the shares of Dar Al-Shifa Hospital Company K.S.C. (Kuwait), as part of

a concentration deal in the healthcare sector.

It also approved the acquisition by Al-Marafie Al-Namouthajiyah Educational Services Company of 100 percent of the shares of South Kuwait Educational Services Group, reflecting continued expansion in the private education sector.

In the food industry sector, CPA approved the joint control deal between BRF GmbH (Austria) and Halal Products Development Company (Saudi Arabia) over One Foods Holdings Limited (UAE) through BRF Arabia Holding Company (Saudi Arabia).

## Warba Bank's 'Al Sunbulla' draws resume following system enhancements

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Warba Bank's "Al Sunbulla" account draws have resumed under a robust regulatory framework, following a hiatus since February 2025. The resumption follows a series of enhancements to the bank's draw systems to align with regulatory directives, ensuring high levels of integrity and transparency.

To reinforce customer trust, the bank implemented a rigorous dual-audit oversight system, described as one of the first of its kind in the region. Warba Bank engaged two global auditing firms: KPMG Al-Qanaei & Partners, which conducted a comprehensive review of software systems and algorithms to ensure the integrity and randomness of results, and Grant Thornton, which oversees the draw mechanisms to ensure compliance with established standards.

Commitment to Transparency:

Muhannad Issa Burhama, Head of Product Development and Customer



Muhannad Issa Burhama



Segments at Warba Bank, said the bank's responsibility toward its customers is the primary driver behind its decisions:

"During the hiatus, we conducted a meticulous review of all data and technical infrastructures. We believe that customer trust is our most valuable asset, and we adopted international best practices to ensure a verified and accurate draw process."

# Business

## Kuwait: Real estate sales slump in Q1 2026 amid geopolitical and seasonal headwinds

By National Bank of Kuwait

Real estate sales softened in Q1 2026 to the lowest level in a year, marking a shift from the strong momentum that had built in previous quarters. By month, market conditions deteriorated most in March, weighed down by the US-Iran conflict (that began end-February) alongside the seasonal slowdown associated with Ramadan and the Eid holiday. Activity in March specifically slowed sharply across all segments after a relatively strong February. Price dynamics also appear to have been hit with downward pressure intensifying in the residential segment, reflecting softer demand after the strong gains in previous years. Looking ahead, the short-term outlook for the market will depend on the evolution of regional geopolitical risks, with a de-escalation or resolution of the conflict potentially boosting confidence and supporting a recovery in demand. A prolonged conflict generating further uncertainty could continue to weigh on investor appetite, keeping activity and prices under pressure.

Total real estate sales fell 31% q/q in Q1 to KD899 million, albeit from a strong performance in the previous quarter. As mentioned, the pullback was driven by an abrupt fall in March, in which sales slumped 72% m/m affected by the reasons described above. Indeed, support for this view can be seen in the figures for January and February alone, which averaged a healthy KD377 million per month and were up a combined 32% y/y. Despite the steep q/q decline, overall sales in Q1 remained 8.4% higher on a year-on-year basis, underpinned by low base effects in early 2025, especially in the residential and commercial segments.

Residential sales also witnessed a sharp quarterly decline of -33%, moving from the historical high of KD591 million reached in Q4 25 while posting a solid increase of 13.9% y/y, despite the sharp loss of momentum in March, when residential sales dropped to KD91.0 million (-46% m/m). Investment segment activity also softened with Q1 sales declining to KD292 million (-33% q/q), the lowest since Q2 24, reflecting heightened investor caution amid rising regional tensions and uncertainties. Commercial segment sales were also volatile, contracting to KD213 million in Q1 (-21% q/q), with March sales stalling to just KD2 million, though still logging a 54% y/y increase in Q1 2026.

Prices, according to our real estate price index, continued to decline on a



Table 1: Real estate sales & prices							
	3Q24	4Q24	1Q25	2Q25	3Q25	4Q25	1Q26
<b>Total real estate sales</b>	846.9	1,081.9	829.7	1,004.7	1,243.2	1,296.5	899.3
Y/Y	24.8	40.4	19.0	17.7	46.8	19.8	8.4
Q/Q	-0.8	27.7	-23.3	21.1	23.7	4.3	-30.6
<b>Residential</b>	383.7	455.8	346.1	418.2	396.0	591.1	394.3
Y/Y	8.2	29.2	-2.0	24.2	3.2	29.7	13.9
Q/Q	14.0	18.8	-24.1	20.8	-5.3	49.3	-33.3
<b>Investment</b>	317.1	432.7	345.4	482.6	406.6	435.2	291.8
Y/Y	49.3	87.6	49.0	116.2	28.2	0.6	-15.5
Q/Q	42.1	36.4	-20.2	39.7	-15.8	7.0	-33.0
<b>Commercial</b>	146.1	193.3	138.2	103.9	440.6	270.2	213.3
Y/Y	31.1	3.3	22.9	-64.6	201.5	39.7	54.3
Q/Q	-50.2	32.3	-28.5	-24.8	324.2	-38.7	-21.1
<b>Real estate price index</b>	115.3	119.4	120.4	120.6	116.9	116.3	112.5
Y/Y	-4.9	-3.5	1.1	2.9	1.4	-2.6	-6.5
Q/Q	-1.6	3.5	0.8	0.2	-3.1	-0.6	-3.2
<b>Investment</b>	99.4	105.7	107.1	106.1	104.7	106.3	107.0
Y/Y	-0.8	1.8	4.4	7.1	5.3	0.6	0.0
Q/Q	0.4	6.4	1.3	-0.9	-1.3	1.6	0.7
<b>Residential</b>	133.1	134.6	135.3	136.9	130.6	127.4	118.7
Y/Y	-8.1	-7.7	-1.6	-0.5	-1.8	-5.4	-12.3
Q/Q	-3.3	1.2	0.5	1.2	-4.6	-2.5	-6.8

Source: Ministry of Justice, NBK calculations NBK calculations

\* The NBK real estate price index is based on a dataset of real estate transactions available at the Ministry of Justice website. The index is calculated on a quarterly basis by type of real estate for all governorates. The methodology is based on a fixed-weight Laspeyres type with the base year 2019.

quarterly basis, with the overall real estate price index decline accelerating to -3.2% q/q, while the year-on-year figure saw its steepest fall since Q1 2017 at -6.5%. Residential prices recorded particularly sharp declines (-12.3% y/y; -6.8% q/q), the largest since Q1 2009, underscoring perhaps the effects of the US-Iran conflict and

recent policy efforts to curb speculative land hoarding. In contrast, investment prices proved relatively resilient, remaining broadly flat y/y and still rising modestly q/q (+0.7%), perhaps reflecting still relatively attractive starting valuations. The thin number of transactions in Q1 makes interpreting price movements more

difficult than usual. Still, with both sales activity and prices on the retreat in Q1 26, the outlook for both will surely be influenced by developments in the US-Iran conflict, with a quick resolution potentially providing reassurance and leading to a recovery in Q2, helped by a reversal of seasonal factors.

## 'Trading suspension turns into delisting'

## CMA pulls plug on Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport listing for disclosure failures

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Capital Markets Authority (CMA), in line with its ongoing commitment to protect investors and enforce Law No. 7/2010 along with its executive regulations, issued Resolution No. 223/2025 on Dec 30, 2025.

In a press statement, CMA disclosed that this resolution, which pertains to the regulation of securities and oversight of listed companies, stipulates that trading in the shares of Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport Company (K.S.C.C.) on Boursa Kuwait was suspended effective Dec 31, 2025. This measure, as outlined in Article One, was implemented pursuant to Clause Four of Article 1-20 of Book 12 of the Executive Regulations of Law No. 7/2010. Under this provision, CMA is authorized to suspend trading in a security when the issuing entity fails to provide the required supervisory information.

The suspension remains in effect until the company submits the necessary documentation related to settlement contracts and agreements impacting its financial statements for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2024 as follows:

1. Settlement agreements confirming the transfer of investment stakes in Kuwait and Gulf Link

Transport Company (K.S.C.C.) as referenced in Note Seven of the 2024 financial statements.

2. Lease agreements for right-of-use assets substantiating balance movements, as detailed in Note Six of the same financial statements.

CMA set a deadline of Feb 1, 2026 for the submission of these documents. Article Two states that failure to comply within the deadline will lead to a review of the listing status of the company.

Article Three obligates the company to submit weekly progress reports, detailing the actions taken to address the causes of the trading suspension.

Article Four stipulates that the relevant authorities must implement the decision after its publication in the official gazette, "Kuwait Al-Youm".

On April 15, 2026, the Board of Commissioners issued Resolution No. 15/2026, formally delisting the company in accordance with clauses Seven and Eight of Article 2-4-1 of Book 12 of the Executive Regulations. The delisting is due to the failure of the company to comply with the requirements set out in Resolution No. 223/2025. By not submitting the specified settlement and lease documentation, the company hindered the

review and audit of its 2024 financial statements. Despite multiple notices issued during the review period stipulated in Article Two, the company did not submit the required weekly reports or supporting documents. In addition, the external auditor's annual reports continued to highlight unresolved issues that were identified in previous financial statements.

As a consequence, the company is now required to comply with Article 2-4-2, which mandates its Board of Directors to convene a general assembly within three months to discuss the delisting and lay down corrective measures for the future.

Failure to meet this obligation may result in further regulatory action. The minutes of the general assembly must be submitted to the CMA and Boursa Kuwait within two weeks of the meeting. Furthermore, as per Article 2-4-3, the company must be included in the unlisted securities system to allow trading within five working days from the date of delisting.

CMA reaffirmed its commitment to maintain a transparent and competitive financial market, as well as protect investors through the strict enforcement of regulatory compliance.

Live-streamed draws showcase bank's commitment to integrity

In collaboration with the Voluntary Work Center

# Kuwait Finance House launches the largest national campaign of its kind



Part of the distribution



Yousef Al-Ruwaieh and the Kuwait Finance House team with Sheikhha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Part of the distribution



KUWAIT CITY, April 16: In line with its social responsibility, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has launched the largest national campaign of its kind under a strategic partnership with the Voluntary Work Center, represented by the center's Chairperson, Sheikhha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Titled "Kuwait's Flag on Every House," the campaign underscores the flag as a powerful symbol of national identity and belonging.

As part of this initiative, Kuwait flags will be distributed to citizens,

fostering a deeper sense of national pride and reinforcing social cohesion, particularly at a time when unity and collective solidarity are paramount.

With the campaign officially launched on Wednesday, 15 April 16, 2026 at 12.00 PM, KFH has started the flag distribution across a number of its branches on different days. These branches include Khaldiya, Bayan, Qasr, Fahaeel and Al Khiran Mall.

The initiative will continue in the coming period, with daily distribution of flags in multiple locations across the country. Additionally, the

campaign, the largest of its kind in Kuwait, ensures nationwide participation among citizens.

It is worth noting that this campaign reflects KFH's commitment to social responsibility and efforts in implementing societal initiatives that serve the country and promote positive national values, in collaboration with voluntary organizations. It also underscores the Bank's leading role in supporting the community, representing unity and cohesion that defines Kuwaiti society.

## The Conversation

### Law of the sea split fuels Hormuz crisis

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

By Elizabeth Mendenhall  
University of Rhode Island

The Strait of Hormuz exists in the eye of the beholder.

While everyone agrees that, geographically speaking, it is a strait - a narrow sea passage connecting two places that ships want to go - its political and legal status is rather more complicated.

The United States and Iran both eye the strait - a choke point through which 20% of the world's oil passes - very differently. Washington sees the Strait of Hormuz as exclusively an international waterway, whereas Tehran sees it as part of its territorial waters.

It follows that Iran's toll-charging of ships is seen by the U.S. as illegal. Similarly, U.S. President Donald Trump's blockade of the passage is a "grave violation" of sovereignty to Iran.

As an expert in the law of the sea, I know part of the problem is that the U.S. and Iran are living in two different worlds when it comes to the international laws governing the strait. Further complicating matters, both are in a different legal universe than most of the rest of the world.

The "law of the sea" is a network of international laws, customs and agreements that set out the foundation for rights of access and control in the ocean. The framework sits apart from the laws of warfare, which are also relevant to the Persian Gulf situation.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, or UNCLOS, is a major plank of the law of the sea. Completed in 1982 and in force since 1994, it aims to create a stable set of zones and places - like international straits - where everyone agrees on who can do what. It has been ratified by 171 countries and the European Union, but not Iran or the United States. Iran has signed it but has yet to ratify; the U.S. has done neither.

This means that the rules which almost every country in the world has consented to can't serve as a basis of agreement over how the U.S. and Iran should govern their actions in the strait during the current war.

Both Iran and the U.S. agree that under the law of the sea, the Strait of Hormuz is an international strait, but not on what kind of international strait it is. Moreover, they disagree on the relevant laws that exist, and how they apply.

For Iran, the Strait of Hormuz is an international strait as set out under international law predating UNCLOS - notably the International Court of Justice's ruling in the 1949 Corfu Channel case and the 1958 Territorial Seas Convention.

These older standards state that foreign ships have a right of "innocent passage" through international straits. Put in other terms, this means that if a ship is simply passing through, without doing anything else and without harming the security of the coastal countries, it must be allowed passage.

This gives Iran - and Oman, the strait's other bordering country - power to make and enforce some rules over passage, such as rules for safety and the environment. They also have wide discretion to decide if passage is "non-innocent" and therefore not allowed. But it does not give them the right to impede innocent passage.

Contrary to the older standard, however, Tehran claims the right to "suspend" passage through its half of the strait, citing the waters as its territorial sea. This is a violation of the 1958 Territorial Seas Convention that Iran relies on for legal support,

which says that when a territorial sea is also an international strait, innocent passage cannot be suspended.

For the U.S., the Strait of Hormuz is an international strait requiring "transit passage," as per UNCLOS. Although the United States is not a member of UNCLOS, it argues that the agreement's updated concept of an "international strait" should apply.

Understanding a waterway as the newer type of "international strait," which requires transit passage, shifts the balance against a coastal country's control and toward free navigation.

Under this standard, countries bordering straits - like Iran and Oman in the case of Hormuz - must also allow overflight and submarines below the surface. Passage must be allowed so long as it is "continuous and expeditious."

The U.S. has forcefully asserted this position at sea through regular "Freedom of Navigation" patrols through the Strait of Hormuz and other straits around the world. The patrols are a visible rejection of claims over the ocean that the U.S. deems illegal or excessive.

The basic U.S. argument is supported by some leading legal scholars, such as James Kraska, a professor of international maritime law at the U.S. Naval War College, who decries the Iranian position as "lawfare" and argues that Iran must abide by the compromises made in UNCLOS.

But the U.S. is a global outlier here, and one of only a handful of countries - alongside the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Thailand and Papua New Guinea - which argue that "transit passage" is required by custom.

Custom, in this sense, is established if a practice at sea is seen as consistent and is backed by wide agreement over its legality. If something is seen as customary law, it applies to everyone. The only way to prevent a custom from applying to you is through the "persistent objection rule," which gives a country an exemption to newly emerging standards if it has shown itself to be consistently against it.

Legal scholars are split on whether transit passage is customary law - although law of the sea specialists tend to say it is not.

Tehran argues that even if transit passage were customary international law, Iran is a "persistent objector," and therefore, the rule doesn't apply to them.

And it is true that Iran's objection has been consistent. Both Iran and Oman argued in favor of innocent passage, and against transit passage, at the UNCLOS negotiations.

Iran reaffirmed its perspective upon signing UNCLOS in 1982. Tehran argues that because transit passage is tied up in the compromises made by UNCLOS, only countries that ratify the treaty can claim the right to transit passage - and neither the U.S. nor Iran has ratified it.

The complex military situation and economic disruption are only part of the story of the Strait of Hormuz.

What lies beneath is a complicated legal situation. Not only do the U.S. and Iran disagree about the legal status of the strait, but the countries that flag oil tankers - and which are therefore responsible for them - must also navigate their own commitments and perspectives under the law of the sea.

Every nation wants to avoid a legal precedent that is contrary to its long-term interests. But for international law to function - to reduce conflict and enable trade - what is needed is an agreement about what rules exist, and a shared commitment to abide by them.

Only that would achieve a stable post-war status for the Strait of Hormuz. How we get there, however, requires navigating some very tricky waters. (AP)

# IEA: Europe has weeks of jet fuel left if Strait of Hormuz remains blocked

'No country immune'

PARIS, April 16, (AP): Europe has "maybe six weeks or so (of) jet fuel left," the head of the International Energy Agency said Thursday in a wide-ranging Associated Press interview, warning of possible flight cancellations "soon" if oil supplies remain blocked by the Iran war.

IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol painted a sobering picture of the global repercussions of what he called "the largest energy crisis we have ever faced," stemming from the pinch-off of oil, gas and other vital supplies through the Strait of Hormuz.

"In the past there was a group called 'Dire Straits.' It's a dire strait now, and it is going to have major implications for the global economy. And the longer it goes, the worse it will be for the economic growth and inflation around the world," he said.

The impact will be "higher petrol (gasoline) prices, higher gas prices, high electricity prices," Birol told the AP, speaking in his Paris office looking out over the Eiffel Tower.



International Energy Agency Executive Director Fatih Birol speaks during an interview with The Associated Press, at the IEA headquarters in Paris, Thursday, April 16, 2026. (AP)

Economic pain will be felt unevenly and "the countries who will suffer the most will not be those whose voice are heard a lot. It will be mainly the developing countries. Poorer countries in Asia, in Africa and in Latin America," said the Turkish economist and energy expert who has led the IEA since 2015.

But without a settlement of the Iran war that permanently reopens the Strait of Hormuz, "Everybody is going to suffer," he added.

"Some countries may be richer than the others. Some countries may have more energy than the others, but no country, no country is immune to this crisis," he said.

Without a reopening of the waterway, some oil products may dry up, he warned.

In Europe, "I can tell you soon we will hear the news that some of the flights from city A to city B might be canceled as a result of lack of jet fuel," he said.

Birol spoke out against the so-called "toll booth" system that Iran has applied to some ships, letting them travel through the strait for a fee. He said allowing that to become more permanent would run the risk of setting a precedent that could then be applied to other waterways, including the vital Malacca Strait in Asia.

"If we change it once, it may be difficult to get it back," he said. "It will be difficult to have a toll system here, applied here, but not there."

"I would like to see that the oil flows unconditionally from the point A to point B," he said.

Birol said more than 110 oil-laden tankers and more than 15 carriers loaded with liquefied natural gas are waiting in the Persian Gulf and could help ease the energy crisis if they could escape through the Strait of Hormuz.

"But it is not enough," he added. Even with a peace deal, strikes on energy facilities means it could be many months before pre-war production levels are restored, he said.

"Over 80 key assets in the region have been damaged. And out of these 80, more than one third are severely or very severely damaged," he said.

"It will be extremely optimistic to believe that it will very quick," Birol said. "It will take gradually, gradually, up to two years to come back where we were before the war."

## US to end waivers on Russian and Iranian oil at sea

WASHINGTON, April 16, (KUNA): US Secretary of Treasury Scott Bessent announced Wednesday that his country would not renew the two licenses that had allowed the sale of stranded Russian and Iranian oil at sea, amid optimism that energy disruption caused by the war in the region is easing.

"We will not be renewing the general license on Russian oil and we will not be renewing the general license on Iranian oil. That was oil that was on the water prior to March 11," Bessent told reporters at the White House.

The step came within the framework of a broader U.S. policy aimed at reducing Russia's and Iran's energy revenues, which the U.S. administration says constitute a key source of funding for destabilizing activities.

The war in the Middle East caused significant increases in oil prices, which led Washington to issue a temporary license for the sale of Iranian oil, and it also took a similar step regarding Russian oil that was in transit and already on ships.

'Fuel, LNG, and halal trade take center stage'

# Malaysia and Australia sign joint statement to boost energy security amid Mideast tensions

KUALA LUMPUR, April 16, (KUNA): Malaysia and Australia on Thursday signed a joint statement aimed at strengthening energy security when global energy markets are under significant pressure due to Middle East tensions, supply chain disruptions, and rising food prices.

The move came during the official visit of Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to Kuala Lumpur, where he held talks with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on enhancing bilateral cooperation in energy, trade, and food security.

Speaking at a joint press conference, Ibrahim said the energy security statement underscores both countries' commitment to existing agreements in fuel and liquefied natural gas, reflecting their shared interest in ensuring stable and resilient supply.

He pointed out that the world is going through "unprecedented times" due to unpredictable de-

velopments and unresolved international issues, including production disruptions and supply chain challenges.

He noted that the Strait of Hormuz has effectively been closed for around seven weeks, placing severe pressure on global energy markets and disrupting supply chains.

Ibrahim described the talks with his Australian counterpart as "honest and cordial," built on mutual trust, stressing that Malaysia will remain a reliable partner to Australia.

He further said both sides agreed to deepen agricultural cooperation, including exchanging expertise in production and irrigation to ensure sustainable food supplies.

Another memorandum of understanding was also signed between the Malaysian Islamic Development Department and Australia's Department of

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

For his part, Albanese expressed concern over the situation in the Middle East, noting that Australia's priority is de-escalation, maintaining a ceasefire, continuing negotiations, and reaching a swift resolution to the conflict.

He added that Australia is working with close partners, including Malaysia, to address these challenges, highlighting that Australian resources help supply energy to the region, while its farmers contribute to regional food security.

Albanese noted that around 60 percent of Malaysia's wheat imports and 75 percent of its lamb and beef imports come from Australia. He explained that fuel and fertilizers obtained by Australia also support food production in the region, with both countries relying on each other for energy supplies, including crude oil and natural gas.

'No tax on tips' boosts workers

## Trump takes tax-cut message to Vegas as gas prices bite wallets

LAS VEGAS, April 16, (AP): President Donald Trump heads to Las Vegas on Thursday to promote the tax cuts he signed into law last year to try to highlight what Republicans see as an economic strength ahead of this year's elections.

Workers who earn tips and overtime are seeing bigger returns this tax season, but those savings and others resulting from the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" that Trump signed last year have been eaten away by higher gas prices driven by the Iran war.

The president's rare trip out West comes as Trump faces growing political pressure to wrap up the war and focus on a message that helps his party as they try to defend their congressional majorities in November's midterm elections.

On Friday, Trump will hold an event in Phoenix with conservative political group Turning Point USA. But his first stop is in Las Vegas where he will hold a roundtable with several police officers who have benefited from new tax breaks on overtime, along with a barber and a casino pit supervisor, who got to claim the new tax breaks on tips.

The Treasury Department said Wednesday that the average tax refund this year has been over \$3,400, up about \$340 from a year ago.

Trump has said he first conceived of his "no tax on tips" in Las Vegas, a city where entertainment is the financial lifeblood and many workers depend on gratuities from visitors.

But it's also a city of commuters, including the tipped workers who drive to their jobs at glitzy casinos. Gasoline is averaging \$5 a gallon in Las Vegas, up 28% from a year ago, according to AAA.

Nicholas Delaney, an airline attendant who lives in the Las Vegas suburb of Henderson and said he did not vote for the president in 2024, said he thinks Trump is doing a "terrible" job when it comes to the cost of living. He thought the tax break for tips was a good policy, but is concerned about the cost of groceries and gas.

"I gotta spend over \$100 for a full tank of gas, 13 gallons? Crazy," Delaney

said.

Paula Goodman, a bartender in a Henderson casino, said the cost of living is her biggest concern right now, adding that she spends more than \$400 a week on groceries for her family.

But Goodman, who voted for the president, said she thought he is "doing a pretty good damn job," and doesn't blame him for high gas prices, which she portrayed as just a fluctuation. As a bartender, she said she personally appreciated the tax savings on tips she brings home.

"Every little penny nowadays is, like, huge," she said. "You've seen diesel, right? \$6.11."

The White House said Trump is focused on tax cuts, deregulation and boosting U.S. energy production to drive down prices, and describes high gas prices as a temporary disruption from the war in Iran.

"Tens of millions of Americans are benefiting this tax season from the president's signature provisions" in the tax law, said White House spokesman Kush Desai, saying that shows "how the administration hasn't lost focus on delivering on our affordability agenda at home."

Even so, the conflict has made things less affordable. The Bank of America Institute looked at its deposit and spending data and in a Tuesday analysis concluded that "the average increase in tax refunds could cover the average increase in gasoline spending for at least five months."

Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide, the insurance and financial services company, said last week in an analysis that "the steep rise in gasoline prices looks likely to completely offset the increased tax funds wind-fall with households," stressing that the money back would likely prevent a sharper drop in consumer spending.

Trump's economic message focusing on the tax breaks has also been drowned out this week by distractions from the president himself, who angered even some of his own supporters when he got into a public fight with

the pope and posted a now-deleted image on social media depicting himself as Jesus.

GOP strategist Ron Bonjean said among Republicans, "the frustration and concern is growing every week about whether or not we will be able to hold onto the House this November."

It takes a lot of repetition for a message like promoting the tax bill to break through to voters, but Trump's tendency to drift into other subjects can dilute that, Bonjean said. Trump, who has at times dismissed affordability concerns as "a hoax," and "con job" from Democrats, has to acknowledge the economic realities people are facing now if he wants to help his party this November, Bonjean said.

"He absolutely has to talk about his plan to bring down high gasoline costs, or else he's lost his own message. It won't be credible just to talk about no taxes on tips," Bonjean said.

While the president has said he thinks the war with Iran will end soon, a deal to resolve it has not yet emerged, with the U.S. and Iran still proffering stances that are far apart.

Trump on Sunday said in a Fox News Channel interview that gas prices "could be the same or maybe a little bit higher" by the November midterms.

By Wednesday, in another Fox News interview, Trump walked back that comment. "I think they'll be much lower" before the election, on the assumption the war will be long over.

"When that's settled, gas prices are going to go down tremendously," Trump said.

Hours later at the White House, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent was less rosy, predicting that gas prices will fall sometime this summer, depending on how the negotiations with Iran go.

"I'm optimistic that sometime between June 20th and September 20th, that we can have \$3 gas again," Bessent told reporters.

Inflation jumps to 3.3%

## US unemployment claims fall last week as layoffs remain low despite global economic uncertainty

WASHINGTON, April 16, (AP): U.S. applications for unemployment benefits fell last week, remaining in the range of the past few years even as the war in Iran continues to threaten the global economy.

The number of Americans applying for jobless aid for the week ending April 11 fell by 11,000 to 207,000 from the previous week's 218,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's less than the 217,000 new applications analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet were expecting but within the range of the past several years.

Filings for unemployment benefits are considered representative of U.S. layoffs and are close to a real-time indicator of the health of the job market.

The Iran war, now in its seventh week, has injected a large degree of uncertainty about how it will affect the U.S. and global economies even as Iran and the U.S. agreed to a ceasefire last week.

U.S. financial markets have rebounded in recent weeks and oil prices have settled in around \$92 per barrel, better than last week's \$112 but still 37% higher than before the war began. Gas prices also remain elevated, saddling businesses

and consumers with higher costs.

The largest monthly jump in gas prices in six decades sent consumer prices up 3.3% in March from a year earlier, the Labor Department said Friday. That's up sharply from just 2.4% in February and the biggest yearly increase since May 2024. On a monthly basis, prices rose 0.9% in March from February, the largest such increase in nearly four years.

This comes at a time when U.S. inflation was already above the Federal Reserve's 2% target, further diminishing the chances of an interest rate cut by central bank officials any time soon.

Fed officials voted to raise the rate three times to close 2025 out of concern for a weakening job market but have held off lowering rates further this year.

The Labor Department reported earlier this month that U.S. employers added an unexpectedly strong 178,000 new jobs in March, nudging the unemployment rate back down to 4.3%. That followed a surprisingly large loss of 92,000 jobs in February. Revisions also have trimmed 69,000 jobs from December and January payrolls, a sign that the labor market remains under strain.

A number of high-profile companies have cut

jobs recently, including Morgan Stanley, Block, UPS and Amazon.

Weekly jobless aid applications have stabilized in a range mostly between 200,000 and 250,000 since the U.S. economy emerged from the pandemic recession. However, hiring began slowing about two years ago and tapered further in 2025 due to President Donald Trump's erratic tariff rollouts, his purge of the federal workforce and the lingering effects of high interest rates meant to control inflation.

Employers added fewer than 200,000 jobs last year, compared with about 1.5 million in 2024, according to the data firm FactSet.

The American labor market appears stuck in what economists call a "low-hire, low-fire" state that has kept the unemployment rate historically low, but has left those out of work struggling to find a new job.

The Labor Department's report Thursday showed that the four-week moving average of jobless claims, which evens out some of the weekly volatility, rose by 500 to 209,750.

The total number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits for the previous week ending April 4 rose by 31,000 to 1.82 million, in line with analyst forecasts.

Shrugging off initial impact of Iran war

## China's economy grows at 5% in first quarter

HONG KONG, April 16, (AP): China's economy accelerated in the first quarter of this year, expanding 5% from a year earlier as it largely shrugged off impacts from the Iran war so far, according to data released Thursday.

The January-March data released by the government, covering a period during which the Iran war began, was better than what economists expected and was up from the 4.5% growth seen in the October-December quarter.

On a quarter-on-quarter basis, China's economy grew 1.3% in the first three months from the final quarter of last year, the fastest pace in a year.

Economists expect China, the world's second largest economy, to be able to weather short-term impacts from the Iran war, now in its seventh week. The war is pushing energy prices higher, worsening inflation and impacting global economic growth. But longer term, areas including global demand for Chinese exports could take a hit.

The International Monetary Fund this week trimmed its economic growth estimates for China to a 4.4% expansion for 2026 as it lowered its global growth forecasts over Iran war shocks. Chinese leaders last month set an economic growth target of 4.5% to 5% for this year, the slowest since 1991.



A subway train passes by power lines, in Guangzhou, in southern China's Guangdong province, Thursday, April 16, 2026. (AP)

"China can likely weather short term disruptions, but a protracted war and higher for longer energy prices would likely start to bite into growth by the second half of the year," said Lynn Song, chief economist for Greater China at Dutch bank ING.

Also on Thursday, government data showed industrial output in China rose 5.7% in March year-on-year, better than market expectations, as global demand for Chinese exports of electronic equipments, autos, semiconductors and robotics remained strong.

Retail sales were up 1.7% from a

year earlier, worse-than-estimates and slower than the 2.8% growth in January and February, reflecting sluggish domestic demand for consumer goods.

A years-long real estate sector slump in China has dragged consumer and investor confidence, but the country managed to achieve its targeted "around 5%" growth last year, powered by robust exports that drove its trade surplus to a record nearly \$1.2 trillion despite U.S. President Donald Trump's higher tariffs.

China's exports will continue to be key in propelling its economy

this year, economists believe, but reliance on export growth could now increasingly become a problem.

"The lack of a speedy resolution to the Iran war is likely to dent global growth, which will negatively impact other economies' ability to absorb Chinese exports," said Eswar Prasad, a professor of economics and trade policy at Cornell University.

"At a time when all countries are trying to protect their firms, households and economies from the fallout of the Iran war, the appetite for Chinese imports is clearly shrinking," he explained.

On Tuesday, China reported its exports grew 2.5% in March from a year ago, significantly slowing from the previous two months although some analysts partly attributed that to seasonal distortions.

China could likely still attain its full year economic growth target of 4.5% to 5% for 2026 through policy stimulus measures, economists say, but there are other concerns.

A boost in public sector investment, Prasad said, would stabilize headline growth but, unless household demand strengthens significantly, could intensify underlying deflationary pressures and increase the economy's reliance on exports down the line.

Wendell Huang, TSMC's chief financial officer, said while rising costs stemming from the Iran war could weigh on profitability, the company has "prepared safety stock inventory on hand" including for helium and is not expecting "any near-term impact" on operations.

TSMC has pledged huge investments in expanding its manufacturing capacity in Taiwan and abroad, including \$165 billion of commitments in building plants in Arizona. The company said Thursday its capital spending for the next three years will be "significantly higher" than the past three years as it ramps up capacity to meet customers' growing demand.

The chipmaker had earlier announced plans to raise its capital expenditure budget to \$52 billion-\$56 billion for this year from about \$40 billion in 2025. It said Thursday it now expects capital spending in 2026 to be toward the higher end of that.

'Subprime AI crisis' looms

## OpenAI refocuses on corporate AI revenue

The same ChatGPT chatbot that gave OpenAI's chief financial officer Sarah Friar a tilapia recipe for a recent Sunday night dinner at home is also now doing her most mundane tasks at work like summarizing her emails and Slack messages.

Friar and other company executives are banking OpenAI's future on more of the latter as it shifts its focus to business-oriented products while shedding some of its consumer offerings as a pathway to profitability.

OpenAI says it will introduce a new artificial intelligence model for "high-value professional work" as the company faces heightened competition with rival Anthropic in attracting corporate customers to adopt AI assistants in their workplaces.

"You'll see a new model coming from us in short order. We feel very excited about it," Friar said in an interview with The Associated Press.

OpenAI boasts of more than 900 million weekly users of its core ChatGPT product, and Friar said about 95% of them "don't pay anything" for the popular chatbot. But while all those interactions build habits and reliance, they also strain the costly computing resources needed to power the company's AI systems and highlight the need for big business customers to help pay the bills.

OpenAI, valued at \$852 billion, and Anthropic, valued at \$380 billion, both lose more money than they make, putting the privately-owned San Francisco-based AI research laboratories in a fierce competition to generate more revenue as they race toward becoming publicly traded on Wall Street.

A push to improve performance and sales of OpenAI's business-oriented products - already Anthropic's bread and butter - has driven OpenAI to abandon some consumer initiatives, like the AI video generator app Sora.

"I think it was a little heartbreaking, but we're like, OK, it's not the main event right now," Friar said. "We need to make sure that our new model that's coming has enough compute."

Codenamed Spud, OpenAI says its "smartest model yet" offers "stronger reasoning, better understanding of intent and dependencies, better follow-through and more reliable output in production." It's part of OpenAI's answer to Anthropic's new Claude Mythos, which Anthropic claims is so "strikingly capable" that it is limiting its use to select customers because of its apparent ability to surpass human cybersecurity experts in finding or exploiting computer vulnerabilities.

Friar, the former CEO of neighborhood social platform Nextdoor, said business customers accounted for about 20% of OpenAI's revenue when she was hired in 2024 as chief financial officer. She said it's now 40% and expected to account for half of OpenAI's sales by the end of the year.

It's a sharp turnaround from late last year, when OpenAI co-founder and CEO Sam Altman was promoting a now-shuttered Sora partnership with Disney, launching a plan to sell ads on ChatGPT and floating the idea of letting ChatGPT engage in erotica with paid adult users.

Altman said on the "Mostly Human" podcast earlier this month that a sharper focus was needed - and Friar agrees.

"Tech companies, when they're growing, it's just this natural thing that happens. There's so many cool things you could do," she said, adding that companies can end up doing "really badly" if they do too many things, while "great companies are very good at, in a reasonable period of time, kind of doing that winnowing down and refocusing and it's super painful."

Signaling that shift was the hiring

three months ago of Slack CEO Denise Dresser to be OpenAI's first chief revenue officer.

Dresser said in a recent AP interview that she has been laser-focused on meeting with corporate leaders and positioning OpenAI as the go-to platform for workplaces employing AI agents to automate a variety of computer-based job tasks.

"It's really clear to me that companies are past the experimentation phase and they're into using AI to do real work," Dresser said. "Leaders at companies are recognizing that AI is probably the most consequential shift of their lifetime."

But those leaders also have a choice, namely Anthropic's Claude that has become widely used by software professionals. Founded in 2021 by a group of ex-OpenAI leaders who said they wanted to prioritize AI safety, Anthropic has positioned itself as the more responsible AI vendor. The distinction drew attention when President Donald Trump's administration punished the startup after a contract dispute over AI use in the military, and Altman used the opportunity to cement OpenAI's own deal with the Pentagon.

Consumer interest in Anthropic surged and the company said its annualized revenues hit \$30 billion, a higher number than what OpenAI has reported, though they measure it differently. Friar and Dresser declined to reveal OpenAI's latest sales but both have suggested that Anthropic's number is inflated because it doesn't account for revenue it must share with cloud computing providers Amazon and Google.

Even so, it remains a tight competition that's also tied to the health of the stock market and the future of the economy.

"They're likely quite close," said Luke Emberson, a researcher at non-profit institute Epoch AI. "Certainly the trends show Anthropic is growing much faster than OpenAI. If that continues, they're likely to cross soon."

The urgency led Dresser to send a memo to OpenAI employees on Sunday, first reported by The Verge, that asserted that Anthropic's coding focus "gave them an early wedge" but expressing confidence that OpenAI has the "real structural advantage" as AI usage expands beyond software developers and OpenAI builds enough computing capacity to operate its AI systems.

"Their story is built on fear, restriction, and the idea that a small group of elites should control AI," Dresser's memo said of Anthropic. "Our positive message will win over time: build powerful systems, put in the right safeguards, expand access, and help people do more."

But for skeptics of the financial viability of AI products like ChatGPT and Claude, the trajectory of both money-losing companies is alarming as smaller startups increasingly become dependent on their AI tools. Anthropic has already imposed rate limits on heavy users, forcing some to wait for hours to use Claude, and both companies have set up service tiers that reward premium payers, said author and AI critic Ed Zitron.

"It's what I call the subprime AI crisis," Zitron said. "People built their lives and they built their businesses on top of these companies that, as they try and save money, will start turning the screws."

One thing that both AI leaders and critics agree on is that it is an expensive technology, though whether it is worth the cost in electricity-hungry AI computers remains to be seen.

"People will say, well, 'Once they go public, they're safe.' That's not true," Zitron said. "Public companies can and will die, especially ones that are dependent on \$100 billion to \$200 billion every year or so, just to keep breathing." (AP)

## TSMC profit jumps 58% on surging AI demand

HONG KONG, April 16, (AP): Taiwan's chipmaker TSMC, one of the world's largest companies, reported a 58% jump in profit on Thursday for the January-March quarter, thanks to strong demand driven by the artificial intelligence boom even as the Iran war was driving up costs.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp., a key supplier for Apple and Nvidia and the largest contract chipmaker in the world, reported a record net quarterly profit of 572.5 billion new Taiwan dollars (\$18.1 billion) for the first three months of the year, better than analysts had expected.

Profit for the quarter was 58.3% higher compared to the 361.6 billion new Taiwan dollars (\$11.5 billion) booked the same period a year earlier. It was also 13.2% higher compared with the previous quarter in October-December.

Revenue increased 8.4% in the January-March period from the previous three months to \$35.9 billion, the company said. For the current

April-June quarter, TSMC expected revenue to further grow to between \$39 billion and \$40.2 billion.

As AI-related demand continues to surge, TSMC has been expanding chip fabrication plants in the U.S., Japan and Taiwan, with a focus on making more advanced 3-nanometer semiconductors that are used in smartphones and AI products.

"AI-related demand continues to be extremely robust," C.C. Wei, TSMC's CEO and chairman, told an earnings conference on Thursday. "Our conviction in the multi-year AI megatrend remains high, and we believe the demand for semiconductors will continue to be very fundamental."

TSMC also warned of potential impacts from the Iran war, which has not only pushed up global supply chain costs but is also disrupting the world's supply of chemicals and gas such as helium essential for chipmaking.

## Jordan teases passion project 'Thomas Crown Affair'

# 'Spaceballs' sequel brings laughs to CinemaCon in first look

LAS VEGAS, April 16, (AP): The cast and filmmakers behind the "Spaceballs" sequel including Bill Pullman and Rick Moranis brought a little levity to CinemaCon Wednesday night in Las Vegas, with an irreverent presentation and first look at the satire.

"With Hollywood studios merging willy nilly like middle aged couples at a party, Amazon acquired MGM and opened the vault," a voiceover said in the "Spaceballs" sizzle reel, with the image on the screen showing Warner Bros. and Paramount, making Amazon MGM the only studio to publicly reference the pending acquisition at the conference so far.

Mel Brooks, in a video message, announced the title, "Spaceballs: The New One."

"It's just like the old one, but it's newer," Brooks said.

He explained that it was not called "Spaceballs: The Search for More Money" because, he said, he found the money. It was in his basement. Also, he said, he couldn't be at Caesar's Palace with everyone because he was seeing Phish at the Sphere.

Moranis's appearance on stage



Rick Moranis, (from left), Lewis Pullman, Josh Gad, Daphne Zuniga, and Bill Pullman, cast members of the upcoming film 'Spaceballs 2,' speak during the Amazon MGM Studios presentation at CinemaCon on April 15, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (AP)

evoked a big reaction from the crowd, but he only got a few words out - part of the bit was that everyone would keep interrupting him, and they stuck to it. The film is expected in theaters next year.

"Spaceballs" was just one part of

the big Amazon MGM Studios presentation to theater owners, which also included first looks at Peter Farrelly's Sylvester Stallone biopic "I Play Rocky" and Michael B. Jordan's "The Thomas Crown Affair."

The newly minted best actor Os-



Adria Arjona, (left), and Michael B. Jordan, cast members of the upcoming film 'The Thomas Crown Affair,' speak during the Amazon MGM Studios presentation at CinemaCon. (AP)

car winner for his dual performance in "Sinners," Jordan directs and stars in the romantic art heist, alongside Adria Arjona. Jon Batiste also played a bit of the score he's composing for the film.

"I've been daydreaming about

making this movie for years," said Jordan.

He watched the 1999 version when he was 12 and said "It left a very big impression on me."

For his version, he said, he wanted to bring the style, sophistication and

rebellion he loved in both of the previous versions, but also to make his character "someone you can root for."

Amazon MGM Studios was received warmly by the exhibitors in the audience on the heels of their biggest theatrical release so far, and their promise to release 15 movies a year by 2027. "Project Hail Mary" continues to do big business, with over \$515 million in global box office earnings. It was so popular that it will be returning to IMAX theaters for one week starting Friday.

Filmmakers Phil Lord and Chris Miller even made a surprise appearance, with Ryan Gosling, to thank the exhibitors for playing the film in their theaters.

"This movie is now the biggest original movie of the year because you believed in it," Miller said.

The studio previewed their summer He-Man movie "Masters of the Universe," starring Nicholas Galitzine, and the family film "The Sheep Detectives," also with Galitzine, Hugh Jackman and Nicholas Braun. Pete Davidson also showed up with David Leitch for their gonzo action pic "How to Rob a Bank."

## Relief for concertgoers

# Jury finds Live Nation held 'illegal' monopoly

NEW YORK, April 16, (AP): A jury found Wednesday that entertainment giant Live Nation, which hosts tens of thousands of concerts a year, and its Ticketmaster subsidiary had a harmful monopoly over big venues.

The ruling, in a lawsuit brought by dozens of states, won't immediately bring relief for concertgoers who have long complained about high ticket prices. But it could cost Live Nation hundreds of millions of dollars and perhaps force the company to sell some of its concert venues when the judge hands out penalties later.

Among other things, the jury found Ticketmaster's anticompetitive practices led to people in 22 states paying an extra \$1.72 per ticket, which the judge could order the companies to pay back.

A jury in New York deliberated for four days before reaching its decision. State attorneys general who sued Live Nation said the verdict could potentially lead to lower ticket prices for music fans.

Live Nation said in a statement that the verdict "is not the last word on this matter."

The company predicted that once a remedy phase of the litigation is completed before the judge and all appeals are resolved, the outcome likely won't be much different from what the federal government achieved with a settlement it reached with the company just after the trial began.

That deal included a cap on service fees at some amphitheaters, plus some new ticket-selling options for promoters and venues - potentially allowing, but not requiring, them to open doors to Ticketmaster competitors such as SeatGeek or AXS.

The trial gave fans the equivalent of a backstage pass to a business that dominates live entertainment in the U.S. and beyond.

Live Nation CEO Michael Rapino testified, answering questions about matters including the company's Taylor Swift ticket debacle in 2022. Rapino blamed a cyberattack.

Jurors also got to see a Live Nation employee's internal messages to another employee declaring some prices "outrageous," calling customers "so stupid" and boasting that the company was "robbing them blind, baby." The employee, Benjamin Baker, who has since been promoted to a position as a ticketing executive, apologetically testified that the messages were "very immature and unacceptable."

Live Nation Entertainment owns, operates, controls booking for or has an equity interest in hundreds of venues. Its subsidiary Ticketmaster is widely considered to be the world's largest ticket-seller for live events.

The verdict could cost Live Nation and Ticketmaster hundreds of millions of dollars, based on the jury's estimate that customers paid an extra \$1.72 per ticket. The companies could also be assessed penalties. In addition, sanctions could result in court orders that they divest themselves of some entities, including venues such as amphitheaters that they own.

In its statement, Live Nation said the jury's award of \$1.72 per ticket applied to "a limited number of tickets" sold at 257 venues and representing about 20% of total tickets sold. The company estimated the aggregate single damages figure would be below \$150 million, though it would be trebled.

The civil case, initially led by the U.S. government, accused Live Nation of using its reach to smother competition - by blocking venues from using multiple ticket sellers, for example.

Live Nation insisted it is not a monopoly, saying that artists, sports teams and venues decide prices and ticketing practices. A company lawyer said its size was simply a function of excellence and effort.

"Success is not against the antitrust laws in the United States," attorney David Marriott said in his summation.

Ticketmaster was established in 1976 and merged with Live Nation in 2010. The company now controls of 86% of the market for concerts and 73% of the overall market when sports events are included, according to an attorney for the states, Jeffrey Kessler.

Ticketmaster has long drawn ire from fans and some artists. Grunge rock titans Pearl Jam battled the business in the 1990s, even filing an anti-monopoly complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice, which declined to bring a case then.

Decades later, the Justice Department, joined by dozens of states, brought the current lawsuit during Democratic former President Joe Biden's administration.

Days into the trial, Republican President Donald Trump's administration announced it was settling its claims against Live Nation.

A handful of the states joined the settlement. But more than 30 pressed ahead with the trial, saying the federal government hadn't gotten enough concessions.

New Jersey Attorney General Jennifer Davenport said in a release after the verdict that Live Nation's "illegal, anti-competitive practices" had driven up ticket prices and made it harder for fans to see their favorite acts.

New York Attorney General Letitia James called the verdict "a landmark victory."

After the victory, Kessler would not say specifically what the states will seek in the next phase of the litigation, which was expected to involve another lengthy legal proceeding before penalties are decided.

## CinemaCom



Christopher Nolan, director of the upcoming film 'The Odyssey,' speaks during the Universal Pictures and Focus Features presentation at CinemaCom on Wednesday, April 15, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (AP)



Steven Spielberg, director of the upcoming film 'Disclosure Day,' speaks during the Universal Pictures and Focus Features presentation at CinemaCom. (AP)



Cast members Kiki Seto, (from left), AnnaSophia Robb, Stephan James, Anthony Ippolito, and director Peter Farrelly of the upcoming film 'I Play Rocky' speak during the Amazon MGM Studios presentation at CinemaCom. (AP)



Cast member Camila Mendes, (from left), cast member Nicholas Galitzine, and director Travis Knight of the upcoming film 'Masters of the Universe' speak during the Amazon MGM Studios presentation at CinemaCom. (AP)

## Spielberg previews 'Disclosure Day' at CinemaCom

# "The Odyssey" is not a story, it's the story'

LAS VEGAS, April 16, (AP): Christopher Nolan gave theater owners a thrilling glimpse of "The Odyssey" on Wednesday evening at CinemaCom in Las Vegas. His adaptation of Homer's epic starring Matt Damon as Odysseus is one of the most hotly anticipated of the year, arriving in theaters on July 17.

"The Odyssey" is a story that has fascinated generation after generation for 3,000 years," Nolan said from the stage. "It's not a story, it's the story."

He introduced an extended clip from the film showing the arrival of the Trojan Horse and the intense nighttime infiltration of the city of Troy. Or, as Jon Bernthal's Menelaus calls it, "the story of the horse."

"The Odyssey" is the first motion picture shot entirely on IMAX film, thanks to the development of new cameras that aren't quite so noisy, fulfilling a dream Nolan said he's had since he was 16.

The film boasts a massive ensemble with Anne Hathaway playing Odysseus's wife Penelope, Tom Holland as his son Telemachus, Zendaya as the goddess Athena and Robert Pattinson as Antinous, one of Penelope's suitors. Nolan said it would be quicker to say who isn't in "The Odyssey," his first feature since "Oppenheimer," which won best picture and best director at the Oscars in 2024.

"It's always been a film, first and foremost, about this idea of family, this idea of homecoming," Nolan said, adding that it is almost done.

The footage was shown as part of the Universal Pictures presentation to exhibitors where the studio also has a new "Minions" movie and Steven Spielberg's original science fiction film "Disclosure Day"

coming to theaters this summer.

"I'm just really glad not to be following Steven Spielberg," Nolan said.

Later, Spielberg, like Nolan, got a rousing, retrospective montage of his films and a big standing ovation from the audience as well. For Spielberg's first visit to the convention, the Motion Picture Association even gave him an award. Colman Domingo, who co-stars in "Disclosure Day," led a discussion with Spielberg about his 35th feature, which opens on June 12.

Spielberg said he's always been fascinated by what's happening in the sky, and, particularly, the UFO phenomenon. And 50 years after "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," he said he's convinced that there's more truth to it than fiction. The movie, which also stars Emily Blunt and Josh O'Connor, has been kept quite secretive. Spielberg said he was adamant about not spoiling the third act.

"All I can say is it's an experience," Spielberg said. "And all you need to get from the beginning to the end is a seat belt."

He also spoke about the industry at large and the importance of giving the audience original stories.

"That is what's going to keep this business alive," Spielberg said.

Snoop Dogg kicked off the presentation performing "Drop It Like It's Hot" and announcing that he's partnered with Universal "to finally tell my story." Craig Brewer will direct and it's aiming to be in theaters next year.

"My movie will be rated R, you can believe that,"

he said. "So kids, get your parents' permission."

Universal currently has the year's biggest box-office hit in theaters with "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie," which has only been out for 15 days and has already made over \$631 million worldwide. It is on its way to being the year's first billion dollar movie, said Donna Langley, the NBC Universal Entertainment chairperson. Last month the studio also pledged to extend the exclusive theatrical window for all its movies to 45 days starting in 2027.

"We've always been a theatrical first studio," Langley said.

For decades the standard exclusive window was 90 days in theaters, but the pandemic and the rise of streaming led to drastic shifts from all the major studios. Universal experimented with 17-day windows during the pandemic era, as well as some day-and-date releases, but for its biggest movies they had already settled into the 45-day model.

It's an important guarantee for theater owners and operators with the box office still at a 20% deficit from its pre-pandemic highs. Disney, by contrast, has a 60-day window, the longest in the industry but still quite depleted from the old 90-day norm.

"Audiences will find what they want to watch whether they're big or small," Spielberg said. "But studios need to help us by expanding their exclusive windows like Donna Langley just did."

He added: "But today I've got to be greedy: Do I hear 60 days? ... We can all make it happen; we have to insist on making it happen."

— See Also Page 12

## Variety

NEW YORK: American Eagle Outfitters has announced the launch of the American Eagle (AE) brand's summer campaign, "Syd for Short: American Eagle Jean Shorts." There is no summer uniform more timeless than a pair of jean shorts and this season, American Eagle is redefining the iconic essential through the lens of Sydney Sweeney's effortless style. "Syd for Short" is the intersection of cool-girl aesthetic and AE's heritage of self-expression focused on summer's "it" product: jean shorts.

"From the free-spirits of the



Sweeney

1970s to the trendsetters of today, jean shorts have been the highlight of summer fashion for generations and no one perfects the warm-weather style like American Eagle," said Jennifer Foyle, President and Executive Creative Director, AE & Aerie. "Summer is defined by a rare kind of magic, an opportunity to live confidently and in the moment. Pairing classic cutoffs with Sydney Sweeney's signature ease makes AE denim the must-have shorts this season."

"Syd for Short" is the evolution of AE's partnership with Sydney Sweeney. The campaign introduces "Syd," a casual dimension of Sydney Sweeney, in AE shorts during her relaxed, everyday life, whether she's at home, running errands or enjoying the beach. Captured on the sand, against the backdrop of blue skies and open water, Sweeney is showcased at her most natural: sun-lit, playful and completely at ease. With a focus on key styles and summer favorites including the Low-Rise Shortie the campaign zeros in on something every sum-

mer wardrobe needs: a pair of AE jean shorts and the confidence that comes with them. (AP)

ISTANBUL: A 5th-century marble sculpture head from the ancient city of Smyrna has been repatriated to Türkiye from the United States, Culture and Tourism Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy said on Wednesday.

The artifact, dating back to the Theodosius period, was returned from the Denver Art Museum's collection following scientific verification that it originated from the Smyrna Agora excavations in modern-day Izmir, a major province on Türkiye's western Aegean coast, said Ersoy on X. Smyrna, one of the oldest settlements in the Mediterranean basin, was a prominent Greek and later Roman city.

Ersoy said that archival records from 1934 proved the piece had been unearthed during official excavations but was subsequently trafficked abroad through illegal channels. (Xinhua)



Jon Batiste performs during the Amazon MGM Studios presentation at CinemaCon on Wednesday, April 15, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (AP)

'Al Watan Baqee' and 'Abtalana Fakhra' chronicle Kuwait's unbreakable spirit

## Abbey's films salute Kuwait's resilience and frontline heroes

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Abbey's Productions, the trailblazing media house led by Sheikhha Abrar Khaled Al Sabah, has officially announced the launch of a definitive cinematic campaign designed to galvanize the national spirit and pay tribute to Kuwait's frontline heroes. In an unprecedented show of solidarity, the production house has mobilized Kuwait's leading stars and celebrities, leveraging their collective influence to support the national cause through two landmark works: "Al Watan Baqee" (The Homeland Remains) and "Abtalana Fakhra" (Our Heroes, Our Pride).

"Al Watan Baqee" serves as a sophisticated historical retrospective, weaving a narrative of endurance through Kuwait's most pivotal trials. The work bridges the collective memory of the 1985 café bombings (Taffirat Al Maqahi Al Shaabeya), the hijacking of the "Al-Jabriya," the 1990 Gulf War, and the 2003 Souq Sharq bombing with contemporary challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and modern regional tensions. The production underscores a singular truth: Kuwait's history is defined not by the crises it faces, but by its unwavering ability to emerge from them more unified.

Complementing this historical lens, "Abtalana Fakhra" spotlights the modern-day guardians across the armed forces, police, and healthcare sectors. By uniting the nation's most recognizable icons in this tribute, Abbey's Productions has transformed a media project into a movement of national gratitude, reinforcing the Nakhwa (Noble Chivalry) and civic duty that bind the community together.

Recognizing the cultural and strategic importance of the campaign, the Ministry of Information (MOI) has selected these works for their exceptional quality and national significance. Consequently, the productions are now being broadcast officially on Kuwait Television, ensuring these messages of pride and resilience reach every household across the country.

A central element of the campaign's forward-looking vision is the inclusion of Kuwaiti children, who take center stage in the upcoming visual installments. By depicting the youth stepping into the metaphorical shoes of today's frontliners, the production highlights these heroes as the ultimate blueprints for the next generation.



Abbey's Productions launches a cinematic campaign with Al Watan Baqee (The Homeland Remains) (left) and Abtalana Fakhra (Our Heroes, Our Pride), paying tribute to Kuwait's frontline heroes and national unity.



eration. Sheikhha Abrar Khaled Al Sabah, Founder of Abbey's Productions, emphasized that this initiative represents a deep personal commitment that transcends her role as an entrepreneur: "At this critical juncture, our absolute priority is the internal cohe-

sion and psychological fortitude of our people. We believe that the creative and entertainment sectors are not merely for aesthetic expression, but carry a profound responsibility toward the state. Art is a vital platform for national support and a strategic vessel for unity, especially during times that demand we stand as

one. By mobilizing our creative elite, we have transformed the media landscape into a pillar of national resilience."

Sheikhha Abrar continued: "I am deeply honored that the Ministry of Information has selected these works for broadcast on our national television. For me, this is the simplest

duty I can perform for Kuwait—not merely as an entrepreneur, but first and foremost as a daughter of this land. To contribute to the security of the national spirit is the highest honor I can achieve as a Kuwaiti, and it is a commitment that will always define my work."

By employing elite production

standards, Abbey's Productions ensures these national messages resonate with the dignity they deserve. The campaign fosters a deep sense of security and pride across all generations, reminding the public that Kuwait is strong enough to endure any challenge and return even more resilient.

### Variety

**NEW YORK:** As Madonna sang in her 2005 hit, "Hung Up," time goes by so slowly. But it continues to move.

On Wednesday, the pop superstar announced she'll release a new album, "Confessions on a Dance Floor: Part II," on July 3 via Warner Records - 21 years after the original.

It's exciting for a number of reasons: The album is a sequel to her 2005 release, "Confessions on a Dance Floor," and her first full-length in seven years, since 2019's "Madame X." The Associated Press characterized the latter album as a misstep, however, the original "Confessions" has been widely regarded as a return to the top of her pop powers. The critically acclaimed release, which produced such hits as "Hung Up," "Sorry," "Get Together" and "Jump," was dance-pop disco for a new era of clubgoers. It was certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and won a Grammy for best electronic/dance album in 2006.

Madonna has previously teased a second "Confessions" work. In December 2024, she shared an Instagram video of herself in the studio with the original album's producer, Stuart Price. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** As WWE gears up for WrestleMania this weekend, the biggest annual event for the professional wrestling organization, data shows that its appearance in Las Vegas last year had an economic impact worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Parent company TKO said Wednesday that recent studies conducted by research firm Applied Analysis show that the two-day premium live event had an economic impact of \$322.2 million, with wrestling fans traveling from all over the U.S. and abroad to spend money on hotels, restaurants, shops and at other businesses.

WWE organizes activities on the days surrounding WrestleMania as well, like meet and greets with wrestlers, its Hall of Fame ceremony and matches for weekly television shows "Smackdown" and "Raw", giving people more reasons to spend their money on a dayslong trip.

For Las Vegas, hosting WrestleMania for the second straight year is a way to entice visitors to the city as it contends with shifting trends in tourism. Las Vegas saw its fewest visitors in four years during 2025, and Strip gaming revenue rose less than 1%, according to statistics released in January. (AP)

### Film



People watch a trailer for the upcoming film 'As Deep as the Grave' featuring a character played by a generative AI version of Val Kilmer at CinemaCon on Wednesday, April 15, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (AP)

### 'As Deep as the Grave' sparks ethics debate

## AI Val Kilmer debuts in indie film trailer

LAS VEGAS, April 16, (AP): The filmmakers behind "As Deep as the Grave," the indie film that is using an artificial intelligence-rendered version of Val Kilmer in a prominent role, debuted a first look at the recreated actor Wednesday at CinemaCon in Las Vegas.

"Don't fear the dead and don't fear me," Kilmer's character, Father Fintan, a Catholic priest and Native American spiritualist, says at the end of the trailer.

The actor died last year at 65, of pneumonia. The use of generative AI to recreate Kilmer for the historical drama based on archaeologists Ann and Earl Morris became a hot button topic when the filmmakers announced it last month. The trailer shows Kilmer's character at various ages.

Writer-director Coerte Voorhees, along with his brother John, spoke on a panel Wednesday about the controversial decision to use technology to create a performance from a deceased actor and explained why they feel they've done it ethically by working with Kilmer's children and the actors union. Coerte Voorhees stopped short of calling it a Val Kilmer performance, however.

"Val Kilmer influenced this performance," Coerte Voorhees said.

Producer John Voorhees said the use of AI actors based on real people is risky territory for anyone to venture into but emphasized that they followed guidelines from the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists union that he boiled down to "consent, compensation and collaboration." Kilmer's estate, including his daughter Mercedes, gave permission for his digital replication, is

being compensated for it and provided archival footage to help the process.

They also compared Kilmer's AI-rendered performance to any actor portraying a historical figure on screen, as Kilmer once did with Jim Morrison in "The Doors." Kilmer also utilized AI while he was alive. When he lost his natural speaking voice following a throat cancer diagnosis and two tracheotomies, he turned to an AI software company to digitally recreate his voice. Kilmer's voice was also digitally altered to help his final screen performance in "Top Gun: Maverick."

Kilmer had signed on to "As Deep as the Grave" years ago; Much of the film was structured around his character, they said. When Kilmer had to pull out at the last minute due to health issues they decided to proceed shooting without the character instead of recasting the role. The production had numerous stops and starts as one of the first to begin shooting in New Mexico in the fall of 2020 amid the pandemic. They realized later that the story really did need Father Fintan, and decided to broach the topic with Kilmer's children, Mercedes and Jack.

"We were so glad they were so excited and so supportive of the idea," Coerte Voorhees said. "We didn't want to do it unless everybody thought this was going to work properly."

He said that Kilmer is on screen in the movie for one hour and 17 minutes; The final runtime was not revealed but he said it's long. The filmmakers plan to release it sometime this year.

— See Also Page 11

### Map reveals lost location

## Mystery of Shakespeare's London house finally solved

LONDON, April 16, (AP): Fans of William Shakespeare know that the great playwright came from Stratford-upon-Avon, the riverside English town where tourists still throng to see his childhood home.

But he made his name in London - though few traces of him remain in the British capital.

A newly discovered 17th-century map sheds new light on the Bard's London life, pinpointing for the first time the exact location of the only home Shakespeare bought in the city, and where he may have worked on his final plays.

Shakespeare scholar Lucy Munro, who found the document, said that it supplies "extra bits of the jigsaw puzzle" of Shakespeare's life. And as with so many discoveries, it was partly due to luck.

"I came across it in the London Archives when I was looking for other things," Munro said.

Historians have long known that Shakespeare bought property in 1613 near the Blackfriars Theatre, but the exact location was a mystery. A plaque on a 19th-century building records only that the playwright had lodgings "near this site."

A plan of the Blackfriars precinct found by Munro and disclosed Thursday by King's College London shows in detail Shakespeare's house, a substantial L-shaped dwelling carved from a former medieval monastery, including its gatehouse.

The 13th-century Dominican friary had been redeveloped for more secular uses after the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII in the mid-16th century. The precinct included the Blackfriars playhouse, which Shakespeare part-owned.

Munro, professor of Shakespeare and early modern literature at King's

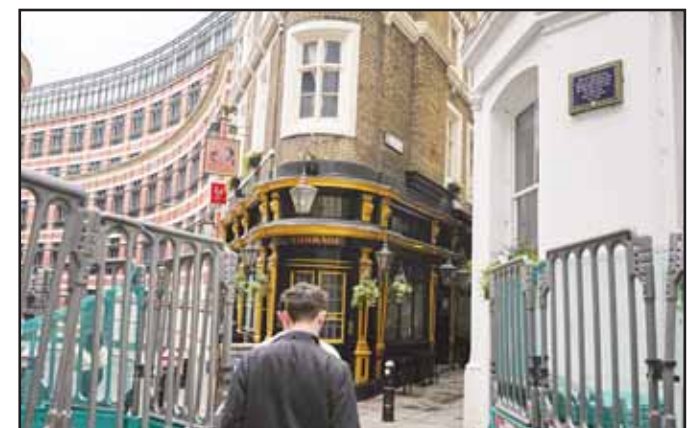
College London, said it was a desirable area moving slightly down-market - due to people like Shakespeare, who was affluent but associated with the slightly déclassé world of the stage.

"After the dissolution of the monasteries, a lot of the nobility, quite high-ranking courtiers, court officials are living in the Blackfriars," Munro said. By the time Shakespeare bought his property, "there are still a lot of important people living there, people who make protests against the playhouses at various points, because they see the playhouses as a bit of a public nuisance."

Shakespeare used the profits of his plays to build a fine family house, now demolished, in Stratford, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) northwest of London. He died there in 1616 at the age of 52.

It's not certain whether Shakespeare lived in his London property or just rented it out. But Munro said that the size of the house and its location a five-minute walk from the Blackfriars Theatre suggest he may have spent more time in London toward the end of his life than is widely assumed. She said that he may have worked here on his final plays, "Henry VIII" and "The Two Noble Kinsmen," both co-written with John Fletcher.

Will Tosh, director of education at Shakespeare's Globe - a reconstruction of the open-air Elizabethan playhouse where many of the Bard's plays were first performed - said that Munro's discovery provides a "dazzling new sense of Shakespeare the London writer. She's helped us to understand how much the city meant to our greatest ever dramatist, as a professional and personal home."



A plaque erected by the City of London to commemorate where William Shakespeare lived on a wall, (top right), is pictured in London, Wednesday, April 15, he purchased lodgings in the Blackfriars Gatehouse, which was located close by. (AP)

## Specialized programs aid recovery after major surgeries

## Physiotherapy helps patients with rehabilitation, not just pain relief

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Physical therapist Abdullah Al-Abdulwahab pointed out that physiotherapy goes beyond managing pain, as it also focuses on the rehabilitation of patients to help them return to their daily routine.

Al-Abdulwahab explained that individuals recovering

from major procedures like open-heart surgery need specialized programs to restore respiratory and chest muscle function, leading to a steady recovery of overall physical health.

On chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes, he stated that patients with these conditions often suffer from additional injuries, which necessitate close monitoring. He added these patients might need an extended recovery timeline, as such diseases can slow the reaction of the body to

therapy.

He stressed the need to stabilize blood pressure and blood sugar levels before initiating treatment sessions to prevent complications, along with a detailed medical history assessment for each patient.

On the other hand, he indicated that patients without chronic conditions respond to treatment faster and this shortens their overall recovery phase.

He added that public awareness on the benefits of physio-

therapy remains low, so many patients endure persistent pain without professional intervention.

He advocated for a healthy lifestyle centered on consistent daily activity, suggesting a target of 7,000 to 10,000 steps every day, complemented by a nutritious diet.

He asserted that ongoing pain should be addressed through medical and physiotherapy consultations, as prompt diagnosis can remarkably decrease the duration and effort required for successful treatment.

## 'Attention at risk'

## 'Put down your phone to reconnect and refocus'

NEW YORK, April 16, (AP): More than a dozen millennials gathered in a brownstone apartment in Brooklyn and placed their phones in a metal container before two hours of reading, drawing and conversation - anything but staring at screens.

A similar scene played out a few miles away, in an early 20th-century cardboard box factory turned high-end office space. Nearly 20 people in their 30s stared at their cellphones for a few minutes. Then they set them down and looked at their bared palms for a while. Then those of their neighbors.

The exercise was meant to drive home the importance of paying attention to real life, not the gleaming little screens that have taken over our world.

Two decades after Steve Jobs premiered the iPhone, a small but passionate movement - with offshoots in several countries - is rebelling against the omnipresent screen.

"The products have become more insidious and more extractive, exploitative," said Dan Fox, 38, who hosted the house gathering. Members of the nascent movement "want to start a revolution," he said.

But can an "attention activism" movement of millennials and Generation Z members break free of the world's largest companies? The raw numbers say no. But cultural changes start small, and the rebellion is growing against what many call "human fracking."

Apple and other Big Tech firms say they've taken steps to help users reduce time spent on their devices, including features that track usage and a less enticing gray mode.

Activists say it's not enough.

"They want to take down Big Tech," says Fox, a stand-up comedian who works in marketing for Brooklyn-based Light Phone, one of several "dumb phones" with only basic functionality.

Unlike most modern products, the company boasts of its phones' lack of features, like "social media, clickbait news, email, an internet browser, or any other anxiety-inducing infinite feed."

Fox was inspired to join the movement when he attended a 2015 Tame Impala concert at Radio City Music Hall. It felt as if everyone in the audience was filming the concert on their phones instead of immersing themselves in the music.

"I realized the phones are literally getting in the way of the things I love," Fox said.

Mobile internet access has so thoroughly permeated modern life that one of the few places in the world where it's not readily available is wartime Iran, where authorities shut down the internet during mass protests in January.

D. Graham Burnett is a historian of science at Princeton University and one of the authors of "Attensity! A Manifesto of the Attention Liberation Movement," making him a pillar of the growing backlash against the corporate harvesting of human attention.

Along with MS NOW host Chris Hayes' bestselling "The Sirens' Call: How Attention Became the World's Most Endangered Resource," his work is part of a growing body of literature calling for people to move away from screens and pay attention to life.

Burnett says the "attention liberation movement" is about throwing off the yoke of time-sucking apps. People "need to rewild their attention. Their attention is the fullness of their relationship to the world."

The people in Fox's living room started the evening by introducing themselves, as if at a support group.

"I don't feel good about my relationship with my phone. I feel like an addict," said Riley Soloner, who teaches theatrical clowning and works as an usher at Carnegie Hall. He arrived with a backpack full of books - the paper kind.

Across the Atlantic Ocean in the Netherlands, people filed into a neo-Gothic cathedral late last month for a meeting of the Offline Club.

"We create our events and gatherings with different themes. One of them is connecting with yourself through creative activities or reading or writing or puzzling," said co-founder Ilya Kneppelhout. "Really something that makes you slow down and reflect, go inward."

There are several dozen "attention activism" groups across the United States and Canada, and the movement has also cropped up in Spain, Italy, Croatia, France and England. Burnett said he expects it to spread further.

Members of Oberlin College's Harkness Housing and Dining Co-op decided to run their organization without emails and spreadsheets in January, expanding to a ban on technology in the shared spaces of the 1950s brick building.

"People expressed a feeling of relief about not needing to be checking their emails, or checking their texts or checking the news. That allowed us to spend a lot of time just talking to each other," said junior Ozzie Frazier, 21.

During the monthlong co-op project, Frazier said, people started checking out CD's from the library, and enjoying arts and crafts nights, live music and the board game Bananagrams.

"A lot of people felt very connected to each other. Not having the devices gave them some kind of mental space," Frazier said.

Wilhelm Tupy read "Attensity" after stumbling across it at a Vienna bookstore and visited the School of Radical Attention in Brooklyn's DUMBO neighborhood on a trip last month.

He felt he had found something that united his sporting career as a judo champion - with its need for focused "flow" - and his postretirement work as a business consultant.



Dr. Tariq Al-Shaiji, a Consultant Urologist from Kuwait.



Spina Bifida Multidisciplinary team, Sidra Medicine, Qatar.



Dr. Santiago Vallasciani

Procedure offers new treatment option for complex urology cases

## Kuwaiti doctor assists in Qatar's first pediatric sacral neuromodulation at Sidra Medicine

DOHA, Qatar, April 16: Sidra Medicine, has successfully performed a sacral neuromodulation implantation procedure on an eight-year-old child with spina bifida.

The innovative procedure, a minimally invasive solution for children suffering from severe bladder dysfunction was done in collaboration with Dr. Tariq Al-Shaiji, a Consultant Urologist from the State of Kuwait.

Dr. Mansour Ali, Chair of Pediatric Surgery at Sidra Medicine said: "This marks the first time the neuromodulation procedure has been carried out in Qatar on a child. I am proud of our joint efforts with Dr. Tariq Al-Shaiji, in bringing this expertise to our patients."

The introduction of sacral neuromodulation is a new treatment option now available in Qatar, for children over the age of seven, who do not respond to first-line therapies. The procedure has shown success in helping children control bladder and bowel activity.

In April 2024, a young patient with a neurogenic bladder and related complications caused by spina bifida, was referred to Sidra Medicine's Multidisciplinary (MDT) spina bifida clinic.

Prior to arriving at Sidra Medicine, she had undergone several medical procedures at other hospitals to control the condition. She was experiencing recurrent urinary tract infections and persistent incontinence. To prevent infections and maintain bladder function, her symptoms were being managed with a permanent catheter.

However, while the permanent catheter was placed to protect the child's kidneys, she kept experiencing persistent urinary tract infections. It was also limiting her ability to lead a normal life, including playing. She was also mired in constant state of anxiety about not being able to control her bladder function when outdoors.

**Introducing a minimally invasive alternative**  
Sidra Medicine's MDT spina bifida clinic includes specialists from urology, nephrology, rehabilitation, and neurosurgery. The team work together to evaluate complex cases and identify the most effective treatment options for each child.

The young patient's initial medical treatment program at Sidra Medicine included a detethering of the

spina by neurosurgery, followed by an endoscopic Botox treatment for her refractory neurogenic bladder. However, neither of these procedures were able to fully address the child's bladder dysfunction.

Dr. Santiago Vallasciani, Division Chief of Urology at Sidra Medicine who is part of the MDT SpinaBifida clinic said: "After having reviewed all possible options and seeing that previous procedures did not address her bladder dysfunction properly, we decided upon performing a sacral neuromodulation. The minimally invasive treatment was the most suitable option and a longer-term solution. Introducing this approach allows us to expand the range of care we can provide to complex pediatric patients while avoiding more invasive reconstructive surgeries whenever possible."

## Procedure

The procedure involves implanting a small battery-operated device, called a neurostimulator, that stimulates the sacral nerves — the nerves responsible for bladder control. Acting similarly to a pacemaker, the neurostimulator regulates nerve signals and can be programmed to optimize bladder function while minimizing disruption to the patient's daily life. The device is controlled by an external remote control.

**A collaborative medical effort**  
While sacral neuromodulation has previously been performed on a small number of adult patients in Qatar, it had not previously been carried out in younger children in the country.

As there weren't any pediatric experts based in Qatar who specialized in the procedure, the spina bifida clinic at Sidra Medicine collaborated with Dr. Tariq Faisal Al-Shaiji, Consultant Urologist from Kuwait. Dr. Al-Shaiji has extensive experience performing sacral neuromodulations and came to Qatar to support the introduction of the procedure at Sidra Medicine.

Dr. Tariq Al-Shaiji said: "I am pleased to collaborate with Sidra Medicine in bringing my expertise and techniques to offer this life-changing procedure for children in Qatar. As a second-line therapy, sacral neuromodulation will provide a non-invasive option for children with bladder dysfunction. We are confident that our joint efforts will change the course of pediatric urological services available in the country."

The sacral neuromodulation that was performed

on the patient involved two steps. The first temporary step was to place the neurostimulator outside of the patient's body for nearly two months. This was done to test any improvements to her urinary function and her body's acceptance of the implant.

Once the child showed progress during the trial period, the team took steps to permanently implant the neurostimulator under her skin. This would allow the device and the cables to remain inside her body. A thin wire (lead) from a neurostimulator device was connected to the child's sacral nerve.

The procedure was successfully performed in February 2026 at Sidra Medicine. Involving a team of anesthesiologists, general surgeons, urologists and neurosurgeons, the minimally invasive procedure and set-up took less than two hours.

The patient was discharged the day after the procedure and continues to receive regular follow-up by the care team.

Dr. Santiago Vallasciani continued: "We are pleased to report that the patient has responded positively to the procedure and is healing well. We have seen a consistent reduction in incontinence issues as well on her capacity to hold larger amounts of urine. Because the device has a long battery life, we are expecting it to last for up to 10 years. This procedure will have a significant impact on the quality of her life by reducing the need for medications and catheterizations as well as protecting her kidney function."

Following the success of its first sacral neuromodulation, Sidra Medicine has now added the procedure to its list of pediatric surgery options. Patients undergoing the procedure are advised to avoid heavy lifting or vigorous physical activity that could dislodge or damage the implant. They will continue to receive regular follow-ups to ensure continuity of care.

"Procedures like this are life changing. Children can go back to doing normal activities such as playing and going outdoors. It will allow them to feel more in control and relieve the anxiety they may experience when going to the bathroom. Being able to offer this procedure to our patients reflects our commitment to innovation, collaboration, and delivering world-class pediatric care in the region," concluded Dr. Mansour Ali.

**For more information about urology services at Sidra Medicine, please visit [www.sidra.org](http://www.sidra.org)**

## WHO says vaccinations saving millions in Africa

## Aid cuts, Iran war threaten vaccination progress

HARARE, Zimbabwe, April 16, (AP): Vaccination programs across Africa have saved tens of millions of lives over the past two decades, but progress is slowing in some countries, the World Health Organization said Wednesday, amid warnings that cuts to United States aid risk leaving millions of children unprotected.

Health systems in the continent of 1.5 billion people face growing uncertainty following the U.S. pullback from global health funding under President Donald Trump's "America First" policy, alongside disruptions linked to the war in the Middle East that are straining aid budgets and supply chains.

Announcing its first-ever comprehensive analysis of immunization in the region, the WHO said more than 500 million children have been reached through routine vaccination since 2000, preventing over 4 million deaths each year.

Overall, it said vaccines have saved more than 50 million lives in Africa over the past five decades, "gaining an estimated 60 years of life expectancy for each infant life saved" during that period.

In 2024 alone, vaccines saved nearly 2 million lives, the agency said, pointing to key milestones including the eradication of wild poliovirus in 2020, "a historic milestone for Africa," and the elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus in most countries.

Vaccines against malaria, a disease that kills more than 400,000 people annually, most of them children under five in Africa, are now being introduced in 25



A health worker shows a bottle of the malaria vaccine R21/Matrix-M before administering it to a child at the comprehensive Health Centre in Agudama-Epie, in Yenagoa, Nigeria, on Dec. 9, 2024. (AP)

countries. Mohamed Janabi, the WHO regional director for Africa, called that "a major scientific and public health breakthrough" during an online press briefing.

But he also warned that "progress is uneven and in some places really slowing," after the COVID-19 pandemic increased the number of children who have never received a single vaccine.

Ten countries account for 80% of children who haven't received any vaccine in the region, he said, describing it as "a profound equity issue."

"These immunization outcomes reflect very different realities, and we have more work to do to ensure we are consistently able to reach children, even in the most fragile and remote contexts," said Sania Nishtar, chief executive of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which partners with WHO in vaccination efforts.

Aid cuts since Trump returned to the White House in 2025 have been devastating, Janabi said. The U.S. withdrawal from WHO in January resulted in the loss of about 40% of the agency's overseas development funding, he said, and urged African governments to increase domestic health financing to mitigate the impact.

The U.S.-Iran war, which has disrupted supply chains and increased gas prices, is concerning for a continent where "many of our facilities depend on generators," said Adelheid Onyango, the WHO Africa director for health systems and services. She said the agency is yet to quantify the war's impact.

Health experts such as Shabir Madhi, a professor of vaccinology and dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at South Africa's University of the Witwatersrand, say funding is emerging as the "biggest threat" to Africa's immunization efforts as the U.S. and other Western donors tighten aid to poorer countries.

In many countries, aid-funded programs have already scaled back or shut down, reducing access to basic health services, including clinics, health workers, cold-chain infrastructure and outreach services that vaccination campaigns rely on.

## US to weigh easing restrictions on unproven peptides

WASHINGTON, April 16, (AP): The Food and Drug Administration will hold a meeting this summer to consider easing restrictions on more than a half dozen peptide injections, a group of unapproved therapies that have become popular among wellness influencers, fitness gurus and celebrities.

The meeting announcement Wednesday follows repeated pledges by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to loosen regulations on peptides, which are often pitched as a quick way to build muscle, heal injuries or appear younger. There's little research behind those claims and most peptides have not been reviewed for safety by the FDA.

Kennedy has discussed using peptides for his own

injuries. And some major supporters of his Make America Healthy Again movement are big proponents of them, including Gary Brecka, a self-described "longevity expert" who sells various peptide formulas through his website.

The FDA said in a federal notice Wednesday it will ask a panel of outside advisers to review seven peptides at a meeting in July, specifically whether they should be removed from a restrictive category reserved for risky, customized drugs. The peptides under discussion will include some of the most popular among influencers, such as BPC-157, which is marketed to heal injuries and reduce inflammation.

"The Wild West is about to become wilder," said

Dr. Peter Lurie, a former FDA official who now leads the Center for Science in the Public Interest. In an interview, Lurie said allowing peptides on the market without clinical testing poses a "profound threat" to FDA's decades-old system for vetting drugs.

"I don't see why one would take the path of a proper drug approval if there is now this less rigorous, alternative path to market," he said.

Under President Joe Biden, the FDA added nearly 20 of the most popular peptides to the federal list of substances that should not be produced by compounding pharmacies - businesses that mix medications that aren't available from drugmakers.



This wide-field, ground-based image provided by NASA on April 15, shows the visible light component of Cygnus X-1, (center), a rich source of X-rays in the constellation of Cygnus. (AP)

## Black hole jets measured in first study

For the first time, scientists have measured the instantaneous mind-blowing power of jets blasting from a black hole.

The jet power from this relatively close black hole-star system is equivalent to 10,000 suns, an international research team reported Thursday. They also tracked the jet speed: roughly 355 million mph (540 million kph) - half the speed of light.

Located 7,200 light-years away, Cygnus X-1 features not only a black hole - the first one ever identified more than a half-century ago - but a blue supergiant star, its constant companion. A light-year is nearly 6 trillion miles (9.7 trillion kilometers).

The University of Oxford's Steve Prabu and his team based their findings on 18 years of high-resolution radio imaging obtained by a global telescope network. He conducted the research while still at Australia's Curtin University, which led the study published in Nature Astronomy.

Prabu and his colleagues were able to measure the swift power of these "dancing jets" as he calls them, as they were pushed in opposite directions by the star's wind. The group based its calculations on how much the jets were bent by the stellar wind as well as computer modeling. (AP)

## SPORTS

# Tigres through to Champions Cup semifinals despite loss

Henrique leads Corinthians past Santa Fe

**SEATTLE, April 16, (Agencies): UANL Tigres lost the match but won their series on away goals.**

Albert Rusnak scored twice and the Seattle Sounders had a 3-1 victory over the Tigres, but the Tigres advanced to the CONCACAF Champions Cup semifinals.

Rusnak put the home team ahead in the 11th minute and added a goal in the 82nd minute, while Danny Musovski scored in the 49th. Joaquim Pereira scored in the 31st minute for Tigres, who won the first leg 2-0.

The Mexican squad progressed because away goals are the tiebreak in the CONCACAF Champions Cup.

Tigres, aiming for a second Cham-



Goalkeeper Fabio of Brazil's Fluminense blocks a goal attempt by Matias Fernandez of Argentina's Independiente Rivadavia during a Copa Libertadores Group C soccer match in Rio de Janeiro. (AP)

pions Cup title and first since 2020, will face Nashville SC, who defeated Club América.

Portuguese striker Joao Dias Fernandes Paulinho scored two goals in a six-minute span in the second half as Toluca FC cruised to a 3-0 victory over LA Galaxy to advance to the semifinals.

Jesus Gallardo opened the scoring in the 10th minute and Paulinho followed with goals in the 58th and 64th minutes.

Toluca, which won back-to-back titles in Mexico, advanced to the semifinals for the sixth time and will play LAFC.

The 33-year-old Paulinho, who recently was called up to play for Portugal in friendly matches against Mexico and the United States, scored five goals in the series which finished 7-2 on aggregate.

In Rio De Janeiro, Gustavo Henrique scored one goal and set up another as Brazil's Corinthians secured a 2-0 home win over Colombian side Santa Fe in the Copa Libertadores Group Stage.

The hosts went ahead just after halftime in Sao Paulo when Ranielie tapped in from close range after Henrique's headed pass.

Henrique extended the lead 10 minutes from time, meeting Rodrigo Garro's floating free kick with an acrobatic volley that looped into the far corner.

"In the first half they defended very well but we didn't let that affect our game plan," Henrique said after the match.

"We have to stay grounded. We are still getting used to the way the manager [Fernando Diniz] wants us to play and hopefully keep improving." The result leaves Corinthians top of Group E with six points from two outings, five clear of third-placed Santa Fe.



Clemente Montes of Chile's Universidad Catolica, left, and Matheus Henrique of Brazil's Cruzeiro battle for the ball during a Copa Libertadores Group D soccer match in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. (AP)

In other Copa Libertadores fixtures, Independiente Rivadavia won 2-1 at Fluminense, Universidad Catolica edged to a 2-1 away victory over Cruzeiro and Rosario Central prevailed 1-0 at Libertad.

In Buenos Aires, Brazil international midfielder Danilo scored a 93rd-minute winner as Brazil's Botafogo clinched a 3-2 away win over Argentine side Racing in the

Copa Sudamericana group stage.

Botafogo forward Arthur Cabral cancelled out Santiago Sosa's early goal before Junior Santos gave the visitors the lead just before halftime.

Adrian Martinez restored parity with a 64th-minute strike but Botafogo wrested back the lead in stoppage time when Danilo combined with Kadir Barria before slotting the

ball past Facundo Cambeses.

"It was a difficult game, but our team showed a lot of fight," Danilo said after the match. "Thankfully we were able to come away with the win and that I could help with a goal. We have to maintain this level to make sure we reach the knockout stage." Botafogo now leads Group E with four points, ahead of second-placed Caracas FC by virtue of a superior

goal tally. Racing is third, a point further back.

Elsewhere in the Copa Sudamericana, Sebastian Driussi's second-half strike gave River Plate a 1-0 home victory over Carabobo, Olimpia drew 0-0 at home to Barracas Central and Caracas FC prevailed 1-0 at home to Independiente Petrolero thanks to Wilfred Correa's 55th-minute goal.

## Atleti looks to end drought

# Griezmann targets perfect ending as Atletico faces Sociedad in Copa final

BARCELONA, Spain, April 16, (AP): Atletico Madrid and Real Sociedad vie for the Copa del Rey on Saturday in the neutral-venue final in Seville.

Atletico is seeking to cap a great week for its fans after Diego Simeone's team eliminated Barcelona in the Champions League quarterfinals and city rival Real Madrid also fell to Bayern Munich.

Sociedad seeks what would be a mild upset to secure a trophy under American coach Pellegrino Matarazzo after he took over the team midseason.

Since taking charge of Atletico in 2011, Simeone has turned what was a mess of a club into a consistent winner and one of Europe's toughest competitors. But it has gone nearly five years without silverware.

If it beats Sociedad, Atletico would lift its first trophy since the 2021 La Liga and its first Copa del Rey since 2013.

The Copa would give it an added boost before it faces Arsenal in the Champions League semifinals starting on April 29.

Atletico also beat Barcelona in the semifinals of the Copa del Rey.

Sociedad most recently won the 2020 Copa del Rey by beating Basque rival Athletic Bilbao in the final that was delayed for a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the New Jersey-born Matarazzo was hired in late December, Sociedad was just two points above the relegation zone. Since then it has risen into seventh place and is again aiming for a European berth.

Sociedad beat Osasuna, Alaves and Athletic to reach the final that will be played at La Cartuja Stadium.

In their only previous Copa del Rey final in 1987, Sociedad beat Atletico on penalties.

Antoine Griezmann, Atletico's all-time leading scorer, can cap his glorious run with the club by winning the Copa before he leaves to join Orlando City in the MLS next season.

The World Cup winner for France remains a key player for Simeone thanks to his vision and playmaking skills. But Atletico will also look to Julián Alvarez and Ademola Lookman for goals and workhorse Marcos Llorente to dog Sociedad in midfield or at right back.

Mikel Oyarzabal leads Sociedad from the striker position, and he has a record of deciding big matches. He scored the only goal in the 2021 Copa



Atletico Madrid's Nicolas Gonzalez, top, heads the ball during the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Barcelona in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

del Rey final and his late goal secured Spain's 2024 European Championship in the final against England.

He will be supported by winger Gonçalo Guedes and midfielder Carlos Soler.

Sociedad is almost at full strength after the recent return of forward Take Kubo but Atletico could still be missing center backs David Hancko and José María Giménez, both out injured. Former Sociedad center back Robin Le Normand will likely start for Atletico.

La Liga is resting this weekend.

Meanwhile, Barcelona forward Raphinha has apologized for his gesture toward Atletico Madrid fans after his team's elimination in the quarterfinals of the Champions League.

Raphinha, who didn't play because of a hamstring injury, also criticized the refereeing, making the "robbed" sign with his hands, and later told reporters that Barcelona was "robbed" over the two legs.

The Brazil star is likely to face punishment from UEFA for his actions at the Metropolitano stadium.

While still on the field, he gestured toward Atletico supporters and made a gesture apparently indicating

that the rival will be eliminated in the next round. He appeared to tell fans "you are out."

"I apologize for my gesture, which does not reflect my values or character," Raphinha said on Wednesday in a comment to a DAZN post that showed him gesturing to the crowd. "It was an act in a moment of tension, in response to a fan who was disrespecting me."

Barcelona, seeking to return to the semifinals of the Champions League



Atletico Madrid's Antoine Griezmann celebrates at the end of the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Barcelona in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

for the second season in a row, won 2-1 on Tuesday but it wasn't enough to overcome a 2-0 loss at home in the first leg last week.

Atletico goalkeeper Juan Musso said it was nonsense for Raphinha to say Barcelona was robbed.

"I respect everyone's opinion, but let's not say that it was a robbery, because it wasn't like that," Musso said. "We won it on the field. We won 2-0 on the road. It's a team that we respect a lot and are very motivated to play against. It's a great team, but I think that to talk about robbery is just crazy."

Raphinha did not immediately apologize for his comments about the refereeing.

"To me, it was 'robbed,'" he told reporters on Tuesday. "Not only this match, but the other one as well. The refereeing was very bad. Incredible the decisions that they made. Atletico made a lot of fouls and the referee didn't show a single yellow card."

Other players also criticized the refereeing over the two legs.

President-elect Joan Laporta said that the refereeing was "shameful" and "inadmissible," and said the club planned to present a formal complaint with UEFA.

## 'Serious mistake'

# Coach who admitted using false vaccine certificate fired

ZURICH, April 16, (AP): A Swiss hockey coach who admitted he used a certificate falsely claiming he'd been vaccinated against COVID-19 to get around China's travel restrictions for the 2022 Winter Olympics has been fired.

In a statement late Monday, head coach Patrick Fischer said

he made a "serious mistake in this matter" by traveling to Beijing with the Switzerland men's team using false paperwork.

The Swiss Ice Hockey Federation initially supported him, saying the case was closed because he had admitted to his mistake. But that changed with news of his dismissal.

"The case is legally closed but has triggered a public debate about values and trust, which the federation takes very seriously," federation president Urs Kessler said in a statement.

"From today's perspective, our initial assessment - that the matter was concluded - was too short-sighted. This is about values and respect, that are fundamental to Swiss Ice Hockey and which Patrick Fischer did not uphold in 2022."

Fischer had said before he was fired that "I'm very sorry if I've disappointed people with this situation."

"I was in an extraordinary

personal crisis because I didn't want to be vaccinated," he added. "At the same time I certainly didn't want to let my team down at the Olympic Games."

Swiss public broadcaster SRF said it confronted Fischer with documents showing he was fined nearly 39,000 Swiss francs (\$50,000) by local authorities in 2023 for document forgery after buying the certificate on social media. SRF said he went public with his admission shortly after.

Switzerland hosts the world championship next month. Fischer was already due to step down after that.

Jan Cadieux, Switzerland's former under-20 coach who had already been announced as Fischer's replacement beginning next year, will take over in the new job immediately, the federation said.

Fischer was one of Switzerland's most successful hockey coaches. He'd been in the post since 2015 and took the team to three Olympics as well as winning three world championship silver medals.

His team reached the quarterfinals at the 2022 Olympics, where COVID-19 testing was a requirement and the NHL stayed away because of the pandemic.

Ahead of the 2022 Olympics, China had some of the strictest COVID-19 rules in the world. It insisted any athletes heading to the Games had to either be vaccinated against COVID-19 or sit out a three-week quarantine in a hotel, as Swiss snowboarder Patrizia Kummer did.



Fischer

# USA Surfing regains status as national governing body

WASHINGTON, April 16, (AP): The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee recognized USA Surfing as the official national governing body for the sport in America, ending a multiyear saga that included the corporation's decertification and an attempt by U.S. Ski and Snowboard to take over.

The USOPC approved USA Surfing's application effective June 1, declaring the federation was financially stable and ready to guide the sport into the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles in 2028.

"USA Surfing's new leadership and new approach has made this moment possible," said USOPC chair Gene Sykes.

According to USA Surfing's own application, it voluntarily agreed to decertify in December 2021 after a USOPC audit made "many negative findings" related to the NGB's finances.

USA Surfing said last June it had secured a multimillion-dollar endowment to secure its finances, a key moment in what had become a contentious battle between the NGB and U.S. Ski and Snowboard, which is led by former World Surf League CEO Sophie Goldschmidt and was seeking to become the governing body for the summer sport.

USSS withdrew its application in November, saying in a news release that USA Surfing "chose public attacks and uninformed legal threats instead of constructive dialogue and engagement" as the two organizations bickered over who would oversee the sport.

The USOPC also certified USA Lacrosse as the NGB for that sport leading into LA, where the sport will be on the Olympic program for the first time as a medal sport since 1908.

# Ekitike to miss World Cup for France with leg injury

LIVERPOOL, England, April 16, (AP): Liverpool striker Hugo Ekitike will miss the World Cup because of a serious leg injury, France coach Didier Deschamps confirmed.

Ekitike sustained a suspected Achilles tendon injury in the 27th minute of Tuesday's Champions League match between Liverpool and Paris Saint-Germain and was taken off the field on a stretcher.

"The severity of his injury will unfortunately prevent him from finishing the season with Liverpool and from participating in the World Cup,"

Deschamps said.

Serious Achilles injuries can take more than six months to fully recover from.

Liverpool did not immediately confirm the news, but coach Arne Slot said Tuesday that the injury looked "really bad."

Ekitike has been one of Liverpool's top players this season and was expected to be part of France's squad for the World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico. He has scored 19 goals for club and country and scored for France in its 2-1 win

over Brazil last month.

"Hugo is one of about 10 young players who have made their debuts for the national team in recent months. He had integrated perfectly into the group, both on and off the pitch," Deschamps said. "This injury is a huge blow for him, obviously, but also for the French national team. His disappointment is immense. Hugo will get back to his best, I'm convinced of it. But I wanted to express my full support for him, as well as that of the entire staff."

Cape Verde debuting

# Spain and Uruguay set for blockbuster World Cup Group H clash

MADRID, April 16, (AP): European champion Spain and South American powerhouse Uruguay highlight World Cup Group H that also includes a Saudi Arabia team which upset Lionel Messi's Argentina four years ago and tiny newcomer Cape Verde.

The only group match outside of the United States will be the most anticipated: Uruguay vs. Spain in Guadalajara, Mexico, on June 26. The only previous World Cup matchups between the former champions were draws in 1950 and 1990.

Two games will be in Atlanta, both involving Spain. Two others involving Uruguay will be in Miami.

Cape Verde and Saudi Arabia face off in the only group game in Houston. Spain rebounded from round-of-16 elimination by Morocco at the 2022 World Cup by winning Euro 2024 in Germany. La Roja also won the 2023 Nations League, and was runner-up to Portugal in the 2025 Nations League.

Spain hasn't gone further than the last 16 in the World Cup since its lone world title in 2010.

The team has been coached by Luis de la Fuente, a former Spain youth coach, since Luis Enrique stepped down after the 2022 World Cup.

A trio of Barcelona players are set to lead the squad. In attack, 18-year-old Lamine Yamal will make his World Cup debut. The 19-year-old Pau Cubarsi is set to command the defense. And Pedri will anchor a midfield that will also likely include Manchester City's Rodri following a long layoff because of a knee injury.

Cape Verde, with a population of about 500,000, is the third smallest nation to qualify for the World Cup after Iceland and Curacao, which is the smallest ever.

The archipelago of 10 volcanic islands off the western coast of Africa secured one of the nine automatic spots in Africa from a group including continent powerhouse Cameroon and Angola. The Blue Sharks won all five home matches during qualifying without conceding a goal.

The nation has been coached by Pedro Leitao Brito, known as Bubista, since 2020. A former captain and defender for the national team, Bubista used to play in small clubs in Spain and Portugal.

Saudi Arabia will make its third straight World Cup appearance. It made headlines in Qatar in 2022 when it defeated eventual champion Argentina 2-1 in the group stage.

The Saudis boosted the domestic league by buying the likes of Cristiano Ron-



In this file photo, Spain's Rodri controls the ball during the final match between Spain and England at the Euro 2024 soccer tournament in Berlin, Germany. (AP)

aldo and Karim Benzema, which has helped to improve the quality of the national team that is coached by Frenchman Hervé Renard.

Renard was in charge at the 2022 World Cup then left to lead France women before returning to lead the Saudi men in 2024.

Saudi Arabia had its best World Cup finish the first time it qualified in 1994, reaching the round of 16 from a group that included the Netherlands, Belgium and Morocco. It hasn't passed the group stage in its five World Cups since then.

The Saudis will host the 2034 World Cup.

Two-time world champion Uruguay was fourth in South American qualifying behind Argentina, Ecuador and Colombia, and ahead of five-time world champion



In this file photo, Uruguay's Manuel Ugarte, left, fights for the ball with Peru's Kevin Quevedo during a World Cup 2026 qualifying soccer match in Montevideo, Uruguay. (AP)

Brazil. It didn't get past the group stage four years ago after reaching the quarterfinals in 2018 and the semifinals in 2010.

Uruguay is coached by veteran Argentine manager Marcelo Bielsa, who took over in 2023. He has been criticized recently after a run of lackluster results in friendlies, including a 5-1 loss to the United States in November. His squad hasn't won its last four matches.

Its top players include Real Madrid central midfielder Federico Valverde, Barcelona center back Ronald Araujo and Manchester United defensive midfielder Manuel Ugarte.

## Curry sparks huge comeback as Warriors edge Clippers in thriller



Los Angeles Clippers guard Kris Dunn, left, and Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry go after a loose ball during the second half of an NBA play-in tournament basketball game in Inglewood, Calif. (AP)

### Sixers earn first-round series against Celtics

**INGLEWOOD, Calif., April 16, (AP):** Stephen Curry scored 27 of his 35 points in the second half, Al Horford hit four 3-pointers during Golden State's electrifying fourth-quarter comeback, and the Warriors advanced in the NBA's play-in tournament with a 126-121 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Curry's seventh 3-pointer broke a tie with 50.4 seconds to play for the 10th-seeded Warriors, who erased a 13-point deficit in the fourth quarter.

Golden State finished on a 16-6 run and held Kawhi Leonard scoreless in the fourth until the final 16 seconds.

After this time-defying rally, Curry, Draymond Green and the postseason-tested Warriors are one game from another playoff berth despite going 37-45 in the regular season and losing Jimmy Butler for the season in January.

The Warriors will travel to face Phoenix on Friday, with the winner moving on to face defending champion Oklahoma City in the first round.

Leonard scored 21 points for the Clippers, who missed the playoffs for the first time since 2022 and only the third time during their streak of 15 consecutive winning seasons.

Benedict Mathurin led Los Angeles with 23 points and Darius Garland had 21 points and eight assists while battling foul trouble.

The Clippers led 98-85 with 9:53 to play, but the 38-year-old Curry led Golden State's furious comeback alongside Kristaps Porzingis, who scored 20 points, and the 39-year-old Horford.

Golden State got a classic second-half barrage from Curry, who returned only five games ago from a 27-game absence with a knee injury. He scored 16 points in a six-minute span of the third quarter to keep the Warriors in it while the Clippers nearly pulled away.

After Horford hit three 3-pointers down the stretch in the fourth quar-

ter, Gui Santos' layup with 2:45 to play trimmed the Clips' lead to 115-114. Horford's fourth 3-pointer put the Warriors up 117-115 with 2:12 left.

The Clippers rallied from a chaotic 6-21 start to finish 42-40 in this once-woebegone franchise's 15th consecutive winning season - the NBA's longest active streak. But two late-season losses to Portland dropped Los Angeles to the No. 9 seed, requiring the Clips to get two play-in victories instead of one to make the playoffs.

After managing just eight points on 2-for-9 shooting in the first half, Curry scored 16 points and hit three 3-pointers in six electrifying minutes of the third quarter.

Tyrese Maxey scored 31 points, V.J. Edgecombe added 19 points and 11 rebounds, and the Philadelphia 76ers weathered the absence of Joel Embiid to beat the Orlando Magic 109-97 and secure the No. 7 seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs.

The Sixers moved on to a first-round series that begins Sunday at Boston.

Desmond Bane and the Magic aren't done yet. They will host Charlotte on Friday night, with the winner earning the No. 8 seed in the East and a first-round matchup with Detroit.

The Hornets held on to beat Miami 127-126 when Miles Bridges blocked Davion Mitchell's attempt at a winning layup at the buzzer. Charlotte's LeMelo Ball will play, although he was fined \$35,000 for what the league said was an uncalled flagrant foul when he tripped Bam Adebayo, causing a back injury that forced the Miami star out of the game.

Embiid had an emergency appendectomy last week in Houston. While the 76ers haven't given a timetable for his return, the two-time scoring champion returned to the team on Wednesday, surprising teammates in the locker room and watching the game from the bench.

Maxey, named an Eastern Conference All-Star starter for the first time in his career, scored seven straight points late in the fourth to give the Sixers some breathing room against a Magic team that wasted a chance to play this game at home with a late collapse in a loss to the Celtics in the season finale.



Orlando Magic's Wendell Carter Jr. (34) goes up for a rebound between Philadelphia 76ers' Kelly Oubre Jr. (9) and Paul George (8) during the second half of an NBA play-in tournament basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

## 'Iran will participate in World Cup 'for sure' despite war'

WASHINGTON, April 16, (AP): FIFA President Gianni Infantino said Wednesday that Iran will participate in the World Cup "for sure" despite its war with the United States.

Speaking at CNBC's Invest in America Forum, Infantino said it is important that Iran participates in the World Cup even though its participation has been in doubt since the U.S. and Israel launched airstrikes on the country.

"The Iranian team is coming for sure, yes," Infantino said. "We hope that by then, of course, the situation will be a peaceful situation. As I said, that would definitely help. But Iran has to come.

Of course, they represent their people. They have qualified. The players want to play."

Infantino met with the Iranian national team in Antalya, Turkey, two weeks ago and said Wednesday he was impressed.

"I want to see them. They are actually quite a good team as well," Infantino said. "And they really want to play and they should play. Sports should be outside of politics now."

Infantino acknowledged it's not always possible to achieve the separation of sports and politics.

"OK we don't live on the moon, we live on planet Earth," Infantino said. "But you know

if there is nobody else that believes in building bridges and in keeping them, you know, intact and together, well we are doing that job."

The United States will co-host the World Cup with Canada and Mexico.

Iran is scheduled to play two group-stage games in Inglewood, California, and one in Seattle.

The war has raised doubts about Iran's participation in the World Cup. There have been conflicting public comments from Iranian government and soccer officials. U.S. President Donald Trump discouraged the Iranian team from attending the tournament, citing safety concerns.

## Champions League Elite enters decisive stage

RIYADH, April 16: The AFC Champions League Elite moves into a crucial knockout phase with the quarterfinals, where East meets West in highly anticipated clashes following an intense journey through the group stage and Round of 16.

Reigning champion Al-Ahli face Malaysian surprise package Johor Darul Ta'zim, who has impressed throughout the tournament to reach this stage. Al-Ahli, led by German coach Matthias Jaissle, enters the match under pressure amid mixed domestic form, but the continental campaign remains a key priority with just three wins separating it from the title.

Johor arrives full of confidence after eliminating Japan's Sanfrecce Hiroshima 3-1 in the Round of 16, underlining its status as one of the tournament's standout sides. With quality foreign players such as Samu Castillejo and Marcos Guilherme, the Malaysian club poses a serious threat.

In another quarterfinal, Al-Ittihad takes on Japan's Machida Zelvia in a challenging encounter for the Saudi champions. Coach Sérgio Conceição is aiming to bounce back from domestic disappointment and refocus



Al-Ahli players celebrate after booking place in the quarterfinals.

on continental success, but faces a difficult task amid ongoing technical and performance issues within the squad.

## Messi accused of breaching \$7 million contract by sitting out exhibition match

MIAMI, April 16, (AP): Lionel Messi is being sued by a Miami-based event promoter who says the soccer icon violated terms of a \$7 million contract by missing an exhibition match last year.

Vid Music Group filed the lawsuit for fraud and breach of contract against Messi and the Argentine Football Association in Miami-Dade circuit court last month, according to court records.

Messi and the AFA didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment. Considered one of the greatest soccer players ever, Messi appears with both his Major League Soccer club Inter Miami and Argentina's national team, and fans routinely pay much higher prices for the chance to see him play.

According to the lawsuit, Vid signed a deal with the AFA last summer for exclusive rights to organize and promote Argentina's friendlies last October against Venezuela and Puerto Rico in exchange for ticket, broadcast and sponsorship revenue. Vid claims that Messi was supposed to play for at least 30 minutes in each match, unless

he was injured. The 38-year-old Messi watched Argentina's 1-0 win against Venezuela on Oct. 10 from a suite at South Florida's Hard Rock Stadium, according to the lawsuit.

The next day, Messi scored two goals in Inter Miami's 4-0 MLS win over Atlanta. That match was important to Inter Miami, since it gave them home-field advantage for Round 1 of the playoffs.

Then, on Oct. 14, Messi played in Argentina's 6-0 win over Puerto Rico. That game was originally supposed to take place in Chicago, but low ticket sales in the city where Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents were making more than 1,000 arrests led organizers to move the game to Florida. AFA blamed the immigration crackdowns when the smaller venue in Fort Lauderdale didn't sell out, even after ticket prices were reduced to \$25 each.

Vid hasn't specified damages they're seeking in the lawsuit, but they claim they lost millions between Messi failing to appear in one game and low ticket sales at the other.

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Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Romario Shepherd hits a six during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Lucknow Super Giants in Bengaluru, India. Bengaluru beats Lucknow by 5 wickets. (AP)

# Sports

## Qadsia and Kuwait Club ready for defining moments

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Qadsia will conclude its preparations on Saturday in Doha ahead of Sunday's semi-final clash against Qatar's Al Rayyan in the Gulf Club Champions League.

Head coach Nabil Maaloul has focused on boosting morale and the psychological readiness of the squad, as the team faces several notable absences.

Qadsia will be without Bader Al-Mutawa, Khaled Ibrahim, and Talal Al-Fadhel due to work commitments, as well as Abdulaziz Wadi and Mubarak Al-Fanini, posing a challenge for the technical staff after a long break from competitive action.

Maaloul and his assistants also studied Al Rayyan by watching their Qatar Stars Cup final against Muaiter, taking tactical notes ahead of the crucial tie.

The Kuwaiti side has been in a Doha training camp since last week, playing one friendly that ended in a goalless draw with Al Bidda, after schedule adjustments caused by delayed travel procedures.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Club will complete its preparations on Saturday in Bishkek ahead of Sunday's AFC Challenge League quarter-final against Oman's Al Shabab.

The team arrived on Wednesday and held its first training session after wrapping up its camp in Saudi Arabia's Dammam, where it recorded a 6-1 win over Al Taraji and a 1-1 draw with Al Fateh in friendlies.

Kuwait Club will be missing Sami Al-Sanea, Fahad Hamoud, and Ahmed Al-Zanki, although coach Nebojsa Jovovic is expected to rely on squad depth to cover the absences.



Nebojsa and Saud Al-Houshan take part in Kuwait Club training session.

## Al-Khudr praises Al-Jalahma support for Kuwaiti coaches in a key meeting

By Khaled Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma, received handball goalkeeper coach Ali Al-Khudr in a meeting that highlighted ongoing efforts to support national sports talent and recognize their achievements.

The meeting aimed to honor Al-Khudr's successful coaching career, which has seen notable accomplishments at both continental and international levels through his work with several clubs and national teams, including the Brazil national handball team, Egypt's Zamalek, Saudi Arabia's Al-Khaleej, and Kuwait Club.

The discussion also explored ways to further support Kuwaiti coaches abroad and expand opportunities for national expertise to compete and succeed in international sporting arenas, strengthening Kuwait's presence globally.

Al-Jalahma stressed the importance of continuing this positive trajectory, noting that such figures represent a source of pride for Kuwaiti youth and reflect their ability to achieve success on the international stage with continued institutional support.

For his part, Ali Al-Khudr expressed gratitude to Al-Jalahma for his strong backing of athletes and coaches across different sports. He described the meeting as constructive and positive, emphasizing that having a minister with a sport-



A formal meeting between Dr. Tareq Al-Jalahma and Ali Al-Khudr, reflecting cooperation and coordination in a professional setting.

ing background brings deeper understanding of the needs of coaches. He also noted the minister's keen interest in identifying challenges facing Kuwaiti coaches, with the aim of removing obstacles and providing a stronger platform for sporting excellence in Kuwait.

## Kuwait competes in FEI international champ'ship



Hussein Al-Kharafi preparing for the championship.

KUWAIT CITY, April 16: The Kuwait national equestrian team is continuing its participation in the final stage of the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) Group VII Championship, held at the Longines Arena in Al Shaqab, Doha, and running through Saturday.

The competition brings together more than 100 male and female riders from across the region, featuring both individual and team events with jump heights of up to 145 cm. The four-day championship also serves as an important qualification event for riders.

Kuwait's squad in the youth and junior categories includes:

Youth category: Hussein Ahmed Al-Kharafi, Ali Ahmed Al-Kharafi, Madi Ali Al-Khamis, and Amer Hisham Al-Shatti.

Junior category: Ghazi Fawaz Al-Fulaij, Mohammed Khaled Al-Mulaifi, and Moudhi Fahad Al-Jabri.

## Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal close to sealing Al-Hilal ownership deal

RIYADH, April 16: Al Hilal is on the verge of entering a new ownership era under Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal, with the anticipated takeover expected to be completed within hours.

Yasser Al-Rumayyan, Governor of Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, recently confirmed that an official announcement regarding the sale of the fund's stake in one club will be made within the next two

days, without disclosing the club's identity.

However, multiple reports suggest Al Hilal is the side involved. Ashraf Al-Awsat had previously reported that Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal reached an agreement to acquire a significant stake in the Saudi giant.

In a parallel development, Al-Riyadiyah reported that Al Hilal has submitted an official offer to Liverpool sporting director Richard Hughes to take on the same role at the club starting next season.

The report added that Hughes has requested to bring a full team of six staff members, with negotiations still ongoing over final contractual details.

Should the deal go through, Hughes would be among the first major appointments under the new Al Hilal ownership structure, with further reinforcements expected in the summer transfer window.

Meanwhile, reports from Thmanya indicate that sweeping administrative and sporting changes are being prepared following the ownership transition, including the introduction of new roles aimed at reshaping the club's structure and boosting performance in the new season.



Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal

### Best of the Rest

**Ulberg says he lost title belt:** Carlos Ulberg fought through an injured right knee to capture the light heavyweight title in UCF 327.

He says he lost it hours later, literally. The 35-year-old from New Zealand defeated Jiri Prochazka in the main event at UFC 327 by knockout this weekend in Miami to become the new champion of the light heavyweight division. He told Fox Sports Australia on Monday that he misplaced his golden title belt while celebrating his victory.

"I've lost the belt, bro," Ulberg told Fox Sports. "Initially after winning, the plan was to not have a drink. But you know how these things go, right? First, someone gives you a champagne to celebrate. Then one thing leads to another and you're doing shots."

His knee injury could keep him sidelined for a year, meaning he will have to give up his champion status anyway, with UCF holding an interim title fight to take his place.

But Ulberg said he's fairly confident his belt will be found before he heads to Las Vegas to get further evaluation from doctors there on his knee. He then plans to spend time at the UFC Performance Institute before returning to New Zealand to be with family.

"I didn't want to be carrying the belt around so I think it's still there at the apartment somewhere. One of the boys probably has it in bed with him," Ulberg said. (AP)

## Late Bayern surge ends Real hopes in Champions League 7-goal thriller



Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham, right, jumps for the ball with Bayern's Aleksandar Pavlovic during the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Bayern Munich and Real Madrid in Munich, Germany. (AP)

### Arsenal outlasts Sporting to set up semifinal against Atletico

**MINICH, April 16, (AP):** Bayern Munich turned the tables on old rival Real Madrid.

Luis Diaz and Michael Olise scored late for the Bavarian powerhouse to beat Madrid 4-3 and advance to the Champions League semifinals.

In the last four two-legged ties between the sides, the Spanish giant had prevailed each time.

The second-leg quarterfinal game ended in acrimony with Madrid's players furious that referee Slavko Vinčić sent off substitute Eduardo Camavinga in the 86th minute with a second yellow card for an innocuous challenge on Harry Kane.

Diaz fired inside the right post three minutes later, and Olise ended the contest definitively with a spectacular strike in stoppage time to give Bayern a 6-4 win on aggregate after the Bavarian powerhouse won the first leg of their quarterfinal 2-1 in Madrid last week.

Madrid's players surrounded Vinčić after the game. Arda Guler, who scored two brilliant goals to spark the visitors' hopes of a famed "remontada."

Bayern will play defending champion Paris Saint-Germain in the semifinals.

Guler opened the scoring after just 34 seconds, thanks to a mistake from Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer, who was outstanding in the first leg, whose attempted pass went straight to the 21-year-old Turkey star, who fired the ball into the empty net from distance.

Bayern seemed unfazed, and

Aleksandar Pavlovic equalized with a point-blank header from a Joshua Kimmich corner in the sixth minute. Bayern maintained its dominance, with Madrid patiently looking for breaks.

Konrad Laimer did well to block Kylian Mbappé, who had an adhesive bandage above his right eye after getting a heavy blow to his face last weekend.

Guler beat Neuer with a brilliant free kick in the 29th, but Bayern had legitimate complaints that it should not have been awarded, with Brahim Diaz going down after minimal contact from Laimer.

Bayern again seized control, and it was no surprise when Harry Kane equalized in the 38th minute inside the right post after being left free by

English compatriot Trent Alexander-Arnold.

Bayern, which smashed the Bundesliga goals record last weekend, can clinch yet another German league title on Sunday - the 13th in 14 years - if Borussia Dortmund drops points the day before.

It's back-to-back Champions League semifinals for Arsenal.

A 0-0 draw with Sporting Lisbon at the Emirates Stadium Arsenal advance 1-0 on aggregate to set up a clash with Atletico Madrid in the last four of European club soccer's top competition.

A Premier League and Champions League double remains possible for Mikel Arteta's team, despite a slump in form in recent weeks.

Bayern Munich beat Real Madrid

4-3 in Wednesday's other second-leg quarterfinal to advance 6-4 on aggregate. The Germans face defending champion Paris Saint-Germain in the semifinals.

Arsenal has never won the European Cup and only once reached the final. But it is now just two games away from this year's showpiece in Budapest, Hungary.

Kai Havertz's late winner in the first leg of the quarterfinals in Portugal last week proved to be decisive as Sporting failed to find a breakthrough in London.

It is the fourth time Arsenal has advanced to the semifinals and the first time it has gone back-to-back having lost to eventual winner Paris Saint-Germain at that stage last season.

The result was the perfect way for Arsenal to start a crucial week in which it also plays Premier League title rival Manchester City on Sunday.

There have been signs of the tension getting to Arteta's players as the season enters the closing stages, having lost the English League Cup final against City and then crashing out of the FA Cup at the hands of second-division Southampton.

Defeat at home in the league against Bournemouth last weekend only added to the sense that it was faltering at a critical time.

"Who cares what people think? All that matters is what this group thinks, what the manager thinks and we're in another semifinal," Rice said. "Bring on the last few weeks. It's a roller coaster, no one's going to hand you anything in this game, so just keep going and, what will be will be."



Arsenal's William Saliba, left, and Sporting's Luis Suarez fight for the ball during the UEFA Champions League second leg quarterfinal soccer match between Arsenal and Sporting in London, England. (AP)