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How similar today is to yesterday ... a headline from Al-Seyassah Page 5 newspaper 46 years ago

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Opinion

First Deputy Prime Minister's statement clarifies everything, so it is important to understand it

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

OVER the past five weeks, Kuwait has witnessed a series of events that have dominated public discussion and raised multiple questions on different issues. These include reports of Iranian attacks on civilian facilities, attacks targeting Kuwait by Iraqi militias affiliated with Tehran, exposure of espionage and terrorist cells, and the financing of foreign

terrorist organizations.

Additional public questions have also been raised about the full resumption of operations at public facilities, the reopening of Kuwait International Airport, and decisions related to citizenship revocations, which have generated widespread debate, particularly due to limited responses from the relevant official authorities. They preferred to work smart and silently so as not to stir up controversy regarding any issue and to prevent interpretations from going too far, especially in a society open to freedom of opinion and the proliferation of social media, including individuals who feign influence

and pretend having connections.

Indeed, wars change people's moods and create a state of caution. If this was the case previously, how much more so now that social media has spiraled out of control?

Social media has taken up a large share of the attention of the relevant state authorities at a time when they most needed to focus on their responsibilities, including maintaining security, social stability, and the economy.

Over the past five weeks, Kuwait has successfully navigated difficult challenges and managed to over-

come the crisis with minimal losses.

As always, the Kuwaiti people demonstrated resilience in confronting the aggression. Maintaining social stability is half the battle.

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PM reviews Kuwait airport readiness ahead of restart

Egypt rejects any threat to Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, April 19, (Agencies): His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited the Kuwait International Airport, accompanied by Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and President of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

During the visit, His Highness held a meeting where he was briefed by officials on reopening plans and measures taken to ensure smooth operations, including the readiness of facilities, safety and security systems, and precautionary procedures.

He also toured key areas of the airport, including departure and arrival halls, customs inspection points, baggage handling systems, operational and technical support systems, as well as the latest preparations in runways and ground services.

His Highness stressed the importance of full coordination among relevant entities to ensure the airport's readiness for operations in line with approved plans, supporting air transport in the country.

He commended the significant efforts of national and technical personnel in preparing the airport and ensuring the resumption of air traffic following the suspension imposed by exceptional circumstances.



PM Diwan photo
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visits the Kuwait International Airport, accompanied by Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and President of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo
Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi receives Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In other news, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi discussed on Sunday with Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah the latest regional developments and efforts exerted in this regard.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the talks took place during President El-Sisi's reception of Sheikh Jarrah on the occasion of his official visit to Egypt.

The meeting also reviewed the strong fraternal relations between the two countries and their peoples, as well as ways to further support and enhance cooperation across various fields.

Sheikh Jarrah conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal

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Gold gets its glow back, dollar dims

KUWAIT CITY, April 19, (KUNA): Global market developments were reflected in the gold and silver prices in Kuwait.

According to a report issued by Dar Al-Sabaek Company, the price of 24-karat gold reached about KD 48,525

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2 'MoE, private sector liaison result-oriented'



8 Zain Kuwait's most awarded 5G network, wins Open-signal's Best Network Award

Rain set to soak Kuwait, eases off by Wednesday

KUWAIT CITY, April 19 (KUNA):

The acting Director of the Meteorological Department, Dhirar Al-Ali, says rainfall is expected to continue until Wednesday morning, accompanied at times by thunderstorms and active winds that may raise dust.

Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Ali explained that weather maps indicate continued rain across the country through Wednesday morning, with an increase in low

and medium cloud cover and the formation of cumulonimbus clouds bringing scattered showers that could be thundery at times.

Intermittent active winds may stir up dust, leading to reduced visibility in some areas and rougher sea conditions. He indicated that the light rainfall experienced on Sunday will intensify on Monday and Tuesday, and gradually diminish by Wednesday morning.

UNHCR envoy wraps Kuwait post amid widespread acclaim

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to the State of Kuwait Lena Maryana organized a farewell reception for Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Kuwait Nisreen Rubaian on the occasion of the conclusion of the successful diplomatic mission in the country.

Present at the event were a number of ambassadors and representatives of various diplomatic missions and international organizations.

In her speech at the event, Maryana expressed her deep appreciation for the vital role that Rubaian played throughout her tenure, praising her notable humanitarian contributions and her tremendous efforts to strengthen



Photo during the farewell reception for Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Kuwait Nisreen Rubaian.

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GPMA axed

4 lose citizenship

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm" Sunday published Cabinet Resolution No. 200/2026, which revokes the Kuwaiti citizenship of four individuals, along with those who acquired it through dependency.

The resolution is based on Article 21 bis (a) of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959 concerning the Kuwaiti Nationality Law and its amendments.

Article 21 bis (a) permits the revocation of citizenship if it is proven to have been obtained unlawfully through fraud, false statements, or the use of invalid documents.

In other news, Decree No. 59/2026 has been issued, repealing Decree No. 346/2007 on the establishment of the Government Performance Monitoring Agency (GPMA), reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Article 1 of the decree, which was published in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm," stipulates the cancellation of Decree No. 346/2007.

Article 2 assigns the responsibilities of GPMA, as outlined in the repealed decree, to the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. It also allows the Council of Ministers to delegate any of these responsibilities to one or more public entities.

Article 3 provides for the transfer of permanent employees of GPMA to the Civil Service Commission (CSC), for placement in government entities with their existing grades and salaries.

Article 4 stipulates the termination of services of temporary and contracted employees of GPMA, effective from the date of the decree, without prejudice to applicable procedures in this regard.

Energy backbone steadies

Kuwait oil sector leadership praises workforce resilience

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: In a message from senior officials in the oil sector to employees of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries, Chief Executive Officer of KPC Sheikh Nawaf Al-Saud Al-Sabah emphasized that Kuwait was subjected to Iranian attacks for six weeks as a result of disputes in which Kuwait had no part.

In a video posted by KPC on its X account, Sheikh Nawaf praised the role of oil sector workers, and highlighted their vital contribution during the crisis.

The Managing Director of Human Resources and Comprehensive Services Hisham Al-Rifai said the war and its repercussions tested the patience of the oil sector employees, as they faced real-world challenges.

The Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) Wadha Al-Khateeb commended oil sector workers and emergency response teams for their vital role during the exceptional circumstances Kuwait experienced.

The Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Ahmed Al-Eidan expressed his pride in the role of oil sector workers and employees during the crisis.

The Chief Executive Officer of

Kuwait Gulf Oil Company, Bader Al-Munaifi, stated that the oil sector is not merely facilities and an economic asset, but the very soul and resilience of Kuwait.

The Chief Executive Officer of Petrochemical Industries Company, Nadia Haji, said the oil sector is part of a larger system that protects Kuwait. She also praised the role of the armed forces in safeguarding the country from all dangers and confronting all challenges.

The Managing Director for Planning and Finance, Bader Al-Attar, affirmed that the oil sector will recover strongly and that all damages will be repaired.

The Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company, Issa Al-Maraghi, stated, "With true national will, this phase will be overcome and will pave the way for a better future."

The Managing Director for Global Marketing and Acting Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Oil Tanker Company, Sheikh Khaled Al-Sabah, expressed his gratitude to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, and His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, for their support of all the state's efforts to ensure Kuwait's continued security and safety.

The Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Petroleum International, Shafi Talib Al-Ajmi, said the efforts of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah with the oil sector in the field during the crisis confirm the solidarity of all state entities during times of crisis.



Sheikh Nawaf



'MoE, private sector liaison result-oriented'

Education minister meets Al-Jarallah, press owners



Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah, and Director of Printing Presses Hussein Ibrahim.



Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah, Dhari Al Mouasherji and Marzouq Al-Jassem.

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: In a fraternal meeting reflecting institutional cooperation, Minister of Education Eng. Sayed Jalal Al-Tabtabaei welcomed Dean of Kuwaiti Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Seyassah and Arab Times newspapers Ahmed Al-Jarallah at his office on Sunday, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The meeting was held in an exceptional atmosphere of mutual respect, with owner of Al-Mouasherji Printing Press Dhari Al-Mouasherji and owner of Al-Risala Printing Press Marzouq Al-Jassem in attendance.

During the meeting, Al-Tabtabaei highlighted the important achievements of the Ministry of Education, particularly the acceleration of its digital transformation and expansion of online services for the educational and administrative sectors.

He affirmed the remarkable progress in easing procedures through the official digital platforms, most notably the 'Sahel' application, which optimized handling complaints, transfer requests and diverse administrative services in a highly efficient manner.

He cited the systematic efforts to address personnel concerns and modernize work mechanisms in various sectors of the ministry.

He stated that the educational system necessitates continuous monitoring and the intensive efforts of all sectors, considering the ministry is one of the huge institutions in the country in terms of operational volume and human capital. He disclosed that the ministry oversees more than one million students in public and private schools, supported by about 160,000 employees, so

it is at the forefront of national and educational responsibilities.

He attributed these milestones to the wise directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the unwavering commitment of the political leadership to improve the quality of education and ensure a stable future for the children of the nation.

Partners

He commended the vital contributions of national printing establishments, describing them as proactive partners in achieving institutional excellence, especially in terms of printing textbooks and educational publications according to international standards and within the specified deadlines. He expressed his appreciation for the constructive relationship with printing press owners, looking forward to the continuous synergy that supports the educational system and raises achievement levels.

He revealed that the ministry finalized a comprehensive regulatory framework for investing in educational facilities to enhance sustainable revenue streams, indicating the draft is currently undergoing final legal and procedural review.

He added that this strategy aims to fully utilize the assets of the ministry, including unused buildings and land, as well as to regulate the use of sports and service facilities to support national development goals without compromising service quality for the students.

The meeting also touched on the successful outcomes of the second

semester, specifically the production and distribution of textbooks in record time. The integrated stages of layout, auditing and delivery were completed according to the schedule, ensuring that the educational field is fully prepared to maintain academic continuity.

Al-Tabtabaei lauded the dedication of the employees at the ministry in performing their duties. He also praised the high level of coordination with local printing firms, emphasizing that the "partnership with the private sector is a fundamental pillar in improving educational performance and institutional services."

Meanwhile, Al-Jarallah commended Al-Tabtabaei's vast knowledge and sophisticated grasp of the operational complexities of the ministry. He pointed out that the outstanding vision and practical approach of the Minister greatly contributed to ongoing efforts to improve the quality of educational outcomes.

He highlighted the remarkable achievements of the ministry under the leadership of Al-Tabtabaei, who focuses on transparency and institutional development.

He also lauded the ministry for its success in implementing the textbooks home-delivery initiative during the exceptional regional circumstances, stating this step as an unprecedented achievement in the history of Kuwaiti education.

He added that this initiative reflects a high degree of organizational excellence, rapid response and steadfast commitment to better serve the students and guarantee the continuity of the educational process.

MoE gives approval to set up seven schools in recent cities

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Ministry of Education (MoE) is implementing its ambitious plan to develop the educational system in new residential cities in a bid to improve its institutional capacity for digital transformation to keep pace with the rapid urban expansion in the country.

In a press statement, the ministry stressed that this is a vital step toward the realization of the national vision for continuous professional development in the educational sector and cover the needs of citizens.

According to the ministry, it is focusing on Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City, one of the modern residential areas, in the execution of its construction plans. It conducted a comprehensive review of the sophisticated demographic tools to identify their use in decision-making before selecting the most suitable locations for constructing school buildings to better serve the residents in the area.

The ministry also announced that it approved seven sites for constructing schools for various educational

levels. This is a multifaceted strategy designed to modernize work mechanisms and improve students' access to their schools within the geographical boundaries.

It revealed that the approved projects include the construction of a kindergarten, a primary school for boys, a primary school for girls, a middle school for boys, a middle school for girls, a secondary school for boys and a secondary school for girls.

Selection

It pointed out that the selection of these sites is based on field studies on population figures and projected density, while ensuring a balanced distribution aligned with international standards and taking into consideration the proximity to residential areas in order to maintain educational and family stability.

It added that it received the sites designated for school construction from the Kuwait Municipality, a crucial step in realizing the national vision for the area.

It also stated that its technical and engineering teams studied these sites and started drafting proposals for architectural designs that suit the available space. This aims to ensure institutional excellence and to provide a modern learning environment.

It indicated that once the design phase is approved, tenders for construction will be issued to start the establishment of these vital facilities.

It emphasized that the tendering process is conducted in accordance with Public Tenders Law No. 49/2016, which stipulates the separation of design and implementation to ensure transparency and governance in improving the quality of educational outputs.

It disclosed that these projects are part of a comprehensive vision for increasing school capacity and balancing administrative and educational functions as per the direction of the country toward sustainable development and in line with the commitment of the ministry to provide services that meet the aspirations of the society.

Kuwait slams Israel envoy to 'Somaliland' move

CAIRO, April 19, (KUNA): Kuwait and 14 other nations on Saturday issued a joint communique vehemently condemning the Israeli occupation's appointment of a diplomatic envoy to the "Somaliland" region, describing the move as a flagrant violation of Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The joint statement, released by the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was co-signed by the foreign ministers of Kuwait, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, Bangladesh, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Türkiye, Jordan, Oman, Palestine, Mauritania, and Indonesia.

The signatory states categorically rejected all unilateral measures that infringe upon national unity or under-

mine the sovereign rights of states.

They reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to the unity and territorial sanctity of the Federal Republic of Somalia, emphasizing that legitimate state institutions remain the sole representatives of the Somali people's will.

The communique further noted that such provocative actions constitute a breach of international law, the UN Charter, and the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

The ministers warned that the move establishes a "dangerous precedent" that threatens to destabilize the Horn of Africa and carries grave implications for regional peace and security.

Minister dissolves many NGOs

KU intensifies preparations for final exams

**By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari/
Fares Ghaleb**

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: With only about two weeks remaining until the end of the academic year, the Kuwait University has intensified its preparations for the final exams.

Exams will be conducted on May 9-23 in line with the comprehensive academic and administrative arrangements aimed to ensure the smooth flow of the educational process.

According to the approved schedule, the deadline for recording grades is May 30, after which the transfer procedures will start on June 2.

Meanwhile, the Chemistry Department in the College of Science unveiled its plan to adopt the recommendation to conduct oral exams. It stated that exam questions will be diverse, not limited to multiple-choice, including numerical and fill-in-the-blank questions, to develop the assessment of the students' understanding of scientific concepts.

NGOs dissolved: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah issued decisions to dissolve several associations, which include the Kuwait Association for People with Disabilities, Entre-

preneurs Association, Kuwaiti Parkinson's Patients Association, Science, Technology and Innovation Association, Health Informatics Association and Ambulance Association.

These decisions stipulate that the boards of directors and employees of the aforementioned associations are not allowed to dispose their funds and documents, and they must hand over assets in their possession to those appointed by the ministry to oversee the liquidation process.

In a related development, the minister instructed the candidates for the boards of directors of public benefit associations to submit a criminal record certificate.



Engineer Fawaz Al-Shammari sheds light on work progress at one of the sites.

Farwaniya Gov. visits multiple sites

'Build strong, durable infrastructure'

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah conducted a field visit on Sunday morning to several sites within Farwaniya Governorate, accompanied by Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Maintenance Engineering Affairs at the Ministry of Public Works, Engineer Fawaz Al-Shammari.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate,

Governor Sheikh Athbi reviewed the overall condition of infrastructure and identified existing challenges and issues on the ground.

He emphasized the importance of continued coordination with relevant authorities to implement necessary technical solutions within established frameworks, in order to accelerate progress and enhance the quality of services provided.

The governor stressed the need to

adhere to high technical standards to improve and develop infrastructure.

At the end of the visit, Eng. Al-Shammari expressed appreciation for the governor's commitment to direct field monitoring, affirming that the Ministry of Public Works is proceeding with the implementation of technical solutions according to the highest standards and in coordination with relevant authorities.

Kuwait, GCC make substantial progress in UN development indicators – report

RIYADH, April 19, (KUNA): GCC Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi said Sunday the Council pursues stability through constructive policies based on development and prosperity, not wars and conflicts.

In a statement, the General Secretariat said this came during his participation in a session titled "A Middle East Beyond Zero-Sum Politics" at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum.

Al-Budaiwi added the GCC seeks to strengthen mutual trust with regional and international partners, reinforcing its position as a reliable partner at all levels.

He noted the Council consistently supports solutions based on diplomacy and dialogue, grounded in respect for sovereignty, non-interference, and peaceful dispute resolution.

He referred to Iranian attacks on GCC states and their serious impact on security and stability, stressing they have not altered the Council's commitment to development and support for countries in need.

He said GCC states made significant efforts to prevent war but were surprised by these unjustified and illegal Iranian attacks.

Al-Budaiwi affirmed the GCC's proactive role in regional issues, particularly the Palestinian cause, supporting international efforts toward a two-state solution, alongside humanitarian and political initiatives.

He stressed such roles reflect the GCC's belief that regional and international stability is a shared responsibility.

He added that regional organizations have become a necessity, with success measured by both internal cohesion and their ability to build partnerships and contribute to global stability.

In this context, he said the GCC has established 28 strategic partnerships worldwide and cooperates with eight regional organizations, enhancing its role in promoting dialogue, peace, and prosperity.

Al-Budaiwi said GCC achievements are a source of pride, reflected in economic growth and resilience, proving joint action can exceed expectations and strengthen international standing.

He noted these collective efforts have built a regional system based on cooperation and integration, contributing ef-

fectively to regional and global security and stability.

Meanwhile, the GCC Statistical Center said on Saturday that Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have made notable progress in UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators, particularly in health, education, and basic services.

In a progress report achieved, the center said GCC countries outperformed global averages across multiple indicators, noting a "near elimination" of extreme poverty, supported by advanced social protection systems ensuring inclusive coverage for all segments of society.

The report highlighted strong performance in the health sector, with maternal mortality at 19.9 per 100,000 live births compared to the global target of 70, while under-five mortality stood at 10.8 per 1,000 live births versus 25 globally.

It added that universal health coverage reached 100 percent compared to 68 percent globally, while basic vaccination coverage also reached 100 percent against 84 percent worldwide.

Physician density stood at 33.6 per 10,000 people, compared to 18.7 globally, reflecting the efficiency and quality of regional health systems.

In education, the center noted high achievement levels, with literacy rates reaching 99.2 percent compared to 88 percent globally, and preschool enrollment at 99.8 percent versus 74.4 percent worldwide.

It also cited full provision of basic services in schools and comprehensive teacher qualification as evidence of strategic investment in human capital.

Regarding infrastructure, the report said 100 percent of the population has access to safe drinking water compared to 73.7 percent globally, while sanitation and wastewater treatment services have reached near-universal levels in several GCC states, supporting environmental and public health sustainability.



Al-Budaiwi

Trust must to nurture ties between Gulf states, Iran

"A few days ago, I followed a statement issued by the diplomatic advisor to the President of the UAE, former Minister Anwar Gargash, in which he said Iran represents a strategic threat to the UAE and the Gulf states, but the UAE rejects any form of cheap peace," columnist **Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"This statement touches on a sensitive issue and reflects a crucial point in the Gulf context as a whole, not just the UAE, as any threat to one Gulf state is effectively a threat to all.

"Therefore, there is a need to develop a military, security, and economic strategy to confront this perceived Iranian strategic threat, rather than relying solely on the good-neighborly relations that once prevailed in the past until Tehran violated them and destroyed all values.

"Working in this field requires a re-assessment of the rules of the game, beginning with the fundamental differences in political approaches between the Gulf states and Iran.

"We must take into account the fact that political change in the form of the Iranian regime would not necessarily mean the end of the threat, but rather its reemergence in a different form. The relationship between the Iranian state and its proxies is likely to continue, shaped by shifts in political ideology and evolving interests in any new phase, rather than a complete abandonment of those proxies.

"Everyone knows that the Gulf model represents a challenge for Iran.

"The social and political stability in the Gulf states leads some Iranian citizens to view them with a degree of resentment toward their own ruling system, which they associate with hardship, poverty, and restrictions on freedom of movement and connection with the world. In contrast, they see Gulf citizens as able to travel freely, benefit from their countries' wealth, and maintain a more comfortable relationship with their leadership.

"While some may consider these factors secondary, they fundamentally shape the relationship between the individual and the state.

"The more comfortable the living conditions, the more time individuals have for creativity, activity, and contributing to the prosperity of their country, and vice versa.

"What the Emirati advisor said contains much insight that can be built upon. Among his remarks, he said Iran is currently seeking to rebuild bridges with the countries of the region. He emphasized that it was Iran that previously targeted those bridges through its actions against the Gulf states over 40 years.

"Rebuilding relations between the Gulf states and Iran requires trust, which has been a central issue of discussion for 47 years.

"Iranian-Gulf relations have gone through several difficult phases, beginning with the Makkah protests, the bombings that Kuwait witnessed in the 1980s, the discovery of Iranian-linked cells, and the recent war in which Tehran worked to burn all bridges of trust.

"This history necessitates a complete reassessment of all relations with Iran. Although geographical realities will not be lenient, this does not mean remaining silent in the face of any aggression, especially since the armies of the Arab Gulf states have proven their ability to confront Iranian aggression.

"The response to any future Iranian aggression must be reciprocal - an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

Also:

"The State of Kuwait experienced one of the most sensitive periods in its modern history during the 1980s, amid the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, which reshaped the balance of power in the Arabian Gulf region," writer and program presenter **Ghani Jumaa** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Kuwait was subjected to several terrorist attacks due to its stance on the Iran-Iraq War, aimed at preventing the spread of Iranian influence in the Gulf states. This position, despite its political dimensions, made Kuwait a target for direct and indirect retaliatory operations. Among the most prominent incidents linked to this period were the 1983 Kuwait bombings, considered one of the most serious terrorist attacks in the country's history.

"On 12 December 1983, several vital locations were targeted in a series of coordinated bombings, including the American and French embassies, Kuwait International Airport, the Shuaiba refinery, and other government facilities.

"The attacks resulted in deaths and injuries and caused widespread shock and concern among the Kuwaiti public. Subsequent investigations indicated the involvement of elements linked to Iran-backed organizations, in what was widely seen as a retaliatory message for Kuwait's support of Iraq.

"In 1985, Kuwait witnessed a failed assassination attempt targeting the then-Amir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. (May God have mercy on him). His motorcade was targeted by an explosion, but by divine providence, he escaped unharmed.

"This attempt was considered a dangerous escalation, marking a shift from targeting civilian infrastructure to targeting political leadership.

"In the same year, Kuwait also experienced the hijacking of the Al-Jabriya

aircraft, reflecting the complexity of the security environment and the intertwining of political factors with transnational terrorism.

"On the maritime front, Kuwait was at the center of what became known as the Tanker War, during which Kuwaiti oil tankers were repeatedly attacked by Iranian forces or their allies using both naval mines and missiles.

"The aim of these attacks was to exert economic pressure on Kuwait and force it to change its stance. These developments led to widespread international involvement. The threats were not limited to these incidents, as Kuwait also witnessed the activity of clandestine cells and attempts to destabilize its internal security through arms smuggling and sabotage operations.

"Kuwaiti security agencies dealt with these challenges decisively and successfully thwarted numerous plots.

"Kuwait managed to maintain its internal stability and develop its security and defense capabilities, benefiting from the support of its international allies and the cohesion of its domestic front.

"This period stands as a testament to the resilience of the Kuwaiti state in the face of challenges and its ability to manage regional crises wisely, despite the serious risks and complex difficulties it entailed."

"The region today is neither on the verge of comprehensive peace nor heading toward an open-ended war. It is in a transitional phase where military pressure intertwines with diplomatic efforts to reshape the rules of engagement, Saudi writer **Saleh bin Abdullah Al-Muslim** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"Peace in the Middle East is not impossible, but it is not imminent in the traditional sense. What is more likely is a cold peace or fragile stability, where temporary understandings serve as safety valves without addressing the root causes of conflict.

"In this context, major regional powers play a decisive role in shaping the coming phase, particularly if they prioritize economic and developmental interests over ideological conflicts.

"The success of negotiations, whether in Pakistan or on the Lebanese front, will remain contingent on the parties' willingness to make genuine concessions, conditions that have not yet fully matured.

"Until then, stability in the region will be a postponed goal, fluctuating between steps forward and steps back in a shifting balance of power.

"The Middle East and its regional periphery are experiencing a highly complex moment, where military escalation intersects with attempts at political de-escalation, reflecting both a clash of wills and the limits of power.

"At the heart of this scene, three intertwined issues stand out - tensions related to Iran, ongoing negotiations in Pakistan, and the delicate relationship between Lebanon and Israel.

"No escalation in the region can be understood without considering Iran's position, as it has become a pivotal player in regional security dynamics.

"Tensions linked to Iran, whether directly or through its allies, reflect a strategy that combines indirect deterrence with an expansion of influence.

"However, Tehran understands that sustained open escalation carries high economic and political costs, especially under ongoing international pressure and sanctions.

"The door to negotiation remains open, but it is contingent on securing gains that preserve the regime's internal balance and ensure a recognized regional role.

"The negotiation track hosted by Pakistan carries particular significance, not only in terms of the participating parties but also in the nature of Pakistan's role.

"Islamabad is seeking to position itself as a mediator capable of building bridges between disparate parties, benefiting from its relatively balanced relations.

"However, the real challenge lies not in bringing the parties to the table, but in their ability to make mutual concessions. To date, the negotiations resemble crisis management more than a path to a fundamental solution. Each side appears focused on buying time and improving its negotiating position rather than definitively ending the war.

"On the Lebanese-Israeli front, the situation is still highly sensitive. Frequent escalations reflect a fragile balance of deterrence, one that could erupt at any moment.

"Indirect negotiations between the two sides, whether through international mediators or back channels, often focus on containing escalation rather than addressing the root causes of the war. Nevertheless, shared interests, such as avoiding a full-scale war or protecting vital infrastructure, may lead to limited understandings, but these fall short of lasting peace.

"Partial progress is possible, but a comprehensive solution remains elusive.

"The regional landscape is governed by complex factors, including conflicting interests among regional and international powers, a lack of trust between the parties, and the use of certain issues as bargaining chips in broader disputes.

"As a result, what can realistically be achieved in the short term is de-escalation rather than a definitive end to the war."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Adel Al-Kharafi

Health rules violated

PAFN shuts Hawally food company

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) has closed a food establishment in Hawally Governorate and issued five citations for violations related to non-compliance with health regulations, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

It stated that the violations included failure to adhere to public hygiene requirements, breaches of health regulations, operating outside the licensed area, food handling by an employee without a health certificate, and employing a worker without obtaining the required health certificate.

PAFN reaffirmed its commitment to continuing intensive inspection campaigns and

taking all necessary legal measures against violators to protect consumer health and safety.

In another development, PAFN has announced the activation of a vehicle registration document issuance service for clients, as part of its ongoing efforts to streamline procedures and expedite transactions, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

In a statement published on its X account, PAFN said the initiative aims to speed up and simplify service delivery, reduce paperwork, and support digital transformation and service quality improvement.

The authority reaffirmed its commitment to expanding digital services to ensure a more efficient and user-friendly experience.

Ex-MPs hearing moves to June 7

'False news aired' accusations

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Court of Cassation on Sunday decided to postpone until June 7 the hearing on the 'broadcasting false news' case, in which eight former members of the National Assembly are implicated, in order to give the defense enough time to complete their arguments.

The case was filed based on the statements circulated regarding the barring of former MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri from entering the country.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendants with broadcasting false news and statements that could disrupt public order, in addition to questioning the official and sovereign procedures of the state.

The legal teams of the defendants attended the session on Sunday, during which the court listened to a part of their arguments before granting them more time to present their closing memoranda, in preparation for the issuance of a ruling on the case.

Illegal arms seized: Two citizens, born in 1990 and 1997, have been referred to the General Department of Weapons Investigations for possessing unlicensed firearms and

ammunition, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

The arrests were made following the grace period granted by the Ministry of Interior to citizens and residents to surrender weapons without legal action or inquiries into their source. According to a security source, securitymen patrolling Al-Julaia'a near the Naval Base roundabout became suspicious of a 2023-model four-wheel-drive vehicle and stopped it to verify the driver's identification documents.

They noticed signs of nervousness from the driver and his passenger, prompting a search of the vehicle for suspected drugs or other prohibited items. Two shotguns and 140 rounds of ammunition were found in the rear compartment of the vehicle.

The Director General of the General Directorate of Emergency Police was informed, and the suspects were referred to the General Department of Weapons Investigations. A case was registered for further legal action.

I'm robbed - Moroccan: A Moroccan expatriate in his thirties has filed a report at Andalous Police Station, stating that his apartment in Rigga was burglarized, without accusing any specific individual, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

In a case classified as burglary, the complainant said he left his home around 6:00 pm with friends and returned at 10:00 pm, only to find his apartment door broken and KD 1,000 and 40 Moroccan dirhams missing. He also stated that he was unaware of any security cameras in the building.

4 Asian expats held, 5th flees as Kuwaiti foils robbery at his farm

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: A Kuwaiti citizen thwarted a theft attempt inside a horse stable at a camel farm, leading to the identification of several suspects and the handover of their details to detectives. The incident was described as reflecting a strong sense of patriotism and social responsibility, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

In detail, a 1998-born citizen residing in Sabah Al-Nasser reported to the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room that, while

heading to his farm, he witnessed four individuals breaking into one of the horse stables, which was built with aluminum and iron. They used a metal-cutting tool to steal two window air conditioners.

He explained that he was able to identify four of the perpetrators as Bangladeshi nationals, born in 1990, 1980, 1966, and 1979. A fifth suspect, whose identity is unknown, was driving a grey Mitsubishi Jeep, and the vehicle's license plate could not be recorded.

News in Brief

What to do in case of gas leak, advises KFF

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Kuwait Fire Force's (KFF) Public Relations Department, led by Director Mohammad Al-Gharib, emphasized the importance of raising awareness about safety procedures to be followed in the event of a gas leak, given the significant risk it poses, which could lead to fires or explosions, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

In an awareness brochure, the department stressed the necessity of adhering to the following guidelines when a gas leak is suspected:

- Do not touch any electrical switches or operate appliances, and avoid igniting any source of sparks.
- Immediately and tightly close the gas valve to prevent further leakage.
- Ensure proper ventilation by opening windows and doors.
- Evacuate the site immediately and ensure that all individuals have left the building to ensure their safety.

Case of stolen wallet: Detectives from the Hawally and Shaab police stations have closed the case of a stolen wallet belonging to an Egyptian expatriate who reported it missing while shopping in Hawally on February 21, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

The expatriate initially believed it had fallen and been taken by an unknown person. He stated that the wallet contained KD 310.

After registering the case and referring it to the Criminal Investigation Department, detectives began their investigation and gathered evidence, which led to the identification of the suspect, an Arab national. Upon being summoned to the Hawally police station and questioned, he confessed to the theft.

He explained that he had transferred the money to a fellow Egyptian citizen within hours of the theft because his family had been pressuring him to send funds. The investigation confirmed the incident, noting that the money has not yet been recovered as it was transferred abroad.

The accused has been referred to the competent authority to take the necessary legal measures, while the relevant authorities continue to follow up on developments in the case.

Other Voices

Health benefits of trivial moves

By Ahmad alsarraf

RECENT research has shown that we don't need to exert much effort to reap some health benefits from exercise. In fact, we hardly need to move at all.

Simply holding a certain position for a few minutes at a time can be beneficial, such as staying in a squat position or sitting on a chair with one leg extended in front of you. These activities can improve heart health and boost muscle strength.

This is good news for many who find it difficult to incorporate an exercise program into their daily routine.

Most of us know the importance of physical activity, but we struggle to implement it, especially with rising levels of inactivity worldwide.

Evidence for the benefits of isometric exercises has been growing for decades, with some indications suggesting their ability to lower blood pressure.

Studies have focused on three specific exercises - the hand grip exercise (squeezing a tool or ball), the wall squat, and the leg extension exercise.

The trials often used the same basic training plan - four rounds of the exercise in question, each lasting two minutes, with one or two minutes of rest between rounds.

This 14-minute session can be performed three times a week. Theoretically, this regimen should fit into anyone's daily routine.

The results were remarkable for anyone concerned about their health. They showed that isometric squats are more effective than cardio, weightlifting, compound training, and high-intensity interval training.

By performing simple movements, blood pressure can drop at a significantly higher rate than with traditional blood pressure-lowering medications.

Maintaining a static position for a few minutes can contribute to building strength and endurance. The simplicity of this regimen makes it very appealing, as it can be done at home without any equipment, without leaving the house, and without excessive sweating.

Isometric wall squats may be particularly beneficial for people with joint or mobility issues who find it difficult to perform dynamic, weight-bearing exercises such as running or weightlifting. This regimen is likely safer from a cardiovascular and musculoskeletal perspective than other types of exercise.

How does it work? During isometric exercise, a muscle (or several muscles) contracts and remains in that position, meaning its length does not change as it does in other types of exercise involving continuous movement.

This static contraction compresses the blood vessels, causing a decrease in oxygen and a buildup of waste products in the active muscle. This, in turn, stimulates the brain to try to send more oxygen to the area, raising blood pressure. When the muscle contraction stops, the blood vessels dilate again, increasing blood flow to the area and causing a temporary drop in blood pressure. The idea is that repeating this process could lead to lower blood pressure in the long term.

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Syrian dead in accident

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: A Syrian resident in his thirties died after being struck by a vehicle on King Fahad Expressway.

According to a security source, when the Ministry of Interior's Operations Room received a report of a hit-and-run accident on King Fahad Expressway toward Kuwait City, security personnel and paramedics were immediately dispatched to the scene.



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Gov't spending hits KD4.015bn

MEW takes 42% share

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The report on the last fiscal year revealed that the approved expenditures for goods and services for 36 government entities amounted to KD4.015 billion.

The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy received the largest share of the total allocation for this item, amounting to KD1.693 billion or 42 percent of the approved amount.

The goods and services item includes expenditures of government entities for their ongoing operations and the provision of goods and services, including fuel for the power plants of the Ministry of Electricity.

Meanwhile, the Electricity Distribution Networks Sector at the ministry included 56 contracts in its plan for fiscal 2026/2027 in order to modernize the distribution network components and make them ready for burdens and challenges, particularly during the summer season, which witnesses remarkable rise in load rates and energy demand. The distribution network is a vital component of the electrical system, as it transmits power from the primary substations to various residential areas.

These contracts will be tendered through the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT), because the estimated value of each contract exceeds KD75,000, requiring their submission to the agency to be offered to companies classified under its regulations.

The contracts are for the maintenance of secondary substations with different voltages in the Capital, Farwaniya, Hawally, Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Ahmadi Governorates, as well as the medium-voltage cables, street lighting equipment and power capacitors.

Moreover, CAPT opened the tender for installing street lighting equipment in all areas. Nine companies competed for the tender.

The bids will be referred to the ministry for review and preparation of technical recommendation to award the contract to the best bidder.

Legal 500 highlights the evolving role of lawyers: From advisory function to decision-making influence

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: In light of the increasing complexity of the business environment and the growing interconnection between legal, economic, and regulatory dimensions, the role of the lawyer is no longer confined to providing legal opinions or managing disputes. Rather, it has evolved into that of an active partner in institutional decision-making. This transformation was the focus of a recent interview with Abdulrahman Al-Houti, Managing Partner of the law firm, featured on the Legal 500 platform, which shed light on a new phase in legal practice in Kuwait.



Abdulrahman Al-Houti

"The lawyer's role is no longer limited to offering legal advice ... but extends to contributing to decision-making within institutions."

Al-Houti emphasized that the legal profession is undergoing a fundamental transformation in both its nature and function, driven by rapid changes in the economic landscape and the evolution of regulatory frameworks – particularly in markets reliant on large-scale projects and long-term investments, such as Kuwait.

He explained that the lawyer is no longer merely a provider of legal opinions or a representative in disputes but has become an integral component in supporting corporate decision-making through risk analysis, evaluation of alternatives, and contributing to the legal and commercial structuring of transactions and projects.

"The true value of legal counsel today lies in understanding the decision itself... not merely interpreting the text."

He further noted that the challenges faced by companies today are no longer purely legal in nature; rather, they are closely linked to economic and operational factors, such as liquidity pressures, fluctuations in execution costs, and delays in payments. These factors have a direct impact on long-term contractual arrangements.

He added that such developments have led to a notable increase in contract renegotiations and a rise in contractual disputes, necessitat-

ing that companies adopt a more flexible approach in managing their obligations while preserving their legal positions.

"Balancing the protection of rights with the continuity of commercial relationships is the most significant legal challenge."

Al-Houti highlighted that the real challenge lies in achieving a precise balance between safeguarding legal rights on one hand and maintaining ongoing commercial relationships on the other. This requires a more advanced role for legal advisors – one that goes beyond textual interpretation to a deeper understanding of business dynamics.

In this context, he noted that law firms poised to excel in the coming phase will be those that successfully transition to a more structured and professional model, grounded in sector specialization, knowledge management, and the provision of integrated legal services that support decision-making rather than merely reacting to it.

He also affirmed that technology now plays a significant role in enhancing legal services, whether by accelerating access to information or improving operational efficiency. However, it remains a supportive tool that cannot replace human expertise and professional judgment, particularly in complex matters requiring strategic insight.

Al-Houti added that the firm is actively developing its business model in alignment with these transformations by strengthening its capabilities in infrastructure, investment, and dispute resolution, as well as expanding cooperation with international entities to better serve clients in cross-border matters.

"The next phase in the legal profession is not about expansion in size... but advancement in impact."

This vision comes at a time when Kuwait is seeking to enhance its position as a regional investment hub under Vision 2035, thereby creating new opportunities for businesses while simultaneously increasing the demand for legal advisors capable of shaping decisions, rather than merely commenting on them.

Jahra roadworks tender deadline pushed to May 12

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) extended the deadline for submitting bids for the construction and maintenance of roads and stormwater drainage systems in Northwest Jahra until May 12, instead of April 14.

The bids will be opened and referred to the Public Works Ministry -- the relevant authority -- for review and preparation of a technical recommendation. The award decision will be based on this recommendation and accordance with the regulations.

This project will modernize the road network in Northwest Jahra and the surrounding areas. It includes providing infrastructure

services and an internal road network, connecting it to the main network, and creating new roads to accommodate traffic volume in the future.

This will better serve those residing in the area and the visitors in view of the urban expansion. It will reduce traffic congestion, ease movement to and from the area, and improve the overall quality and efficiency of the roads.

Over 27,000 plots delivered in Mutlaa

PAHW issues permit certificates, reports March housing progress

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Deputy Director General for Public Relations and Development and the official spokesperson for the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) Omar Al-Ruwaih announced the issuance of "To Whom It May Concern" certificates required to obtain building permits.

During his presentation of the performance report for March, he stated that the number of plots delivered in Mutlaa City reached 27,796 out of 28,288, in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak 3,252 out of 3,260, and in Khaitan 1,423 out of 1,448.

Al-Ruwaih said PAHW continues to make progress in implementing its housing and infrastructure projects according to approved plans, with diligent field monitoring to overcome obstacles and streamline procedures.

He explained that the data reflects further progress in completion rates and a diversification of services provided to citizens through various channels. The actual completion rate for the main roads contract in South Saad Al-Abdullah City reached 59.71 percent. The actual completion rates for the three infrastructure contracts were 9.82 percent, 10.15 percent, and 9.09 percent, respectively. The actual completion rate for the main roads contract in South Sabah Al-Ahmad City reached 81.83 percent. The infrastructure contracts recorded actual completion rates of 45.59 percent, 48.82 percent, and 38.06 percent, respectively.

Regarding the low-cost housing project, Al-Ruwaih explained that the actual completion rates were 35.85 percent for the first contract, 42.50 percent for the second,

42.80 percent for the third, 7.26 percent for the fourth, 7.60 percent for the fifth, and 7.54 percent for the sixth.

The total number of housing services provided to citizens last month through the Citizen Service Department reached 22,968. These services were distributed as follows: 13,801 online services via the Sahel application and the PAHW website, and 8,329 services through communication channels (telephone and chatbot). The services included 731 through reception centers at PAHW headquarters and 107 through external centers.

The number of public buildings under construction reached 278, including 170 buildings in Al-Mutlaa City, 74 buildings in the low-cost housing project, 17 buildings in Sabah Al-Ahmad, 13 buildings in South Abdullah Al-Mubarak, two buildings in Saad Al-Abdullah, one building in South Khaitan, and one in Jaber Al-Ahmad.

Al-Ruwaih went on to explain that PAHW signed five supervisory contracts, including two for the supply, extension, and maintenance of 400 kV underground cables to power the main substations in the South Sabah Al-Ahmad project. Another contract was signed for the supply, installation, operation, and maintenance of three air quality monitoring stations in residential areas (West Abdullah Al-Mubarak suburb, Jaber Al-Ahmad City, and Al-Qairawan).

The contracts also include one for the maintenance of landscaping and irrigation networks at PAHW's headquarters, and another for consultancy services related to the management and supervision of the construction of public buildings and infrastructure networks in the Al-Mutlaa Residential City project.

Owner disclosure law amended

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has issued Ministerial Resolution No. 37/2026, amending certain provisions of Ministerial Resolution No. 4/2023 on procedures for identifying the beneficial owner, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The resolution stipulates that no license may be issued or renewed unless all requirements related to the disclosure of the

beneficial owner are fully met.

It also introduces administrative fines ranging from KD 1,000 to KD 10,000 for each violation in cases of non-disclosure or submission of incorrect information.

Penalties apply as well to anyone who falsely registers as a beneficial owner or knowingly provides or participates in submitting inaccurate information. The resolution came into effect on April 16, 2026.

Safety prompts digital exam format

KU Law finals go online April 22

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The College of Law at Kuwait University announced that final exams for the current semester will begin online on April 22, in coordination with the university administration, given the current circumstances in Kuwait and in the interest of everyone's safety.

The college explained that it is coordinating with the university administration to monitor developments and make appropriate decisions regarding the exam format during this period, whether online

or in person, in the public interest. Exams will continue to be conducted online unless developments require a change in this decision.

It urged students to prepare for the online exams by following the guidance materials and informational videos provided by the relevant institutions to ensure their technical and academic readiness.

The college emphasized its commitment to the efficient and regular continuation of the educational process, in accordance with the directives of the university administration and in coordination with the relevant authorities in the country, while ensuring everyone's safety.

PAMA enables Sahel app direct bank transfers for heirs' funds

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Public Authority for Minors' Affairs (PAMA) announced that it has sent notifications via the Sahel app to eligible adult heirs to receive due payments for previous periods, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, PAMA urged recipients to follow the steps outlined in the notification to complete the transfer of funds directly to their bank accounts without the need to visit PAMA headquarters in person.



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LOCAL

57th Anniversary

Egypt, Sudan envoys applaud Al-Seyassah

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Ambassador of Egypt to Kuwait Mohamed Gaber Abul Wafa congratulated Al-Seyassah daily on its 57th anniversary, praising its pioneering and ongoing role in supporting the path of free and responsible journalism, reports Al-Seyassah daily.



Abul Wafa



Balla

Kuwaiti and Arab media landscape.

On this occasion, the ambassador highlighted his pride in the deep fraternal relations that unite the Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Kuwait, and wished Al-Seyassah daily continued success.

Meanwhile, the Editor-in-Chief Ahmed Al-Jarallah received congratulations from the Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan to the State of Kuwait, Awadelkarim El-rayah Balla, on the occasion of the newspaper's 57th anniversary.

He expressed his sincere congratulations on this occasion, affirming that Al-Seyassah's celebration of this anniversary reflects a long history of professionalism and sound journalistic work in the Kuwaiti press.

The ambassador noted that the newspaper has presented a distinguished professional model, contributing to the objective reporting of events and enlightening public opinion, thus serving as a true reflection of current events and a platform supporting national awareness.

Ambassador Elrayah Balla wished the editor-in-chief continued health and well-being, and Al-Seyassah continued success in fulfilling its media mission and its role in supporting awareness and national unity, while also wishing Kuwait continued security and stability.

When past insights echo the present

How similar today is to yesterday ... a headline from Al-Seyassah newspaper 46 years ago

Reflecting on an Al-Seyassah headline from 46 years ago: How history repeats itself

While we do not profess to be fortune-tellers, we pride ourselves on intuitive foresight and a full grasp of the regional geopolitical landscape.

It is truly paradoxical that a headline featured on the front page of Al-Seyassah nearly half a century ago remains so strikingly relevant today. One can only imagine the impact of republishing that original piece in its entirety today.

This sentiment brings to mind a poignant verse by the illustrious poet Al-Jawahiri: "A fool is he who, despite his intellect, fails to let the lessons of the past illuminate his path for tomorrow."



An archival glimpse of Al-Seyassah newspaper editions, capturing a historic front page preserved through decades – where past headlines continue to echo the present.

New move to strengthen national stock market infrastructure

MoF grants Kuwait Storage Company land for strategic storage facilities

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The Ministry of Finance, represented by the State Property Department, has granted the Kuwait Storage Company a license to utilize state-owned land for the establishment of storage facilities for food, pharmaceutical, and medical supplies, with the possibility of expanding the license in the future to include other types of materials.

aims to provide large-scale public storage areas in various regions of Kuwait. Meanwhile, Al-Jarida daily reported that His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah had, earlier this month, directed officials at Kuwait Storage Company to coordinate with the State Property Department at the Ministry of Finance to expedite land registration procedures, enhance operational readiness, and improve the efficiency of strategic

stock management. It is worth noting that Kuwait Storage Company is a closed Kuwaiti joint-stock company established by the Kuwait Investment Authority in 2023 with a capital of KD 50 million (approximately US\$153 million). It operates in transportation, refrigerated and frozen storage, customs warehousing, and logistics services.

Continued from Page 1

First Deputy

Nevertheless, many questions are still in need of answers, particularly regarding certain issues that demanded immediate action. Among these issues was the discovery of terrorist cells. Opinions were divided, with one group advocating for postponing the investigation until the end of the war, and the other insisting on immediate action during this critical period.

Regardless of the differing opinions, the state is fully aware of the sensitivity of the matter and knows exactly what it must do.

Accordingly, the statement issued by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, was met with great relief. The statement provided definitive answers and clarified the situation. It addressed the questions that had been circulating and causing public concern.

Today, more fine details have been added to the new image of public affairs. Everyone must consider such details and facts in order not to repeat painful experiences, particularly those related to treason cases, which have left deep wounds in the heart of Kuwaiti society, wounds that require healing and recovery. It also necessitates a realignment of ranks behind the political leadership.

The nation needs vigilance because the region is still unstable. This requires everyone, regardless of differing opinions, to stand united as one. The statement of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior inaugurates a new approach to addressing current developments. Therefore, what is required now is full commitment to the national interest.

PM reviews

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh

Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to President El-Sisi, along with their wishes of continued health and well-being and further progress and prosperity for the Egyptian people.

During the meeting, El-Sisi affirmed Sunday Egypt's firm rejection of any aggression against Kuwait's sovereignty or any Arab state, stressing their security is integral to Egypt's national security.

Presidency spokesperson Ambassador Mohammad Al-Shennawy said this came during El-Sisi's meeting with Sheikh Jarrah, attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to Cairo Ghanem Al-Ghanem and senior officials.

El-Sisi affirmed Egypt's full support for Kuwait's security and stability and for measures to protect its resources, alongside backing Arab states' security.

He asked that his greetings be conveyed to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, praising strong historic ties.

The meeting discussed boosting bilateral relations, particularly in investment and trade, to serve mutual interests, noting recent progress in ties.

The Kuwaiti minister conveyed His Highness the Amir's greetings to El-Sisi, affirming pride in advancing relations and appreciation for Egypt's longstanding support for Kuwait's security and Gulf stability.

He expressed Kuwait's keenness to enhance coordination with Egypt to support regional peace and safeguard Arab security.

Separately, Sheikh Jarrah met on Sunday with Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Expatriates, Badr Abdelattay, during his official visit to Egypt.

In a statement, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the meeting touched on the longstanding fraternal relations between the two countries and their peoples, with both sides stressing the importance of continuing to strengthen frameworks of cooperation

across all fields and levels in line with the visions of the two countries' leaderships.

The two ministers also discussed regional developments and ongoing diplomatic efforts, emphasizing the need for these efforts to lead to a comprehensive and sustainable settlement that enhances security and stability in the region.

They affirmed continued Kuwaiti-Egyptian coordination to address current challenges amid sensitive regional developments.

Elsewhere, President Donald Trump said that U.S. negotiators will head to Pakistan on Monday for talks with Iran, lifting hopes of extending a ceasefire set to expire this week even as Washington and Tehran remain locked in a standoff over the Strait of Hormuz.

The prospect of talks on the horizon, which Iran did not immediately confirm, came as ships remain unable to transit the critical waterway amid threats from Iran and a U.S. blockade on ships heading to and from Iranian ports.

Iranian officials said earlier on Sunday that they remained open to negotiation, but held firm that ships wouldn't pass the strait while the U.S. blockade remained in effect.

"It is impossible for others to pass through the Strait of Hormuz while we cannot," Iranian parliamentary Speaker Mohammed Bagher Qalibaf said in an interview aired on state television late Saturday.

In his post-announcing official travel for another round of talks, Trump accused Iran of violating the ceasefire by firing at ships passing the strait and threatened to destroy civilian infrastructure in Iran, if it doesn't take the deal that the U.S. is offering.

"If they don't, the United States is going to knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran," Trump wrote.

He didn't detail which officials that the U.S. would be sending to a second

round of in-person talks with Iran is Islamabad. The White House and office of U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who led the first round of talks, didn't immediately respond to messages Sunday morning.

It remained unclear whether either side had shifted their stances on unresolved issues that derailed the last round of negotiations, including Iran's nuclear enrichment program, its regional proxies and control over the Strait of Hormuz.

Qalibaf, who is Iran's chief negotiator in talks with the United States, said before Trump's latest comments that Iran still was seeking peace despite the blockade and deep-seated distrust of Washington.

"There will be no retreat in the field of diplomacy," he said, acknowledging that the gap between the two sides remained wide.

Iran had announced the strait's reopening after a 10-day truce between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon took hold on Friday. But after Trump said that the U.S. blockade of Iran's ports "will remain in full force" until Tehran reaches a deal with the United States, Iran said it would continue enforcing its restrictions in the strait.

Gold gets

per gram (around \$158), and 22-karat gold approximately KD 44,480 per gram (around \$149). Silver prices declined to around KD 805 per kilogram (about \$2,629), as investors closely tracked global fluctuations and their impact on demand and investment activity.

Globally, gold prices recorded a notable increase at the end of last week's trading, closing near \$4,830 per ounce and extending gains for a fourth consecutive week. This was supported by improved global risk sentiment and a decline in the US dollar.

According to the report, this positive

performance was driven by Iran's announcement of reopening the Strait of Hormuz to commercial shipping during a ceasefire period, which helped ease concerns over global supply disruptions and contributed to a pullback in inflationary pressures, alongside a sharp drop in oil prices.

Remarks by US President Donald Trump regarding a potential imminent agreement with Iran boosted investor risk appetite. This pushed the US dollar to a seven-week low, further supporting gold as a dollar-denominated asset.

Precious metals saw strong weekly performance, with gold futures rising about 1.5 percent in Friday's session, while silver gained more than 7 percent over the week. The gains were driven by shifting expectations for monetary policy and declining US Treasury yields.

The report noted that oil prices, which fell by more than 9 percent, reinforced expectations that the US Federal Reserve may adopt a more accommodative policy stance, reducing the likelihood of further interest rate hikes and providing additional support for gold. However, uncertainty remains due to ongoing disagreements between the United States and Iran, particularly over the nuclear issue.

From a technical perspective, gold is facing strong resistance near the \$4,900 level, which it has yet to decisively break despite improving momentum indicators such as the Relative Strength Index (RSI).

A break above \$4,900 could push prices towards \$4,950 and then \$5,000 per ounce, while a drop below \$4,750 may lead to a correction towards \$4,700.

Looking ahead, the report said gold's direction will remain closely tied to geopolitical developments, especially the prospects of a final US-Iran agreement, in addition to upcoming macroeconomic data and central bank decisions that will shape global market trends in the coming period.

UNHCR envoy

cooperation with different local and international entities in championing the humanitarian cause of refugees.

She pointed out that Rubaian did not only act in her capacity as the representative of an international organization, but also as an active partner in humanitarian work, distinguished by a high level of institutional professionalism and an exceptional ability to foster trust and cooperation within the diplomatic community.

She said Rubaian left a lasting impact through her unwavering commitment to the humanitarian principles and her continuous advocacy for the protection of vulnerable groups, adding that her compassionate approach and constructive engagement earned her the respect and admiration of her colleagues.

She extended her sincere wishes for Rubaian's success in her future endeavors, expressing full confidence in her ability to work toward more accomplishments and make a meaningful impact in her next international role.

On the other hand, Rubaian expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the partners of UNHCR in the country, commending the strong support extended by both the government institutions and the private sector.

She stressed that this cross-sector collaboration has been a key factor in enabling the UNHCR to carry out its duties and achieve its humanitarian goals with a high degree of effectiveness.

She also praised the ambassadors and diplomatic representatives, indicating that the diversity of partnerships – whether through collaborative initiatives or support for humanitarian programs – played a crucial role in the overall success of the mission of UNHCR.

She applauded the teamwork within the United Nations system in Kuwait, describing it as a model of institutional cohesion that is worthy of emulation.

Big midterms year in Arizona kicks off

Indiana primary to test Trump's control over GOP party after redistricting defiance

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind., April 19, (AP) — The only thing standing between US President Donald Trump and his revenge on Indiana state senators are people like Julie Wise.

She's 48 years old, works at a hospital, describes herself as a conservative and voted for Trump in the last election. But that doesn't mean she's going to vote out her Republican state senator just because he defied the president's demand to redraw Indiana's congressional map.

"I'm not going to say that 'because this is what the president wants, this is how I'm going to vote,'" Wise said from her front step on a sunny, spring-time afternoon.

Indiana's primary on May 5 has become an unlikely test of Trump's grip on the Republican Party. After state senators defied White House pressure by opposing redistricting, Trump has endorsed seven primary challengers in races that rarely attract any attention from Washington.

The campaign, backed by national organizations such as Turning Point Action and pro-Trump groups that have spent more than \$4.2 million on advertising, has no precedent in recent memory. Gov. Mike Braun and U.S. Sen. Jim Banks, both Republicans, are also working against incumbent state senators in a display of deference to Trump.

One of their targets is Spencer Deery, a first-term state senator who knocked on Wise's door while canvassing her West Lafayette neighborhood via electric scooter.

"This is about one thing only," he told The Associated Press. "And that's control."

Deery represents the 23rd Senate District, a seven-county swath of farmland that borders Illinois to the west, runs north to West Lafayette and touches the outskirts of Terre Haute to the south.

Four years ago, Deery's campaign spent \$142,000 to win his seat in a race where fewer than 11,000 people voted. One of the primary candidates he defeated was Paula Copenhaver, a veteran Republican activist and local party chair.

Now Trump has endorsed Copenhaver, an aide to Lt. Gov. Micah Beckwith, and Deery is facing a nearly \$1 million avalanche of spending. One television advertisement declared that "State Sen. Spencer Deery voted against President Trump's agenda."

"It's about sending a message that any state that does not get in line or any lawmakers that do not get in line with the political forces in D.C. should be on the lookout," Deery said. "That should concern you in a constitutional democracy."

Deery has spent \$167,000 so far,



Republican supporters stand outside the Maricopa County Recorder's Office to protest what they allege is an unfair election in Phoenix on Nov. 12, 2022. (AP)

and he hasn't had any help from outside groups.

Copenhaver declined to respond to telephone calls and text messages from The Associated Press after originally saying she was willing to discuss the campaign. Trump endorsed her in January by calling her a "MAGA Warrior" - a reference to Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement - and "a terrific Candidate for Indiana's

23rd State Senate District."

He wrote on social media that Copenhaver was "running against an incompetent and ineffective RINO incumbent named Spencer Deery who, for whatever reason, betrayed his voters by voting against Redistricting in Indiana." RINO means "Republican in name only."

The White House leaned heavily on Indiana lawmakers last year to break

with precedent and adopt a new congressional map, part of an unusual nationwide cascade of redistricting that Trump hopes will help Republicans protect their thin US House majority in November's elections. Vice President JD Vance met with Indiana politicians in Washington and Indianapolis, and Trump weighed in by conference call.

Some opponents of the proposal faced threats. Deery was targeted by a false police report intended to provoke a dangerous situation by sending a SWAT team racing to his home.

But the Republican-controlled state Senate voted against redistricting in December, a defeat for the president.

Trump tried to brush it off afterward, telling reporters in the Oval Office that "I wasn't working on it very hard."

Also:

PHOENIX: Arizona is expected to have at least two competitive US House races in November while Democrats will be defending their seats for governor, attorney general and secretary of state.

Yet so far, it's been the office running elections in the state's most populous county that has commanded much of the spotlight.

Republican **Justin Heap** is an election skeptic who will be overseeing his first statewide election in **Maricopa** County. He has been engaged in a bit-

ter legal feud with the county board of supervisors over election procedures, has put in place a controversial system for checking signatures on mail ballots and has run voter records through a federal system to check for noncitizens despite questions about its accuracy. Heap also has made overtures to the Trump administration in its quest for voter and election records.

His actions have drawn heated comments from members of that board, which splits election oversight with Heap's office, and rebukes from the attorney general and secretary of state. A ruling this week in the legal case will give Heap more authority over election operations.

The turmoil has created an air of uncertainty about how the midterm elections will go in a county that has been a regular target of election conspiracy theorists and is pivotal for deciding statewide races in one of the nation's most important political battlegrounds.

State Sen. **Lauren Kubly**, a Democrat who sits on a legislative elections committee and represents part of Phoenix, said the discord between the recorder and county board is sowing confusion and distrust. "We're one of the biggest counties in the country, and we have all of our election administrators fighting right now," she said. "So I imagine if you're a voter, you're pretty confused and worried."



Former US President Barack Obama and Mayor Zohran Mamdani take part in a shared reading event at Learning Through Play Pre-K in the Bronx in New York on April 18. (AP)

Obama meets Mamdani in NYC before reading to preschoolers

Former US president Barack Obama met with New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani for the first time on Saturday at a child care center where they read to preschoolers and led a singalong.

The meeting comes as Mamdani, a democratic socialist who marked his 100th day in office just over a week ago, is also trying to build a working relationship with Republican President Donald Trump.

Obama and Mamdani did not take questions after reading the book "Alone and Together" to the children and leading a singalong of "The Wheels on the Bus." The former two-term president and standard-bearer

for the Democratic Party has offered to be a sounding board for Mamdani, 34, whose star power, youth and progressive agenda has made him stand out in Democratic politics.

Mamdani took office in January after a campaign centered on making New York City a more affordable place to live, centering his agenda on refocusing the vast power of government toward helping the city's struggling working class.

Mamdani has met twice with Trump at the White House in November and February to discuss issues affecting New York. (AP)

Powerful winds and tornadoes rip thru Midwest, leaving heavy damage

WASHINGTON, April 19, (AP) — A trail of damaged homes and buildings dotted a wide swath of the US on Saturday after a burst of destructive winds and reported tornadoes tore off roofs, uprooted trees and rendered rural roads impassable with debris.

No deaths were reported following Friday's storms, which barreled through the Upper Midwest and delivered the latest round of severe weather to batter the region. Officials braced residents for a long recovery in some rural communities.

"We are extremely fortunate that this storm did not result in loss of life or serious injury," Stephenson County Sheriff Steve Stovall said of the storm that hit Lena, Illinois.

Officials in Wisconsin and Minnesota echoed those sentiments.

In central Wisconsin, a reported tornado that tore through the cities of Kronenwetter and Ringle left behind damaged homes and some residents briefly trapped in their basements, Ringle Fire Chief Chris Kielman told reporters.

Marathon County Sheriff Chad Billeb said he had not seen this much devastation during his 34 years in law enforcement.

"A lot of people are going to need a lot of help," Billeb said.

In Kronenwetter, neighbors were helping each other clear debris from their properties, and Wisconsin Public Service was working to restore power. Police Chief Terry McHugh said it



Debris and fallen tree limbs cover the ground after a severe storm that tore through the Upper Midwest on April 17, in Rochester, Minn. (AP)

could be a lengthy process.

He noted that the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin has partnered with United Way of Marathon County to help residents whose homes were damaged.

In Olmsted County, Minnesota, sheriff's officials said tornadoes caused "multiple levels" of damage. At least 30 homes were damaged in Marion Township, with a number of those sustaining damage that was described as significant. Officials went door to door to check on people.

The National Weather Service said the damage was likely caused by torna-

does and surveys of the affected areas would be conducted over the weekend.

On Friday in Illinois, Leo Zach, 14, had just gotten to the high school band room for a music competition when the building started shaking and the power went out. The room was packed with students, and some were very scared and had panic attacks.

"I'm definitely on the luckier side of how that could've happened," he said. "I was just trying to stay calm, help other people." When they got outside, they found some of the windows blown out in the gym and part of the school's roof ripped off.

Ukraine mass shooting kills six before police shot, killed gunman

KYIV, Ukraine, April 19, (AP) — A gunman wielding an automatic weapon killed six people and barricaded himself inside a supermarket with hostages in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, on Saturday, before he was shot and killed by police, authorities said.

At least 14 people were wounded and taken to hospital.

The 58-year-old attacker was not named by police, but Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he was born in Russia, as authorities worked to piece together a motive for the violence.

The mass shooting - unheard of in wartime Kyiv following Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine in 2022 - took place in a busy central district of the city, outside an apartment block and a nearby shopping center, leaving bodies on a crowded street as bystanders fled for safety.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw victims' bodies in the street covered with emergency blankets before they were taken away.



Police officers are seen at the site where a gunman killed at least six people in the streets before being shot dead by police, in Kyiv, Ukraine on April 18. (AP)

"The assailant has been neutralized. He had taken hostages and, tragically, killed one of them. He also murdered

four people on the street. Another woman died in the hospital due to severe injuries," Zelenskyy said.

"It has been established that the attacker set fire to an apartment before taking to the streets with a weapon," Zelenskyy said in a video posted online. "He had a prior criminal record, had lived in the Donetsk region (in eastern Ukraine) for a long period, and was born in Russia."

Ukraine's special tactical police units stormed the convenience store after attempts to contact the gunman with a negotiator failed, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said.

The hostages were supermarket customers and staff.

"We tried to persuade him, knowing that there was likely a wounded person inside. We even offered to bring in tourniquets to stop the bleeding, but he did not respond," Klymenko said. "Consequently, the order was given to neutralize him."

The minister said the gunman had a valid weapon's permit.



Venezuela's opposition leader Maria Corina Machado delivers a speech on stage in front of supporters at Madrid's Puerta del Sol, in Madrid, Spain on April 18. (AP)

Venezuela's Machado draws huge Madrid crowd and rebuffs meeting with Spain's PM

MADRID, April 19, (AP) — Venezuela's exiled opposition leader Maria Corina Machado drew several thousand supporters Saturday to a rally in Madrid, where the Nobel laureate declined a meeting with Spain's progressive Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez on a multicountry European tour.

Sánchez, an outspoken critic of US President Donald Trump, was hosting a summit of like-minded progressive leaders from around the world Saturday, while Machado extolled Trump's ouster of Nicolás Maduro in January.

Earlier this year, she presented Trump with her Nobel Peace Prize.

"What happened in the last few hours at the meeting (Sánchez) held in Barcelona with several leaders and political figures from different countries demonstrates why such a meeting was not advisable," Machado told reporters Saturday.

Machado insisted at an earlier event she will be returning to Venezuela, but declined to say when, or how, and acknowledged the challenges implicit in a return to her country.

Her multistop European tour, during which she met with the leaders of France, Italy and the Netherlands, comes while Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodríguez has continued in her temporary role, exceeding its initial 90-day limit, while the US government has lifted some sanctions against her.

Machado criticized Rodríguez's government, saying it represented "chaos, violence and terror," and reiterated her belief in the need for democratic elections in Venezuela. Machado added she did not regret presenting Trump, whose

administration has largely sidelined the crusader for democracy, with her Nobel.

She said she was in permanent contact with officials in the Trump administration and trusted Washington's phased process in Venezuela since Maduro's removal.

"There is one leader in the world, one head of state, who has risked the lives of his country's citizens for the freedom of Venezuela. And that is Donald Trump," Machado said, referring to the U.S. military operation in January.

The opposition leader drew a huge crowd in the Spanish capital's Puerta del Sol, standing beside Madrid's conservative regional leader Isabel Díaz Ayuso, who feted her earlier in the day.

Some 600,000 Venezuelans live in Spain, home to the largest population anywhere outside the Americas. Many fled political persecution and violence, but also the country's collapsing economy. A majority live in the capital, Madrid.

Ahead of Venezuela's 2024 presidential elections, Machado crisscrossed the country, rallying millions of voters looking to end 25 years of single party rule. When she was barred from the race, a previously unknown former diplomat, Edmundo González, replaced her on the ballot. But election officials loyal to the ruling party declared Maduro the winner despite ample credible evidence to the contrary.

Machado, revered by millions in Venezuela, went into hiding but vowed to continue fighting until democracy was restored. She reemerged last December to pick up her Nobel Peace Prize in Norway, the first time in more than a decade that she had left Venezuela.

Bulgarians head to polls to elect parliament for eighth time in 5 years

SOFIA, Bulgaria, April 19, (AP) — Bulgarians are heading to the polls on Sunday for the eighth time in five years, hoping to finally elect a parliament able to resolve the longtime political impasse that has gripped this Balkan country.

The snap vote follows the resignation of a conservative-led government amid nationwide protests last December that drew hundreds of thousands, mainly young people, to the streets.

The protesters called for an independent judiciary to tackle widespread corruption. Since 2021, the nation of 6.5 million has struggled with fragmented parliaments that produced weak governments, none of which managed to survive more than a year before being brought down by street protests or backroom deals in parliament.

The revolving door of governments has fostered widespread public mistrust, voter apathy and a shrinking turnout in elections.

Still, Sunday's vote is significant as it could bring to power a left-leaning, pro-Russian former president - just days after Hungarian voters rejected the authoritarian policies and global far-right movement of Viktor Orbán, who cultivated close ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The front-runner, Bulgaria's former President Rumen Radev,



People cast their ballots at a polling station in Sofia, Bulgaria on April 19, during early parliamentary elections. (AP)

is leading a newly formed, center-left Progressive Bulgaria coalition. He resigned from the mostly ceremonial presidency in January, a few months before the end of his second term, to launch a bid to lead the government as prime minister.

Asia

PLA conducts sea, air patrols in East China Sea: The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theater Command conducted joint readiness patrols in the relevant waters and airspace of the East China Sea on Saturday, according to a spokesperson.

Xu Chenghua, spokesperson of the PLA Eastern Theater Command, said that the patrols were a routine arrangement organized in accordance with the annual plan, aimed at testing the joint operational capabilities.

Xu stressed that the troops of the theater command will routinely organize relevant military operations based on the needs of the security situation, and safeguard national sovereignty and security as well as regional peace and stability. (Xinhua)

10 injured in Hong Kong minibus accident: At least 10 people were injured, with two in severe condition, after a minibus collided with a van in Tsing Yi, Hong Kong, on Saturday night.

The crash happened at around 9:30 p.m. Multiple ambulances were dispatched to the scene, and police are investigating the cause of the accident. (Xinhua)

9 killed, 10 injured in Myanmar road accident: Nine people were killed and 10 others injured in a road accident in southern Myanmar's Mon state on Saturday, an official from the Thaton Township Fire Services Department told Xinhua.

The accident, which involved a passenger bus and a light truck, occurred at around 4:30 p.m. local time on the Yangon-Mawlamyine road in Thaton township, Mon state, the official said.

Local fire service personnel and rescue organizations transported the deceased and injured to nearby hospitals, he added. (Xinhua)

1 dead after car ploughs into crowd in Melbourne Showgrounds: A car



A drone photo taken on April 15, 2026 shows tourists taking a cruise ship for sightseeing in Rongcheng City, east China's Shandong Province. (Xinhua)

ploughed into a group of pedestrians outside Melbourne Showgrounds on Saturday evening, killing at least one person, Victoria Police of Australia said.

"It is believed a grey Toyota mounted a kerb on Langs Road and struck two pedestrians just before 5 p.m.," a press release by Victoria Police said.

"Sadly, one of the pedestrians who is yet to be formally identified died at the

scene," it said. "The second pedestrian was taken to hospital with life-threatening injuries," it added. (Xinhua)

9 killed in pickup Thailand truck accident: A pickup truck carrying 21 passengers lost control and crashed off the road in northern Thailand on Saturday, leaving nine dead and 10 injured, according to Thai media.

The accident took place in Pua District of Nan Province, where the pickup truck hit a guardrail and overturned at a steep downhill curve.

Five people died at the scene, and three died after being sent to the hospital that day. Another injured person died on Sunday morning, bringing the total death toll to nine. The injured ranged in age from 8 to 58, including four students.

Boonsong Nikornthuean, chief of Pua Police Station, said that it is suspected that the cause of the accident was speeding on the curve and poor road conditions and visibility, noting the specific cause is still under investigation. (Xinhua)

Quake hits northern Sumatra, Indonesia - GFZ: An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.8 jolted northern Sumatra, Indonesia, at 2006 GMT on Saturday, the GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences said.

The epicenter, with a depth of 10 km, was initially determined to be at 1.29 degrees north latitude and 97.21 degrees east longitude. (Xinhua)

Fire in northern Borneo state of Sabah displaces hundreds: Hundreds of people have been displaced after a fire destroyed over 200 homes in a coastal village in the northern Borneo state of Sabah, Malaysian authorities said on Sunday.

The fire broke out at 1.32 am local time, Sandakan district's fire and rescue chief Jimmy Lagung told Bernama.

"Strong winds and the close proximity of the houses caused the fire to spread rapidly, while low tide conditions also made it difficult to obtain an open water source," he said.

No casualties have been reported so far, and local authorities have started arranging temporary shelters for the affected residents. (Xinhua)

Senior South Korean officials express concerns

North Korea launches multiple short-range ballistic missiles toward sea, say neighbors

SEOUL, South Korea, April 19, (AP) - North Korea launched multiple short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea on Sunday, its neighbors said, days after the UN's nuclear watchdog warned that North Korea was making "very serious" advances in efforts to build nuclear weapons.

The missiles fired from the North's Sinpo area flew about 140 kilometers (87 miles) each in a direction toward the country's eastern waters, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

It said South Korea maintains a readiness to repel any provocations by North Korea and is closely exchanging information with the US and Japan.

In an emergency meeting of the National Security Council, senior South Korean officials expressed concerns about North Korea's repeated ballistic missile tests and urged it to stop them immediately. Sunday's launches came hours before South Korean President Lee Jae Myung left the country to visit India and Vietnam.

The U.S. and Japanese militaries also said they detected the launches. The US Indo-Pacific Command said it remains committed to the defense of the US homeland and its allies in the region. Japan's Defense Ministry said Tokyo strongly protested to Pyongyang, saying the launches threaten regional and international peace and violated UN Security Council resolutions that bans any ballistic activities by North Korea.

Sinpo, the launch site, is an eastern coastal city in North Korea where it has a major shipyard use for building submarines.

South Korea's military was analyzing whether the latest launches were made from a submarine, a land-based launcher or both platforms, according to South Korean media. Asked about where the missiles were launched, Japan's Deputy Minister of Defense Masahisa Miyazaki told reporters that Japan was analyzing launch details in coordina-



This photo provided by the North Korean government, shows what it says a test launch of a missile at an undisclosed place in North Korea on April 12. (AP)

tion with the US and South Korea.

If the launches involved a submarine, it would mark North Korea's first submarine-launched ballistic missile test in four years.

North Korea obtaining a greater ability to fire missiles from under-

water would be a worrying development because it's difficult for its rivals to detect such launches in advance. Last year, North Korea unveiled a nuclear-powered submarine under construction for the first time.

Sunday's launches were the latest in North Korea's run of weapons tests this year.

Last week, North Korea said leader Kim Jong Un supervised missile tests from the country's destroyer. In the previous week, North Korea said it had three days of testing activities to examine ballistic missiles armed with cluster-bomb warheads and other new weapons systems.

Last month, it said it tested an upgraded solid-fuel engine for missiles capable of reaching the US mainland.

Kim has focused on enlarging his nuclear and missile arsenals since his high-stakes nuclear diplomacy with U.S. President Donald Trump collapsed in 2019.

Trump has repeatedly expressed his desire to restore diplomacy with Kim, and the North Korean leader has recently left open the door for dialogue with Trump but urged Washington to drop demands for the North's nuclear disarmament as a precondition for talks.

Trump is to travel to Beijing for a rescheduled summit with Xi Jinping in May. Some observers North Korea's recent testing activities were likely meant to increase its leverage in future dealings with the U.S., as the Trump-Xi meeting could provide a diplomatic opening with Pyongyang.

On Wednesday, International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Grossi said that his agency has confirmed "a rapid increase" in activities at nuclear manufacturing facilities in North Korea. Grossi told reporters in Seoul that activities in North Korea point to "a very serious increase" in its nuclear weapons production capabilities.

Africa

Mugabe's son enters plea deal: A son of former Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe avoided being charged with attempted murder on Friday after reaching a plea deal in which he admitted to pointing a gun and breaking immigration laws in South Africa.

Bellarmino Chatunga Mugabe and his co-accused, Tobias Mugabe Matonhodze, have been detained since mid-February, facing attempted murder charges following the shooting of Sipho Mahlangu, whom the police identified as an employee at the home. He was hospitalized for his injuries.

Mugabe, 28, pleaded guilty to "the offense of pointing anything which is likely to lead a person to believe it is a firearm" in a separate incident and to illegally entering and staying in South Africa. He is the youngest son of the former leader of Zimbabwe, who died in 2019, and Grace Mugabe, his second wife.

Matonhodze pleaded guilty to five charges, including attempted murder, possession of an unlawful firearm and ammunition, defeating ends of justice and illegal immigration.

The pair's legal representative, Sinenhlanhla Mnguni, told reporters outside court that the state and the defense had entered into a Section 112 plea deal after initial plea and sentence negotiations collapsed. Under South Africa's Criminal Procedure Act, this kind of deal avoids a full trial.

Defense lawyer Advocate Laurence Hodes argued for mercy in sentencing, pointing out that both Mugabe and Matonhodze, who are cousins, had no prior convictions, had compensated their victim financially, and were able to pay any fine imposed by the court.

However, a police investigator brought in as a witness told the court that the police were still looking for the gun used in the incident and that the accused, who "were there at that time when the firearm was fired and injured the victim," were not assisting them. (AP)



Mugabe

Activist Seba arrested in S. Africa: Prominent Beninese activist Kemi Seba has been arrested in South Africa for alleged conspiracy to commit a crime, police said, as he faces extradition to Benin where he is wanted for "inciting rebellion" following last year's failed coup there.

Seba, whose birth name is Stello Gilles Robert Capo Chichi, was arrested alongside his son during a sting operation in Pretoria, South Africa's capital, police said.

The police, citing Interpol's assistance, said they can confirm that Seba, 45, "is indeed a wanted fugitive in Benin in relation to crimes against the state."

Seba and his son were charged with conspiracy to commit a crime and immigration violations for allegedly planning illegal migration to Europe via Zimbabwe. A third accomplice, also in detention, was accused of paying roughly R250,000 (\$15,000) to facilitate the cross-border movements.

The trio appeared at the Brooklyn magistrates' court on Wednesday, according to the police, where the case was rescheduled until April 20.

Seba, meanwhile, was placed in police custody as the police plan to extradite him to Benin.

Benin in December issued an international arrest warrant against Seba for "incitement to rebellion" after he posted a video on social media expressing support for the failed coup. In the video, he was seen celebrating the attempted overthrow of President Patrice Talon as successful, calling it "the day of liberation" and describing the soldiers involved as "patriotic." (AP)

Ghana rescues 305 W. African nationals: More than 300 West African nationals, including 113 children, have been rescued after an intelligence-led bust by the Ghana Immigration Service on street begging networks in the capital of Accra, the agency said.

The operation early Wednesday targeted suspected street begging rings exploiting foreign nationals linked to human trafficking across parts of the Greater Accra Region.

According to a US State Department report in 2024, Ghana does not meet the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking despite efforts by the government. It is a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking in West Africa. (AP)

Pope Leo XIV challenges Angola's leaders to break 'cycle of interests'

LUANDA, Angola, April 19, (AP) - Pope Leo XIV challenged Angola's leaders to break the "cycle of interests" that have plundered and exploited Africa for centuries as he arrived in the southern African country on Saturday with a message of encouragement for its long-suffering people.

Leo's arrival in Angola, the oil-and-mineral rich former Portuguese colony, marked the third leg of his four-nation African voyage. En route from Cameroon, he spoke again of the ongoing back-and-forth with US President Donald Trump over the Iran war.

Leo, history's first US-born pope, said that it was "not in my interest at all" to debate Trump, but that he would continue preaching the Gospel message of peace, justice and brotherhood in Africa.

US Vice President JD Vance later wrote on social media that "I am grateful to Pope Leo for saying this." Vance, a Catholic convert, suggested earlier in the week that Leo "be careful" when speaking about theology.

In Angola, Leo met with President Joao Lourenco and delivered his first speech to Angolan government authorities, in which he referred repeatedly to Angola's tortured history of colonial plunder and civil war.

"I desire to meet you in the spirit born of peace and to affirm that your people possess treasures that cannot be bought or stolen," he said. "There dwells within you a joy that not even the most adverse circumstances have been able to extinguish."



Pope Leo XIV arrives in Kilamba, some 30 kilometers south of Luanda, Angola, to preside over Sunday Mass on April 19 on the seventh day of an 11-day apostolic journey to Africa. (AP)

Angola, which has a population of around 38 million, gained independence from Portugal in 1975. But it still bears the scars of a devastating civil war that began straight after independence and raged on and off for 27 years before finally ending in 2002. More than a half-million people are believed to have been killed.

For years, the civil war was a Cold War proxy conflict, with the United States and apartheid South Africa backing one side and the Soviet Union and Cuba backing the other.

Angola is now the fourth-largest oil producer in Africa and among the

world's top 20 producers, according to the International Energy Agency. The country is also the world's No. 3 diamond producer and has significant deposits of gold and highly sought after critical minerals.

But despite its varied natural resources, the World Bank estimated in 2023 that more than 30% of the population lived on less than \$2.15 a day.

"You know well that all too often people have looked - and continue to look - to your lands in order to give, or, more commonly, in order to take," Leo told the Angolan authorities.

Peru's interim president defers \$3.5 bln fighter jet purchase to next government

LIMA, Peru, April 19, (AP) - Peruvian interim President José María Balcázar has deferred the decision to purchase 24 fighter jets valued at \$3.5 billion to his successor who will emerge after a runoff in the country's presidential election.

Balcázar announced the decision in an interview with RPP local radio station on Friday evening. His transitional government, which began in February, is set to end in July. Peru is holding a presidential runoff on June 7.

The interim leader said the new government will have "full legitimacy to decide" whether to acquire the F-16 Block 70 fighter jets manufactured by the United States-based Lockheed Martin.

"For us to commit such a large sum of money to the incoming government would be a poor practice for a transitional government," Balcázar said.

Peruvians voted for president on Sunday. No candidate received enough support to win outright, and electoral authorities have not yet announced the two candidates who will advance to the runoff contest as they continue to count votes.



Voters line up outside a polling station during general elections in Lima, Peru on April 12. (AP)

Conservative former congresswoman Keiko Fujimori has assured her spot in June's ballot after taking the top slot among 35 presidential hopefuls. But the tight race for second and third place could take weeks to finalize.

The runoff winner will take office on July 28.

In 2024, the government of Presi-

dent Dina Boluarte announced that Peru would allocate \$3.5 billion to the purchase of 24 fighter jets through domestic borrowing of \$2 billion in 2025 and \$1.5 billion in 2026. Among the companies that submitted bids were, in addition to Lockheed Martin, the Swedish Saab and the French Dassault Aviation.

Lat/Am

Mexico arrests alleged drug trafficker: A suspected drug trafficker considered one of Europe's most wanted fugitives has been arrested in Mexico, authorities said on Saturday.

The suspect, identified as János Balla and also known as Dániel Takács, was captured in the southern state of Quintana Roo, according to Mexican Security Secretary Omar García Harfuch. Balla is wanted in Hungary over drug trafficking accusations and is the subject of an Interpol Red Notice, García said on X.

State and federal authorities in a joint statement said Balla was located thanks to information shared by Hungarian security agencies, as well as intelligence and investigative work. They said he was turned over to Mexico's immigration agency "to determine his immigration status and continue his controlled deportation process to Europe." (AP)

56 bodies dumped at cemetery: Police in Trinidad and Tobago said they were investigating after 56 bodies - mainly of infants - were found dumped at one of the country's cemeteries on Saturday.

The twin-island Caribbean nation has been struggling with surging crime, including deadly gang violence, which prompted authorities to extend an existing state of emergency last month. (AP)

Subcontinent

Lightning strikes kill 12 in Bangladesh: A series of lightning strikes killed 12 people in six districts of Bangladesh on Saturday.

The majority of the lightning fatalities occurred in rural areas where people were working on their farmlands, local sources said.

Deaths due to lightning strikes are common in Bangladesh during this time of the year, as the weather changes from the dry season to the rainy summer season.

The country has seen a surge of lightning strike deaths in recent years, data showed. (Xinhua)

Sri Lanka fines 80 buses for overcharging: Sri Lanka's National Transport Commission (NTC) has fined 80 buses for overcharging passengers during the Sinhala and Tamil New Year period, the country's most popular holiday, an official said on Sunday.

Rohana Wattage, head of the NTC's mobile bus inspection unit, told journalists that officials inspected 680 buses between April 8 and 18 and found that 80 buses had charged passengers above approved fares.

Wattage said officials refunded the excess fares to passengers and imposed fines on the bus operators concerned. He said officials inspected nearly 150 buses on April 18 alone and found that 12 had overcharged passengers.

Wattage said the NTC will continue the inspections until April 21. (Xinhua)

Leading February 2026 report, topping nine metrics with five outright wins

Zain Kuwait's most awarded 5G network, wins Opensignal's Best Network Award

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Zain Kuwait has been recognized with the Best Network Award in Opensignal's Mobile Network Experience Report for February 2026, further cementing its leadership as Kuwait's Most Awarded 5G Network and highlighting the company's continued excellence in delivering a superior mobile experience across the country.

The recognition reflects Zain's continued strength across key dimensions of network experience and performance, after emerging on top across a total of nine metrics in the report, more than any other operator in the market. These included five outright wins and four shared ones, underscoring the depth, consistency, and resilience of Zain's network leadership.

According to the independent report, Zain achieved sole wins in Coverage Experience and 5G Coverage Experience, scoring 8.1 out of 10 and 4.5 out of 10 respectively. Zain also ranked first in Consistent Quality with a score of 71.2 out of 100, highlighting its ability to deliver a dependable and high-quality user experience across everyday mobile usage scenarios. Zain also secured outright wins in 5G Video Experience with a score of 77.2 out of 100, and 5G Download Speed Experience with a top score of 328.8 Mbps.

The company further emerged as a joint winner in Video Experience with a score of 70.1 out of 100, Download Speed Experience with a score of 106.5 Mbps, Time on Network with a score of 98 out of 100, and Reliability Experience with a score of 874 out of 1000, demonstrating balanced strength across a broad range of performance indicators.

Opensignal's February 2026 Mobile Network Experience Report evaluated the performance of Kuwait's mobile operators over a 90-



day period from October 1, 2025 to December 29, 2025. Opensignal is a leading independent global standard in measuring and analyzing consumers' mobile and broadband network experiences. Its reports provide data-driven insights into how users experience connectivity in everyday life across key performance indicators.

The recognition adds further momentum to Zain's ongoing investments in network modernization and future-ready digital infrastructure. It also reflects the company's broader efforts to deliver a reliable, seamless, and high-performing connectivity experience that

supports the evolving needs of individuals, households, and businesses across Kuwait.

The report also highlighted the strong development of Kuwait's telecom market, driven by growing adoption of 5G Standalone technology and continued operator investment in advanced infrastructure. Within this landscape, Zain's performance in the latest results reaffirms its position at the forefront of network innovation and service excellence.

Recently, Zain Kuwait added another major international win to its growing record of network leadership accolades, winning three prestigious awards from Ookla® Speedtest® – the world's leading platform for network intelligence, testing, and analytics. The recognition was made on the sidelines of the Mobile World Congress (MWC 2026) in Barcelona, Spain.

The company secured the titles of Fastest 5G Network in Kuwait, Best Coverage in Kuwait, and Best 5G Network in Kuwait, based on Ookla® Speedtest® Intelligence data for the second half of 2025 from millions of user-initiated tests in Kuwait. The recognition reinforced Zain's position at the forefront of network excellence in the Kuwaiti market and reflected the strength, consistency, and maturity of its connectivity infrastructure.

This reflected Zain's sustained investment in advanced network infrastructure, continuous coverage expansion, and ongoing optimization of the customer experience across the country. It also highlighted the company's focus on delivering consistent 5G performance, strong network reliability, and high-quality connectivity through a long-term strategy centered on innovation, efficiency, and operational excellence.

Kuwait leads jet fuel exports as global supply crisis looms

KPC confirms top global rank

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Unlike international reports, specifically *The Telegraph* magazine, which stated that Kuwait ranked second globally in jet fuel exports, an official report issued by the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) confirmed that Kuwait achieved first place globally in jet fuel exports during 2025.

The same report revealed that the net quantity of jet fuel (kerosene) produced by the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) through the Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-Ahmadi refineries reached approximately 10,217.8 million metric tons in the first third of 2025.

Production of the same fuel from the Al-Zour refinery during the same period reached approximately 3,352 million metric tons.

According to international reports, the head of the International Energy Agency (IEA) recently stated that the available jet fuel is sufficient for six weeks or slightly longer, and warned of the possibility of flight cancellations at many airports worldwide if the Iran war continues to disrupt oil supplies.

The same reports predicted a slump in the global tourism and travel market this summer due to a shortage of jet fuel, which is impacting airline profitability.

The reports stated that jet fuel represents 27 percent of operating expenses, and that the US-Israeli war on Iran has caused jet fuel prices to jump from \$90 to \$200 per barrel in recent weeks, forcing the global aviation sector to raise airfares by more than 100 percent.

According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the jet fuel shortage crisis



Al-Mutairi



Al-Harami

could last for months, as it may take a long time to repair Gulf refineries damaged by Iranian attacks.

In this regard, Mohammed Al-Mutairi, Head of the Kuwait Union of Travel and Tourism Offices, confirmed that the rise in jet fuel prices will inevitably affect travel and tourism this summer.

He stressed that the impact will not necessarily be immediate or permanent on ticket prices, especially since pricing depends on several factors, including supply and demand, competition, and each company's policies.

Al-Mutairi predicted gradual increases in ticket prices or adjustments to the number of flights, depending on feasibility.

He noted that airlines have tools to help mitigate the impact of rising fuel prices, such as advance planning and cost management.

Meanwhile, oil analyst and expert Kamel Al-Harami stated that the disruption of jet fuel and marine fuel supplies is a major issue for the global transportation sector, significantly affecting global trade.

He explained that this highlights the world's urgent need for these two fuels. The production capacity of jet fuel from Kuwait's three local refineries - Al-Zour, Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-Ahmadi - is estimated at approximately 345,000 barrels per day. This amount represents a consid-

erable share of the total production capacity of the three refineries, which is approximately 1.2 million barrels per day.

Asian markets are expected to be affected, as Kuwait exports most of its refined products to these markets, including Japan, South Korea, China, and India. These markets represent higher added value compared to the European and US markets, due to price differences and the availability of secure outlets for marketing KPC's products.

Al-Harami said KPC has moved to enter the Korean and Chinese markets due to intensifying competition, affirming that Kuwait's refining sector is exerting concerted efforts to establish a presence in those countries to market Kuwaiti oil and its derivatives.

In addition, international reports confirm that the world consumes approximately 8 million barrels of jet fuel. With the disruption of fuel supplies, the situation has worsened in low-income markets that rely on imports, such as Vietnam, Myanmar, and Pakistan, after China and Thailand halted jet fuel exports. This has forced airlines to reduce the number of flights, cut services on less profitable routes, or suspend some operations entirely.

Other reports highlighted the problem arising from competition among air cargo companies for limited supplies. In many cases, airlines resort to transporting additional fuel from airports where it is cheaper or more readily available to avoid shortages at arrival airports.

The reports explained that Gulf airlines incurred heavy losses as a result of the war, estimated at around \$200 million per day in the initial weeks. In the event that the war resumes after a ceasefire, financial losses are expected to increase by at least \$1.5 billion. If the war continues for half a year, losses in the Gulf aviation sector may exceed \$3 billion.

Gulf's AI ambitions tested by regional instability

US-Iran war threatens global AI and cloud economy

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Amid a turbulent geopolitical landscape, the US-Iran war is increasingly being viewed as more than a traditional regional dispute, emerging instead as a direct test of the future of the global digital economy, particularly the artificial intelligence sector.

While Gulf states have sought to become global hubs for data centers and cloud computing in the post-oil era, the war has underscored the challenges of achieving this ambition and has placed added pressure on the foundations of the cloud economy.

The risks now extend beyond energy prices and oil flows to include modern technological infrastructure such as electronic chips, supply chains, data centers, and even the concept of the "cloud," which was once regarded as a borderless digital space.

It has become clear that this infrastructure is highly dependent on geography and extremely sensitive to geopolitical and military developments. Any instability in the Gulf, therefore, could have immediate repercussions for the global digital economy.

Reports from Reuters, the Associated Press, and Agence France-Presse indicate that the war is no longer merely a geopolitical development, but a factor directly reshaping the artificial intelligence economy, particularly in the Gulf region, which has emerged as a strategic hub combining

energy resources and digital infrastructure.

Analyses published by The American Prospect confirm that disruptions to global supply chains for gas, helium, and semiconductors pose a direct threat to companies' ability to operate and scale AI models.

Meanwhile, reports from Investor's Business Daily, Fortune, and Axios highlight that the AI sector has undergone huge shifts as a result of the war, most notably the transformation of data centers from secure economic assets into strategic targets vulnerable to military strikes, with some digital facilities reportedly coming under direct attack.

Reports from Foreign Policy and The American Prospect indicate that the attacks have targeted not only the energy sector but also the "brain of the digital economy," leading to rising cybersecurity costs for digital service providers.

According to The American Prospect, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz caused widespread disruption to energy supplies, significantly affecting the semiconductor industry. This included the shutdown of helium facilities in Qatar's Ras Laffan, which account for roughly one-third of global supply, resulting in higher prices, increased production costs, and disruptions to data center operations worldwide.

Foreign Policy further reports that the war is no longer confined to traditional resources but has expanded into digital infrastructure, with data

centers becoming potential military targets.

The deep interconnection between Asian chip manufacturing and Gulf resource dependency has disrupted global supply chains, pushed up electronics prices, and intensified inflationary pressures.

Kuwait occupies a highly sensitive position amid these developments, as the gap widens between its ambitions to build an advanced digital economy and the volatile security environment.

According to international reports, Kuwait relies on emerging data center and artificial intelligence projects, which exposes it to the impacts of regional instability, particularly given its close ties to energy markets.

Across the Gulf region, these challenges reflect a broader shift from an environment once considered highly attractive for technology investment to one where security risks are increasingly intertwined with economic considerations, underscoring the need to reassess digital transformation strategies.

The war revealed that artificial intelligence is no longer merely a promising economic sector, but has become part of a complex geopolitical equation where energy, technology, and security intersect.

With rising risks, the success of Gulf states in this field is no longer determined solely by the scale of investment, but also by their ability to balance digital ambitions with security stability in a highly volatile regional environment.

Restarts Dhaka service

Kuwait Airways extends 14-destination network

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: As part of Kuwait Airways' ongoing efforts to expand its route network during the current circumstances, the company has announced the resumption of its scheduled flights to Dhaka, Bangladesh, effective 24 April 2026, operating via King Fahd International Airport in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, after transporting passengers by land through the Nuwaiseeb border crossing. The service will operate with two flights per week.

This comes as part of a series of destinations recently launched by the company via Dammam, including London, Cairo, Istanbul, Lahore, Amman, Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Kochi, Chennai, Manila, Paris, and Colombo, bringing the total number of destinations operated by Kuwait Airways to 14.

Kuwait Airways Acting Chief Executive Officer, Captain Abdulwahab Ibrahim Al-Shatti stated that Kuwait Airways is pleased to resume its scheduled flights to and from Dhaka, emphasizing that the company continues to relaunch its destinations in response to the high demand from its valued passengers. He added that Kuwait Airways remains committed to implementing its operational plans with high efficiency to ensure smooth travel operations, noting that the company has mobilized all available resources and mechanisms to receive travel requests and provide flights to designated destinations accordingly.

Al-Shatti added that the launch of the Dhaka route reflects its importance to Kuwait Airways passengers and forms part of the national carrier's plan to continue expanding its network with new destinations in its daily flight schedule, alongside several other key destinations, especially in light of the current circumstances and reflecting the company's commitment to meeting the needs of travellers.

Al-Shatti stated that Kuwait Airways has provided a service for submitting visa applications to the



Captain Abdulwahab Al-Shatti

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for residents, provided they have made prior reservations on Kuwait Airways flights.

He explained that Kuwait Airways in cooperation with Al Khairan Mall, will provide travellers exclusive offers from several brands at the mall, giving them the opportunity to shop at special prices before departure.

Al-Shatti concluded by stating that the company is working continuously with relevant authorities inside and outside the State of Kuwait to ensure the best operational solutions, emphasizing that the safety and security of passengers and aircraft crew remain the national carrier's top priority.

Kuwait Airways has made bookings available for passengers wishing to travel through its Customer Service Call Center at 171, via WhatsApp at +965 1802050, as well as through Kuwait Airways Sales Offices.

Kuwait boosts Shariah audit expertise with new cohort

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Under the patronage of the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS), Basel A. Al-Haroon, the seventh cohort of the Certified Shariah Auditor program has been launched. This program is part of the "Kafa' a initiative" launched by CBK in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks, and is managed and executed by KIBS.

This was stated in a remark by the CBK Governor, in which he emphasized the importance of continuing such specialized programs despite the current challenging landscape, due to their pivotal role in enhancing the efficiency of Sharia auditing in the sharia-compliant financial institutions, especially in light of the rapid changes seen in the banking sector.

KIBS inaugurated the seventh cohort of the "Certified Shariah Auditor" Program on 19 April 2026. The program is delivered through a flexible training approach that keeps pace with developments and ensures continuous professional development.

In this context, the KIBS Director General, Ms. Rana Abdullah Al-Nibari, noted that the program attracted an elite group of professionals working in Sharia auditing in Kuwaiti Islamic banks as well as Sharia audit firms and offices in addition to participants from various entities and individuals, thus reflecting ongoing interest in developing competencies.

She added that Sharia auditing is a fundamental pillar of Sharia governance which requires continued investment in developing human resources through high-quality professional



training even under exceptional circumstances. She stressed that the current phase calls for intensified efforts to sustain professional capacity development.

From this standpoint, CBK, in collaboration with KIBS, developed the "Certified Shariah Auditor" Certification that has been designed to cover auditing across banking and financial institution activities, including investment and insurance, in accordance with the latest professional practices and standards. The certification is accredited by both CBK and Walbrook Institute London in the United Kingdom.

KIBS reaffirms its commitment to deliver high-quality programs efficiently and flexibly, in line with current requirements, reflecting its dedication to supporting the banking and financial sector under all circumstances.

Boursa Kuwait closes higher, Main 50 leads gains

KUWAIT CITY, April 19, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Sunday's trading session on a positive note, with the general index rising by 22.13 points, or 0.25 percent, to close at 8,924.82 points. Market activity saw 471.5 million shares traded across 28,442 transactions, with a total value of KD 108.9 million (approximately USD 353 million).

The main market index recorded stronger gains, climbing 94.19 points, or 1.15 percent, to 8,298.24 points. Trading volume reached 287.7 million shares through 17,211 transactions, valued at KD 41.2 million (around USD 134.7 million).

Meanwhile, the premier market index posted a modest increase of 7.91 points, or 0.08 percent, to settle at 9,521.25 points. A total of 183.7 million shares changed hands via 11,231 transactions, with a value of KD 67.6 million (approximately USD 221 million).

The Main 50 Index outperformed, advancing 144.45 points, or 1.61 percent, to close at 9,138.62 points. Trading activity included 253.9 million shares across 14,196 transactions, totaling KD 36.5 million (about USD 119.3 million).

BUSINESS

GCC banks see liquidity pressure as loan-to-deposit ratio reaches record highs

By KAMCO Invest

GCC-listed banks showed steady growth in revenues during Q4-2025 with total bank revenue reaching a new record high level during the quarter. The growth was led by higher net interest income despite a fall in yield on credit and non-interest income and was mainly led by consistent growth in lending. Non-interest income witnessed a decline for the first time in seven quarters, partially offsetting the overall growth. The bottom-line also declined during Q4-2025 led by a growth in impairments during the quarter that reached the highest level in eighteen quarters.

The growth in credit facilities was broad-based spread across most sectors and across the region backed by a strong pipeline of projects. Aggregate gross loans reported by listed banks in the GCC registered an increase of 2.7% reaching USD 2.47 Trillion at the end of Q4-2025. The growth reflected resilient non-oil sector growth in the region with non-oil manufacturing consistently well above the growth mark for key economies in the region. Net loans also showed a healthy growth of 2.5% during the quarter to reach USD 2.37 Trillion. On the other hand, customer deposits witnessed the first sequential decline in 19 quarters to reach USD 2.78 Trillion, registering a q-o-q fall of 0.6%. As a result of higher lending and a fall in customer deposits, the loan-to-deposit ratio for the GCC Banking sector reached a new record high of 85.4% at the end of Q4-2025 vs. 82.8% during the previous quarter.

In terms of topline performance, aggregate banking sector revenues reached a new record high during the quarter at USD 37.4 Bn, after registering a sequential growth of 1.7% in Q4-2025. The growth was led by an increase in revenues reported by banks in Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia that was partially offset by a marginal decline reported by UAE and Qatari-listed banks.

Net profits reported by listed banks in the GCC declined by 5.9% from a record high level in Q3-2025 to a four-quarter low level of USD 15.6 Bn during Q4-2025. The decline, which was seen in almost all the countries in the GCC barring Oman, mainly reflected higher impairments that more than offset the topline growth. An increase in operating expenses for the second consecutive quarter also affected bottom-line performance.

Highlights – GCC Banking Sector

This report analyzes the financials reported by 56 listed banks in the GCC for the quarter ended Q4-2025. Data for individual banks has been aggregated to the country level. Some of the key observations from the most recent financial quarter for the GCC Banking Sector include the following:

Fed rate expectations change dramatically...

The US Fed interest rate expectations have transitioned significantly over the last six months, from a definitive easing cycle to a state of heightened caution. In late 2024 and through December 2025, the central bank was actively cutting rates, eventually reaching a range of 3.50%–3.75%. At that time, market participants largely expected a series of continued cuts throughout 2026, aiming for a terminal rate near 3.0% as inflation appeared to be cooling toward target levels.

However, the narrative shifted abruptly in early 2026 due to a double shock of persistent domestic inflation and geopolitical instability in the Middle East. The resulting surge in energy prices and a war risk premium forced the Fed to pause its easing cycle in January-2026. By the March-2026 meeting, the updated dot-plot revealed a significantly more hawkish stance, with officials revising their inflation forecasts upward and signaling that the era of easy money was on indefinite hold. As of April-2026, the conversation has moved beyond mere pauses toward the possibility of active tightening. With core inflation remaining stubborn and leadership transitions looming at the Fed, some policymakers have openly discussed the necessity of rate hikes if price stability isn't restored. This has effectively erased the optimism of late 2025, replacing it with a higher-for-longer outlook that accounts for the volatile global energy market and its impact on the broader US economy.

The most recent inflation data paints a picture of a stalled disinflationary trend, with headline CPI figures beginning to decouple from more stable core measures. While the inflation in February-2026 was steady at 2.4% y-o-y matching January's figure and marking its lowest level since mid-2025, leading data from the Cleveland Fed suggest a significant upward spike for March-2026 and April-2026, with headline CPI potentially surging toward 3.4%. This divergence is primarily attributed to a sharp reversal in energy costs while food inflation has remained stubborn at roughly 3.1%. In contrast, the Core CPI remained stable at 2.5%, marking its lowest level since March 2021. On a monthly basis, core prices advanced by a subdued 0.2%, consistent with January's figures and matching forecasts.

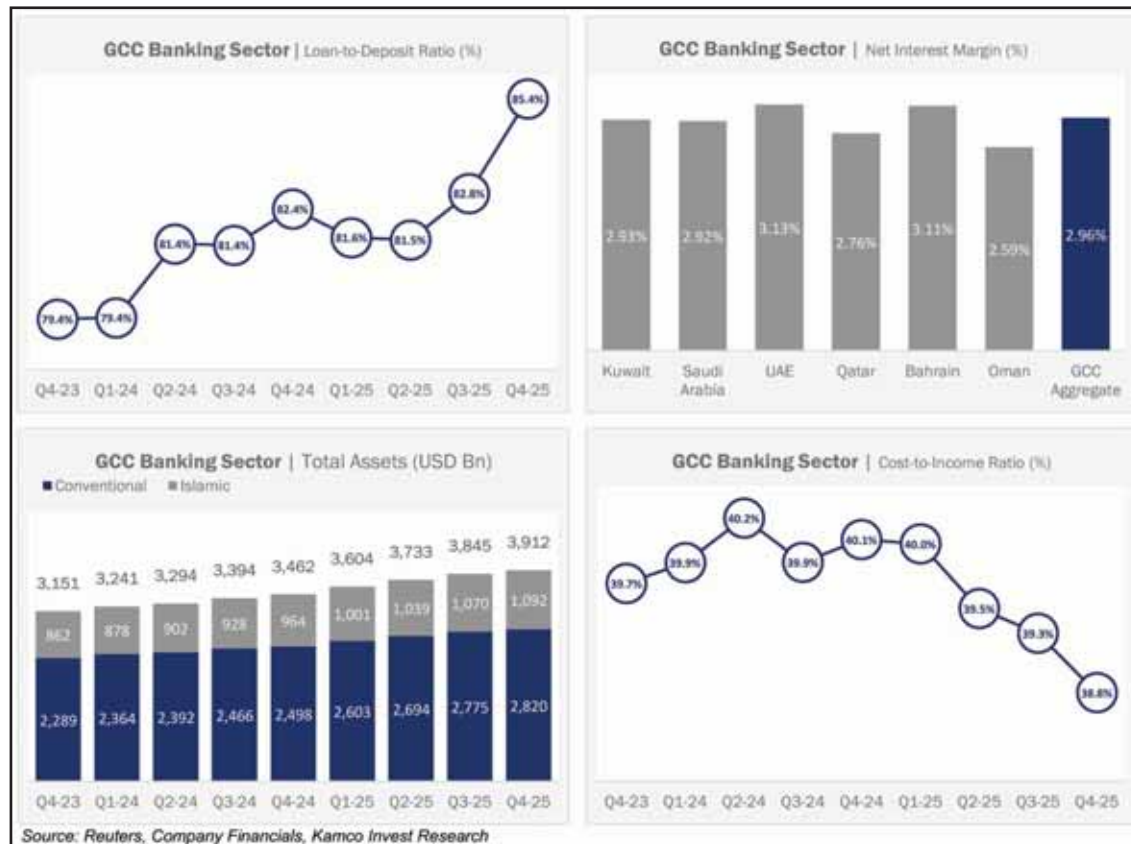
The ECB, meanwhile, has transitioned to a wait-and-see stance, maintaining its deposit facility rate at 2.00% as of March-2026. While the central bank had previously been on an easing path following a mid-2025 cut, persistent geopolitical instability in the Middle East has derailed expectations for further reductions. Market sentiment has shifted from anticipating a series of cuts to pricing in a prolonged pause, with some policymakers even hinting at potential hikes if energy-driven price shocks continue to threaten medium-term stability. This hawkish shift is also a direct response to a sharp reversal in Eurozone inflation, which jumped to an estimated 2.5% in March-2026 after remaining comfortably below the target at 1.9% in February-2026. The spike is primarily fueled by a nearly 5% surge in energy costs, forcing the ECB to revise its 2026 inflation forecast upward to 2.6%. Consequently, the Eurozone faces a stagflationary challenge, as higher costs are paired with a downgraded GDP growth projection of just 0.9%, leaving the central bank to navigate a narrow path between controlling resurgent prices and supporting a fragile economic recovery.

On the other hand, China is successfully moving away from the deflationary risks of previous years as CPI climbed to 1.3% in February-2026, with a year-end target of approximately 2.0%. While producer prices (PPI) remain slightly negative at -0.9%, the narrowing of this decline suggests that industrial overcapacity is easing and corporate profitability is beginning to stabilize as the government maintains modest fiscal stimulus and a deficit of 4.0% of GDP. China's economic outlook for 2026 reflects a deliberate transition toward high-quality growth, with GDP expected to moderate to a target range of 4.5% to 5.0%, down from roughly 5% in 2025. This structural slowdown is driven by a persistent property market downturn and cautious consumer spending, which are being partially offset by robust manufacturing investment in strategic sectors like AI and semiconductors.

In terms of interest rate expectations, global central banks have largely transitioned from a coordinated easing cycle to a fragmented, data-dependent hawkish pause as they grapple with a resurgence of energy-driven inflation. While the US Fed and the ECB have halted their rate-cutting campaigns to monitor the impact of Middle Eastern geopolitical tensions on global oil prices, the Bank of England remains deeply divided, balancing persistent services inflation against a softening labor market. In emerging markets, the trend is even more cautious. India's RBI is currently weighing a potential surprise rate hike to defend a weakening rupee, while other developing nations have halved the pace of their rate reductions compared to 2025. Overall, the terminal rate expectations for major economies have been revised upward across the board, signaling that the move toward neutral monetary policy will be significantly slower and more volatile than previously anticipated. Central banks in the GCC are likely to follow the US Fed's rate path this week as well as next year as the currency pegs remain in comfortable position.

Resilient growth in lending across the GCC...

Data from GCC central banks once again highlighted the resilience of regional economies with continued growth in outstanding credit facilities. Total credit facilities, as seen from central bank published data, continued to show growth during Q4-2025 led by growth in all countries in the region. Total GCC credit facilities expanded from USD



2.08 Trillion at the end of September-2025 to USD 2.11 Trillion by December 2025, representing a net addition of USD 27.1 Bn and a quarterly growth rate of 1.30%. This modest yet consistent expansion reflects the region's resilient financial sector amid global economic uncertainties. All six GCC countries recorded growth during the quarter, with the UAE contributing the largest absolute increase of USD 10.1 Bn, followed closely by Saudi Arabia at USD 9.1 Bn. In percentage terms, the UAE led the region with 1.85% growth, followed by Bahrain (1.78%) and Kuwait (1.53%), while Qatar recorded the slowest pace of growth at 0.95%.

Saudi Arabia, the GCC's largest credit market with outstanding credit facilities of SAR 3.30 Trillion (USD 879 Bn), grew by 1.04% during the quarter. Corporate Real Estate financing emerged as the standout performer, increasing by 4.48% (+SAR 9.5 Bn) as Vision 2030 mega-projects continued to attract investment. The Utilities sector (Electricity, Water, Gas & Health) also showed strength with 3.38% growth (+SAR 7.1 Bn), while Transport & Communications added SAR 1.6 Bn (+2.24%). However, the Kingdom witnessed notable contractions in Building and Construction (-3.75%, -SAR 5.4 Bn), Manufacturing (-2.30%, -SAR 4.6 Bn), and Finance & Insurance (-2.51%, -SAR 4.6 Bn).

The UAE delivered the strongest absolute growth at AED 37.1 Bn (+1.85%), driven predominantly by personal consumption loans (+3.57%, +AED 20.1 Bn), government sector borrowing (+6.95%, +AED 14.7 Bn), and utilities (+8.28%, +AED 4.5 Bn), while agriculture (-22.5%), mining (-8.6%), and transport (-4.1%) experienced pullbacks.

Outstanding credit facilities in Kuwait grew 1.53% (+KWD 802.8 Mn), with the crude oil and gas sector delivering exceptional performance at 19.48% growth (+KWD 335.4 Mn), reflecting intensified upstream energy investments. Purchase of securities also performed well (+6.42%, +KWD 288.9 Mn), alongside the "Other" category (+4.87%, +KWD 191.7 Mn). However, industry (-5.29%, -KWD 119.1 Mn), trade (-2.90%, -KWD 110.7 Mn), and construction (-2.80%, -KWD 77.3 Mn) faced headwinds. Qatar's credit facilities expanded by 0.95% (+QAR 13.6 Bn), with international lending (outside Qatar) surging 36.69% (+QAR 24.1 Bn), indicating aggressive regional expansion by Qatari banks. General trade financing grew 4.79% (+QAR 9.8 Bn), and consumption loans added QAR 5.6 Bn (+1.59%), while public sector credit declined sharply by 4.68% (-QAR 20.2 Bn).

Bahrain achieved the second-highest percentage growth at 1.78% (+BHD 227.3 Mn), with other service activities expanding 14.13% (+BHD 106.9 Mn) and government borrowing increasing 5.63% (+BHD 40.6 Mn). The business sector also contributed positively with 1.37% growth (+BHD 75.1 Mn). Mining (-14.05%, -BHD 13.2 Mn) and construction (-5.25%, -BHD 24.6 Mn) were the key detractors. Oman (data through November 2025) grew 1.44% (+OMR 391.7 Mn), with government sector lending surging 14.36% (+OMR 114.7 Mn)—the highest government growth rate in the GCC—while household sector lending added OMR 134.9 Mn (+1.49%) and corporate lending grew OMR 165.7 Mn (+1.17%). Public enterprises was the only notable decline at -2.01% (-OMR 23.6 Mn).

Based on the data from central banks, four key themes emerged across the GCC credit landscape: (1) Personal and consumer lending remained the dominant growth driver across UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman, reflecting sustained economic optimism and household confidence; (2) Government sector borrowing increased significantly in the UAE (+6.95%), Oman (+14.36%), and Bahrain (+5.63%), suggesting continued public investment programs; (3) Energy and utilities sectors showed robust growth, particularly Kuwait's crude oil & gas (+19.48%) and UAE's utilities (+8.28%), aligned with the region's energy transition investments; (4) Construction and manufacturing experienced synchronized pullbacks across Saudi Arabia (-3.75% and -2.30% respectively), Kuwait (-2.80% and -5.29%), and Bahrain (-5.25%), potentially indicating project completion cycles or cautious industrial expansion.

Several measures announced to deal with the current geopolitical situation...

To counter regional instability, the six GCC central banks have announced a series of precautionary measures designed to maintain financial stability and credit flow in the economy. The central bank of UAE deployed a broad resilience package including access to 30% of reserve balances and the release of capital buffers, while central banks of Kuwait and Qatar significantly lowered liquidity and capital ratios to 80% to infuse significant liquidity into their markets. Saudi Arabia (SAMA) focused on consumer-centric relief by mandating 25 free banking services and formalizing a new bank resolution framework. Meanwhile, central banks of Bahrain and Oman have focused on operational resilience and rigorous business continuity planning, with the CBO specifically testing new interbank market operations to ensure stability during the crisis.

The Kuwait Central Bank also started implementing stimulus package in response to the current situation by introducing measures aimed at regulatory liquidity requirements and capital adequacy ratios. The measures include lowering the Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) and Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR) from 100% to 80%, and reducing the Regulatory Liquidity Ratio to 15%. Additionally, the CBK released 1.0% of the Capital Conservation Buffer and increased the maximum lending limit to 100% of available financing sources to ensure credit continues to flow to the local economy.

The UAE's central bank recently announced a resilience package to support the banking sector and boost liquidity and lending capacity to deal with the ongoing conflict in the region. The measure would allow banks to access as much as 30% of their CRR balances (cash reserve requirements) and provide temporary relief on liquidity and deal with the deposit outflow. This liquidity boost was primarily facilitated through the Contingent Liquidity Insurance Facility (CLIF), a flexible tool designed to provide long-term reserve support to commercial lenders during periods of market stress. While the banking sector remains liquid and resilient, this proactive measure ensures that institutions have access to necessary capital and collateral-backed borrowing to navigate evolving economic condi-

tions and potential supply chain disruptions.

Along with these systemic measures, major local financial institutions like Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank, First Abu Dhabi Bank, and Ajman Bank have launched dedicated relief programs. These initiatives prioritize small businesses and frontline workers, offering benefits such as instalment deferrals, waived processing fees on home and auto loans, and preferential lending rates. By providing flexible payment plans and fee waivers, the banking sector aims to alleviate the immediate financial pressures faced by essential personnel and industries heavily impacted by the current climate, such as tourism and shipping.

Gross loan surged to a new high in Q4-2025...

Aggregate lending by listed banks in the GCC continued to show q-o-q growth during Q4-2025, backed by growth in all GCC markets. Aggregate gross loans at the GCC level reached a new record high of USD 2.47 Trillion, although the sequential growth was at a four-quarter low level at 2.7% or USD 64.3 Bn in Q4-2025 vs. a growth of 3.6% during the previous quarter. The y-o-y growth continued to remain steady in double-digits at 13.9%. Banks in the UAE once again reported the biggest q-o-q growth in gross loans in the GCC during Q4-2025 mainly led by healthy lending in almost all sectors. Gross loans growth for UAE-listed banks came in at 4.7% or USD 33.9 Bn to reach USD 748.4 Bn at the end of Q4-2025.

Kuwaiti banks were next with q-o-q lending growth of USD 12.6 Bn or 4.6% to reach aggregate gross loans of USD 286.8 Bn followed by Qatari and Saudi-listed banks with gross loan growth of 1.7% (+USD 7.5 Bn) and 0.8% (USD 6.6 Bn), respectively. Banks in Oman and Bahrain registered relatively smaller q-o-q loan growth of USD 2.1 Bn and USD 1.7 Bn, respectively, during Q4-2025. In terms of type of banks, Islamic banks in the GCC registered a relatively healthy growth in lending during the quarter with gross loan growth of 3.7% to reach USD 753.9 Bn while growth in conventional bank lending came in at 1.7% to reach an outstanding gross loan of USD 1.72 Trillion at the end of the quarter.

Customer deposits declined for the first time in 19 quarters...

After consistently registering growth for almost five years, total customer deposits reported by listed GCC banks declined for the first time in nineteen quarters in Q4-2025 by 0.6% to reach USD 2.78 Trillion. The decline was mainly led by a fall in customer deposits reported by Saudi and Qatari-listed banks. The general trend in customer deposits, based on available data for banks in Saudi, UAE, showed that demand deposits declined mainly in Saudi Arabia during the quarter while deposits with financial institutions declined for both Saudi Arabia and UAE-listed banks during Q4-2025.

Aggregate customer deposits reported by listed banks in Saudi Arabia declined for the second consecutive quarter by 2.7% to reach USD 827.2 Bn at the end of Q4-2025. The decline was mainly due to a fall in demand deposits and deposits from financial institutions that more than offset a healthy growth in savings deposits as well as other deposits. Qatari banks also reported a fall in customer deposits during the quarter with a sequential fall of 4.0% to reach USD 435.4 Bn. On the other hand, customer deposits in the rest of the GCC countries showed growth during Q4-2025. UAE-listed banks registered the strongest absolute growth in deposits during the quarter that reached USD 993.1 Bn, the highest in the GCC, after a q-o-q growth of 1.1%. Kuwait-listed banks were next with a q-o-q growth of USD 6.7 Bn or 1.9% to reach total customer deposits of USD 354.1 Bn followed by banks in Bahrain and Oman with a growth of USD 4.1 Bn (+5.2%) and USD 3.0 Bn (+3.6%) reaching USD 82.9 Bn and USD 86.2 Bn, respectively.

Loan-to-deposit ratio surged to a new high in Q4-2025...

The aggregate net loan-to-deposit ratio for the GCC banking sector remained elevated above the 80% mark at the end of Q4-2025 and reached a record high level at 85.4%. The ratio increased sequentially as well as y-o-y by almost 300 bps during the quarter. The ratio has remained consistently above the 80% mark over the last seven quarters and reflects improving asset utilization as well as better margins to offset pressure from declining interest rates.

The ratio, however, showed strong divergence across countries with Saudi Arabia registering the highest ratio during the quarter followed by Qatari banks. Data from listed Saudi banks showed loan-to-deposit ratio going above the 100% mark for the first time to reach 101.2%. Data from Sama also showed the ratio of commercial bank claims on private sector to total deposits reaching the highest level on record at 108.4% during November-2025 that has subsequently declined for three consecutive months until February-2026 to reach 104.9%. The elevated ratio in Saudi Arabia also highlights challenges on the liquidity front in the banking sector and also indicates higher external funding requirements in the near term in addition to the issuances in the current year via bonds and sukuk.

In the case of Qatari banks, the ratio reached 96.8%, the second highest in the GCC after registering a healthy q-o-q growth of 570 bps in Q4-2025. Banks in UAE also registered growth in the ratio that went above the 70% mark at 72.0% after recording a q-o-q growth of 274 bps. For the rest of the banks, however, the ratio showed a decline, including banks in Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.

Net interest income grows despite a fall in NIM...

Aggregate net interest income reported by banks listed in the GCC continued to register growth during Q4-2025 surging 3.1% during the quarter as compared to a slightly higher growth of 3.6% in the previous quarter. Aggregate net interest income reached a new record high of USD 24.5 Bn during Q4-2025 vs. USD 23.8 Bn during Q3-2025. The q-o-q growth was led by an increase in gross loans during the quarter that more than offset the impact of an increasing cost of funding in certain markets and the rate cuts implemented since last year.

At the country level, the trend remained largely positive with four out of the six country aggregates showing an increase in net interest income while Kuwaiti and Qatari banks showed a marginal decline. The biggest increase was seen in Saudi Arabia with aggregate net interest income growth of 5.6% q-o-q to reach USD 8.4 Bn, the highest in the GCC. Bahrain was next with a growth of 4.1%

with net interest income reaching USD 0.8 Bn followed by UAE and Omani banks with growth of 3.9% and 0.8%, respectively. In terms of y-o-y growth, UAE-listed banks showed the biggest growth of almost 10% followed by Saudi and Qatari banks.

Central banks across the globe as well as in the GCC accelerated rate cuts during Q4-2025 and implemented two 25-bps cuts during the quarter as compared to one 25-bps cut in the previous quarter. These cuts were replicated by all central banks in the GCC, barring the Kuwait central bank that lowered the rate by 25 bps in Q4-2025. The yield on credit for the GCC banking sector also showed the impact of lower interest rates going below the 4.0% mark to reach 3.98% at the end of Q4-2025 as compared to 4.05% at the end of Q3-2025 and 4.21% at the end of Q4-2024.

Revenue growth remains steady backed by higher net interest income...

Total revenues for the GCC banking sector once again showed healthy growth for the third consecutive quarter during Q4-2025. The growth, however, was almost half of the pace seen in the previous two quarters at 1.7% in Q4-2025, with total bank revenues reaching USD 37.4 Bn, a new record high for the sector. The increase in revenues was led by growth in most markets in the GCC with UAE and Qatar showing marginal q-o-q declines. Saudi-listed banks registered the biggest absolute sequential growth in revenues at USD 0.41 Bn or 3.4% to reach USD 12.5 Bn during Q4-2025. Kuwaiti banks were a close second with revenue growth USD 0.25 Bn or 6.9% reaching USD 3.9 Bn followed by Omani and Bahraini banks that registered a growth of 8.4% and 5.6% with revenues reaching USD 1.0 Bn and USD 1.1 Bn, respectively. Qatari banks, on the other hand, registered a decline of 1.8% q-o-q with revenues of USD 5.2 Bn while UAE-listed banks showed a marginal revenue decline of 0.6% recording a revenue of USD 13.7 Bn during Q4-2025, the highest in the GCC.

In terms of revenue growth drivers, the higher revenues during the quarter were mainly led by a growth in net interest income while non-interest income declined for the first time in seven quarters, partially denting the overall revenue growth. Aggregate non-interest income declined by 0.9% during the quarter and declined from a record high in the previous quarter to USD 12.9 Bn in Q4-2025. At the country level, the q-o-q trend was equally split between the six country aggregates with three showing growth and the remaining three showing declines. Kuwaiti banks registered the biggest q-o-q growth in non-interest income at 30.7% or USD 0.29 Bn to reach USD 1.2 Bn followed by Omani and Bahraini banks with growth of 22.5% and 10.4%, respectively. On the other hand, UAE-listed banks registered the biggest decline of 7.0% with non-interest income reaching USD 5.3 Bn. Qatari and Saudi-listed banks followed with declines of 3.6% and 1.0%, respectively.

Impairments increased for the third consecutive quarter...

Impairments booked by banks in the GCC increased for the third straight quarter during Q4-2025. Total loan impairment increased by almost 50% during the quarter to reach USD 3.9 Bn as compared to USD 2.6 Bn during Q3-2025. The increase reflected an higher impairments booked by almost all country aggregates in the GCC, barring Omani banks that showed a marginal decline of 4.4%. Impairments booked by banks in Kuwait more than doubled during Q4-2025 to reach USD 0.71 Bn vs. USD 0.28 Bn in Q3-2025. Banks in Saudi Arabia also showed a steep increase of 73.6% with total impairments reaching USD 0.87 Bn during the quarter. UAE and Qatari banks showed almost a quarter increase in impairments during Q4-2025 that reached over USD 1.0 Bn each.

Higher quarterly impairments were also reflected in the cost of risk for the GCC Banking sector. The ratio reached 0.47% during Q4-2025, the highest in four quarters, as compared to 0.45% in Q3-2025. However, the ratio remained low as compared to historical levels indicating recoveries, strong economic indicators as well as stable asset quality. The ratio was highest in the case of Qatari banks at 0.83% in Q4-2025 vs. 0.85% during Q3-2025. Bahraini banks were next with a cost of risk ratio at 0.62%, closely followed by Omani banks with the ratio at 0.50%. The ratio was the lowest in the case of Saudi banks at 0.29%, while Kuwaiti and UAE-listed banks showed slightly higher cost of risk of 0.44%.

Operating expenses continued to rise in Q4...

Aggregate operating expenses for listed banks in the GCC increased for the second consecutive quarter during Q4-2025 after seeing two consecutive quarters of declines during 1H-2025. Total operating expenses for the GCC Banking sector stood at USD 14.6 Bn during Q4-2025 with a q-o-q increase of 2.1% and a y-o-y growth of 2.8%. The q-o-q increase came after five out of six country aggregates showed an increase. Bahraini banks showed double-digit q-o-q increase in operating expenses while the remaining markets registered mid to low single digit q-o-q growth. Saudi-listed banks reported the smallest increase in operating expenses at 1.1%. On the other hand, Qatar was the only country which registered a decline in operating expenses by 6.2% during Q4-2025. After the increase, the y-o-y growth in operating expenses during 1H-2025 stood at 6.0% and for the full year, the growth came in at 7.3% for 2025 vs. 2024.

Meanwhile, despite a q-o-q increase in operating expenses, the aggregate cost-to-income ratio for the GCC banking sector declined marginally and stayed below the 40% mark during Q4-2025. The ratio declined by 50 bps to reach 38.8% at the end of the quarter as compared to 39.3% during Q3-2025. The decline reflected a drop in the ratio for five of six country aggregates. At the country level, Bahrain showed the biggest decline of 250 bps with the ratio still remaining the highest in the GCC at 58.5%. Saudi and Kuwaiti banks also showed steep declines of 90 bps and 60 bps, respectively, while Qatari and UAE-listed banks showed marginal declines. Omani banks showed a marginal growth of 10 bps with the ratio reaching 45.5% during the quarter. Qatari banks continued to boast the lowest cost-to-income ratio in the GCC that reached a nine-quarter low level of 36.1% during Q4-2025.

NIM declined in line with rate cuts...

The aggregate net interest margin reported by GCC-listed banks continued to decline during Q4-2025 as a larger share of lending was repriced at the lower interest rates after the rate cuts announced during the second half of last year. The NIM at the GCC level went below the 3.0% mark and stood at 2.96% at the end of Q4-2025 as compared to 3.01% at the end of Q3-2025. The ratio showed a broad-based decline falling in all countries aggregates in the GCC, although the decline was the smallest in the case of Saudi-listed banks that showed a NIM of 2.92%.

UAE-listed banks ranked first in the GCC in terms of NIMs that reached 3.13% in Q4-2025 as compared to 3.19% during Q3-2025. Bahraini banks followed with a NIM of 3.11% in Q4-2025 as compared to 3.35% in Q3-2025. The higher margins as compared to gulf peers reflect ample liquidity with low-cost CASA deposits. The composition of loan book in the UAE also helped in generating relatively higher NIM as personal loans accounted for close to a quarter of total banking credit facilities in the country.

GCC banking RoE declined to a 9-quarter low...

Aggregate return on equity (RoE) for the GCC banking sector declined marginally during Q4-2025 and stood at 13.4% during Q4-2025, the lowest since Q3-2023. The marginal decline in the ratio reflected a q-o-q fall in almost all country aggregates in the GCC while Saudi-listed banks registered flat trend in Q4-2025. Total shareholder equity reached USD 502.3 Bn at the end of Q4-2025, registering a growth of 3.6% as compared to Q3-2025.

At the country level, UAE-listed banks once again topped in the region with the highest RoE at the end of Q4-2025 at 16.5% as compared to 16.6% during the previous quarter. Saudi-listed banks were next with an RoE of 13.0%, once again flat as compared to Q3-2025 followed by Qatari banks with an RoE of 12.1% recording a decline of 20 bps from the previous quarter. ROEs for Kuwaiti banks stayed elevated at a double-digit level of 10.0% vs. 10.6% in the previous quarter.

BUSINESS

Global markets flex: Navigating economics, geopolitics and energy

By National Bank of Kuwait

Global markets this week were shaped by a combination of resilient economic data, evolving central bank signals, and geopolitical uncertainty linked to the Middle East conflict, with the International Monetary Fund lowering its 2026 global growth forecast to 3.1% YoY and projecting global inflation at 4.4% YoY, while warning of downside risks should energy disruptions persist. In the United States, inflation data showed headline PPI rising +0.5% MoM while core PPI slowed to +0.1% MoM, indicating contained underlying pressures despite a sharp increase in energy costs, while labour market conditions remained stable with jobless claims declining to 207K and continuing claims rising modestly to 1.82M; Federal Reserve communication highlighted policy caution, with inflation guidance to 2.75-3.0% MoM and growth at 2.0-2.5%, reinforcing a data-dependent stance, as DXY closed the week at 98.098 [-0.56%]. In Canada, political developments saw the Liberal Party secure 174/343 seats, paving the way for fiscal expansion and infrastructure investment; USD CAD closed the week at 1.3691 [-1.10%]. In Europe, Hungary experienced significant market repricing following the electoral defeat of now-former Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, while the Swiss National Bank reiterated readiness to intervene in FX markets amid franc strength; EUR USD closed the week at 1.1765 [+0.36%], USD HUF at 307.30 [-4.23%], and USD CHF at 0.7817 [-0.90%]. In the United Kingdom, GDP rose +0.5% MoM in February, exceeding expectations, although forward-looking indicators point to rising inflationary pressures linked to energy costs; GBP USD closed the week at 1.3516 [+0.40%]. In Asia-Pacific, Japan saw heightened attention to the possibility of FX intervention as USD JPY neared 160 and rate hike expectations for the April 28 meeting fell below 20%, while China reported stronger-than-expected GDP growth of +5.0% YoY and +1.3% QoQ alongside weak domestic demand indicators; Australia's labour market remained steady with unemployment at 4.3% and employment rising +17.9K. USD JPY, USD CNH, and AUD USD closed the week at 158.64 [-0.40%], 6.8160 [-0.14%], and 0.7174 [+1.56%] respectively. In rates markets, US Treasury yields were volatile, leaving the 10-year at 4.248% [-6.9bps] - reflecting inflation and policy uncertainty. This move was accompanied by a steepening of the US curve, with the 2s10s and 5s30s widening by 2.2bps and 7.1bps, respectively. Equity markets advanced as major US indices posted gains amid ceasefire optimism; notably, the S&P 500 and Nasdaq reached record highs. Meanwhile, commodities closed the week mixed with Brent crude at 90.38 [-5.06%] and spot gold at 4830.34 [+1.70%], reflecting sensitivity to geopolitical shifts and inflation expectations.

United States and Canada

US PPI Rises +0.5% MoM in March as Core Slows to +0.1% MoM Amid Energy Surge

US wholesale inflation dynamics presented a nuanced picture in March, with headline producer prices rising +0.5% MoM for a second consecutive month, while core PPI moderated sharply to +0.1% MoM, signalling contained underlying inflation despite a significant energy shock. The near 16% surge in gasoline prices accounted for almost half of the increase in goods inflation, marking the strongest goods price advance since August 2023, while services inflation remained broadly subdued despite a +1.3% rise in transportation and warehousing costs. Upstream pressures are nonetheless building, with intermediate goods costs posting their largest increase in nearly four years, reflecting supply chain disruptions linked to the Middle East conflict and constrained shipping flows through the Strait of Hormuz. Forward-looking indicators suggest firms may increasingly pass through higher input costs, particularly as trade services margins continue to compress for a second consecutive month. While the data offered some near-term relief on core inflation, the Federal Reserve remains alert to second-round effects, especially as energy-driven cost pressures begin to permeate broader industrial and consumer categories. DXY last printed at 98.098.

US Jobless Claims Fall to 207K (-11K WoW) as Continuing Claims Rise to 1.82M

US labour market conditions continue to exhibit resilience, with initial jobless claims declining by 11K to 207K in the week ended April 11, marking the largest weekly drop since February and reinforcing the narrative of limited layoffs. The four-week moving average remained broadly stable, underscoring a steady employment backdrop despite elevated macro uncertainty. However, continuing claims edged higher to 1.82M, suggesting some gradual softening in re-employment dynamics. Regional volatility persists, with unadjusted claims rising notably in New York due to seasonal distortions, alongside increases in Connecticut and California. Overall, the data aligns with broader indicators, including the Federal Reserve's Beige Book, which characterises labour demand as stable with minimal layoffs, supporting the view that the US labour market remains well-balanced and not currently exhibiting signs of significant deterioration.

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.1723	1.1658	1.1849	1.1765	1.1650	1.1850	1.1814
GBP	1.3462	1.3381	1.3599	1.3516	1.3380	1.3600	1.3513
JPY	159.27	157.59	159.86	158.64	157.55	160.00	157.45
CHF	0.7887	0.7775	0.7934	0.7817	0.7670	0.7930	0.7741

Fed's Williams Sees Inflation at 2.75-3.0% YoY in 2026 with Growth at 2.0-2.5%

Federal Reserve Bank of New York President John Williams emphasised heightened policy uncertainty, signalling that forward guidance remains inappropriate in the current environment while maintaining a baseline outlook of moderating inflation and steady growth. Williams projects headline inflation to reach 2.75-3.0% YoY by year-end before converging to the 2% target in 2027, with US GDP expected to expand within a 2.0-2.5% range and unemployment stabilising between 4.25-4.5%. He highlighted the risk of a conflict-induced supply shock, where elevated energy and intermediate goods costs could simultaneously lift inflation and suppress growth, creating a stagflationary impulse. Despite these risks, monetary policy is viewed as appropriately positioned, with eventual rate cuts anticipated as inflation normalises to prevent an unintended tightening in real rates. As the Fed enters its pre-meeting blackout period, market focus turns to a potentially more hawkish narrative next week as investors weigh recent energy-driven price pressures and the upcoming Senate confirmation hearing for Fed Chair nominee Kevin Warsh.

Canada's Liberal Party Secure 174/343 Seats (50.7%) as Majority Unlocks Fiscal Expansion Agenda

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has secured a parliamentary majority, with the Liberal Party holding 174 out of 343 seats, equating to approximately 50.7% representation, thereby enabling accelerated implementation of his economic agenda. The majority government provides a clear mandate to advance large-scale infrastructure investments, including energy export facilities and ports, alongside increased defence spending and efforts to diversify trade. The political consolidation follows a significant turnaround from earlier electoral weakness, supported by leadership repositioning and shifting geopolitical dynamics. However, challenges remain, particularly in navigating trade tensions with the US and managing domestic political opposition to energy policy shifts. The strengthened mandate is expected to enhance policy execution efficiency, with potential medium-term implications for Canada's fiscal trajectory, investment climate, and export competitiveness. USD CAD last printed at 1.3691.

Europe and the United Kingdom

Hungary's 10Y Spread Narrows to Five-Year Low Following Orbán's Landslide Defeat

Hungarian assets have rallied sharply following Viktor Orbán's electoral defeat, with the spread between Hungarian and German 10-year bonds narrowing to a five-year low and the 10-year average yield at Thursday's auction dropping to 6.01%, the lowest level in four years. The forint has appreciated more than 5% against both the dollar and euro year-to-date, reflecting a significant shift in investor sentiment driven by expectations of structural reforms and potential euro adoption under the incoming government. The prospect of unlocking approximately USD 20B in frozen EU funds and aligning more closely with European institutions has materially reduced perceived fiscal and political risks. While euro accession remains a medium-term objective not expected before 2030, the initiation of the convergence process itself is acting as a powerful catalyst for capital inflows and risk premium compression. Nonetheless, substantial structural challenges persist, including fiscal deficits and institutional reforms, which will determine the sustainability of the rally. USD HUF last printed at 307.30.

SNB Remains on High Alert on Franc Strength, Reaffirms FX Intervention Readiness

The Swiss National Bank signalled a high readiness to intervene in foreign exchange markets to counter excessive appreciation of the Swiss franc amid safe-haven inflows. Policymakers emphasised that currency strength has tightened monetary conditions despite an otherwise accommodative stance, with intervention remaining a key tool to safeguard price stability. Inflation dynamics remain influenced by rising energy costs in the near term, although medium-term pressures are expected to ease. The SNB highlighted robust credit growth and stable financial conditions, with no signs of a credit crunch. However, global uncertainties, particularly stemming from the Middle East conflict and broader trade tensions, continue to pose downside risks to growth while simultaneously creating upward pressure on in-

flation via imported energy costs. USD CHF last printed at 0.7817.

UK GDP Rises +0.5% MoM in February as Growth Outperforms Pre-Conflict Expectations

The UK economy recorded a stronger-than-expected expansion of +0.5% MoM in February, significantly above the +0.1% consensus and marking the fastest growth since January 2024, driven by sustained momentum in the services sector alongside gains in production and construction. However, this positive momentum precedes the economic shock from the Middle East conflict, which has materially altered the outlook through higher energy prices and tightening financial conditions. Forward-looking indicators point to rising inflationary pressures, with expectations of inflation nearing double the Bank of England's target, while growth forecasts have been revised lower. Household disposable income is also expected to deteriorate, with estimates suggesting a GBP 500 impact from energy costs. Policymakers now face a complex trade-off between controlling inflation and supporting growth, raising the risk of stagflationary conditions in the near term. GBP USD last printed at 1.3516.

Asia-Pacific

China GDP Grows +5.0% YoY and +1.3% QoQ as Industrial Output Hits +5.7% YoY

China's economy demonstrated resilience in Q1 2026, with GDP expanding +5.0% YoY and +1.3% QoQ, supported by strong manufacturing output and export performance despite ongoing geopolitical disruptions. Industrial production exceeded expectations, rising +5.7% YoY, while exports surged 15% YoY, underpinned by high-tech manufacturing growth of 12.5%. However, domestic demand remains a key weakness, with retail sales slowing to +1.7% YoY and private investment declining, highlighting structural imbalances within the economy. The surveyed urban unemployment rate increased to 5.4% in March, signalling emerging labour market pressures. While the robust headline growth reduces the urgency for broad-based stimulus, policymakers are expected to maintain targeted support measures aimed at boosting consumption and mitigating the impact of energy price shocks. The divergence between strong supply-side performance and weak demand continues to define China's macroeconomic trajectory. USD CNH last printed at 6.8160.

Japanese Yen Near 160 per Dollar as Intervention Risk Rises; Rate-Hike Odds Fall Below 20%

Japanese authorities have intensified verbal intervention as the yen remains close to the critical 160 level against the US dollar, with Finance Minister Satsuki Katayama signalling readiness for decisive action following discussions with US Treasury officials. The currency briefly strengthened toward 159.86 on Monday, reflecting market sensitivity to policy signals. Market-implied probability of a Bank of Japan rate hike has dropped below 20%, down from approximately 55% earlier in the week, as policymakers adopt a cautious stance amid geopolitical uncertainty. The potential for direct FX intervention remains elevated, particularly given the precedent of approximately USD 100B spent in 2024 to stabilise the currency. Coordination with US authorities further enhances the credibility of intervention threats, positioning FX markets as a key transmission channel for policy action. USD JPY last printed at 158.64.

Australia Employment +17.9K as Unemployment Holds at 4.3% and Full-Time Jobs +52.5K

Australia's labour market remained robust in March, with employment rising by 17.9K, driven entirely by a strong increase of 52.5K in full-time positions, while the unemployment rate held steady at 4.3%. Despite a decline in part-time employment and a slight easing in participation to 66.8%, overall labour market conditions remain tight, reinforcing inflationary pressures within the economy. Underemployment held at 5.9%, while underutilisation ticked up to 10.2%, indicating some emerging slack. The data supports expectations that the Reserve Bank of Australia may continue tightening, with swap markets currently pricing a 72% probability of a 5 May rate hike to 4.35%. However, deteriorating consumer and business sentiment amid rising energy costs highlights growing stagflation risks, complicating the policy outlook. AUD USD last printed at 0.7174.

Kuwait

USD KWD closed last week at 0.30620.

'Book early as airfares rise'

War-driven fuel surge pushes airfares higher

WASHINGTON, April 19, (AP) - As the U.S. and Israel's war with Iran squeezes global oil supplies, travelers have valid reasons to worry about the cost and availability of flights as they plan their late spring and summer trips.

The head of the International Energy Agency has warned that European countries could run low on jet fuel within weeks, forcing the continent's airlines and carriers that fly to Europe to significantly reduce flights. Many airlines have already raised checked bag fees or added fuel surcharges as the global price of jet fuel increased from about \$99 per barrel at the end of February to as high as \$209 a barrel at the beginning of April.

In a sign of the conflict's ongoing repercussions for travel, Air Canada said Friday it planned to suspend its service to New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport from June 1 until Oct. 25 to lower its fuel costs. Other airlines, ranging from U.S. carriers like United and Delta to Air France-KLM, SAS, Philippine Airlines and Cathay Pacific in Europe and Asia, have reduced routes and either increased ticket prices or said they would hike them if the war keeps oil from passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

"It's very hard for the airlines to make predictions in this environment, so they're going to be conservative, and that's why it's likely that their prices will remain elevated for some time until things really stabilize," said Shye Gilad, a former airline captain who now teaches at Georgetown University's business school.

With airfares and fees on the rise, consumers still can make choices that determine how much of their travel budgets will get taken up by paying to get to and from their destinations.

While consumers may be tempted to see if the war ends before buying airline tickets, the "wait-and-see" approach to booking flights is riskier this year, travel experts say, especially the longer the war goes on and the closer to summer and other peak travel periods it gets.

"Presuming there is a lasting ceasefire - or better yet, peace agreement - it will take a few months for normal levels of jet fuel production and delivery to resume," airline industry analyst Henry Harteveltd, president of Atmosphere Research Group, said.

Iran's reversal on Saturday of its decision to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and President Donald Trump's insistence on maintaining a U.S. blockade of Iranian ports illustrated the shakiness of prospects for oil flowing reliably again from the Persian Gulf and with it, an easing of the price pressure on airlines and their customers.

"My advice to travelers is this: If you find a flight whose schedule fits yours, with a fare you can afford, and on an airline you can at least tolerate, book it," Harteveltd said. "But - and I cannot emphasize this enough - do not book a Basic Economy fare," the cheapest but also the most restrictive airline ticket class.

Along with charging for checked bags and seat selection, most North American airlines do not give refunds or travel credits to passengers with Basic Economy tickets if they don't cancel their trips within 24 hours of purchase. Policies may vary, but spending more for a Standard Economy ticket provides more flexibility, according to Harteveltd.

Paying more up-front for a refundable ticket also prove advantageous because "if the prices start to dramatically change, you can cancel and re-book for the better price," Gilad said.

Travel experts say that for now, longstanding booking guidance offers a baseline for how early to reserve a flight to get the lowest airfare: international flights are typically the cheapest about two to five months in advance, and domestic trips about three to six weeks out.

Last-minute bookings and other situations that typically command higher prices are likely to keep climbing, Gilad said.

"Remember, especially if you're traveling on the major airlines, they're going to have more ability to adjust fares. If you book too close to your travel date, you're going to pay more," he said. "The farther out you can book, the better."

Travelers who don't want or need to reach a specific place at a specific time can find it easier to save on airfare. Shifting departure or return dates by a day or two - especially from peak weekends and holidays to midweek - often yields big price differences.

Choosing a different destination also may pay off. A flight from the U.S. may be significantly cheaper to one European city than another. Since budget airlines and trains connect much of Europe, and trains, an airport it cost less to get to can still provide easy access to a lot of other places.

Consumers not set on a certain arrival destination can try tools like Skyscanner's "Explore Everywhere" feature to look for less-expensive options.

Looking beyond the closest airport for departures also can make a meaningful difference. Major hubs tend to offer more flights and lower fares than smaller regional airports.

In some cases, booking a separate short flight or train to a hub will unlock a cheaper long-haul airfare - think Milwaukee versus Chicago's O'Hare International Airport.

Sticking to a carry-on bag, when possible, can help avoid the higher fees for checking luggage that many major U.S. airlines introduced recently, including Delta, American, United, Southwest and JetBlue.

If packing light is not an option, plan ahead because airlines typically charge more to add bags closer to departure, especially within 24 hours of a flight.

While fares are going up, the number of airline points needed for many flights has not increased at the same pace, said Adam Morvitz, CEO of points.me, a loyalty rewards redemption search platform.

Airlines still need to fill seats, Morvitz said, and offering more of them for fewer points is one way to do it.

Customers without enough frequent-flyer miles or credit card points for a round-trip ticket still can redeem their travel rewards for one leg of a journey and free up cash for other travel expenses.

Many travelers redeem points directly through their credit card's booking portal, where they're typically worth about 1 cent each, Morvitz said. Transferring points to airline loyalty programs often unlocks significantly better value because most major credit card issuers partner with a range of airlines.

Take American Express, whose points can be transferred to Air France's Flying Blue program. Travelers who don't want to book with Air France still can use those points with the airline's partner carriers, such as Delta, Morvitz said.

"Points are a form of wealth, and consumers should recognize that those points increase spending power," he said.

For those new to travel credit cards, sign-up bonuses may yield benefits that can be put to use as soon as this summer. Some bonuses are large enough to cover a flight after meeting a minimum spending requirement.

"Even if you were to travel the entire year, taking one trip per month, you would still earn more points simply by signing up for the card than actually sitting on a seat and flying," Morvitz said.

Points and rewards can add up through everyday spending on groceries, dining and gas. Some cards include perks like free or discounted checked bags.

Skynest pods promise better sleep on 16-hour flights

Air New Zealand launches economy sleep pods on long-haul flights

WELLINGTON, April 19, (AP) - Sleep on a long-haul flight in economy class has always been a fantasy for many travelers. Air New Zealand will soon offer a solution that involves climbing into a triple-tier bunk bed wearing special socks.

The airline will soon open bookings for four-hour stints in the Skynest sleep pods and says they will be the first lie-flat beds for budget air travelers. Fliers will get cozy with their fellow passengers, however, so crumbs, strong perfumes and bedsharing are forbidden.

The curtained berths will be available to economy and premium economy fliers on the airline's new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft from November. The planes will service the Auckland to New York route, which is one of the world's longest commercial flights and leaves economy passengers sitting upright for a marathon 16 to 18 hours.

Instead, travelers will have the option of a pre-booked four-hour spot in a curtained pod, with costs starting from 495 New Zealand dollars (\$291) on top of the price of their economy tickets. But use of the six pods, arranged in a triple-bunk style layout between cabins, will put fliers in close proximity to others, prompting the airline to publish etiquette notes.

Passengers must refrain from snacking in the pods, which can't be used by children or any additional visitors.

"That means solo snoozes only please, no musical nests or tag-teaming," Air New Zealand's website says. For those worried about cleanliness, the airline assures travelers that the pillows, blankets and sheets supplied "are all refreshed" between four-hour naps.



This photo provided by Air New Zealand shows sleeping pods in a mock-up of a plane cabin in Auckland, New Zealand. (AP)

Fliers are also required to change into specially provided socks to enter the pod, fasten their seatbelts over their blankets and forgo dousing themselves in any smelly "perfumes or potions." Passengers will

be woken by a gentle change in lighting at the end of their four-hour stint in the bunk - or by a flight attendant, possibly less gently, if they don't rouse in time.

Each berth is about the length of a regular bed - 80 inches or 203 cm - but the pods don't leave headroom for sitting up and access "requires bending, kneeling, crawling, or climbing into the space," the aircraft's website says. The bunks are 25 inches (64 cm) wide at shoulder height, tapering to 16 inches (41 cm) at the foot of the beds.

Seats or couches that convert into beds in the sky aren't a new offering for business and first class travelers, but Air New Zealand believes its lie-flat bunks for economy travelers will be a world first.

The offering from New Zealand's national carrier is the latest from airlines seeking to sell seat upgrades and other add-ons to economy travelers. Air New Zealand first announced the economy beds were in development in 2020.

The airline has increased fares and cut some domestic flights from its schedule in response to increased jet fuel costs during the war in the Middle East. In March, it suspended its earnings outlook due to fuel price volatility and warned that more changes to its routes were possible.

But on one of its longest flights, travelers might finally get some shut-eye - although they should expect snoring, for which earplugs are provided, the airline said.

"Statistically, someone's going to do it," Air New Zealand's website reads. "It might be you."



Eddie Murphy accepts the 51st AFI Life Achievement Award during a tribute to him on Saturday, April 18, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (AP)

Draws standing ovation

Eddie Murphy gets AFI lifetime award

LOS ANGELES, April 19, (AP): Eddie Murphy took a moment to look out at the star-studded room at the American Film Institute ceremony - at his family, his peers, the people who have shared his journey - and let it all sink in.

"Seeing all of my family, all my kids, my beautiful wife, and seeing all the different people I worked with, I'm just really filled up," said Murphy, who received the life achievement award at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles on Saturday night. "This is a special moment. I wish y'all could feel what I'm feeling, see what I'm seeing. I almost teared up. I'm going to get backstage and cry."

Just before accepting the award, Murphy was met with a standing ovation, stepping onstage and moving through the ballroom as the applause followed. Along the way, he passed Spike Lee, Martin Lawrence, Dave Chappelle, Chris Rock, Arsenio Hall and Judge Reinhold.

The tribute, which also featured appearances from Bill Burr, Kevin Hart, Eva Longoria, Da'Vine Joy Randolph and Kenan Thompson, will premiere as a special on Netflix on May 31.

Murphy, 64, has moved from a teenage stand-up sensation to a breakout force on "Saturday Night Live" to a box office mainstay with films like "Beverly Hills Cop," "Coming to America," "The Nutty Professor" and the "Shrek" franchise.

Large images from those defining moments filled the venue, tracing a career that has crossed stand-up, television and film. "Eddie made us laugh and made our nation feel better," said Lee, who presented the award to Murphy. "I took a camera and told stories on how our nation could be better. ... We both pushed culture forward. ... Every step of this journey, Eddie has been true to himself."

Comedians pointed to Murphy's influence across generations.

"There is no us without you," Rock said. Lawrence, who starred in the film "Life" with Murphy, shared a personal moment from early in his career, recalling how Murphy once declined his request for a photo. But now, that shouldn't be a problem since their children married each other in 2025.

"Now I can get all the pictures I want," Lawrence said with a smile. "Because we're in-laws."

Arsenio Hall, Murphy's longtime collaborator on "Coming to America," spoke about Murphy advocating for him in the film and highlighted the depth of his talent.

"When Eddie does a family film, he plays a whole damn family," Hall said.

Chappelle reflected on studying Murphy's stand-up as a teenager watching "Raw." He described Murphy as one of the defining figures in the industry and shared a recent visit to his home, where seeing Murphy's grandchildren playing offered a deeper perspective on his life.

"I would watch him every day after school like I was taking a class," said Chappelle, who also spoke on an interview where he considered revisiting "Chappelle's Show," a project he once stepped away from, calling it one of the most meaningful experiences of his career.

Chappelle said Murphy encouraged him to revisit the idea, and even joked about joining the project if it comes to fruition.

"You are still the hero I want to be," he said.

Stevie Wonder described Murphy's impact as something that extends beyond comedy. He showed his deep admiration for the comedian-actor. "Laughter can make life livable," Wonder said. "Eddie is more than a comedian ... he is a universal reminder."

Mike Myers, who co-starred in the "Shrek" films with Murphy, credited him with helping define one of animation's most beloved characters, calling his character portrayal of Donkey a "masterpiece."

Jennifer Hudson delivered a musical tribute with performances from "Dreamgirls," backed by a house band led by Rickey Minor.

The gala, which raised more than \$2.5 million to support AFI's nonprofit education programs, also included the presentation of the Franklin J. Schaffner Alumni Medal to cinematographer Autumn Durald Arkapaw, who spoke about finding her voice through the institute.

Murphy's career has spanned nearly 50 years, from stand-up stages to blockbuster films, with a versatility that has kept him relevant across generations. In 2023, he received the Cecil B. DeMille Award at the Golden Globes and has spoken about embracing a deeper appreciation for his journey.

"Thank you for giving me this night that I will remember forever and ever and ever," Murphy said. "I love you."

Macron pays tribute to actor, says 'we loved and grew with her'

Nathalie Baye, French actor known for versatility, dies at 77

PARIS, April 19, (AP): Nathalie Baye, a French actor who was a fan's favorite for her down-to-earth charm and great versatility, has died. She was 77.

French president Emmanuel Macron paid tribute to an actor "with whom we loved, dreamed and grew." French media reported that Baye died on Friday in Paris from a neurodegenerative disease, quoting a statement from her relatives.

"We loved Nathalie Baye so much," Macron wrote in a message on X. "Through her voice, her smiles, and her modesty, she accompanied the past decades of French cinema, from François Truffaut to Tonie Marshall."

Baye featured in more than 80 movies, switching from mainstream comedies to auteur films with ease in a career that spanned over five decades. She twice claimed the prize for best actress at the Césars, France's equivalent of the Oscars.

Baye, who was Leonardo DiCaprio's on-



Actress Nathalie Baye poses for photographers upon arrival at the screening of the film Juste la Fin du Monde (It's Only the End Of The World) at the 69th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, May 19, 2016. (AP)

screen mother in Steven Spielberg's "Catch Me If You Can," won both popular and critical ac-

claim for her role in "Venus Beauty Institute," a romantic comedy that follows three women working in a Parisian beauty salon as they search for fulfillment. Marshall won the César award for best director in 2000 for the movie.

The daughter of artists, Baye first trained as a dancer then honed her acting skills at the famed Cours Simon and the Conservatoire. She took the spotlight in François Truffaut's "Day for Night" in 1973 and, five years later, worked with him again on "The Green Room."

Baye worked with directors Maurice Pialat, Claude Sautet and Bertrand Tavernier, among others. She rose to fame with "The Return of Martin Guerre" in 1982. A year later, her role as a tough-talking streetwalker devoted to her down-and-out gangster boyfriend Philippe Léotard in "La Balance" earned her a César.

Baye liked to work with emerging filmmakers such as Xavier Beauvois. She won the César for best actress for his movie "The Young Lieutenant" in 2006.

Film



This image released by Magnolia Pictures shows Bob Odenkirk in a scene from 'Normal.'

Odenkirk anchors hyper-violent Midwestern thriller

Good guy sheriff enters a dark town in 'Normal'

LOS ANGELES, April 19, (AP): Over the years, we've seen countless characters wander into corrupt small towns and become entrapped by the locals. Usually, the mean face of these movies is the town sheriff. The best recent example: Don Johnson's crooked lawman in 2024's "Rebel Ridge."

But in Ben Wheatley's "Normal," the good guy drifting into town is the sheriff. Ulysses (Bob Odenkirk) has come to Normal, Minnesota, in the dead of winter to fill in for the town's recently deceased sheriff.

Now, I don't think traveling substitute sheriffs are necessarily a real thing any more than police officers named after Homeric heroes. But "Normal," a hyperviolent Midwestern Western that cleverly inverts some genre standards, has a pleasingly loose hold on reality. It's a goofy, gory good time. And while it shares a lot of DNA with Odenkirk's two "Nobody" movies, "Normal" is the best and most convincing showcase for Odenkirk as a butt-kicking action hero yet.

When Ulysses wakes up in a motel in Normal, a quaint town of 1,890, he seems to be doing only slightly better than Saul did at most points in "Better Call Saul." He leaves a message for his estranged wife (just like his namesake, they're separated) and greets an officer, Deputy Mike Nelson (Billy MacLellan), eager to show him around town.

Odenkirk, a brilliant comic mind, has proven surprisingly adept at playing middle-aged washouts who maybe have a few moves left. His Sheriff Ulysses has given up trying too hard when it comes to upholding the peace. "Life's a lot easier when you care a little less," he says. His goal, he says,

is to leave Normal the way he found it.

But Normal tests his apathy. The town, set on a wintry tundra, seems to be doing well - too well, in fact. A banner by the town hall celebrates the raising of \$16.8 million for some initiative. The police department is stocked with an unusual amount of weaponry. Around town, the local hardware store has a suspiciously locked closet. Even the old lady with a yarn store is listening to a police scanner.

The former sheriff also had a surprisingly grand home. His death was a little mysterious, too. And we learn more about his teenage child, Alex (Jess McLeod), whose precarious situation as a veritable outcast suggests the town residents may be quite aggressively controlling who gets to call Normal home.

How Ulysses navigates this and a few other situations quickly arouses the concern of a mayor (Henry Winkler, having a ball) looking for a sheriff with a "light touch." So when a couple of down-on-their-luck thieves (Brendan Fletcher, Reena Jolly) try to hold up a bank, the resulting standoff goes unlike any you've seen before. The mayor, the two deputies (Ryan Allen plays the other) and, soon enough, the entire town turn on Ulysses. Midwestern manners fall away and mayhem begins.

"Normal" is written by "John Wick" creator Derek Kolstad, who also penned the "Nobody" movies that launched Odenkirk as an action star. And it exists quite knowingly alongside movies before it. We are not far from " Fargo" territory, a fact nodded to in the name of the previous

sheriff, Gunderson - the same as Frances McDormand's sheriff in the great Coen brothers movie.

"Normal" doesn't aim for the dark comedy of the Coens. It's closer to the cartoony underground network qualities of the "John Wick" franchise. The Japanese yakuza appear in the first scene in "Normal," so you know they're going to have something to do with the small-town nefariousness, despite being so many worlds away.

So "Normal" morphs into a kind of over-the-top "Bad Day at Black Rock," with its streets turned into a combat zone. Many of its twists aren't hard to see coming, and the movie sometimes lacks the scale needed for a sprawling battle. But a mustachioed Odenkirk with a shotgun is, by most metrics, more than enough firepower for any movie.

Wheatley is also in his wheelhouse. The British director has often wavered between conceptual missteps (2020's "Rebecca," 2015's "High-Rise") and plodding, Tarantino-inspired grindhouse exercises (2016's "Free Fire," 2023's "Meg 2: The Trench"). But he knows his way around a fire-fight. And while there isn't much that's new in "Normal," it - not unlike Ari Aster's "Eddington" last year - gamely filters national politics into a small-town thriller where the local law can be on the side of good, or not.

"Normal," an Magnolia release currently in theaters, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for strong bloody violence and language. Running time: 90 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Titanic memorabilia continues to command huge prices

Titanic survivor's life jacket auctioned off for over \$900,000

LONDON, April 19, (AP): A life jacket worn by a passenger on RMS Titanic as she escaped the sinking steamship on a lifeboat sold at auction on Saturday for 670,000 pounds (\$906,000).

The flotation device was worn by Laura Mabel Francatelli, a first-class passenger on the doomed ocean liner, and is signed by her and other survivors from the same lifeboat.

It was the star among items in a sale of Titanic memorabilia by Henry Aldridge & Son auctioneers in Devizes, western England, and sold to an unidentified telephone bidder for well over the presale estimate of between 250,000 and 350,000 pounds.

A seat cushion from one of the Titanic lifeboats sold at the same auction for 390,000 pounds (\$527,000) to the owners of two Titanic museums in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee,

and Branson, Missouri.

The prices include an auction-house fee known as the buyer's premium.

"These record-breaking prices illustrate the continuing interest in the Titanic story, and the respect for the passengers and crew whose stories are immortalized by these items of memorabilia," auctioneer Andrew Aldridge said.

Billed as the world's most luxurious ocean liner and described as "practically unsinkable," the Titanic hit an iceberg off Newfoundland during its maiden voyage from England to New York. It sank within hours on April 15, 1912. Some 1,500 of the 2,200 passengers and crew died.

The Titanic is still a subject of worldwide fascination,

in part because of the range of passengers aboard the ship, from paupers to plutocrats.

Francatelli was traveling with her employer, fashion designer Lucy Duff Gordon, and Lucy's husband Cosmo Duff Gordon. All three survived in the ship's lifeboat No. 1, which was launched carrying 12 people despite having capacity for 40. Its failure to pick up survivors from the frigid water became a source of controversy.

The record auction price for a piece of Titanic memorabilia is 1.56 million pounds (almost \$2 million at the time) paid in 2024 by a gold pocket watch given to the captain of RMS Carpathia, the ship that rescued 700 Titanic survivors.



A Titanic life-preserver, belong to a survivor is shown, London, Wednesday, May 16, 2007. (AP)

'Venice Biennale must not 'whitewash' war crimes as Russia returns'

War on culture: Ukraine fights to recover looted art treasures

KYIV, Ukraine, April 19, (AP): When Alina Dotsenko returned to her museum after Ukrainian forces retook the southern city of Kherson from Russian forces in late 2022, she found thousands of artworks had vanished.

"I walked in and saw empty storage rooms, empty shelves. My legs gave way, and I just sat down by the wall, like a child," the Kherson Art Museum director said.

Before Russia's full-scale invasion in early 2022, the museum held more than 14,000 works in a collection "ranging from America to Japan." As the Russians retreated, they loaded much of it onto trucks and took it to Russian-annexed Crimea, according to Dotsenko and video filmed by residents.

The fate of nearly 10,000 pieces remains unknown.

Ukraine is again raising its voice over the looting as Russia seeks to return to the world's cultural stage. Next month's Venice Biennale plans to allow Russian representatives to take part for the first time since 2022. Ukraine has said the event "must not become a stage for whitewashing the war crimes that Russia commits daily against the Ukrainian people and our cultural heritage."



A visitor at Ukraine's National Art Museum is bundled up due to power outages caused by Russian air attacks on the country's energy system, affecting the museum's temperature during winter in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Feb. 6, 2026. (AP)

The Kherson case stands out because Ukraine knows exactly what was lost.

Years before the war, Dotsenko began photographing every item in the museum's holdings, creating a digital archive. When Russian forces occu-

pled Kherson, she hid the hard drives containing it. After Ukrainian troops returned, she retrieved them.

Today, that archive forms the most detailed record of looted cultural property during the war, allowing prosecutors to work with Interpol to trace missing

works and pursue those responsible.

Across much of Ukraine, however, such documentation does not exist. And cultural losses can only be pursued in court if they can be proved, item by item.

The Russian Culture Ministry did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment on the alleged removal of items from Ukrainian museums. In the past, Russian-appointed officials in occupied territories described the removal as protective measures.

Kirill Stremousov, the former Russia-installed deputy administrator in Kherson who died shortly before Ukrainian forces liberated the city, said removed statues would "definitely return" once fighting stopped.

Halyna Chumak, former director of the Donetsk Regional Art Museum, fled Russian-controlled Donetsk in 2014, carrying what she could: catalogs documenting a fraction of the museum's roughly 15,000 artworks.

She spent a year transporting the catalogs through checkpoints into Ukrainian-controlled territory, leaving most behind as she tried not to draw attention from pro-Russian forces who searched her at each crossing.

Those catalogs covering just over

1,000 items are the only surviving evidence. More than a decade later, Ukrainian entrepreneur Oleksandr Velychko is digitizing them.

It took his team over three painstaking months to process about 400 works. Once completed, the database will be given to Ukrainian authorities, providing a partial legal basis to claim ownership of missing items.

Officials say many cases across Ukraine resemble Donetsk more than Kherson.

Anna Sosonska, deputy head of a war crimes unit at Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office, said her department is handling 23 criminal proceedings involving cultural crimes, covering 174 episodes of looting, damage and destruction.

The Kherson museum case is among the priorities, she said, largely because of Dotsenko's digital archive.

Sosonska said Russian forces often remove inventory books and other documentation from museums, making it harder to establish what was taken.

Prosecutors sometimes rely on open-source intelligence, tracking artworks through photos, auction records and other online traces - a labor-intensive process that cannot reconstruct

entire collections.

It takes time, but Sosonska noted that cultural crimes fall under international law and have no statute of limitations.

Ukrainian officials say the scale of looting far exceeds what can be documented.

According to Ukraine's Culture Ministry, Russia as of March had destroyed or damaged 1,707 cultural heritage sites and 2,503 cultural infrastructure facilities including events spaces and galleries, notably the Mariupol Drama Theatre.

The ministry said over 2.1 million museum objects remain in Russian-occupied territories. Of the territories Ukraine has retaken since 2022, over 35,000 museum items are confirmed to have been looted.

Large parts of Ukraine have been under Russian occupation since 2014, and much original documentation has been lost, destroyed or removed.

Russia has moved to formalize control over seized collections. In 2023, it amended legislation to incorporate 77 Ukrainian museums in the occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions into its national catalog, a step critics say effectively prohibits the return of looted works.



A worker carries out restoration work in the al-Madina Souq, the world's largest covered historic market, in Aleppo, Syria, on March 6, 2022. (Xinhua)

Syria works to restore war-damaged heritage

Aleppo's ancient souqs stir back to life

ALEPPO, Syria, April 19, (Xinhua): In the narrow, vaulted alleys of Aleppo's ancient markets, the sound of hammers striking stone echoes once again, a quiet sign of life returning to one of the Middle East's oldest trading hubs after years of war.

Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1986, Aleppo's historic souqs had long been a vibrant hub of trade along the Silk Road.

Once the largest covered market in the world, this 13-km labyrinth through the old city was devastated during some of the fiercest fighting of Syria's civil war.

A massive fire in 2012 swept through large sections of the souqs, destroying hundreds of shops and collapsing centuries-old structures, while years of shelling and fighting left parts of the historic marketplace in ruins, forcing traders to abandon shops that had been passed down for generations.

Today, parts of the souqs are gradually coming back to life. Workers restore arches blackened by fire and rebuild stone walls using traditional materials, while shopkeepers cautiously reopen their businesses in alleys that had long lain silent.

"The old city is our soul, our pride, our civilization and our history," Mahmoud Hazkan, a soap maker standing inside his recently restored shop, where he sells Aleppo's famed laurel soap, told Xinhua. "Whether it is the Umayyad Mosque, the old markets or the Citadel of Aleppo, it is everything to us."

For locals like Hazkan, the return is about more than commerce.

Before the civil war, the souqs bustled with tourists and traders from around the world. "There were tour groups from everywhere," Hazkan said. "Now, we need stability," he



A carpet weaver works at his workshop in Aleppo, Syria, on March 8, 2022. (Xinhua)

added, noting that ongoing regional tensions continue to weigh on tourism and economic recovery.

Across Syria, officials say restoring heritage sites has become a national priority after more than a decade of conflict, which left many of the country's historic landmarks damaged.

"The whole world is looking at Syria and wants to see where the country will stand on the issue of its heritage after 14 years of war," Masoud Badawi, director-general of antiquities and museums, told Xinhua.

Syria is home to six UNESCO World Heritage sites, all of which were placed on the organization's "in danger" list during the conflict. Authorities say they are now working, with international support, to restore these sites and eventually remove them from that designation.

The revival of the ancient souqs is a testament to these nationwide restoration efforts.

"The most severe damage among cities listed on the World Heritage List is in the Old City of Aleppo, particularly the souqs, which were almost completely destroyed," Badawi said.

He added that authorities have completed comprehensive studies for the full restoration of the markets, with reconstruction expected to proceed in phases. "This process takes time, but ultimately, the Old City of Aleppo will return to what it once was," he said.

"Commercially and in terms of economic life, these markets have largely recovered. Traders are reopening their shops, and people are returning," said Ghaith Makansi, an engineer involved in the restoration project.

Still, challenges persist. Officials say one of the biggest hurdles is securing sufficient funding, as large-scale restoration projects require significant financial resources, alongside the need to clear land mines and unexploded ordnance from damaged sites.

Art

'Art is a source of life ... a reflection to future'

Cameroonians speak with one voice of unity, peace and harmony through art

YAOUNDE, April 19, (Xinhua): As early morning light touched Cameroon's capital Yaounde, Francky Mpando was already up, bustling around in his shop.

For the craftsman who specializes in sculpting elephants and horses, the art of shaping stones and wood into various forms has become not only a passion but a long-standing family tradition.

At the heart of Yaounde stands the imposing Reunification Monument, built in the 1970s to commemorate the reunification of Cameroon, which had been divided during the colonial era.

Today, the towering sculpture is widely seen as a visual representation of the country's past, present and future in unity. Mpando's late father Gedeon Mpando is credited with constructing this landmark.

"My father was gifted in art," the 45-year-old recalled. "In the past, authorities wanted to construct a monument that would relay the message of one and indivisible Cameroon. So the monument was constructed to remind Cameroonians that we are all brothers."

In a country with over 250 ethnic groups, two official languages, and regions still healing from conflict, art is unifying people in peace across cultures and generations.

From the streets of Yaounde to the galleries of the commercial hub of Douala, art has become a quiet diplomat for unity, development and peace in the central African nation.

Artworks are spotted along streets and in shops across the country, turning everyday walks into open-air gallery visits.

"Art is a source of life; it is the beginning and the end. It is also the reflection of the future and shows us how we should live in the future," said Thierry Mejia, whose paintings were displayed along a street in Yaounde.

Elise Sidonie Fotso, who runs an art gallery in the capital, said that she prioritizes color in her artworks to portray joy and peace.

Her paintings depict people drumming and dancing to traditional Cameroonian music.



Sculptor Francky Mpando works on an elephant sculpture at his workshop in Yaounde, Cameroon, April 13, 2026. (Xinhua)



Sculptor Patrick Ndzana creates an artwork in Yaounde, Cameroon, April 14, 2026. (Xinhua)

"People from all (Cameroonian) cultures will find themselves in my paintings," said the 45-year-old widow, who learned how to paint from her late husband. "Painting drives away stress; it is a therapy."

In the English-speaking Southwest region, devastated by a protracted separatist conflict, Sebastian Enow is using art as a powerful tool to influence perceptions and bring peace and reconciliation to communities torn apart by the conflict.

He has been creating art for about three decades. "Art is so powerful it brings divided communities together, and through

art, generations to come can understand well how we lived," the 65-year-old said.

He said people displaced by the conflict often come to his art gallery and gaze at his works with admiration and wonder.

"My paintings show the dark side of the conflict. So, when they gaze at my works, they feel sad or happy depending on the situation. For many, it is some sort of therapy," Enow said.

As Cameroon marked World Art Day last Wednesday, Mpando hopes that the value of creativity and the richness of artistic works will continue to have a positive impact on society.

Robots show gains in speed and stability

Humanoid robot beats human half-marathon world record in Beijing

BEIJING, April 19, (Xinhua): Humanoid robot named "Flash" from Shenzhen Honor Smart Technology Development Co., Ltd. claimed victory at the 2026 Beijing E-Town half-marathon with a time of 50 minutes and 26 seconds in autonomous navigation on Sunday, beating the human world record of 57:20.

The men's half-marathon world record was created by Uganda's star distance runner Jacob Kiplimo at the Lisbon Half Marathon in Portugal last month.

At the inaugural E-Town half-marathon in 2025, Tiangong Ultra seized victory in two hours, 40 minutes, and 42 seconds, and only six out of the 20 competing teams successfully finished the 21.0975-kilometer race to make history.

In the second edition of the event on Sunday, humanoid robots made remarkable progress and demonstrated technological breakthroughs to become faster and more stable in running. The number of participating teams increased to more than 100 this year, including participants from Germany, France and Brazil.

In terms of competition rules, robots and human runners followed the same route but separate lanes to ensure safety, and the robot's cutoff time was set at three hours and 40 minutes.

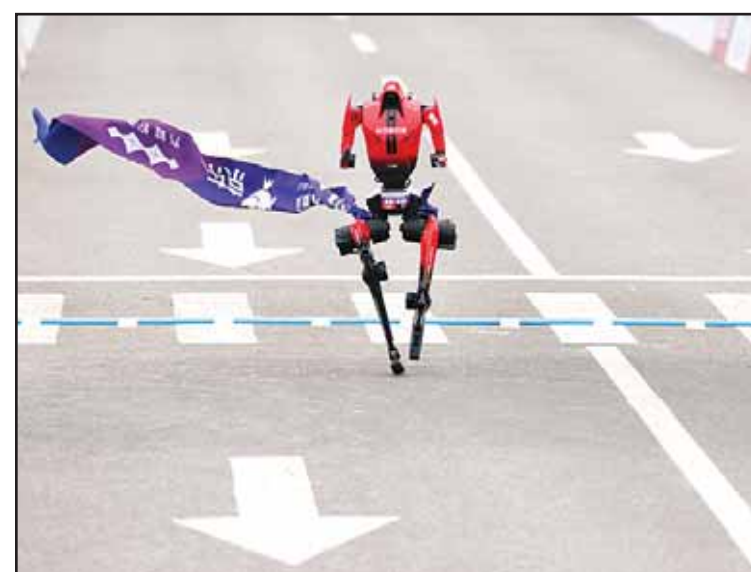
The newly added format this year includes two ways of participation - remote control and autonomous navigation.

For teams in remote control, their finishing times need to be multiplied by a coefficient of

1.2. About 40 percent of the teams adopted the autonomous navigation to achieve better results.

"The setting of coefficient aims to guide and encourage the research and development of autonomous navigation, which represents a technological foundation for humanoid robots to be applied in more scenarios in our daily life towards future," explained Liang Liang, deputy secretary-general of the Chinese Institute of Electronics.

On the human's side of E-Town half-marathon, China's Zhao Haijie took the men's title in one hour, seven minutes, and 47 seconds, while his compatriot Wang Qiaoxia was crowned in the women's race with 1:18:06.



Humanoid robot 'Flash' of Pofengshandian Team in the remote-controlled category crosses the finish line during the Beijing E-Town half-marathon and humanoid robots half-marathon in the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area in southeast Beijing, China, April 19. (Xinhua)

'Untreated allergies may cause complications'

Accurate diagnosis vital for proper treatment of respiratory allergies

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: Many individuals have reported allergy symptoms and respiratory challenges amidst the fluctuating weather conditions and seasonal dust storms in the country.

Dr. Fahad Al-Fahad, a consultant otolaryngologist, pointed out that the prevalence of nasal allergies entails the need for accurate clinical diagnosis to distinguish these conditions from other allergic manifestations and ensure that appropriate therapeutic protocols are implemented.

In an interview with Kuwait TV, Al-Fahad disclosed that nasal allergies are among the widespread pathological conditions in the country. He explained while these conditions are seasonal – linked to climatic shifts – some patients suffer from perennial symptoms requiring continuous monitoring and long-term management strategies.

He touched on the distinction between various allergic conditions, underscoring the importance of differentiating nasal allergies from asthma and dermatological allergies, as each requires certain diagnostic and treatment methodologies.

He stressed the need to consult specialized medical personnel to ensure appropriate decisions are taken regarding the underlying causes of symptoms, optimizing treatment outcomes and preventing complications.

He pointed out that the etiology of allergies covers genetic predispositions and environmental factors, explaining that these conditions mirror chronic



Dr. Al-Fahad

diseases like diabetes and hypertension in requiring managed control rather than a definitive cure, urging patients to maintain their daily routines.

On the common triggers, he cited dust, climatic changes, pollen, domestic pets, smoking and perfumes. He emphasized that triggers show high individual variability, as no single factor uniformly affects the entire populace.

He stated that untreated nasal allergies may lead to complications, such as nasal polyps or chronic sinusitis, particularly if sinus obstruction leads to secondary symptoms like headaches. He added that physiological factors, including deviated septum, can exacerbate the condition.

He said septal deviation diagnosis is typically achieved through endoscopic review, adding that while 80 to 90 percent of the population exhibits minor deviations, surgical intervention is restricted to cases with significant symptomatic burdens.

He added that aesthetic rhinoplasty procedures are unrelated to nasal allergies, as individuals seeking cosmetic refinement do not suffer from allergic conditions.

He indicated that corticosteroid nasal sprays are considered the primary therapeutic intervention and should be utilized consistently during peak seasons, complemented by saline rinses to efficiently cleanse the nasal passages of environmental impurities.

He cautioned against the prolonged use of decongestant sprays due to adverse side effects and physiological dependence. He said their use must be limited and under strict medical oversight.

On traditional remedies, he pointed out that the intranasal application of olive oil is clinically incorrect, whereas saline solutions – whether pharmaceutically prepared or formulated precisely – serve as an effective tool in maintaining nasal hygiene.

Culling on

FMD affects 100 farms in Cyprus

NICOSIA, April 19, (Xinhua): The total number of farms infected with foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in Cyprus has risen to 101, the veterinary services department said on Saturday.

According to the Cyprus Mail, new cases were detected at a sheep and goat farm in Dromolaxia-Meneou municipality in southern Cyprus near the coastal city of Larnaca, as well as at a cattle farm and a pig farm in the Nicosia district of central Cyprus.

The outbreak has so far affected 13 cattle farms, 86 sheep and goat farms, and two pig farms. Culling operations and vaccination campaigns are ongoing in the southeast and the Nicosia district in the center of the island.

The current outbreak began on Feb. 20 with the first case reported at a dairy farm in the southeastern Larnaca region and has since spread to multiple areas across the country. Earlier this week, authorities confirmed the first infection in pigs at a farm west of the capital Nicosia, prompting the establishment of a protection zone and movement restrictions in surrounding areas.

Under European Union regulations, all animals at infected farms must be culled. More than 30,000 animals have already been culled in Cyprus.

Meanwhile, South Africa has vaccinated more than 2 million livestock against FMD, Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen said Wednesday. In a statement, Steenhuisen said 2,033,289 animals were vaccinated between February and March 26, adding that no new infections had been detected in herds that had already received vaccines, indicating the effectiveness of the immunization campaign.

A total of 1,317 FMD cases had been recorded nationwide across all nine provinces as of Friday, he said, adding that the recent increase in reported numbers was largely due to improved surveillance capacity.

"We have strengthened surveillance and implemented a centralized reporting system, allowing for earlier detection and faster data capture," said the minister.

South Africa has procured millions of vaccine doses from international suppliers as part of a nationwide mass vaccination drive launched earlier this year. The agricultural department previously confirmed the arrival of major consignments, including 1 million doses from Argentina and 1.5 million doses from Türkiye.

It added that vaccination is being implemented using a risk-based approach that prioritizes areas with high concentrations of susceptible livestock, with dairy herds in provinces such as the Free State and Western Cape among those already covered.

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 19: The need for 'digital detox' has become more urgent due to the rapid flow of news and increasing reliance on smart devices to monitor developments, especially in times of crisis and tension.

This is necessary because the impact extends beyond the psychological condition of an individual, affecting the quality of life and family relationship.

Experts explained to the newspaper that 'digital detox' is a temporary or organized break from screens and social media to restore mental balance and reduce the stress resulting from information overload.

They pointed out that this approach is an effective tool for promoting mental health and improving concentration levels in adults and children in an environment saturated with news round the clock.

Dr. Sarah Al-Saif, a psychotherapy specialist at the Ministry of Health, stated that virtual detox technology effectively restores psychological balance by reducing constant exposure to news and encouraging the use of reliable official sources.

"Aside from allocating specific times for news consumption, disabling annoying notifications, activating the 'Do Not Disturb' mode, and engaging in physical or manual activities such as sports, reading or tidying the house could help shift focus to the present moment and calm the mind," she elaborated.

She also emphasized the importance of creating a safe space before bedtime, free from phones and news, to give the mind time to recover from stress. "This

leads to deep sleep and maintains the mental health of both children and adolescents. Incorporating these simple steps into the daily routine can make a significant difference in reducing stress and increasing inner peace," she suggested.

Psychotherapist Haya Al-Ajmi confirmed that excessive preoccupation with news leads to a decline in genuine interaction among family members, especially between spouses, as devices replace direct dialogue. "This weakens emotional bonds and leads to a gradual disintegration within the home," she warned.

She added that 'compulsive browsing' of the news transfers feelings of stress and anxiety to children, even if one does not converse with them. "Children sense their parents' anxiety, creating a psychologically unstable environment and affecting their sense of security."

Pressures due to the influx of information drain the parents' mental energy and reduce their ability to interact positively with their children. This can be reflected in parenting styles and responses to daily needs. It is important to simplify information presented to children in a way that is appropriate for their age," she disclosed.

She called for adopting 'digital detox' by regulating news consumption and limiting it to short periods, avoiding random browsing, and replacing it with alternative activities like hobbies or family interaction in order to reduce stress and improve mental health.

She asserted that temporary breaks from the news have significant benefits for the family, most notably strengthening emotional bonds, improving mental health, and increasing the quality of shared time, thus, creating a more balanced and stable family environment under external pressures.

'New order could help patients reclaim their lives'

Trump signs order to speed review of psychedelics, including ibogaine

WASHINGTON, April 19, (AP): President Donald Trump on Saturday directed his administration to speed up reviews of certain psychedelic drugs, including ibogaine, which recently has been embraced by combat veterans and conservative lawmakers despite having serious safety risks.

Ibogaine and other psychedelics remain banned under the federal government's most restrictive category for illegal, high-risk drugs. But the administration is taking steps to ease restrictions and spur research on using the drugs for medical purposes, including conditions like severe depression.

"Today's order will ensure that people suffering from debilitating symptoms might finally have a chance to reclaim their lives and lead a happier life," Trump said as he signed an executive order on the drugs. The Republican president said his directive will help "dramatically accelerate" access to potential treatments. "If these turn out to be as good as people are saying, it's going to have a tremendous impact," he said.

Veteran organizations and psychedelic advocates have long contended that ibogaine, which is made from a shrub native to West Africa, has great promise for hard-to-treat conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder and opioid addiction.

Trump's announcement follows pledges by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and other administration officials to ease access to psychedelics for medical use, an issue that has won rare bipartisan support.

Joining Trump in the Oval Office were his top health officials, conservative podcaster Joe Rogan and Marcus Luttrell, the former Navy SEAL whose memoir about a deadly mission in Afghanistan was the basis of the film "Lone Survivor." Rogan said he texted Trump information on ibogaine and the president responded: "Sounds great. Do you want FDA approval? Let's do it."

"You're going to save a lot of lives through it," Luttrell told Trump during the ceremony. "It absolutely changed my life for the better."

The Food and Drug Administration next week will issue national priority vouchers for three psychedelics, which the agency's commissioner, Marty Makary, said will allow certain drugs to be approved quickly "if they are in line with our national priorities." The vouchers can cut review times from several months to a period of weeks. It is the first time the FDA has offered that fast-tracking to any psychedelics.

The FDA is also taking steps to clear the way for the first-ever human trials



President Donald Trump holds up a signed executive order in the Oval Office of the White House, Saturday, April 18, in Washington. (AP)

of ibogaine in the US.

Trump's action surprised many longtime advocates and researchers in the psychedelic field, given that ibogaine is known to sometimes trigger potentially fatal heart problems. The National Institutes of Health briefly funded research on the drug in the 1990s, but discontinued the work due to ibogaine's "cardiovascular toxicity."

"It's been incredibly difficult to study ibogaine in the US because of its known cardiotoxicity," said Frederick Barrett, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research. "If the executive order can pave the way for doing objective, scientific research with this compound, it truly would help us understand whether it is a better psychedelic therapy than others."

No psychedelic has been approved in the United States, but a number of them are being studied in large trials for various mental health conditions, including psilocybin, MDMA and LSD. All those drugs remain illegal, classified as Schedule I substances alongside drugs such as heroin. Two states - Oregon and Colorado - have legalized psychedelic therapy with psilocybin.

Ibogaine was first used by members of the Bwiti religion in African nations like Gabon during their religious ceremonies.

In recent years, U.S. veterans have reported benefiting from the drug after traveling to clinics in Mexico that administer it.

Backing from veterans groups and former Texas Gov. Rick Perry led to a law last year providing \$50 million for ibogaine research in that state. Perry, who co-founded a group called Ameri-

cans for Ibogaine, recently appeared on Rogan's podcast, making the case for reducing federal limits on the drug. It was his second time talking about ibogaine on the popular podcast in the past two years.

Trump's order calls on the Department of Health and Human Services to direct at least \$50 million to states that have enacted or are developing programs to advance psychedelic drugs for serious mental illness. It's described as a federal-state partnership to provide funding, technical assistance and data sharing.

Ibogaine is known to cause irregular heart rhythms and has been linked to more than 30 deaths in the medical literature, according to the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, a nonprofit that conducted some early studies in patients outside the U.S.

The group's co-executive director, Ismail Lourido Ali, said Trump's order might encourage other states to follow the Texas model.

"The stigma around Schedule I drugs is significant," Ali said. "It feels like this would give pretty substantial cover for Republican governors and legislatures to step into the ring in terms of funding research programs at their universities."

Owners of ibogaine clinics said the impact of the order will not be immediate.

"There will be no insurance coverage, it will still be considered unapproved and non-covered care," said Tom Feegel of Beond Ibogaine, which operates a clinic in Cancun, Mexico. "But what it does mean is that ibogaine shifts from being fringe and underground to being federally acknowledged."

Extreme dryness across US threatens crops

Record drought raises fears of fires, water supply

NEW YORK, April 19, (AP): Drought in the contiguous United States has reached record levels for this time of year, weather data shows. Meteorologists said it's a bad sign for the upcoming wildfire season, food prices and western water issues.

More than 61% of the Lower 48 states is in moderate to exceptional drought - including 97% of the Southeast and two-thirds of the West - according to the US Drought Monitor. It's the highest levels for this time of year since the drought monitor began in 2000.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's comprehensive Palmer Drought Severity Index not only hit its highest level for March since records started in 1895, but last month was the third-driest month recorded regardless of time of year. It trailed only the famed Dust Bowl months of July and August 1934.

Because of record heat, much of the West has had exceptionally low levels of snow in the first few months of the year, which is usually how the region stores water for the summer. A different drought -

connected to the jet stream keeping storms further north - has put the South from Texas all the way to the East Coast into a separate drought that just happens to coincide with what's going on in the West, said Brian Fuchs, a climatologist with the National Drought Mitigation Center.

It would take 19 inches of rain in one month to break the drought in eastern Texas and more than a foot of rain to solve the deficit for most of the Southeast, NOAA calculated.

"Right now 61% of the country is in drought and that's steadily being going up for the calendar year," Fuchs said. "We just haven't seen too many springs where this amount of the country has been in this kind of shape."

Sticking out like a sore thumb is a highly technical but crucial measurement of "the sponginess" of the atmosphere - or how much moisture the hot, dry air is sucking up from the land it's baking. It's called vapor pressure deficit. It's 77% above normal and more than 25% higher than the previous record for Janu-

ary through March in the West, said UCLA hydroclimatologist Park Williams. That level of moisture-sucking from the ground "wouldn't have appeared possible" before now, Williams said.

Drought usually peaks in summer, not spring, and that's what worries meteorologists.

"Fire tends to respond to heat and drought in an exponential manner," Williams said. "For each degree of warming, you get a bigger bang in terms of fire than you got from the previous degree of warming."

In Arizona, cacti are blooming months early and the worry about water has already started, said Kathy Jacobs, director of the Center for Climate Adaptation Science and Solutions at the University of Arizona.

"Those of us who are dependent on the Colorado River, of course, are very concerned about the fact that we don't have a negotiated path forward in the middle of what appears to be possibly the worst year of drought that we've all experienced," Jacobs said. "We have lots of reservoirs that are not full."



Skincare products made from salmon DNA are displayed Friday, March 6, 2026, in Cincinnati. (AP)

New 'skincare' trend

Should you put beef fat, salmon 'milt' on face?

NEW YORK, April 19, (AP): Bryan Vander Dussen spent years as a dairy farmer before shifting to selling farm-raised beef. In the past year, he and his wife have been making another transition: Cooking up recipes in their kitchen that turn organ fat from his animals into tallow balm that buyers are eager to slather on their skin.

One tricky bit: Coming up with formulas that don't smell like pot roast.

"You see it everywhere, so we were like, 'Why don't we do this?'" he said. "Some of the feedback is, 'We don't want to smell like beef,' so we add things like lavender and wild orange to kind of counter that potential beef smell."

From moisturizers made with beef tallow to salmon 'milt' facials, consumers have become more interested in animal-based skin care products in recent years. Promoted as natural alternatives to synthetics, they're gaining popularity across social media and high-end spas as well as at farmers' markets and in home kitchens.

Some experts connect the products' rise to an increased focus on the health impact of chemicals, as well as pro-meat messaging from the Make America Healthy Again movement.

"There's been a movement in the last couple of years to embrace animal-based foods," said Norah MacKendrick, an associate professor of sociology at Rutgers University who has studied why consumers are worried about chemicals in their personal care products. "I think some of that is probably spilling over into the cosmetic world."

Natural

Natalee Keenan, 31, said she was looking for natural skin care products when she decided to give tallow a try. The first product she purchased felt beefy and heavy on her skin, but the western Pennsylvania woman said she recently found a whipped tallow balm scented with coconut that feels much lighter.

"I use it sparingly," she said, adding a tiny bit has been enough to keep her skin feeling smooth.

Here's what experts have to say about animal-based skin care, including cautions about a lack of medical evidence for their effectiveness.

The cosmetics industry moved away from many animal-derived ingredients decades ago amid concerns about animal testing and disease outbreaks like mad cow, said Perry Romanowski, an independent cosmetic chemist who studies how skin care ingredients are formulated.

For years, those concerns, along with the rise of vegan beauty products, pushed many brands to avoid animal-based ingredients altogether. But recently, some of those materials have started to reappear in skin care products and are often marketed as natural alternatives.

Jamie Moody, founder of Sonoma Mountain Beef in Northern California, said she started making tallow products in an effort to reduce waste. "Since the trend toward clean products remains strong, I believe the market will continue to grow," she said.

Vander Dussen, the California rancher, said he and his wife are "just kind of jumping onto the fat that's already there." He added: "In today's world, it's very important not only what you are putting on your face but where it comes from."

Treatments

Kelly Pratt, who owns a spa in Tampa, Florida, said demand for treatments like salmon 'milt' DNA facials have surged because clients report improvements over time. Cassandra Hutchison, an aesthetician who gives the treatments at the spa, said the ingredient is intended to repair skin and keep inflammation down. She said it helps in hydration, making skin look healthier and repairing damage to the outer layer of skin that keeps moisture in and irritants out.

Prices vary, but a tub of tallow balm at Target costs about \$15 more than a tub of petroleum jelly. And while there are some salmon 'milt' products like masks you can apply at home, many have to be applied at a spa, which comes with its own costs. Still, that hasn't deterred some consumers, whose searches for terms like "beef tallow for skin" have jumped in recent years and remained higher than ever before, according to Google Trends.

Turning waste from an animal product into something people use is certainly an example of sustainability, experts said.

But neither beef tallow nor salmon 'milt' have robust medical data to support their effectiveness, said Dr. Angelo Landriscina, a New York City dermatologist who has taken to social media to debunk what he sees as skin care misinformation.

Dr. Heather Rogers, a Seattle dermatologist, agreed there's no medical evidence that tallow on your skin is helpful. She said it can be rancid and hard to use, and additives to make it smell more pleasant can be irritants.

Romanowski, the cosmetic chemist, said consumers should keep their expectations realistic. He said only a few skin care ingredients, including retinol, a vitamin A-derived ingredient commonly used to reduce fine lines and wrinkles, and niacinamide, a form of vitamin B3 that helps with redness and strengthens the skin, have strong evidence behind them. Others, he said, may offer only modest benefits that are difficult for consumers to notice.

Corrin Dial, 32, owns Lowcountry Family Farms with her husband in South Carolina. Neither of them grew up farming, she said, but decided to try it after he got out of the Marine Corps.

SPORTS

Messi delivers again as Miami extends unbeaten run

Espinoza, Schwake keep Nashville rolling

COMMERCE CITY, Colo., April 19, (AP): Lionel Messi had two goals, Germán Berterame scored for the second consecutive game, and Inter Miami beat the Colorado Rapids 3-2 on Saturday to extend their unbeaten streak to seven games and win their first game under interim coach Guillermo Hoyos.

Hoyos, who had been serving as club's sporting director, took over coaching duties after Javier Mascherano unexpectedly left the club due to personal reasons. Mascherano led Inter Miami to the 2025 MLS Cup title in his only full season with the club.

Messi, who opened the scoring when he converted a penalty kick in the 13th minute, scored the go-ahead goal in 79th minute. After a Colorado turnover near midfield, Messi cut back near the right corner of the penalty box and flicked a rising shot that split a pair of defenders and slipped



Inter Miami forward Lionel Messi jumps after scoring in the second half of an MLS soccer game against the Colorado Rapids in Denver. (AP)

inside the back post.

Messi has seven goal this season, tied with Sam Surridge and Petar Musa for most in MLS.

Miami (4-1-3) hasn't lost since a season-opening 3-0 defeat to Los Angeles FC.

Yannick Bright was shown a straight red card in the 87th minute and Miami played a man down the rest of the way.

Cristian Espinoza had a goal and an assist and Nashville SC shut out Atlanta United 2-0 behind rookie Brian Schwake.

Hany Mukhtar had an assist on Espinoza's goal and another one on Abdul Shakur Mohammed's first career goal to help Nashville (6-1-1) stay on top in the Eastern Conference.

Schwake had three saves for Nashville, earning his fourth clean sheet in his eighth career start. He has allowed a league-low four goals.

Neither team scored until Espinoza used assists from Mukhtar and defender Jeisson Palacios to find the net in the 61st minute and give Nashville the lead.

It was the third goal for Espinoza in his first season with the club after scoring 36 times in 218 appearances for the San Jose Earthquakes over seven seasons. Palacios collected his second assist.

Sergi Solans had two goals and an assist, Diego Luna added a goal and two assists, and Real Salt Lake beat San Diego FC 4-2 to extend its unbeaten streak to six games.

Morgan Guilavogui scored his first goal in MLS and had an assist for Real Salt Lake (5-1-1). The 28-year-old designated player has five goal contributions in his first six career games.

Tomás Chancalay scored his first goal of the season and added an assist, Kelvin Yeboah had a goal for the second consecutive game, and Minnesota United beat the Portland Timbers 2-0.

The Timbers (2-5-1) - who beat Los Angeles FC 2-1 last time out to snap a five-game unbeaten streak - have lost five of their last seven.

Cristian Roldan scored two goals, Albert Rusnák added a goal and two assists, and the Seattle Sounders beat St. Louis City 4-1.



CF Montreal's Olger Escobar, right, tries to get by New York Red Bulls' Ronald Donkor during the second half of an MLS soccer game against the New York Red Bulls in Montreal. (AP)

The Sounders (5-1-1) are unbeaten, with four wins, in their last five games.

Dor Turgeman scored the equalizer early in the second half and Carles Gil netted the winner on a penalty kick in the 85th minute as the New England Revolution rallied to beat the Columbus Crew 2-1 on Saturday night to remain unbeaten at home.

Houston's Héctor Herrera scored late in the second half and Jonathan Bond made it stand up for the Dynamo in a 1-0 victory over Orlando

City.

Neither team scored until Herrera found the net for the first time this season - unassisted in the 75th minute. Herrera has six career goals in 68 appearances with the Dynamo.

Idan Tokloamati and Kerwin Vargas each scored a goal, Kristijan Kahlina had seven saves, and Charlotte FC beat New York City FC 2-1.

Charlotte (4-2-2) lost 2-1 to Nashville last time out to snap a four-game unbeaten streak.

Prince Owusu scored on a penalty

kick and added three assists to spark CF Montreal to a 4-1 victory over the New York Red Bulls.

Montreal (2-6-0) finished off a season sweep of New York (3-3-2) and snapped its losing streak at four in the club's first match under interim coach Philippe Eullaffroy after Marco Donadel was fired April 12.

Lucas Sanabria and Joseph Paintsil scored late in the first half after Petar Musa scored twice to give Dallas the lead, helping the Los Angeles Galaxy rally for a 2-2 draw.

Tom Barlow and Evander Da Silva Ferreira - known simply as "Evander" - each scored a goal Saturday night for FC Cincinnati in a 3-3 tie with the Chicago Fire.

Defender Kobe Franklin scored his first career goal in the 88th minute to rally Toronto FC to a 3-3 draw with Austin FC on Saturday.

Toronto (3-2-3) upped its unbeaten run to six on the season and 12 at home dating to last year. The club is 2-0-3 in five home matches and 4-0-8 during the streak.

Marie-Louise focuses on Union survival mission

Bundesliga's 1st female coach, Eta, looks ahead after historic debut ends in defeat

BERLIN, April 19, (AP): Marie-Louise Eta was in little mood for celebrating after making her debut as the first female coach in the Bundesliga on Saturday.

Eta was feted by the Union Berlin fans before the game, but the team was unable to live up to the sense of occasion as it slumped to a 2-1 defeat at home to Wolfsburg, which was previously winless in 12 games.

Eta had spoken before the match of just wanting to get on with the job, deflecting attention from her own barrier-breaking achievements, and focusing instead on her task of securing Bundesliga survival for Union.

She was appointed as interim coach with five games to go before the end of the season. Now it's four, and Union is a point closer to the relegation zone, just six points away, despite dominating toward the end against Wolfsburg.

"First of all, of course I'm disappointed that we lost this game. But I'm very happy with how we approached it today, with the lads' performance," Eta said. "We talked about a lot of things this week. We also saw the lads training with good energy, with great conviction, and we implemented the plan we'd developed over the past few days very well today."

Her team missed a host of good chances, with Wolfsburg goalkeeper Kamil Grabara proving to be the decisive figure, while lapses at the back allowed Patrick Wimmer and Dženan Pejičinović to score early in



New head coach of German Bundesliga soccer club 1. FC Union Berlin Marie-Louise Eta looks on during the warm up prior to the German Bundesliga soccer match between FC Union Berlin and Wolfsburg in Berlin, Germany. (AP)

each half for the visitors.

"Today it was simply about focusing on the essentials. In the end, it was about football, and I was really looking forward to playing this Bundesliga match here," Eta said. "Ultimately, it's bitter and disappointing that we're leaving here without any points."

The 34-year-old Eta became the first female coach across the top divisions of the "big five" European

leagues in men's soccer, but she didn't dwell at all on her achievement.

Before the game, Union fans greeted each player's name during the lineup announcement with a roar of "Fussballgott!" (football-god), and there were cheers and applause when it came to announcing the coach's name.

"Fussballgott!" the fans roared - football-goddess.

Eta previously became the first female assistant coach in the men's Bundesliga in 2023, also at Union, and had been coaching the under-19 men's team at the club, where she's affectionately known as Louie.

She made four changes to the team that lost at bottom side Heidenheim the weekend before, bringing back Union veteran Christopher Trimmel.

"For Louie, of course it's difficult to impose all the new things in just three or four days so everything can be implemented immediately. That's perfectly understandable. It would have been difficult for any coach, and yet we still managed to execute a solid match plan well. A lot of things worked out," Trimmel said. "I'm staying positive."

Union next faces Champions League-chasing Leipzig away, then relegation-rival Cologne at home. It will face former coach Urs Fischer - who led the team to promotion in 2019 - at Mainz, before ending the season at home against Augsburg on May 16.

"We clicked quickly," Union defender Derrick Köhn of Eta's impact as head coach. "She shared her game plan with us, and we implemented what she gave us. There's not too much new, so we feel very, very comfortable with her. We tried, especially today, to give her the win as a present, but unfortunately, we didn't succeed. As I said, we'll move on. We'll try to analyze this and then prepare for Leipzig and try to give her her present there."

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Thailand's Natthakritta seals Chongqing Women's Open win

CHONGQING, April 19, (Xinhua): Natthakritta Vongtaveelap won the Kove China Sports Lottery Chongqing Women's Open by two strokes, ending a winless streak among Thai players dating back nearly three years on the CLPG Tour.

Playing under hot and sunny conditions at KingRun Nanshan Golf Club, the Bangkok native closed with third round score of eight-under 64 to finish on 15-under 201. The victory was worth RMB 144,000. She becomes the first Thai to win a single-sanctioned CLPG Tour event since Kusuma Meechai won the CTBC Ladies Classic in August 2023 at Shanghai Silport Golf Club.

Siri Patchana made it a one-two finish for Thais after shooting a seven-under 65 to finish runner-up. Overnight leader Xu Ying, the defending champion, stayed close until a double-bogey six on the 16th hole to close with a 69 for third place, three shots off the pace. Ren Yijia (66), the CLPG Tour points ranking leader, was fourth a shot further back.

Peng Yanxuan was the top amateur in fifth after closing with a 70. The Chongqing teenager opened with a nine-under 63 on Thursday, but could not build on her record-breaking round, finishing five strokes back.

Natthakritta, who played two seasons on the LPGA Tour before losing her playing card, started her round with a bogey at the 382-yard first to drop three shots back. She then reeled off three

consecutive birdies from the second hole, before picking up another stroke at the eighth hole. After a bogey five at the 382-yard ninth to make the turn at 34, she turned it on over the back nine with six birdies, including the final two holes.

It was the sixth pro win, and first outside of Thailand, for the 23-year-old.

"This is my first win in China, so I feel very excited. It is my second tournament in China, so I feel grateful that I play so well today. This means that everything I worked so hard on in the past gives me the best result, so I am proud of myself," said Natthakritta.

"When I was practicing on the putting green I was feeling like today is my day. I feel a little bit confident, but not sure yet. So I just played my game, kept it simple." Fellow Bangkok native Siri moved up the leaderboard to post her best result in two seasons on the CLPG Tour with a bogey-free final round. The 26-year-old carded seven birdies and was tied for the lead with Natthakritta through 16 holes but could only make par over the final two holes.

"There's still a lot of room for me to improve and to grow as a player. Today was actually a big step for me. I did a lot better than I expected. I'm gonna keep on doing what I'm doing," said Siri, an alumni of the Grand Canyon University golf program in Arizona.

Korir leads a field of more than 30,000

Boston Marathon set for fast times with stacked field, tailwind boost

BOSTON, April 19, (AP): The weather looks good, Sharon Lokedi is fit, and the fastest field in Boston Marathon history could push her to a second straight course record - if she decides to go for it.

A year after shattering the women's mark by more than 2½ minutes, the defending champion will head to the starting line in Hopkinton on Monday for the 130th edition of the world's oldest and most prestigious annual marathon. Reigning men's champion and fellow Kenyan John Korir is also back to lead a field of more than 30,000 on the 26.2-mile (42.195-kilometer) race to Boston's Copley Square.

Cool weather and an expected tailwind will greet them in Hopkinton - perhaps the ideal conditions for more fast times like last year, when Lokedi finished in 2 hours, 17 minutes, 22 seconds to break the 11-year-old course record and deprive runner-up Hellen Obiri of a third straight win. Korir's 2:04:45 was the third-fastest ever as he joined his brother to become a Boston Marathon champion.

"Last year was crazy fast, so I don't know if it will be the same thing this year. But whichever one, I'm excited for," Lokedi said this week as she prepared to defend her title. "You never know. I feel like that is always determined by when you get to the start line."

Joining her there will be what is being called the strongest field in race history.

The entire men's podium and seven of the top 10 finishers from last year are back, including runners with three of the top eight times in race history. Eight women in the field have run a sub-2:20 marathon - times that would have been a course record in Boston until a year ago.

"Yeah, it's stacked," American competitor Alex Maier said.

The Americans are showing their strength as well.

There are 12 U.S. men with personal bests below 2:10. Four - including 2017 Boston runner-up Galen Rupp and last year's seventh-place finisher, Clayton Young - have run 2:08 or faster; those would be Boston bests until Geoffrey Mutai's then-world best of 2:03:02 in 2011.

In the women's field, the entire U.S. marathon team from the 2024 Paris Olympics will be competing, along with two of the three American women who competed in last year's world championships. In all, eight U.S. women have beaten 2:25 and three have personal bests below 2:22 - Emily Sisson, Sara Hall and Susanna Sullivan.

"American women's marathoning is in a super special spot right now," said Fiona O'Keefe, who won the 2024 U.S. marathon trials and finished fourth in New York last fall. "We have amazing veterans like Sara, who have been doing this forever, and then a younger crew coming up, too. So it's fun to be in the middle of that, and I'm really excited to see what we collectively can do on Monday."

FBI Special Agent in Charge in Boston Ted Docks said authorities are operating at a "heightened threat environment" because of the war in Iran. Docks stressed that there are no specific or credible threats against the race but asked spectators to remain on the lookout for suspicious activity.

Thirteen years after the finish line bombs that killed three people and wounded almost 300 others, marathon runners and fans have grown accustomed to an increased security presence at the race.

Authorities gave the usual warnings for spectators to stay alert, and encouraged them to leave large items like backpacks and strollers at home to avoid the need for a search.

Several of the law enforcement officials at the pre-race security briefing said they are already planning for the other high-profile events scheduled for the Boston area this year, including soccer's World Cup, the Sail Boston tall ships display and the United States' 250th anniversary celebration.



In this file photo, John Korir, of Kenya, breaks the tape to win the Boston Marathon in Boston. (AP)

Lazio claims 2-0 win

Inter on verge of Serie A title after Napoli loss

MILAN, April 19, (AP) - Napoli was jeered off the field after it lost 2-0 at home to Lazio - a result that saw Inter Milan take a huge step toward winning the Serie A title next week.

Matteo Cancellieri and Toma Basic scored for Lazio, which could have won by a greater margin had it not been for a saved penalty and several other missed opportunities.

Inter can now claim the league crown if it wins at Torino next Sunday and Napoli fails to beat lowly Cremonese two days earlier.

Inter, which beat Cagliari is 12 points above Napoli. There are five rounds remaining after this weekend.

Lazio made an aggressive start in Naples and it paid off as the visitors took the lead in the sixth minute when Kenneth Taylor got down the left and pulled back for a relatively unmarked Cancellieri to fire home.

Lazio could have doubled its lead in the 31st minute after Tjijani Noslin was bundled over by Stanislav Lobotka in the area but



Napoli's Alisson Santos, right, and Lazio's Toma Basic battle for the ball during the Italian Serie A soccer match between Napoli and Lazio in Naples, Italy. (AP)

penalty specialist Vanja Milinkovic-Savic parried the resulting spot kick by Mattia Zaccagni, who then ballooned the rebound over the bar from close range.

After missing other chances, Lazio did get a second in the 57th minute. Nuno Tavares raced down the left and rolled it across toward

Cancellieri, who made a mess of it, but it fell kindly to teammate Toma Basic to fire in.

It was Napoli's first Serie A home defeat of the season.

Roma drew 1-1 against coach Gian Piero Gasperini's former team Atalanta in a result that does little for either side's Champions

League hopes.

Gasperini was reduced to tears when talking about his nine years with Atalanta in a press conference on Friday. It has been a difficult week for Gasperini following a very public disagreement with director - and former Roma coach - Claudio Ranieri.

Mario Hermoso's fantastic volley on the stroke of halftime canceled out Nikola Krstovic's opener for Atalanta.

Hermoso almost snatched all three points for Roma late on but his header bounced off the top of the crossbar.

Nesta Elphege's first Serie A goal practically secured Parma's top-flight status as it helped his team to a 1-0 win at Udinese.

The 25-year-old, who joined from Grenoble in January, came off the bench at halftime and scored what was to prove the winner six minutes later, gathering with his back to goal and then spinning around to sweep past the goalkeeper.

Parma moved 12 points above the drop zone.

Kennard steps up big as Lakers seize early edge against Rockets



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, second from left, passes the ball as Houston Rockets guard Josh Okogie, left, and forward Jabari Smith Jr. defend during the first half in Game 1 of a first-round NBA playoffs basketball series in Los Angeles. (AP)

Brunson and Towns lead Knicks past Hawks

LOS ANGELES, April 19, (AP) - Luke Kennard scored a career playoff-high 27 points, LeBron James had 19 points and 13 assists, and the short-handed Los Angeles Lakers capitalized on Kevin Durant's injury absence for a 107-98 victory over the Houston Rockets in the opener of their first-round playoff series.

Deandre Ayton had 19 points and 11 rebounds for the fourth-seeded Lakers, who pulled off an impressive win without their top two scorers.

Both teams played the opener without their most important player. Luka Doncic and Austin Reaves have been out indefinitely with injuries since April 2, while Durant was a late scratch with a bruised right knee.

Los Angeles thrived by hitting 60.6% of its shots while holding the Rockets to 37.6% shooting with pesky defense.

Alperen Sengun scored 19 points and Jabari Smith Jr. had 16 points and 12 rebounds for the

fifth-seeded Rockets, who finished one game behind Los Angeles in the regular season. Amen Thompson added 17 points, but Houston's young core got off to an inconsistent start after becoming the firm favorite in this series due to the Lakers' injury woes.

Game 2 is Tuesday night in Los Angeles.

The Lakers acquired Kennard from Atlanta in early February, and the NBA's most accurate 3-point shooter became a key reserve before he seized a major role over the past two weeks in the absence of Los Angeles' starting backcourt. He hit four 3-pointers in Game 1 while making nine of his first 12 shots.

Knicks 113, Hawks 102

In New York, Jalen Brunson scored 28 points, Karl-Anthony Towns had 19 of his 25 in the second half and the New York Knicks beat the Atlanta Hawks in Game 1 of their Eastern Conference playoff series.

OG Anunoby added 18 points and Josh Hart had 11 points and 14 rebounds for the Knicks in their first postseason game under Mike Brown after making four trips in five years under Tom Thibodeau, capped by their first trip to the Eastern Conference finals since 2000 last year.

The No. 3 seed in the East again this season

hosts Game 2 on Monday night.

CJ McCollum had 26 points and Jalen Johnson added 23 for the Hawks, who went 20-6 after the All-Star break to earn the No. 6 seed.

Brunson, who already owns the Knicks' record with eight 40-point games in the postseason, was almost halfway to another in the first quarter. He made his first six shots and had 19 points as the Knicks led 30-24.

Brunson didn't do as much in the second half, but Towns took over after he was just 1 for 6 for six points at the break.

Nuggets 116, Timberwolves 105

In Denver, Jamal Murray scored 30 points, going 16 of 16 from the free-throw line, and Nikola Jokic had a triple-double as the Denver Nuggets shook off a sluggish start to beat the Minnesota Timberwolves in the opener of their first-round playoff series.

Jokic had 25 points, 13 rebounds, 11 assists and a bloody nose in a physical game between the Northwest Division foes. There were 42 fouls called, along with an unsportsmanlike technical on Jaden McDaniels for pushing Jokic in the back and a technical on Nuggets coach David Adelman. Julius Randle and Aaron Gordon picked up late technical fouls, too.

Denver has won 13 straight since losing on March 18.

Jokic had a five-point stretch to help hold off Minnesota. Murray had one of the biggest shots of the game from halfcourt. With the shot clocking winding down, he heaved it at the hoop and it grazed the rim to reset the clock. It eventually led to a dunk from Gordon that gave Denver a 108-101 lead with 1:50 left. Gordon had 17 points despite early foul trouble.

Cavaliers 126, Raptors 113

In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell scored 32 points, Max Strus had 24 off the bench and the Cleveland Cavaliers defeated the Toronto Raptors in Game 1 of their Eastern Conference first-round playoff series.

James Harden had 22 points and 10 assists while Evan Mobley had 17 and seven rebounds for fourth-seeded Cleveland, which hosts Game 2 on Monday night.

It was a playoff career high in points for Strus, who missed the first 67 games this season with a broken left foot that occurred during offseason training. RJ Barrett scored 24 points and Scottie Barnes had 21 for the Raptors, who were playing in their first playoff game since 2022. Toronto was missing point guard Immanuel Quickley because of a mild right hamstring strain.

Rybakina seals Porsche Grand Prix triumph

Shelton overcomes Cobolli to win clay-court Munich Open



Ben Shelton of the US celebrates with the trophy after winning the men's singles final match against Italy's Flavio Cobolli at the ATP Tour in Munich, Germany. (AP)

MUNICH, April 19, (AP) - Ben Shelton bounced back from disappointment last year by defeating Flavio Cobolli 6-2, 7-5 to win the Munich Open.

Shelton lost the final to Alexander Zverev in 2025 and was determined not to let it happen again at the ATP 500 event.

The 23-year-old from Atlanta hit four aces and saved every break point he faced (six), while converting three of his own to beat the 16th-ranked Cobolli in 1½ hours.

It's the sixth-ranked American's fifth career title and second on clay. Elena Rybakina defeated Karolina Muchova 7-5, 6-1 to win the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix for the second time.

It's the first time the 26-year-old 2024 champion won a repeat title after claiming 12 in different tournaments previously.

The No. 2-ranked Rybakina converted four of her eight break-point opportunities to beat Muchova in 1 hour, 18 minutes.

SA ends Hong Kong Sevens drought

HONG KONG, April 19, (AP) - South Africa broke its title drought in the Hong Kong Sevens when it won the final from defending champion Argentina 35-7 on Sunday.

The Blitzboks came to Hong Kong's 50th anniversary as the favorite having won the last three stops in the sevens world series. But it also carried baggage from never having won Hong Kong and losing the final of the crown jewel of sevens rugby in 1997, 2008, 2009 and 2017.

"We broke the hoodoo and can finally call ourselves champions," captain Impi Visser said.

Meanwhile, the New Zealand women claimed their fourth consecutive Hong Kong title after winning an inevitable final against Australia 19-14.

Hong Kong's most successful men's teams, Fiji and New Zealand, shut out South Africa, but the Blitzboks dominated New Zealand 26-14 in the semifinals and Argentina knocked out Fiji 24-17 in the quarterfinals.

In the final, the Blitzboks scored after 38 seconds when Tristan Leyds punted from inside his 22 down the middle, collected the ball and raced between the posts.

Argentina, which lost to South Africa 38-0 in pool play on Saturday, leveled when Santino Zangara took Luciano Gonzalez's offload.

But the rest of the final was all South Africa. Leyds took a kick pass from Selwyn Davids in his own half and went on a mazy run to feed Davids in support. Davids got a second try, Shilton van Wyk scored from

a Leyds chip and Ryan Oosthuizen also touched down.

Even more dominant this season than the Blitzboks has been the New Zealand women's team.

They have won five of the six stops in the series, contesting every final with Australia. They're even better in Hong Kong, having won all three previous women's championships.

"We love these finals," New Zealand's Jorja Miller said. "These are the moments we play for."

Mahina Paul, on her 25th birthday, got New Zealand rolling by slipping outside Kahl Henwood for the opening try. Miller scored her ninth try of the weekend in support of a Manaia Nuku break for 14-0.

Co-captain Bella Nasser finished her own break and Australia trailed only 14-7 at halftime. But Australia lost Teagan Levi to the sin-bin from the second half restart when she took out Miller in the air.

Moments later, Nasser was denied a try in a great tackle by Heidi Dennis but New Zealand used a ruck penalty to send Kelsey Teneti clear for a decisive 19-7 lead.

The last five minutes were all defense and Australia couldn't crack New Zealand until there were seconds left when Madison Levi scored her seventh try of the weekend.

Levi passed Portia Woodman-Wickliffe's 256 all-time career tries and finished Hong Kong on 260, trailing only Michaela Brake's 287. Brake had her first baby, a son, last month.

Best of the Rest

Estudiantes moves clear: Brian Aguirre scored a second-half goal as Estudiantes moved two points clear at the top of Group A with a 1-0 away win over Instituto in Argentina's Apertura tournament.

The visitors went ahead in the 51st minute when Aguirre cut inside from the left flank and lashed a low 18-yard drive past goalkeeper Manuel Roffo.

The hosts controlled more than 50 percent of possession but could manage only two shots on goal for the match. (Xinhua)

Botafogo eases past Chapecoense: Edenilson and Matheus Martins scored two goals each as Botafogo cruised to a 4-1 away win over Chapecoense in Brazil's Serie A.

Edenilson struck either side of Martins' 14th-minute strike before Marcinho pulled a goal back for the hosts with a long-range effort into the top-right corner.

Martins restored his team's three-goal advantage when he combined with Joaquin Correa before drilling a low shot past goalkeeper Rafael Santos. "There's a lot we can take from this," Botafogo manager Franclim Carvalho told a post-match news conference. (Xinhua)



Atlanta Hawks' Dyson Daniels, left, fights for control of the ball with New York Knicks' Jalen Brunson during the second half in Game 1 of a first-round NBA playoffs basketball series in New York. (AP)



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Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh plays a shot during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals in Kolkata, India. Kolkata Knight Riders won for the first time this season in the Indian Premier League as Rinku Singh and Anukul Roy led their team to a four-wicket victory over Rajasthan Royals. Singh scored 53 not out off 34 balls and Roy hit an undefeated 29 off 16 deliveries. (AP)

Sports

Kuwait Club storms into Challenge League semis

Al Shabab fightback falls short

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

BISHKEK, April 19: Kuwait Club secured its place in the AFC Challenge League semifinals after a dramatic 5-3 victory over Oman's Al Shabab in the quarter-finals at Dolen Omurzakov Stadium in Bishkek.

Goals for Kuwait Club came from Khaled Walaywa (34, own goal), Taha Yassine Khenissi (39), Amro Abdel Fattah (48), Mohammed Marhoon (63), and Faisal Zaid (90), while Al Shabab responded through Mohammed Al Ghafri (72) and a brace from Kenan Maliko (75, 88).

Kuwait Club dominated the first half, controlling possession and limiting Al Shabab's attacking threat, while regularly testing Omani goalkeeper Ibrahim Al Mukhaini. The Omani side depended on counterattacks, which failed to trouble the Kuwaiti defence.

The breakthrough came in the 34th minute when Marhoon's cross was deflected into his own net by a defender. Khenissi then doubled the lead seven minutes later with a composed finish following a move involving Mohammed Daham.

Kuwait Club extended its advantage early in the second half to go 4-0 up, before coach Nebojša Jovović made changes, introducing Idrissa Doumbia and Youssef Nasser.

But after easing off, Kuwait Club allowed Al Shabab back into the game, with the Omani side scoring twice in quick succession to reduce the deficit and spark a tense finish.

A late error from substitute Doumbia further boosted Al Shabab's hopes, before Faisal Zaid sealed the win in style, scoring a spectacular bicycle kick in the closing stages to confirm Kuwait's semi-final qualification.



Kuwait Club players celebrate after advancing to Challenge League semifinals.

Qatar's Al-Mahmoud takes silver

Perfect run delivers gold for Al-Kharafi at FEI Group 7 Championships in Doha



Winners display their trophies on the podium.

DOHA, April 19, (KUNA): Kuwaiti rider Hussein Al-Kharafi claimed top honors, winning the Individual Youth category at the FEI Group 7 Championships in Doha.

Riding his horse Reeve, Al-Kharafi delivered a flawless round, completing the course with zero penalty points in a time of 65.87 seconds to secure the gold medal amid strong regional competition featuring more than 100 riders.

Qatari riders completed the podium, with Ibrahim Al-Mahmoud taking silver on Dorferheide after finishing in 52.34 seconds with four penalty points, while Abdul-

lah Al-Jalandani earned bronze aboard Cavallinia in 55.46 seconds, also with four penalties.

The prestigious competition, which began on Wednesday, carried a total prize fund of €318,000 (around \$375,000) and served as a key regional platform for emerging talent under the supervision of the International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI).

Earlier, Kuwait's junior equestrian team secured a podium finish, claiming third place in the team finals.

Competing at the prestigious Al Shaqab Longines Arena in Doha, the Kuwaiti riders delivered a composed performance on

a demanding technical course, confirming their status among the region's top emerging talents.

The United Arab Emirates claimed the gold medal, while Saudi Arabia finished second. Kuwait's third-place result came through the efforts of Mohammad Al-Mulaifi, Ghazi Al-Faleej, and Moudhi Al-Jabri.

Team coach Ali Al-Kharafi praised the riders in remarks to KUNA, highlighting the high level of competition and the strong international participation. He described the result as an important boost for the team as they look to build momentum in upcoming regional and international events.

Matarazzo celebrates maiden title

Sociedad shows nerves of steel to win Copa; shootout heartbreak for Atletico



Real Sociedad's team players celebrate with the trophy after the Copa del Rey final soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Real Sociedad in Seville, Spain. (AP)

SEVILLE, Spain, April 19, (AP): Real Sociedad beat Atletico Madrid on penalties to win the Copa del Rey title, giving American coach Pellegrino Matarazzo his first career title after he moved to Spain this season.

After the game finished 2-2 following extra time, Sociedad goalkeeper Unai Marrero saved shots by Alexander Sorloth and Julián Álvarez and Pablo Marín converted the last kick to clinch the shootout 4-3.

Sociedad needed 14 seconds and just three players to touch the ball directly after kickoff to take the lead through Ander Barrenetxea.

Ademola Lookman equalized for Diego Simeone's side with a goal in the 19th minute, but a penalty by goalkeeper Juan Musso allowed Mikel Oyarzabal to restore Sociedad's advantage in first-half injury time.

Álvarez stroked a shot into the right corner to make it 2-2 in the 83rd.

The New Jersey-born Matarazzo took over Sociedad in December when it was two points above the relegation zone in the Spanish league. Four months later, the Basque Country club has won the cup and is in the upper half of the La Liga table.

Atletico will now turn its focus to the Champions League semifinal against Arsenal starting later this month.

"We fought back from the 1-0 and 2-1 and had chances to win it. We can only congratulate our rival, which was more clinical at key moments," said Simeone, who after a point-blank miss by Alex Baena in the final minutes went down on his hands and knees with his head briefly pressed to the turf.

Opta Statistics said Barrenetxea's goal was the fastest ever in a Spanish cup final.

The opening goal against Atletico's vaunted defense was about as simple as they come: ball to goalkeeper, long ball down the right flank, where Gonçalo Guedes was free to send in a cross for Ander Barrenetxea to head it home.

The sequence exposed a series of less-than-ideal defending. Neither Nahuel Molina nor Giuliano Simeone intercepted reachable balls; Matteo Ruggeri let the shorter Barrenetxea outjump him for the header; and goalkeeper Juan Musso perhaps could have made a more sprightly effort to stop the shot from bouncing past.

Lookman again proved the most-impactful winter signing by a Spanish side - his goal was his seventh for Atletico - when the former Atalanta forward received a pass from Antoine Griezmann just inside the area and sent a left-footed shot inside the post.

Oyarzabal went to the spot after Musso slammed into Guedes while disputing a high ball in the box. Oyarzabal lived up to his reputation as a penalty expert, slotting his try home. The Spain striker also scored a penalty for the only goal in the 2020 cup final against Athletic Bilbao.

Sociedad was in control and only minutes away from the title when Atletico finally mounted a good team move to unsettle Sociedad's defense for the first time and set up Álvarez in the second half.

Musso made up for his earlier mistakes by making back-to-back saves in extra time. And Álvarez went close to netting a winner when he hit the woodwork in the 100th. Otherwise, Atletico created several chances it couldn't finish off to get the title-clinching goal.

Then it was Marrero's turn to shine as he guessed right on the first two penalties by Atletico's strikers before Marín fired his shot into the top corner.

Liverpool scores late to beat Everton in derby as Villa and Forest grab key wins

MANCHESTER, England, April 19, (AP): Virgil van Dijk headed home a dramatic winner in the 10th minute of stoppage time to earn Liverpool a 2-1 victory at Everton in a Merseyside derby featuring a record-tying goal from Mohamed Salah.

Salah, who is leaving Liverpool at the end of the season after nine trophy-filled seasons, marked his final derby by slotting in a low finish in the 29th minute. His ninth Merseyside derby goal drew him even with Liverpool great Steven Gerrard for the most in the Premier League era (since 1992).

It was Liverpool's other stalwart,

Van Dijk, who sealed the win by turning in a corner by Dominik Szoboszlai.

There was so much stoppage time because Liverpool goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili was forced off on a stretcher after sustaining an injury attempting in vain to save a 54th-minute shot by Beto that brought Everton level.

Liverpool moved seven points clear of sixth-place Chelsea in the race for Champions League qualification, with the top five assured of a berth in Europe's top competition next season.

A win for Everton in the first derby at its new stadium at Bramley-Moore

Dock would have lifted the team just two points behind Liverpool.

Aston Villa consolidated its spot among the Champions League qualification places by beating Sunderland 4-3 thanks to a stoppage-time winner from Tammy Abraham.

Villa stayed in fourth place, behind Manchester United on goal difference, but moved 10 points ahead of sixth-place Chelsea with five rounds remaining.

Ollie Watkins scored a first-half double and also set up Morgan Rogers for Villa's other goal against Sunderland, which briefly equalized through Chris Rigg to make it 1-1 and then

scored in the 86th and 87th minutes via Trai Hume and Wilson Isidor, respectively.

Morgan Gibbs-White scored a second-half hat trick as Nottingham Forest rallied to beat Burnley 4-1 and further boost its survival hopes.

Forest moved five points clear of third-to-last Tottenham in the relegation zone, while next-to-last Burnley slipped closer to the drop to the Championship.

Igor Jesus scored a late fourth for Forest, which fell behind to Zian Flemming's goal in first-half stoppage time. Tottenham remains rooted inside the

relegation zone. Chelsea is stuck outside the Champions League spots.

It was a disappointing for the two London giants in the Premier League, starting with Tottenham conceding an equalizer deep into stoppage time to draw 2-2 with Brighton.

That kept Spurs, ever-presents in England's top flight since 1978, in third-to-last place and in grave danger of relegation with five games left.

Chelsea then lost 1-0 at home to Manchester United in a showdown between teams fighting for a place in the top five and therefore Champions League qualification. Matheus Cunha

scored the only goal.

While United strengthened its grip on third place, Chelsea stayed in sixth and is looking increasingly unlikely to get back into Europe's top competition next season. That would be a huge financial blow to Chelsea's American ownership which has spent heavily to build an underperforming playing squad.

Tottenham is still without a win in the Premier League in 2026 - a stretch of 15 matches. That's a remarkable run for one of the country's so-called "Big Six" which played in the Champions League this season as the reigning Europa League winner.