

Kuwait praises UAE's vigilance in thwarting threat to national unity

Authorities dismantle Iran-linked terror group recruiting Emirati youth

KUWAIT CITY, April 20, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait praised the efficiency and vigilance of the security authorities in the United Arab Emirates in dismantling a terrorist organization and arresting its members, who were involved in activities aimed at undermining national unity and destabilizing security.

In a statement on Monday, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated Kuwait's total rejection of all forms of terrorism and extremism, and its condemnation of anyone who stands behind or supports such acts. It also affirmed Kuwait's full solidarity with the UAE and support for all measures taken to preserve its security, stability, and safeguard its sovereignty. The UAE State Security Service on Monday arrested a terrorist cell over involvement in covert activities aimed at undermining national unity and destabilizing the country through plans to carry out coordinated terrorist and sabotage acts,

with investigations revealing links to Iran. According to the Emirates News Agency, investigations showed that members of the group adopted extremist ideologies threatening internal security and carried out recruitment operations through secret meetings as part of a coordinated plan with external entities to access sensitive positions. Monitoring and investigations uncovered that members held clandestine

Continued on Page 6

Opinion

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

Globally, debtors do not get imprisoned, the loss falls on the creditor

THE government of Saudi Arabia implemented the new enforcement system based on the foundational principle of compassion. It is meticulously designed to maintain family cohesion and prevent societal fracture.

This initiative is a significant leap toward institutional justice, recognizing that punitive measures often catalyze social instability and erode fundamental rights.

It is widely acknowledged within the legal and economic circles that the incarceration of individuals in commercial or civil cases only exacerbates the financial crises rather than finding a viable resolution.

Restricting a debtor's freedom severs the very financial channels required for debt repayment, initiating a detrimental cycle of increased litigation and protracted prison terms, particularly for insufficient funds cases.

This reality necessitates a multifaceted strategy from national executive leaders.

In line with this vision, the Saudi government and several Gulf counterparts prioritized modernizing work mechanisms to establish a balanced framework that secures the rights of both the creditors and debtors, while serving public interest.

By institutionalizing the separation of the debtor as a person from his tangible assets, the new system eliminates physical punishment in civil cases, balancing enforcement and human rights.

The regulatory framework mandates the comprehensive asset disclosure for liq-

uidation, easing the restoration of rights through data-driven procedures without the need for deprivation of liberty.

Furthermore, the inclusion of 'reverse enforcement' mechanisms enhances transparency and governance, empowering debtors to seek legal recourse against any procedural irregularities during the asset seizure process.

In a development contrasting with global trends, the Kuwaiti Cabinet recently reauthorized the issuance of arrest warrants and intensified travel restrictions, implemented through case-by-case judicial reviews.

This approach resulted in indefinite travel bans, as exemplified by the historic 'Al-Manakh Stock Exchange' disputes, which have been affecting individuals for decades.

Remarkably, these restrictions persisted for nearly 40 years in some instances, even extending their legal repercussions to the

Continued on Page 6

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Photo by Rezk Tawfik
Kuwait wakes under a leaden Monday sky, where fits of drizzle dampen the roads and commuters inch toward the capital, as the Liberation Tower stands resolute against a smothering, overcast skyline.

Units fully prepared for severe weather scenarios

KFF locks in emergency mode nationwide

By Munif Naif
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Director of the Public Relations and Media Department at the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) Brigadier General Mohammad Al-Gharib disclosed that KFF raised its alert level to the maximum.

In a statement to the newspaper, Al-Gharib confirmed that all fire stations have been mobilized and are fully prepared to deal with various emergencies and reports in a speedy and precise manner, particularly in terms of the unstable weather conditions. He said the firefighting units laid down plans specifically for such weather conditions.

He added that operational capacity has been boosted through the deployment of more personnel, specialized vehicles and essential hardware to ensure immediate intervention and response to incoming calls. He revealed that field patrols have also been ramped up to monitor vital locations and areas vulnerable to flooding.

He stated that KFF maintains constant communication with the concerned agencies to track weather patterns and implement safety protocols to protect lives and properties, and minimize risks.

He affirmed that fire stations are active 24/7, efficiently dealing with reports through the Central Operations Center hotline number 112. He advised the public to remain vigilant during this time.

War shock rekindles Kuwait debate over privatization law

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: With the war that erupted in the region on February 28, and whose repercussions continue to unfold in the political and economic landscape day after day, and with its increasing economic impact on most countries of the world, especially the Gulf states, the old-new questions resurfaces - Does Kuwait need, more than ever, to activate its privatization law to alleviate its budget deficit in the coming years? What are the benefits of privatization for the Kuwaiti economy? Does the local private sector have the financial capacity to undertake the tasks it would manage on behalf of the state?



Al-Khashnam



Al-Kandari



Al-Shatti

experts, who believe that Kuwait currently needs to activate privatization more than ever before.

Economic expert Ahmed Al-Khashnam called for the activation of the privatization law after the end of the war the region is witnessing between the US-Israel and Iran, which has entered its seventh week.

He highlighted that the war has disrupted Kuwaiti oil exports, which will inevitably affect the current state budget, leading to losses amounting to billions of dinars.

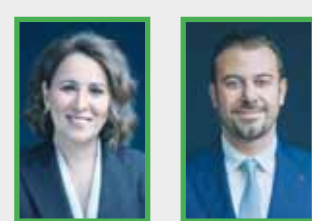
Al-Khashnam explained that privatization would be a lifeline for the Kuwaiti economy in the future, reducing dependence on oil as a primary resource, which currently accounts for over 95 percent of national income. If the war were to continue for nearly a year, it would not only affect the state budget but also Kuwaiti society as a whole, given that salaries depend on oil revenues. A prolonged war would lead to higher inflation rates.

Implementing privatization mechanisms would benefit the Kuwaiti economy in several key ways

- By contributing to the diversification of income sources
- By resolving a significant part of the employment challenge.
- By attracting more foreign capital to the Kuwaiti market
- By reducing a substantial portion of the financial burden on the state budget.
- By reducing bureaucracy that hinders the growth of the national economy.

Al-Khashnam also noted that privatizing housing, for example, would

Continued on Page 6



8 KIPCO picks veteran Chami as Group Chief Financial Officer



8 Commercial Real Estate Co. AGM approves 3% cash dividend and 3% bonus shares



9 ABK announces Alfouz account's deferred draw winners

'Reform' urged to unlock SMEs economic power

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Abdulaziz Al-Humaidhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Economic Society, affirmed that despite the increasing importance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as drivers of economic growth and diversification amid current economic challenges, their actual contribution remains below expectations despite their large number.

Speaking to the daily, Al-Humaidhi stated that recent financing facilities represent a positive step but require a comprehensive reform framework to have a real economic impact.

He explained that 99 percent of Kuwaiti companies fall under the category of SMEs, yet their contribution to GDP does not exceed 3 percent. This sector represents 22 percent of GDP in Saudi Arabia and 53 percent in the UAE. The global average for the SME sector is 45 percent, indicating a significant development gap that requires urgent strategic intervention.

Achieving the true impact of this sector requires three essential conditions - comprehensive legislative reform, essential financing based on

Continued on Page 6



KUNA photo
Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Al-Sabah chairs the third coordination meeting of the National Standing Committee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Kuwait anchors reform agenda in human rights commitments

KUWAIT CITY, April 20, (KUNA): Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights, Ambassador Sheikh Jawaher Al-Sabah, affirmed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' commitment to developing visions aimed at consolidating Kuwait's international standing.

This commitment reflects Kuwait's obligations under the voluntary pledges it made during its membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2024-2026, and its intention to run for

Continued on Page 6

Classrooms 'quiz-free' zone

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Ministry of Education announced that, given the ongoing situation in Kuwait and the commitment to ensuring a stable and effective learning environment, it has decided to implement a new achievement assessment system, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press release issued on Sunday, the ministry explained that the system will be based on a flexible mechanism that prioritizes students' best interests and supports their academic progress without compromising educational quality standards. It will cover all grade levels.

Continued on Page 6



Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:54 Asr 15:22
 Sunrise .. 05:17 Maghrib .. 18:17
 Zohr 11:47 Isha 19:38

KFAS names winners of 36th Jaber Al-Ahmad Award for Young Researchers '25

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) announced the winners of the 36th edition of the Jaber Al-Ahmad Award for Young Researchers for 2025.

According to a press release issued by KFAS, the award is granted annually to Kuwaiti researchers holding a PhD in recognition of their outstanding scientific contributions in their respective fields.

This year, the award was granted in four fields. In the field of Engineering Sciences, the award was granted to Dr. Yousef Saad Al-Qahim, a research scientist at the Petroleum Research Center of the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research. He holds a PhD from Newcastle University in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Al-Qahim received the award in recognition of his research efforts in developing applied engineering solutions that serve the oil and gas sectors.

In the field of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the award was granted to Professor Dr. Yousef Abdullah Al-Khazi, Head of the Mathematics Department at the College of Basic Education in Public Authority for Ap-



Dr. Yousef Al-Qahim



Dr. Hussein Behbehani



Dr. Aisha Al-Azmi



Dr. Yousef Al-Khazi

plied Education and Training (PAAET). He holds a PhD from the University of Texas at Arlington in the United States.

Dr. Al-Khazi received the award in recognition of his scientific contributions and pioneering research in mathematics and the development of the educational process.

In the field of Social Sciences and Humanities, the

award was granted to Dr. Aisha Ahmad Al-Azmi, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the College of Education in Kuwait University. She holds a PhD from Virginia Tech in the United States.

Dr. Al-Azmi received the award in recognition of her research contributions to developing educational policies and enhancing the efficiency of educational sys-

tems.

In the field of Life Sciences, the award was granted to Professor Dr. Hussein Mahdi Behbehani, Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at the College of Science in Kuwait University. He holds a PhD from the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Behbehani received the award in recognition of his outstanding scientific contributions and research in the field of life sciences.

KFAS congratulates the winners and wishes them continued excellence and success. It affirmed its commitment to supporting Kuwaiti researchers and encouraging them to pursue their scientific careers in service of society and in contributing to sustainable development.

It is worth noting that the Jaber Al-Ahmad Award for Young Researchers was established in 1988, based on an initiative by the late Amir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to honor young Kuwaiti scientists and encourage them to excel in various scientific research fields.

New conditions for commercial license

'Declare beneficiary owner or face hefty fines'

By Marwa Al-Bahawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) issued a decision amending some provisions of Ministerial Resolution No. 4/2023 concerning procedures for identifying the beneficial owner.

The amendment stipulates that no commercial license may be granted or renewed unless the requirements for disclosing the beneficial owner are met. Fines ranging from KD 1,000 to KD 10,000 will be imposed for each violation.

The Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry, Marwa Al-Jaidan, confirmed that the decision to suspend the implementation of Ministerial Resolu-



Al-Jaidan

tion No. 10/2026, regarding regulations for organizing restaurant delivery orders, came within the framework of reorganizing procedures related to the application of the regulations, in addition to the incomplete electronic system designated for their implementation.

She stressed that the current suspension is temporary, and the decision will be reinstated after the completion of the electronic system and regulatory procedures.

Al-Jaidan explained that the decision was is-

sued without completing all the necessary executive procedures, which would have posed significant implementation challenges for delivery companies and platforms, and created practical difficulties on the ground.

The absence of a comprehensive electronic system would have complicated the ministry's monitoring and follow-up efforts, especially as the regulations did not allow sufficient time for developing such a system.

Setting a deadline of only two months for implementing the decision from its issuance was unrealistic, given the need to establish a comprehensive digital infrastructure and define clear mechanisms for implementing the requirements.

CAPT gives 'go ahead' for two MEWRE tenders worth KD78m

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) settled two tenders for the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy at a total value of KD 78.23 million during its meeting last week.

The first tender pertains to the supply and installation of a 400 KV overhead transmission line extending from the Shagaya solar power plant to the Wafra (Z) main substation.

The tender was awarded to the company offering the lowest price that met all the required terms and specifications, for a total value of KD 35.962 million. This project is part of the ministry's plans to support clean energy projects.

The new transmission line will contribute to the efficient transfer of power generated from the Shagaya solar power plant, while also enhancing the reliability of the electrical grid and increasing

its capacity to accommodate growing demand.

The project is expected to be implemented in accordance with the latest international technical standards for high-voltage overhead transmission lines, including the use of advanced technologies that ensure safety, operational efficiency, and sustainability, as well as compliance with approved environmental requirements.

Meanwhile, CAPT awarded the second tender for the construction, completion, maintenance, and development of the water distribution complex in Hawally, including all associated works, to the consortium with the lowest bid that met the requirements, for a total value of KD 42.268 million.

The project aims to improve the efficiency of the water distribution system in Hawally Governorate by upgrading existing facilities and increasing their operational capacity to keep pace with Kuwait's urban and population growth.

Co-ops have started 'general assemblies'

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Cooperative societies have resumed organizing their general assemblies to complete financial and administrative procedures, enable shareholders to discuss financial and administrative reports, approve annual budgets and distribute profits.

Some cooperatives have started sending invitations to their shareholders, including Shamiya Cooperative Society, which will hold its general assembly on Tuesday, and Ali Sabah Al-Salem Cooperative Society on Wednesday.

The agenda includes reports of the boards of directors, approval of financial statements and other organizational concerns.

These general assemblies are being held with the approval of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which will regulate such meetings in coordination with the concerned cooperative societies.

Earlier, the ministry contacted the relevant authorities to obtain approval, as it is keen on resuming the general assemblies that were postponed due to the circumstances the country experienced recently.

This is part of a structured plan to gradually resume the general assemblies of all cooperatives to guarantee transparency and activate the role of shareholders in oversight and accountability, as well as maintain the stability of cooperative work and its vital role in serving the community.

Criminal record evidence 'must'

Poll role tied to good demeanour

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Minister of Social, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwaila has issued Ministerial Decision No. 90/2026, which was published in the official gazette 'Kuwait Al-Youm', requiring candidates for membership on the boards of directors of public benefit associations to submit a recent criminal record certificate issued through the Sahel application, reports Al-Seyassah daily.



Dr Al-Huwaila

Article Two stipulates that the submission of a criminal record certificate is a mandatory and renewable requirement in each election for the members of the board of directors.

Article Three states that any candidate who fails to submit a valid criminal record certificate will have their candidacy deemed invalid and will be barred from running, voting, or holding any leadership position on the board until the requirement is fulfilled.

Article Four stipulates that the relevant association is responsible for verifying compliance with this requirement and promptly notifying the ministry of any updates related to the criminal record of any candidate.

Article Five stipulates that the provisions of the decision shall take effect from the date of its publication in the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm," and that all relevant authorities shall be notified and required to implement it.

GM in breach of trust: The Criminal Security Sector referred a Lebanese expatriate to the Public Prosecution for embezzling KD 164,000 from a contracting company where he held the position of General Manager, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources, the legal representative of the general trading and contracting company filed a report at the Maidan Hawally Police Station, accusing the expatriate of breach of trust.

The complainant explained that an audit conducted by a financial and legal auditor revealed significant sums of money missing from the company. The auditor also found fraudulent invoices issued to shell companies, with the general manager's signature appearing on them. The complainant provided the defendant's details.

Upon registering a breach of trust case, it was referred to the Criminal Security Department, which summoned the accused.

Other Voices

When goals to control take shape bit by bit!

By Ahmad alsarraf

Day after day, the picture becomes clearer, and the conviction grows stronger that Israel's ambitions to control, in one way or another, the "biblical" region stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates are not an illusion or a mirage, but a reality.

Everything is currently aligned, in this view, for the realization of Israel's ambitions. The weakness and fragmentation affecting some Arab countries are seen as factors that serve this, along with the strong American support for the policies and demands of Netanyahu's government in a way unprecedented in the history of the two countries.

Israel's expansion at the expense of some Arab countries and the construction of dozens of settlements in occupied territories have been met with silence from the international community. Even Israel's recent incursion into parts of Lebanese territory, along with bulldozing operations and the destruction of dozens of villages in southern Lebanon, has been met with limited condemnation and protest, both at the Arab and international levels.

Palestinian journalist Noura Odeh, a BBC correspondent, stated that the Greater Israel project is not merely a biblical vision or a Zionist dream, but also an ideological concept embraced by early Zionists despite their limited religious observance.

They, according to this view, selectively used biblical texts to advance their vision. Even the Israeli left, historically less supportive of the idea, has become more open to it as prospects for imposing sanctions on Israel diminish.

Due to this international silence, Netanyahu has become convinced

that the time has come to advance this idea. The US Ambassador Huckabee stated that the land of Israel, stretching from the Euphrates to the Nile, is a Jewish right granted by God 3,000 years ago. This declaration strengthened the Israeli government's resolve to pursue its dream on a "now or never" basis.

Daniel Levy, writer for The Guardian and a former Israeli peace negotiator in the Oslo II talks, as well as president of the US/Middle East Project, stated, "This goes beyond mere territorial acquisition to Netanyahu's desire for Israel to become a regional superpower. His objectives in the war are to weaken Iran to the point of collapse. This is not the end of the campaign. The fighting will resume. The complete elimination of Iran paves the way for a Greater Israel and an expansion of the territory Israel claims. This is the approach Israel has followed since its inception, with the displacement of Palestinians recently accelerating dramatically."

Israel has devastated the Gaza Strip and reoccupied it, killing tens of thousands, destroying civilian infrastructure, and confining its population to just 12 percent of an already narrow territory.

What is happening in the West Bank is unprecedented since the Six-Day War of 1967. Israel has expanded its presence in Syria beyond the Golan Heights, which have been annexed. Israel is rebuilding an occupied territory in southern Lebanon, and perhaps annexing it. There are ministerial demands... Seriously, it is expanding all the way to Damascus."

Levi argues that Greater Israel should be viewed as a geopolitical and strategic concept as much as a regional one. Acquiring and controlling territory is the obvious and easier part. Therefore, Netanyahu is seeking to achieve something far more ambitious and complex than mere territorial control, through a hegemonic project built on new alliances and backed by military force.

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MoC to carry out routine repairs at phone exchanges

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Ministry of Communications announced the continuation of routine maintenance work at several telephone exchanges as part of its ongoing plan to develop the telecommunications network infrastructure and enhance its operational efficiency, reports Al-Anba daily.

In a press release, the ministry stated that maintenance work will be carried out according to a schedule covering several exchanges in different areas, as follows:

- Mangaf Exchange - Monday, April 20
- Shuwaikh Exchange - Tuesday, April 21
- Jahra Exchange - Wednesday, April 22
- Kuwait City Exchange - Wednesday, April 22
- Mishref Exchange - Thursday, April 23
- Ardiya Exchange - Sunday, April 26
- Nuzha Exchange - Monday, April 27
- Shuwaikh Exchange - Wednesday, April 29
- Kuwait City Exchange - Wednesday, May 6
- Shuwaikh Exchange - Wednesday, May 13

The ministry clarified that the maintenance work will take place between midnight and 6:00 am, noting that it may result in partial disruption to telecommunications services during those hours.

The ministry affirmed its commitment to carrying out the maintenance work according to the highest technical standards, ensuring improved service quality and continuity.

It also expressed its gratitude and appreciation for the public's cooperation.

10 years in prison, fine, dismissal from his work

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Abdulwahab Al-Muaili, sentenced a military officer assigned at a police station in the Capital Governorate to 10 years in prison with hard labor, fined him KD800, and dismissed him from his post.

The defendant was convicted of fabricating malicious charges against several expatriates in exchange for bribes.

Case details revealed that the accused abused his authority at the police station by orchestrating baseless accusations against the expatriates. He exploited their legal circumstances to obtain financial compensation for easing their deportation or threatening them with deportation, thereby, undermining the integrity of the security sector and the commitment of the nation to achieve institutional excellence.

Misuse of telephone: The Court of Appeals overturned the ruling of the lower court, which abstained from sentencing the defendant in a telephone misuse case and acquitted her, citing lack of elements constituting the crime of threatening.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendant with sending WhatsApp messages to the victim, containing statements that the latter considered threatening, in addition to making a telephone call with the same content.

During the appeal proceedings, lawyer for the defendant, Attorney Mohammad Jaber Baqer, argued that the elements of the crime of threatening were not met. He said the messages were neither serious nor threatening, and did not rise to the level of criminal offense stipulated by law. He also pointed out that the case files lacked conclusive evidence of criminal intent. The court accepted the arguments, stating in its reasoning that the statements attributed to the defendant were general and vague and did not include a threat, thus, negating the elements of the crime. It added that the presented evidence was insufficient for conviction.

It affirmed that the presumption of innocence applies to every person and that any doubt is interpreted in favor of the accused, leading to the annulment of the appealed ruling and the acquittal of the accused.

Using a fire blanket: As part of its awareness campaigns to prevent fire incidents and their consequences, the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) has released a video in which it explains how to use a fire blanket and recommends keeping one in the kitchen area, reports Al-Anba daily.

KFF outlined the correct steps for using a fire blanket, explaining that the tab or strap must be pulled to release the blanket, after which it should be held by the strap, and then placed over the burning area.

It also stressed the importance of closing the gas valve tightly. KFF noted that the ideal location to store a fire blanket is in the kitchen or a nearby area.



Al-Seyassah photo

Chairperson of the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Dr. Rana Al-Fares meets President of the Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association (KAAA) Sabah Al-Jalawi.

Nazaha, KAAA vow anti-graft war

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Chairperson of the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Dr. Rana Al-Fares, Vice Chairperson Dr. Majed Al-Daihani, and members of the Board of Directors held a meeting with the President of the Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association (KAAA) Sabah Al-Jalawi, and board members of the association, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The meeting was aimed to support national efforts to combat corruption and strengthen the principles of financial disclosure.

Nazaha explained that the meeting addressed ways to enhance cooperation between the two sides in developing financial disclosure mechanisms and improving

compliance with professional and ethical standards, thereby contributing to the national integrity system. The role of accountants in establishing financial disclosure principles and activating modern financial oversight tools was also discussed.

Both sides emphasized the importance of integration between professional institutions and regulatory bodies, exchanging expertise, and launching impactful initiatives that help prevent corruption, enhance trust in the institutional environment, and build effective partnerships between different sectors, reflecting Kuwait's commitment to promoting good governance.

diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Public divided ... dissolution boon, ills in society traced

"23 months - this is the period that has elapsed since the dissolution of the National Assembly, which is sufficient for citizens to decide whether to reinstate it after the dissolution period ends in approximately two years." Kuwaiti citizen **Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"After meeting many friends in diwanias and other acquaintances on various occasions, I have heard that most of them wish for the dissolution period to be extended for a similar duration. A few, however, hope for its reinstatement with new faces who will work diligently and sincerely for the country and its people for fulfilling their aspirations.



Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber

"This sentiment stems from their observation that the development process is progressing more rapidly than before, without reports of theft, compromise, or violations of others' rights for the benefit of individuals, which were issues that plagued citizens for many years.

"Among the most significant outcomes that have pleased all Kuwaiti citizens without exception is the revocation of citizenship from those who forged it and the exposure of individuals with fake academic credentials. This has instilled a sense of comfort and reassurance among citizens regarding the future of their children and future generations.

"Praise be to God, who has instilled tranquility in the hearts of Kuwaitis, the people of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and their resident brothers since the beginning of the aggression by the neighboring Muslim country, as it falsely and slanderously claims, with its missiles, drones, and violations of the ceasefire agreement.

"However, the faith of our people in their Lord, followed by the strength of their resolve and will, has enabled them to continue their daily lives normally, without fear or panic.

"His Highness the Amir (May God protect and preserve him) further strengthened the confidence of his people through his noble words and valuable directives to His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister, and his Deputy, who reinforced this confidence by visiting the front lines as well as security and civilian sites to boost morale and encourage the defense of the land and skies against the aggression.

"This reflects the unity and solidarity of Kuwaitis and their steadfast support for their leadership in times of hardship. This has always been our way throughout our lives, praise be to God.

"After hearing the story of the Battle of Dhat al-Salasil as related to me by a friend, I feel that Arabs should name the strait after Khalid ibn al-Walid (May God be pleased with him), even if it is not officially recognized. He is most deserving of this after his victory over his opponent.

"Some people you want to hold close to your heart, and some you want to keep far away. O God, protect Kuwait, its people, and its leadership from all harm and evil."

Also:

"We have an opinion on the negotiations between America and Iran following a war that lasted approximately forty days." Doctor of Law and Kuwaiti lawyer **Dr. Nayef Al-Adwani** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"These negotiations, held in Pakistan and chaired by US Vice President James Vance and Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, indicate that the two sides have reached agreement on 80 percent of the points under discussion.

"The main sticking point is the American side's insistence on transferring more than 400 kilograms of enriched uranium out of Iran. This is considered necessary for Iran to return to being a normal country contributing to the global economy after the lifting of the 3,500 US sanctions imposed on it.

"Furthermore, the United States has successfully imposed an economic blockade on Iranian ports, negatively affecting Tehran's ability to export its oil to customers, particularly China and India, amid current high oil prices. This has created significant pressure on the Iranian government, making it more pragmatic in accepting a return to the negotiating table.

"Perhaps the proposal put forward by Russia to transfer the enriched uranium to its territory offers a glimmer of hope for resolving this dilemma and bringing both sides back to the negotiating table.

"However, the problem lies in Iran's distrust of the United States if its enriched uranium is transferred abroad. Iran fears that the Americans might return to war afterward, and believes that moving the uranium outside its borders would weaken its negotiating position and undermine its sovereignty over its resources.

"Between the devil in the details and this lack of trust, the state of the negotiations remains unclear and uncertain."

"Global supply chains are currently experiencing rapid disruptions, accompanied by a significant increase in transportation and shipping costs as a result of international crises. This makes Ministerial Decision No. 30/2026 a prime example of sound economic management." columnist

Bassam Fahad Thunayan Al-Ghanim wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"The decision does not merely address the symptoms but directly tackles the root causes of the problem, establishing a practical framework that balances market stability, consumer protection, and the sustainability of commercial activity.

"It is important to emphasize that this decision does not involve adding new items to the supply system, as might initially be understood. Rather, it directly supports the additional costs borne by companies importing essential goods to ensure their uninterrupted flow to Kuwait and to prevent these costs from being passed on to final prices in the local market. This reflects a mature economic vision that addresses challenges with a proactive and well-considered approach.

"This approach reflects a deep understanding of the nature of the modern economy, which is no longer purely local but is instead intertwined with complex global fluctuations. Therefore, supporting "access costs" rather than directly intervening in prices is a smart tool that maintains market equilibrium without disrupting its mechanisms. It also ensures that companies can continue to perform their vital role without incurring burdens that could lead to supply disruptions or sudden price increases.

"The decision was accompanied by precise controls to ensure that support is directed to genuinely exceptional cases and that companies commit not to raise prices during the benefit period. This strengthens confidence and confirms that the state is exercising its regulatory and oversight role in an efficient and responsible manner.

"Thus, this decision cannot be viewed in isolation from the state's overall vision of strengthening food security and enhancing economic stability. Rather, it is an extension of a comprehensive approach that prioritizes protecting people and preserving their ability to live with dignity amid global challenges.

"While we commend this approach, we extend our deepest gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Khaled Abdullah Boodai for their sincere efforts in managing the affairs of the country with wisdom and competence, and for making decisions that reflect a high sense of national responsibility and genuine concern for the well-being of citizens and the stability of the nation.

"If this decision reflects an advanced governmental awareness in managing current challenges, then the next phase requires building on this approach by accelerating the adoption of sustainable food security projects, foremost among them the small farms project. This is based on distributing agricultural land in carefully planned areas that achieve economic, social, and national objectives simultaneously.

"Up to 10,000 square meters are allocated for retirees, providing them with a productive source of income and a dignified life after years of service. Nearly 4,000 square meters are granted to young entrepreneurs, supporting agricultural entrepreneurship and stimulating local production. In addition, a model of agricultural housing spanning approximately 3,500 square meters combines residential and productive spaces, contributing to reducing housing demand and achieving a degree of self-sufficiency for Kuwaiti families.

"This approach supports the "New Kuwait 2035" vision and aligns with the commendable efforts of the Minister of State for Development and Sustainability, and the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources Dr. Reem Ghazi Al-Faleej during this crisis. These efforts prioritize initiatives that benefit the nation and its citizens and strengthen Kuwait's stability.

"The importance of these projects extends beyond their economic dimension to their strategic significance. They contribute to enhancing food security and reducing dependence on imports, in addition to their vital role in consolidating human and productive presence in border regions, particularly in the north. This is an extension of a well-established national experience embodied by the Al-Abdali farms since the early 1960s, when they contributed to stabilizing borders and strengthening security and stability. This underscores that agriculture has never been merely an economic activity, but has always been, and remains, a pillar of national sovereignty.

"We ask God Almighty to protect Kuwait, its leadership, and its people, and to perpetuate its blessings of security, safety, and stability. May He bless the efforts of its loyal citizens, and may Kuwait always remain a model of wisdom, moderation, and humanity, as well as an oasis of security and safety, and a land of pride, goodness, and generosity."

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

Municipality lifts 58 'unwanted' cars in streets

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality announced that the Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy Department of the Capital Municipality carried out extensive field tours of residential and industrial areas, aiming to enhance public cleanliness and remove anything that obstructs traffic or causes disorder, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.



Al-Mudayan

Mishari Al-Mudayan, the General

Supervisor of Public Hygiene and Road Occupancy at the Capital Municipality, stated that the tours resulted in the issuance of 78 citations for violations related to cleanliness, road occupancy, and street vending, in addition

to 971 warnings, pledges, and notices, as well as the removal of 58 abandoned vehicles.

The Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality affirmed that field teams from the Public Hygiene Departments are continuing their inspection tours to monitor and remove violations of cleanliness and road occupancy regulations across various governorates.



Farwaniya Governorate photo showing Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah chairs the meeting.

Talk on infrastructure

Service system upgrade focus of panels meeting

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah chaired a meeting of the Services Committee of the Farwaniya Governorate Council on Monday at the Farwaniya Governorate headquarters.

According to a press release issued by the Farwaniya Governorate, the meeting was held with the participation of the committee's chairman and members, as part of ongoing efforts to develop the service system in the governorate.

During the meeting, they reviewed several important items on the agenda, including improving the efficiency of infrastructure and roads, and addressing issues related to residents' demands.

Governor Sheikh Athbi emphasized the importance of integrated roles among the relevant authorities and accelerating the completion of service projects.

He stressed the need to follow up on the implementation of the committee's recommendations and translate them into practical actions on the ground, contributing to meeting the aspirations of citizens and residents and enhancing the efficiency of government performance in Farwaniya Governorate.

The meeting is part of regular sessions that reflect the Farwaniya Governorate Council's commitment to strengthening and activating the role of specialized committees, thereby supporting the development process and reinforcing the principles of institutional work.

Partners compensated in car business dispute

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Commercial Circuit of the Court of First Instance ordered an individual - a partner - to pay KD 44,300 to two other partners in a financial dispute arising from a car trading partnership.

The case concerns a dispute between the parties who had established a car trading partnership. The plaintiffs stated that they had paid for several vehicles on behalf of one of the partners, but he misappropriated the proceeds from their sale without remitting them or settling accounts with the other parties, prompting them to seek legal recourse to claim their rights.

The court explained in its ruling that it relied on the report of the Ministry of Justice's Experts Department, which concluded that the third defendant owed KD 44,300. The debt arose from the plaintiffs having paid for the vehicles in question without receiving the proceeds.

The defendant failed to provide any evidence to prove his innocence or to show that he had remitted the sales proceeds, thus establishing his liability for the awarded amount. The court also rejected requests to return the case for further expert review or to merge it with another case due to lack of relevance, affirming that the documents and technical report were sufficient to form its conviction and adjudicate the dispute.

Lawyer Ali Jawhar, representing the plaintiffs, argued for the establishment of the debt based on the documents and the expert report. He successfully amended the final claims to align with the findings of the technical report, which contributed to resolving the dispute in favor of his clients and confirming their right to the awarded amount.

Real estate deal annulled: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Nayef Al-Mutairat, upheld the ruling of a lower court that annulled a real estate sales agreement.

The ruling mandates the seller to return the KD50,000 deposit to the buyer, indicating that the revocation of the citizenship of the latter is an external factor beyond the control of the contracting parties.

The case involves a citizen who initiated procedures for property acquisition and paid the aforementioned deposit.

During the ownership transfer process, a decree was issued revoking the citizenship of the buyer as per Article Eight of the Nationality Law, an administrative measure that rendered the legal completion of the transaction under the name of the buyer impossible.

However, the seller refused to refund the deposit, so the buyer sought legal recourse through her lawyer, Attorney Mubarak Al-Nuwaibet, to secure her financial entitlements.

The court accepted the arguments for termination of the agreement, emphasizing that the withdrawal of citizenship is an external force preventing the fulfillment of contractual obligations.

Consequently, the lower court ordered the restoration of the parties to their pre-contractual status, a judgment confirmed by the Court of Appeals as final.

Police officer convicted of stealing public funds

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Court of Cassation, presided over by Judge Sultan Bouesli, upheld the suspended two-year prison sentence imposed on a police officer convicted of stealing public funds and properties, reports *Al-Seyassah* daily.

According to the case file, the defendant exploited his position and misappropriated items from the prison warehouse - including two refrigerators and several floor mats, which he illegally sold to the inmates.

Ban to protect litigant privacy

Photos, videos hamper hearings

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The decision of the Supreme Judicial Council to prohibit taking photos and videos inside courtrooms and judicial buildings without written permission from the relevant authorities was taken at the right time.

Courts recently witnessed an increase in indiscriminate filming and the circulation of videos on social media related to pending cases or individuals within the judicial system. This could violate their privacy and affect the legal proceedings.

Legal experts confirmed to the newspaper that the decision is an important step towards restoring order inside the courts, maintaining the integrity of the justice system, preventing external influences on cases being heard, and providing a suitable environment for hearings - away from practices that disrupt sessions or affect the parties involved in the case.

Attorney Enam Haidar affirmed that the decision is a commitment to protect the dignity of litigants, pointing out that courts are not open forums for publication and circulation, as they are places where rights are upheld and privacy is preserved.

She added that some of the published videos were taken out of the legal context and led to premature societal judgments against parties whose cases have yet to be resolved.

Attorney Abdulmohsen Al-Qattan said the decision aims to heighten security in the courts, explaining that unregulated filming could reveal the identities of witnesses or parties involved in the cases, potentially exposing them to pressure or threats.

He stated that ensuring the safety of all participants in the judicial process is essential to achieving justice, and any

violation of this principle must be dealt with firmly.

He pointed out that the ban on filming contributes to reducing the crowd, which might impede the workflow in courts.

He considers the requirement for written permission a progressive step towards regulating media coverage, ensuring balance between the right of the public to know and the need to maintain order in courts.

He clarified that the decision does not eliminate transparency, because such a move shifts the focus from randomness to organization, empowering relevant authorities to assess cases that warrant media documentation. He said this approach aligns with practices in many advanced judicial systems in several countries.

He stressed that the decision boosts public trust in the judiciary by providing a calm and impartial environment, free from external influences that might affect the parties involved in the case or the course of the trial.

He added that preserving the dignity of the judiciary is crucial to upholding the rule of law, as justice cannot be achieved amidst media chaos or pressure resulting from the circulation of fragmented and out-of-context footage.

He asserted that "the decision to ban filming inside the courts is a crucial step towards developing the judicial system, keeping pace with modern changes without compromising legal principles."



Al-Qattan



Haidar



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MoF grants KIA-owned storage firm license to secure national reserves

New facilities aim to curb 20% in logistical waste

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Ministry of Finance, represented by the State Property Administration, granted a license to the Kuwait Storage Company, which is 100 percent owned by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA).

This license grants the company the right to develop and operate storage facilities dedicated to food, pharmaceuticals, and medical supplies, with the possibility of future expansion to include other types of materials.

This step comes within the framework of a clear government direction toward establishing an integrated national storage system geographically distributed across various regions of Kuwait.

It follows prior planning and was preceded by related decisions issued by the Municipal Council during 2023 and 2024.

The Municipal Council had previously approved the allocation of large strategic areas to KIA for use as public storage zones, totaling approximately 2.357 million square meters.

The Ministry of Finance's granting of this license to the Kuwait Storage Company represents a strategic shift in the structure of the Kuwaiti economy, as the country moves from managing traditional supply chains to building a sovereign logistics arm capable of controlling the storage and distribution of essential goods.

This step lays the foundation for a more robust and sustainable food and pharmaceutical security system, aligned with the goals of New Kuwait 2035 vision.

It also establishes an advanced national infrastructure managed according to the highest technical and health standards, ensuring greater efficiency in strategic stock management and reducing losses of essential goods. In addition, it enhances the country's ability to respond swiftly to regional and global crises that could disrupt supply chains.

Furthermore, this initiative paves the way for adopting modern operating models based on digital transformation and the use of smart technologies in inventory management and supply chains.

This step is expected to have a positive impact on the stability of the local market by reducing price volatility and lowering the cost of emergency imports.

Unofficial estimates indicate that im-

proving storage efficiency and inventory management could reduce logistical waste by 10 to 20 percent annually, resulting in savings of tens of millions of dinars.

Strengthening strategic storage capacity could extend Kuwait's food supply coverage beyond its current levels to a more secure range and reduce the risks associated with heavy reliance on imports, which reaches approximately 85 percent for some commodities.

The Kuwait Storage Company represents a pivotal pillar in reshaping the national food security system, not only as an operational tool but also as a long-term sovereign investment that enhances economic stability and gives Kuwait greater resilience in the face of global crises.

This step comes at a highly sensitive time regionally and internationally, as Kuwait relies on imports for up to 85 percent of some food commodities, while the reliance rate in the Gulf countries ranges between 80 and 90 percent. Around 70 percent of these imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, making any disruption a direct threat to food security.

Expanding strategic storage facilities has become a sovereign choice that strengthens the ability to secure long-term reserves, especially given the rising food

subsidy bill in Kuwait, which reached approximately 58.7 million dinars at the beginning of 2026, an increase of 50 percent.

The importance of this step is not limited to its storage aspect but it represents a shift toward achieving "logistical sovereignty" by building an integrated system that combines strategic storage, local production, and smart supply chain management.

Successive and rapid government decisions have contributed to the emergence of a logistical powerhouse, represented by the allocation of strategically important sites with high logistical value, including:

■ Shuwaikh Industrial Area - allocation of 4 plots, the first of which covers 90,000 square meters

■ Mina Abdullah - allocation of 3 sites with a total area of 579,000 square meters

■ Doha Port - allocation of vacant land with an area of 554,000 square meters

■ Shadadiya Port - allocation of vacant land with an area of 1.119 million square meters

■ Allocation of an area surrounding Kuwait International Airport of no less than 15,000 square meters

■ Establishment of seven new supply centers in various governorates

■ Allocation of plots for food production projects in Wafra, Abdali, and Sulaiyiba

Fair evaluation

Oral exams set for KU mathematics courses

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Department of Mathematics at the College of Science in Kuwait University issued a circular on oral examinations as part of its efforts to regulate assessment mechanisms for the 2025/2026 academic year.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the circular addressed to the faculty members and support staff, stating that the Department of Mathematics Council, in its sixth meeting on April 15, recommended allowing oral examinations for all courses at the discretion of the faculty member.

According to the recommendation, if the oral examination is approved, it must be administered to all students in the section to ensure academic fairness and equal opportunities for all students.

It added that the semester exam grade should be calculated based on the average of the written and oral exams scores to guarantee a more comprehensive assessment of the academic performance of the students.

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.

MPW advances volunteer work center project in Dasman

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Ministry of Public Works intends to implement a project that includes the construction and maintenance of the Volunteer Work Center.

Recently, the ministry obtained approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to invite registered

companies interested in the construction contract to bid for the project.

However, in its meeting last Wednesday, the agency decided to postpone the issuance of its decision. It is waiting for a formal update from the ministry, incorporating the discussed revisions, expected within 10 days.

This request marks a significant advancement for the project, which has been part of the long-term objectives of the ministry for several years. Once the tender is released,

the agency will specify the deadlines for bid submission and opening.

The ministry will then evaluate the bids and present a technical recommendation, ensuring the contract is awarded to the bidder that meets the specifications.

The Construction Projects Sector in the ministry will manage the center, which will be established on an area measuring 6,084 square meters in the eastern part of Dasman Complex.

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PAAET photo
A joint meeting at the headquarters of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training in the presence of its Director Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam and the Secretary-General of the National Council, Dr. Mohammed Al-Jassar, along with a number of leaders and officials from both sides.

Committee stresses readiness

PAAET reviews education plans, affirms online exams continuity

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Executive Committee at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) held a meeting on Sunday, chaired by Director General Dr. Hassan Al-Fajjam, with Deputy Director General Dr. Meshaal Al-Mansouri and the college deans and institute directors in attendance.

The meeting is in line with the commitment of PAAET to continuously monitor the educational and training procedures and ensure its readiness to deal with various developments and current circumstances.

They tackled several academic and organizational topics, such as developing the educational and training systems, improving institutional performance, and raising the quality of graduates as per the demands of the labor market.

They also deliberated on updates in the educational process, while affirming the continuation of distance learning and

conducting exams online. This decision was made in light of the current situation to guarantee the continuity of education and maintain the quality of educational outcomes.

All those present at the meeting agreed that ensuring student safety and security is a top priority that cannot be compromised.

In a related development, PAAET reaffirmed its commitment to work as per the well-studied plans that guarantee the achievement of educational and training objectives according to the highest standards of quality and excellence.

This includes strengthening integration among various sectors at PAAET to support efforts to improve institutional performance and educational services.

It clarified that updates or changes are announced immediately through its official channels. It urged the students to follow these channels regularly and obtain information only from official sources to curb the spread of rumors or inaccurate information.

MoE compiles non-teaching staff requirements for new fiscal year

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Ministry of Education is currently compiling its staffing requirements for non-teaching positions for the new fiscal year, based on job grades approved by the Ministry of Finance, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to educational sources, the Ministry of Education has instructed its departments to assess their actual workforce needs and submit reports detailing the current occupancy of each position. The Human Resources Department will automatically input staffing requirements into the integrated civil service systems starting at the beginning of the new fiscal year this month. Job requests will be categorized by type and number of positions required, for both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti men and women, along with required qualifications and justifications.

If any department submits requests under the "contracts - expertise" category for non-Kuwaiti candidates, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) will nominate qualified

Kuwaitis for these roles, provided there are Kuwaiti applicants registered in the central employment system with matching academic specializations. Priority will be given to appointing qualified Kuwaiti nationals registered on the waiting list.

These needs do not include supervisory positions, which are filled through career advancement. The requested positions will be classified in accordance with CSC's regulations and their required qualifications.

For positions that cannot be filled on a gender-specific basis, the requesting entity will be consulted.

The sources affirmed the ministry's full commitment to its Kuwaitization policy, which has achieved significant progress, reaching about 95 percent in administrative positions and 72 percent in teaching positions.

They revealed that most teaching posts are now held by Kuwaiti teachers, compared to 28 percent held by non-Kuwaitis in rare specializations, according to last year's statistics.



Photo by Rezk Tawfiq

The Municipal Council, chaired by Abdullah Al-Mahri, during its regular session on Monday.

Council greenlights major utility and transit projects

New standards set for recycled materials

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Municipal Council approved several regulatory and service-related projects and requests in its regular session chaired by Abdullah Al-Mahri on Monday.

The following were approved during the session:

■ Request of the Ministry of Finance to expand and develop the bus station of Kuwait Public Transport Company (KPTC) on the main road near Adhami station,

■ Letter of the Tourism Projects Company (TEC) about the amendment of the decision of the council on the Al-Egaila Beach development project ('Beach Seven'), including the addition of a technical condition for the investor to submit a detailed traffic study approved by the General Traffic Department (GTD),

■ Request of the Public Authority for Sports to allocate an alternative site for the Kuwait National Shooting Club,

ing Club,

■ Request of the Ministry of Public Work to allocate a route for two sewage lines from the new Jahra pumping station to the North Kabad station,

■ Request of the Construction Department at the Kuwait Municipality to adopt the study on breakwaters in blocks Six and Seven in Messilah,

■ Request of the Ministry of Public Works to allocate the site of the Center for the Prophet's Biography and Hadith Studies in Block Six, Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for a wastewater treatment plant.

The council also adopted the recommendations presented at the coordination meeting on the minutes of the first workshop of the Environment Committee regarding the specifications and uses of recycled materials, such as holding initial coordination meetings to translate the recommendations into actionable procedures in cooperation with the relevant authorities.

Another important recommendation is the formation of the National Specifications Committee, chaired by the Municipality with 12 gov-

ernmental and academic bodies as members. This committee will be in charge of preparing unified technical specifications for recycled materials, issuing an updated national guide, developing supportive legislative and regulatory frameworks, establishing a quality assurance monitoring system, and supporting scientific and technological researches in the field of recycling.

Meanwhile, the council referred to the Capital Governorate Committee a letter from member Dr. Hassan Kamal, who heads the committee, requesting that a special item in the proposed traffic management plan for Sulaibikhat Cemetery should be added to the agenda of the council.

Moreover, member Abdullah Al-Hathal Al-Enezi accepted the response of the Municipality to his question about the request of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs to allocate a site for the Quran Memorization Center and parking spaces in Fintas (Block 17 - Sector 2).

The council approved this request in its 14th session, before the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs expressed his objection, citing the need for further study.

Kuwait and UK plan to deepen aviation co-op

KUWAIT CITY, April 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's aviation regulator chief Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Sabah held talks on Monday with British ambassador to Kuwait Qudsi Rasheed, focusing on efforts to ratchet up cooperation in the aviation industry.

The talks looked into plans to propel Kuwait's aviation ties with London to greater levels, the Public Authority for Civil Aviation said in a statement, citing such initiatives as instrumental in keeping growth in the aviation industry on an upward trajectory, it added.



Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Kuwait Civil Aviation Authority chief



Qudsi Rasheed, British Ambassador to Kuwait



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For first-time registration please contact TLQX@Chevron.com - BHSJ@Chevron.com for support and guidance.

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	IBAN: SA2620000003100019949901
	IN SAUDI RIYAL

The start date for the following Tenders will be on Tuesday, 21 APR 2026 and closing date will be on Tuesday, 19 MAY 2026 @ 09:00 A.M.

S. NO.	TENDER NO.	MATERIALS CLOSING DATE	FEES (KD)	CLOSING DATE
1	052779	Metal Plates (30 Lines), 2.2-2.7x8—12.2m, Any Reputed MFR, Mina Al Zour, WJ104	50	19/5/2026
2	052880	Pressure Gauges (4 Lines, 0-600/1000/3000 PSI), Ashcroft — Wafra GEN Stock	15	19/5/2026
3	052883	'24" Gate Valves (16 Nos, Approved MFR) — MGC Water Line Project, Wafra	15	19/5/2026
4	052886	Gate & Ball Valves: 3 Line Items (20", 16", 12"), Approved MFR — MP-1086, Wafra	15	19/5/2026
5	052890	Drain Sump Pumps Supply, 1 Line Item (Approved (MFR) — MP-1086 MGC, Wafra	50	19/5/2026
6	052892	Gate Valves Supply: 2 Items (20", 4"), Approved MFR — MGC Water Line, Wafra	5	19/5/2026



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Education and welfare care across 16 nations

Zakat Al-Othman supports 1,539 orphans

KUWAIT CITY, April 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's Zakat Al-Othman Committee, affiliated with Kuwait's Al-Najat Charity Society, announced the continuation of its sustainable sponsorship program, currently supporting 1,539 orphans across 16 countries, including Kuwait, Palestine, Yemen, Egypt, Turkiye, and Albania.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Monday,

Zakat Al-Othman Director Emad Al-Mutawa said orphan sponsorship is one of the committee's most vital sustainable projects, as it directly provides orphans with educational, health, and living needs, along with psychological and social support.

Al-Mutawa affirmed that Zakat Al-Othman is committed to offering continuous care, including clothing, Eid gifts, and food bas-

kets on various occasions, to bring joy to the orphans and strengthen their sense of stability.

He emphasized that the sponsorship program goes beyond financial aid, providing a comprehensive system of educational, health, social, and psychological care to help raise the orphans properly and empower them to become active members of their communities.



Zakat Al-Othman photo
The Al-Othman Zakat Committee announces the continuation of its efforts within sustainable care programs by sponsoring 1,539 orphans in 16 countries.

Kuwait condemns attack on UNIFIL

KUWAIT CITY, April 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's Foreign Ministry condemned Sunday the attack on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) which killed a French peacekeeper and injured others in south Lebanon yesterday.

In a statement, the Ministry said that this is a violation of international law and Security Council Resolution No. 1701.

The Foreign Ministry underlined holding those responsible for this attack accountable, and renewed its full support to UNIFIL in safekeeping Lebanese stability. The Ministry condoled France and wished those injured a speedy recovery.

Kuwait backs 'Peace Board' mandate for Gaza transition

Two-State Solution, reunification reaffirmed

BRUSSELS, April 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium and Head of Mission to the European Union and NATO Nawaf Al-Enezi affirmed Monday Kuwait's support for implementing the mandate of the "Peace Board" as a transitional body within the comprehensive plan to end the conflict in Gaza, as adopted by UN Security Council Resolution 2803.

Speaking at the ninth meeting of the Global Alliance for the Two-State Solution in Brussels, Al-Enezi stressed the need to implement the resolution within the framework of all relevant UN Security Council resolutions, describing them as the legal basis for achieving peace.

The meeting was attended by international and European officials, notably EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas and Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa.

Al-Enezi said the Palestinian cause remains at the forefront of Kuwait's foreign policy priorities despite the



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium and Head of its Mission to the European Union and NATO, Nawaf Al-Enezi, during his attendance at the meeting.

challenges facing the country and the fast-moving developments in the region, reaffirming Kuwait's commitment to supporting the Palestinian people and pursuing a just and comprehensive peace.

He underlined the importance of a multilateral international role in supporting implementation of the two-state solution and called for adherence to the provisions of the "New York Declaration" to help end the conflict in Gaza and achieve a just and lasting peace.

He reaffirmed Kuwait's support for the Palestinian government, stressing the need to enable it to fully assume responsibilities across all occupied Palestinian territories, including Gaza,

and pursue reunification with the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Al-Enezi underscored the importance of establishing an international coordination mechanism for reconstruction, allowing countries to contribute based on expertise and capabilities, ensuring efficiency and timely response to Palestinian needs, while affirming Kuwait's commitment as active partner.

He renewed Kuwait's strong condemnation of Israeli occupation forces' actions in Gaza, resulting in around 70,000 deaths and over 170,000 injuries, mostly women and children, while thanking Belgium and the European Union for hosting.

20,000 benefit from Kuwait-backed projects.

Namaa opens 10 wells, 5 mosques in Benin

KUWAIT CITY, April 20, (KUNA): Kuwait's Namaa Charity, affiliated with the Social Reform Society (SRS), announced the opening of 10 water wells and 5 mosques in the Republic of Benin, benefiting more than 20,000 people.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Sunday, Deputy Executive President of Namaa Charity Abdulaziz Al-Kandari said the projects were implemented after careful field studies to ensure aid reaches the most deprived areas and achieves sustainable humanitarian and developmental impact.

The wells provide a vital lifeline for thousands of families who previously suffered from a lack of clean water and had to travel long distances daily, he explained.

The projects directly improve public health and preserve human dignity, Al-Kandari added.

Namaa prioritizes building mosques in underserved areas to serve as religious and social beacons for local communities, he mentioned.

He emphasized that Kuwaiti charitable work continues its humanitarian mission worldwide, supported by generous donors, reflecting Kuwait's bright image and pioneering role in helping those in need.



Namaa Charity photos
The projects contribute to improving public health and preserving human dignity in Benin.



Building mosques in needy areas.

MoHE designates Higher Institute of Musical Arts as new visitor hub

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: The Ministry of Higher Education designated the Higher Institute of Musical Arts in Salmiya as a center for receiving visitors effective immediately.

The ministry clarified that visitors must obtain appointments through the official digital platform, 'Meta', stressing the need to adhere to the booked appointment and arrive 15 minutes earlier. It stated that this measure aims to develop work

mechanisms, guarantee workflow efficiency, and expedite the processing of transactions. It added that appointments can be booked through the QR code technology or the 'Meta' platform, providing flexibility in selecting suitable slots.

It then reaffirmed its commitment to organize the work environment and implement a sophisticated operational system for visitor management in order to achieve institutional excellence and guarantee the delivery of high-quality services in accordance with the regulations and in the interest of beneficiaries.

Health condition unstable

Actress Al-Fahad readmitted to ICU after sudden setback

By Mufreh Hijab

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Kuwaiti actress Hayat Al-Fahad has suffered a severe health setback and was admitted to Intensive Care Unit on Monday.

In an official statement, the Kuwait Union for Artistic and Theatrical Production and Entertainment Professionals revealed that the renowned actress Hayat Al-Fahad suffered a sudden health setback on Sunday morning, necessitating her transfer back to intensive care after having been receiving treatment in an isolation room.

Chairman of the union Khaled Al-Rashed revealed that her health condition is currently unstable and requires close monitoring and intensive medical care, under continuous supervision from the medical team overseeing her case.

Al-Rashed indicated that he maintains continuous dialogue with the medical team and conducts regular hospital visits, although entry into her room remains restricted. He is currently monitoring her progress from a distance, and called on the public and artistic community to pray for her recovery and immediate return to her fans.

He added that undergoing medical treatment abroad is not under consideration at the moment, as the decision lies in the hands of the attending physicians. He emphasized that her health is in the hands of Almighty Allah.

He disclosed that prominent figures in the artistic community, including Suad Abdullah,



Kuwaiti actress, Hayat Al-Fahad back in ICU following sudden setback.

Haifa Adel and Zahra Al-Kharji are in contact with her daughter, Suzan, to monitor the latest developments regarding her condition.

Meanwhile, veteran actress Mariam Al-Saleh expressed deep sorrow over the illness of Al-Fahad.

She said "our last encounter was at a commemorative ceremony in the Kingdom of Bahrain. I now maintain constant follow up through her daughter, particularly since I am personally dealing with certain health challenges. I sincerely wish for her speedy recovery and return to her audience."

Veteran actor Jassim Al-Nabhan also urged the community to pray for the restoration of the health of 'Umm Suzan.'

He stated "we are monitoring her clinical status through Khaled Al-Rashed, as she is an artist of significant standing who achieved remarkable milestones, with distinguished career in various art forms." He added that all her professional colleagues deeply miss her during this difficult period.

Globally, debtors

heirs of the original debtors – a practice that contradicts the international standards of personal responsibility.

Kuwaiti legislation lags behind international digital and legal standards, as it continues to restrict freedom of movement for civil liabilities. This penalty was abolished globally in favor of more sophisticated asset-based enforcement.

With around 84,000 citizens facing arrest warrants and 120,000 subject to travel bans, these figures challenge the national vision for sustainable professional development and the right to economic participation. This creates an enormous administrative burden on executive agencies, diverting critical security and judicial resources away from maintaining public order toward the protracted enforcement of civil warrants.

The optimal approach entails providing debtors with the flexibility to fulfill their obligations in accordance with their income levels to support family stability and the national economy.

In this regard, the revised Saudi and regional frameworks provide a roadmap that prioritizes humanitarian considerations, while curbing enforcement abuse.

A vital provision of the new legislation is the implementation of the 10-year statute of limitations for promissory notes, which is in line with the established legal timelines and addresses unresolved debts that have plagued the local landscape for decades.

Strategic solutions for Kuwait include manageable installment plans and debt-restructuring programs, aimed at alleviating the burden of interest that frequently exceeds the principal amount. Another measure is the suspension of arrest warrants and travel bans to allow the concerned citizens to contribute to the labor market. These solutions are rooted in the protection of human rights.

We should also emphasize that the Saudi enforcement system is a move toward improving the investment climate and boosting investor confidence. By eliminating the threat of imprisonment, the system provides a modern environment for innovation, allowing entrepreneurs to honor their commitments and advance their projects in accordance with international standards.

Meanwhile, the current situation in Kuwait continues to impede developmental goals and creates complex social and commercial challenges requiring urgent institutional intervention.

Therefore, addressing this issue has become a national obligation to alleviate the burden on the populace, particularly in light of the sensitive regional developments currently impacting the economic landscape of the country.

We bring this matter to the attention of His Highness the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice, calling for comprehensive legal reforms that align with international best practices and mirror the successful transitions witnessed in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

We also put this matter before the astute legal mind of the Minister of Justice, emphasizing that the burden of risk management lies with the creditors, who

must safeguard their capital and refrain from pursuing illicit gains through usurious practices.

Kuwait praises

meetings in and outside the country with terrorist elements and suspicious organizations to spread misleading ideas among Emirati youth.

It also noted that the group's charges include establishing and managing a secret organization within the country, pledging allegiance to external parties, and harming national unity and social stability.

The UAE State Security Service affirmed its continued firm stance against any threats to public security, calling on citizens and residents to report any suspicious activities through official channels to support security and stability.

'Reform' urged

sound feasibility studies, and the creation of sustainable domestic demand. Once these conditions are met, the positive impact could begin to emerge within 5 to 7 years.

Al-Humaidhi commended the Central Bank of Kuwait for launching a survey on financing SMEs, recognizing its role in enhancing the business environment for this vital sector.

The decision to reduce the discount rate to 4 percent in September 2024 contributed to creating a more favorable monetary environment for borrowing and investment.

However, from the perspective of the Kuwait Economic Society, these steps are still insufficient, as local banks require companies to have been established for three fiscal years before obtaining non-cash credit facilities. This presents a credit barrier that limits the benefits for entrepreneurs.

Al-Humaidhi stressed that the absence of a comprehensive government economic stimulus program reduces the actual impact of these decisions, making a structured implementation framework necessary.

Based on a study by the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises, Al-Humaidhi reiterated that approximately 99 percent of companies in Kuwait fall under the category of SMEs, yet their contribution to GDP does not exceed 3 percent, reflecting a clear structural imbalance.

He emphasized that the potential of the SMEs sector is substantial, especially given the entry of approximately 25,000 graduates annually into the labor market, most of whom head to the already overcrowded public sector.

Al-Humaidhi affirmed that SMEs represent the most capable alternative for absorbing these graduates, but the current reality does not reflect this.

Al-Humaidhi stated that the private sector contributes less than 13 percent to the national GDP, and the percentage of Kuwaitis working in it does not exceed 6 percent.

Main challenges facing the SME sector:

- Loans do not exceed 4.7 percent of total credit.
- 65 percent of projects face difficulty in obtaining land plots.
- 45 percent suffer from weak demand.
- Weak management and inadequate feasibility studies.
- The economy's 85 percent dependence on oil.
- The migration of projects to other Gulf countries.
- Proposals to strengthen the sector:
 - Establish a national recovery fund to support entrepreneurs
 - Expand the role of the National Fund to include licensing and land allocation and ease bank requirements
 - Allocate small government contracts to projects
 - Adopt artificial intelligence tools to enhance project efficiency

Classrooms

The technical guidance departments for core subjects will be responsible for developing appropriate student assessment mechanisms.

Assessment will be conducted through practical applications during class time, using methods that differ from traditional written short exams.

Kuwait anchors

another term from 2027-2029.

This came during Sheikh Jawaher's address at the third coordination meeting of the National Standing Committee for the Preparation of Reports and Follow-up on Recommendations Related to Human Rights, held Monday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The meeting focused on coordinating the preparation of Kuwait's fourth periodic report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, scheduled for submission in Geneva next October, and preparing for the discussion of the comprehensive periodic report on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

War shock

help reduce the backlog of housing applications, which continues to increase annually due to population growth.

He called for updating the 2010 privatization law in light of recent developments, indicating that the law is no longer attractive for privatization.

Al-Khashnam stressed that if the privatization process is to begin, it should include housing, the Ministry of Public Works, and certain sectors within the Ministry of Health.

He also noted that other countries in the region have advanced further in privatization, despite Kuwait having started early by conducting studies related to private sector involvement in managing government projects.

Meanwhile, former Secretary of the Kuwait Transparency Society and an economic expert Dr. Manal Al-Kandari affirmed that privatization is one of the most prominent economic tools countries resort to in order to achieve efficiency in

resource management and promote economic growth.

She highlighted the importance of activating privatization in Kuwait so that it does not remain heavily dependent on oil revenues.

Dr. Al-Kandari emphasized that privatization has become one of the most important strategic options for diversifying income sources and supporting the labor market.

She explained that implementing a privatization system will create a more competitive and transparent environment, in addition to attracting foreign investors seeking promising opportunities. Privatization contributes to reducing red tape and bureaucracy and improving operational efficiency, which increases investor confidence in the local economy. It is an important means of developing other sectors such as tourism, logistics, telecommunications, and renewable energy, especially as these areas can create new sources of income, reduce dependence on oil, and enhance long-term economic stability.

Dr. Al-Kandari highlighted the vital role of privatization in creating job opportunities and developing young people's skills to meet labor market demands.

She stated that opening up the field to the private sector will have a positive impact on entrepreneurship, encouraging young people to establish their own businesses instead of relying entirely on government jobs.

Dr. Al-Kandari affirmed that despite the advantages of privatization, it may face some challenges, such as job insecurity or rising prices.

She emphasized the importance of providing sufficient guarantees for workers in the private sector through legislation.

In addition, the CEO of the Center for Future Foresight Consulting and Studies and economic expert Qais Al-Shatti affirmed that privatization is one of the most important pillars that must be activated to alleviate the pressures on Kuwait's budget resulting from the repercussions of the wars witnessed in the region.

He highlighted that the most important advantages of implementing privatization include accelerating economic reform, promoting sustainable development, increasing investment opportunities, improving management, encouraging innovation, achieving financial savings, reducing costs, narrowing the budget deficit, stimulating the private sector, attracting capital, and enhancing competition.

Al-Shatti summarized the potential risks of privatization as an increase in bribery and fraud during the process, which raises the chances of corruption and mismanagement, and may lead to greater monopolization due to the lack of genuine competition.

He expressed concern that privatization could lead to the monopolization of the privatized facility or resources by a single company or a limited number of companies, thereby reducing real competition.

Al-Shatti emphasized that these risks can be addressed by establishing a robust system of oversight and transparency, strengthening the role of independent institutions, effectively enforcing anti-corruption measures, promoting civic participation, and enhancing good governance.

Event to last nearly three weeks

US, allied forces kick off combat drills with Philippines despite Washington's focus on Iran

MANILA, Philippines, April 20, (AP): The United States and the Philippines kicked off one of their largest combat exercises Monday in an annual display of allied military might aimed at deterring aggression in Asia, despite Washington's preoccupation with the war in the Middle East.

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

More than 17,000 American and Filipino military personnel will participate in the Balikatan - Tagalog for shoulder-to-shoulder - exercise.

The event will last nearly three weeks and will include mock battle scenarios and live-fire maneuvers in locations including Philippine provinces facing the disputed South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

Nearly 10,000 US military personnel will take part in the combat drills, a major deployment that US military officials said underscores Washington's commitment to Asia despite its preoccupation with the war against Iran.

"Regardless of the challenges elsewhere in the world, the United States focus on the Indo-Pacific and our ironclad commitment to the Philippines remains unwavering," Marine Lt Gen Christian Wortman said in the opening ceremony.

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff Gen. Romeo Brawner said the multinational combat drills build deterrence and resilience against aggression in the region.

He did not mention any country in his speech but in the past, he has strongly criticized China for its increasingly assertive actions against Philippine navy and coast guard forces in the South China Sea, which Beijing



From left: Major General Francisco Lorenzo Jr, Philippine exercise director, Philippine military Chief General Romeo Brawner, US Charge d' Affaires, Ad interim Y. Robert Ewing, Philippine Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations J3 Major General Elmer Suderio and US Lieutenant General Christian Wortman, Commanding General I Marine Expeditionary Force, prepare to link arms during the opening ceremonies of the joint military exercise dubbed 'Balikatan' or 'Shoulder to Shoulder' on April 20 at Camp Aguinaldo military headquarters in Quezon city, Philippines. (AP)

claims virtually in its entirety.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also lay

claims to the waters, a key global trade route, but territorial confrontations have particularly spiked between Chinese and Filipino forces in recent years.

China has objected to the US-Philippine drills, saying they are aimed at containing its global rise. The Philippine military, however, has insisted the exercise does not target any country and is also needed to prepare allied forces to respond to natural disasters.

The US has repeatedly warned China that it is obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces come under an armed attack in disputed waters.

"We remain guided by a shared commitment to uphold international law, to respect sovereignty and to contribute to a free and open Indo-Pacific where nations can thrive without coercion," Brawner said.

During the drills, Japanese forces will fire missiles from a coastal area in the northwestern Philippine province of Ilocos Norte to help sink a mock enemy ship about 40 kilometers (25 miles) away in the peripheries of the South China Sea, Philippine marine. Col. Dennis Hernandez told The Associated Press.

US forces will use a marine drone laden with explosives to further bombard the enemy ship, Hernandez said.

Last year, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth assured Philippine officials while visiting Manila that the Trump administration would work with allies to ramp up deterrence against threats across the world, including China's aggression in the South China Sea.

"Friends need to stand shoulder to shoulder to deter conflict, to ensure that there is free navigation whether you call it the South China Sea or the West Philippine Sea," Hegseth told Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

JMA warns of slightly increased risk of mega-quake

7.5 magnitude earthquake strikes off Japan

TOKYO, April 20, (AP): Japan on Monday issued an advisory for northern coastal areas for an increased risk of a possible mega-quake induced by a major quake earlier in the day.

The Cabinet Office and the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said there is 1% chance for a mega-quake occurring on the northern Japanese coast in the next week or so following the powerful quake earlier Monday near the Chishima trough.

Officials said the advisory is not a quake prediction but urged residents to raise their preparedness, such as emergency food and their grab bag just in case, while continuing their daily lives.

The advisory for the region is the second in recent months. One was issued following another major quake in December. No major subsequent quake occurred.

A powerful earthquake struck off the northern Japanese coast earlier Monday, and the Japan Meteorological Agency issued a tsunami alert in the region, sending residents to rush over to safer grounds. So far, no major injuries or damages have been reported.

The quake registering a preliminary magnitude of 7.5 occurred off the coast of Sanriku in northern Japan at around 4:53 pm (0753 GMT), at a depth of about 10 kilometers (6 miles), the agency said.

A tsunami of about 80 centimeters (2.6 feet) was detected at the Kuji port in the Iwate prefecture within one hour of the quake, and a smaller tsunami of 40 centimeters (1.3 feet) was recorded at another port in the prefecture, the agency said.



An official of the Japan Meteorological Agency speaks near a monitor showing a tsunami alert during a news conference at the agency in Tokyo on April 20 after an earthquake that struck off the northern Japanese coast. (AP)

The tsunami alert and advisory were still in place in Japan, with warnings of a wave of up to 3 meters (10 feet), but the US-based Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said the tsunami threat from the quake "has now passed."

The Japanese agency urged residents in the region to immediately stay away from the coast or along rivers and take shelter on higher ground. It also cautioned people in the area against possible aftershocks for about a week.

Footage on NHK television showed many people driving up to parks and other facilities on higher ground. In the town of Tomakomai in Hokkaido, a resi-

dent came to a hilltop park after picking up his child at a cram school and said he planned to stay until the alert is lifted.

Iwate and three other northern prefectures issued non-binding evacuation advisories to more than 128,000 residents, according to the disaster management agency.

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency said officials are assessing the situation but so far no damage or injuries have been reported, including at power stations and other facilities.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority said nuclear power plants and related facilities in the region were all intact and no abnormalities were detected.

With no end in sight to deployment, Nat'l Guard troops roam Washington

WASHINGTON, April 20, (AP): The cherry blossoms draw more than a million visitors to Washington's Tidal Basin annually. This year was no different, except some strolling the area between the Lincoln Memorial and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial were dressed in camouflage -- and armed.

Eight months after President Donald Trump declared a crime emergency in the nation's capital and called up the National Guard, more than 2,500 troops remain, in a deployment that has grown increasingly routine, with no clear end in sight.

Deployments to other cities have ended or been paused by courts in California and Illinois, while more limited operations are ongoing in cities including New Orleans. But in Washington, guard members still walk city streets and patrol metro stations, tourist attractions, neighborhoods and parks.

Even with pivotal elections looming this year, that lingering presence is barely mentioned in city council meetings or by candidates running for mayor and Congress -- perhaps reflecting both competing priorities and a sense that local officials have little power to stop it. Unless the courts step in, the guard will remain at least through the end of the year, if not longer.

"Taxpayers are paying more than a million dollars a day to have them walk around," said Phil Mendelson, chairman of the District of Columbia Council, in an emailed response to questions.

And, he said, "the presence of armed soldiers on American streets is not a good look."

Trump, a Republican, issued an ex-



National Guard patrol the Washington Mall, with the US Capitol in the background on April 7, in Washington. (AP)

ecutive order in August to deal with what he called a crime emergency. The order brought the guard in, along with hundreds of additional federal law enforcement officers.

Over the months, guard members have responded to medical emergencies, assisted with arrests, helped local police enforce the city's juvenile curfew and carried out beautification projects. The D.C. Guard helped with snow removal during a major storm in January.

While the guard members do not make arrests, the Trump administration argues their support to the broader mission has helped reduce crime. The White House said 12,000 arrests have been made by the task force since op-

erations began, including 62 known gang members, and thousands of illegal firearms were seized.

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said the president's crime task force in the city has "yielded tremendous results for local communities."

"Every local leader should want to mimic this success in their own locales," Jackson said.

But officials disagree over how much credit the deployment can be given in Washington, a heavily Democratic city. Figures show crime was already on the decline before, although those figures are being investigated after claims arose against local police that they may have been manipulated.

UK's Starmer faces angry lawmakers over Mandelson's appointment as ambassador

LONDON, April 20, (AP): British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will try on Monday to get a grip on a crisis that has left power slipping from his grasp.

Starmer will face a tough barrage of questions in Parliament when he stands up to explain why Peter Mandelson, a scandal-tarnished politician and friend of Jeffrey Epstein, became Britain's ambassador to Washington despite failing security checks - and seemingly without Starmer being told about the concerns.

The revelation has left furious opponents calling for Starmer to resign and uneasy allies wondering what else the nation's leader didn't know about.

Starmer repeatedly told lawmakers that "due process" was followed when Mandelson was appointed. He now says he's "furious" that he wasn't informed that an intensive vetting process had recommended Mandelson not be given security clearance. The Foreign Office, which oversees diplomatic appointments, cleared him anyway.

"The fact that I wasn't told that Pe-



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer gives a statement after an international summit to push forward efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, at the Elysee Palace, in Paris, France on April 17. (AP)

ter Mandelson had failed his security vetting when he was appointed is astonishing," Starmer told the Daily Mir-

ror. "The fact that I wasn't told when I said to Parliament that due process had been followed is unforgivable."



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speaks during the opening of the 61st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva on Feb 23. (AP)

Four candidates for United Nations secretary-general audition this week

UNITED NATIONS, April 20, (AP): Four candidates to be the next secretary-general of the United Nations will audition for the job this week, far fewer than there were 10 years ago when Antonio Guterres was selected as UN chief.

Chile's former President Michelle Bachelet - one of two women and one of three from Latin America - will be the first to face ambassadors from the UN's 193 member nations during a three-hour question-and-answer session on Tuesday. Bachelet will be followed by UN nuclear chief Rafael Mariano Grossi of Argentina.

On Wednesday, UN trade chief Rebecca Grynspan will take center stage in the General Assembly hall, and finally, Senegal's former President Macky Sall.

In 2016, a hotly contested race drew 13 candidates. What has changed? For starters, the deeply polarized and conflict-racked world of 2026 is far different from the more peaceful global climate in 2016, the year Donald Trump was elected president for the first time.

Add to that the diminished stature

of the United Nations. A decade ago, the world organization was basking in its success in helping achieve the Paris climate agreement to curb global warming and an agreement by world leaders on 17 goals to promote global economic growth, preserve the environment and close the growing gap between rich and poor nations.

Today, the divisions among world powers are so deep that the UN has been unable to fulfill its primary role in ensuring global peace and security. The once powerful Security Council has been blocked from acting to halt wars in Ukraine, Gaza and Iran, among other conflicts, leaving the UN on the sidelines of major global crises.

The International Crisis Group's Richard Gowan, a UN watcher and program director, said the current geopolitical scene has affected the race to succeed Guterres, whose second five-year term ends on Dec 31.

He said 10 years ago, many candidates entered the race knowing they had little chance of winning, but used it to raise their profiles.

"There was no real cost associated with losing," Gowan said. (asterisk) This time around, potential candidates and the governments who sponsor them are much more cautious. There is a feeling that if a candidate puts a foot wrong and offends Washington or Beijing, it could cause real diplomatic damage."

In 2016, there was intense pressure to choose the first woman to lead the United Nations. Seven of the 13 candidates were women. But there was widespread agreement that Guterres performed best in what the UN calls the "interactive dialogue" with General Assembly members.

The UN Charter says little about choosing the secretary-general except that the General Assembly, which includes all members, should do so upon the recommendation of the Security Council. That gives the five permanent members of the UN's most powerful body - the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France - the decision-making role and veto power over the selection.

America

3 students, 2 others shot near campus: A shooting during a fight in a nightlife district near the University of Iowa campus wounded five people early Sunday, including three students, police and university officials said.

Multiple victims were transported to hospitals for gunshot wounds, according to Iowa City police.

One person was in critical condition while four others were stable, police said.

No arrests had been made as of Sunday morning, according to a campus alert. Police released photos of groups of people that were identified as persons of interest. (AP)

8 killed Louisiana mass shooting: A man killed eight children, including seven of his own, and shot two women in an attack in a Shreveport, Louisiana, neighborhood that was the nation's deadliest shooting in more than two years, authorities said.

At a news conference outside the residence where one of the shootings occurred early Sunday, officials appeared stunned, requesting patience and prayers from the community.

"This is a tragic situation - maybe the worst tragic situation we've ever had," said Tom Arceneaux, mayor of the city in northwestern Louisiana.

Mourners laid flowers outside the single-story house on 79th Street, and people lit candles for the victims at an evening prayer vigil in a nearby parking lot. (AP)

Europe

Jordanian king, Finnish president meet: King Abdullah II of Jordan and Finnish President Alexander Stubb held talks in Amman on Sunday, focusing on bolstering bilateral ties and coordinating responses to regional crises, according to a statement released by the Royal Hashemite Court.

Addressing regional stability, the king stressed the importance of maintaining the ceasefire between the United States and Iran to end the war, urging follow-up diplomatic measures to reduce tensions.

On the situation in Lebanon, the king stated that the ceasefire must put an end to Israel's aggression, reiterating Jordan's support for Lebanon's sovereignty. (Xinhua)

US funding helps Cyprus upgrade army bases: With help from US taxpayers, Cyprus is upgrading key military installations to strengthen the mission it has carved for itself as a safe haven in the eastern Mediterranean for evacuees from the conflict-racked Middle East and as a humanitarian aid hub.

Cyprus' main Evangelos Florakis naval base, just 142 miles (229 kilometers) from Lebanon's coast, will get a new, US European Command-funded heliport that will be able to accommodate large, Chinook-type transport helicopters for airlifting evacuees out of conflict zones. (AP)

Boursa Kuwait sees modest drop

KUWAIT CITY, April 20, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Monday's trading session in negative territory, with its general index falling 55.76 points, or 0.62 percent, to close at 8,869.06 points. Trading activity saw 394.4 million shares exchanged across 27,922 cash transactions, with a total value of KD 99.6 mil-

lion (about USD 325.7 million).

The main market index recorded a steeper decline, dropping 88.03 points, or 1.06 percent, to 8,210.21 points. A total of 222.8 million shares were traded through 14,650 transactions, valued at KD 32.9 million (approximately USD 107.5 million).

KIPCO picks veteran Chami as Group Chief Financial Officer

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: KIPCO – Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) – announced the appointment of Mr Moustapha Chami as Group Chief Financial Officer, effective May 1. Mr Chami succeeds Mr Sunny Bhatia, who stepped down from the position for family reasons.

Mr Moustapha Chami joined KIPCO in 2009 and has served as Deputy Group CFO since 2022, working closely with senior management on financial planning, capital allocation and portfolio performance oversight. He brings extensive experience across the Group's operations and a strong understanding of KIPCO's financial and strategic framework.

Commenting on the announcement, **Sheikha Dana Naser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah**, KIPCO's Group Chief Executive Officer, said: "On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to announce the appointment of **Mr Moustapha Chami** as Group CFO. Having worked closely with the Group's leadership and portfolio companies, he brings strong financial expertise, deep institutional knowledge and a clear understanding of KIPCO's strategic priorities. His appointment ensures continuity and supports the Group's continued focus on disciplined financial management and long-term value creation."



Sheikha Dana Naser Al Sabah



Moustapha Chami

■ "Strong financial expertise & clear understanding of KIPCO's strategic priorities ensure continuity" says Group CEO



Jazeera Airways aircraft

Reconnecting with twice-weekly service

Jazeera expands regional connectivity with Beirut

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost carrier, today announced the relaunch of its service to Beirut from Kuwait via Dammam. The twice weekly service will help open a vital travel corridor for the large Lebanese community based in Kuwait.

His Excellency Ghady El-Khoury, Ambassador of Lebanon to Kuwait, said:

"The resumption of direct connectivity between Kuwait and Beirut, during these exceptional circumstances, is a very positive development for the Lebanese community in Kuwait, for all the Kuwaiti friends of Lebanon, and with all those with close ties between our two countries. This service allows families to reconnect and preserve our longstanding ties. I greatly appreciate the efforts of Jazeera Airways in resuming this vital route for our Lebanese community. I wish to take this opportunity to express my utmost admiration for how Jazeera Airways navigated the recent crisis, particularly the seamless management, and rerouting of flights under the strategic vision of its leadership driven by the efforts of the entire Jazeera team."

Alongside Beirut, the airline also

increased the frequency on its Amman route from one to two weekly flights. This aims to provide greater flexibility and improved connectivity for travelers to Jordan. These additions come as part of the airline's continued efforts to expand its operational footprint and maintain strong regional connectivity through its dual-base operations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia while the Kuwait International Airport remains temporarily closed.

Barathan Pasupathi, Chief Executive Officer, said: "The relaunch of our Beirut service and the increased frequency to Amman underscore our commitment to maintaining strong regional connectivity from Kuwait during this period of disruption. These routes are vital in bringing people back home, reuniting families and loved ones, and supporting essential travel across the region. At the same time, they provide our customers with greater flexibility and convenience, while enabling the continued movement of critical supply chains."

Passengers can book flights via the Jazeera Airways website: jazeeraairways.com, app or by calling customer relations at 177 (Kuwait) or +965 22054944 (international).

KFH signs a partnership with Trolley

A new partner to the bank's rewards program

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has unveiled a new partnership with Trolley, a leading homegrown convenience and retail chain with a network of branches located across Kuwait offering daily groceries and essential items.

Under this partnership, customers will be able to transfer their KFH Rewards points to Trolley Rewards program. The transferred points will be automatically added to the members' balance in Trolley app, allowing them to pay with these points when shopping at Trolley stores.

"This collaboration aligns with the bank's efforts to provide customers with the best benefits, enhance its rewards program and maximize the points usage coverage," Deputy General Manager Cards at KFH, **Talal AlArbeed** stated. "Through this partnership KFH offers a competitive edge in the Kuwaiti market by granting customers to shop at Trolley stores, collect points and linking these points to KFH Rewards program. The collected points can be transferred through KFH Rewards program's mobile app or website and used to pay with or redeem them for various promotional programs through Trolley's Rewards app."



Talal AlArbeed



Mohammed Yaqoub Boodai

AlArbeed:

■ Customers can Transfer their KFH Rewards points to Trolley's program

AlArbeed added that KFH recently released an updated version of its rewards program on smart phones and the website, designed to enhance user experience and offer more flexibility. The new update provides marketing and promotional opportunities for

partners and participating merchants. "Additionally, cardholders can enjoy a unique shopping experience through a wide range of opportunities and allowing them to earn up to 200 points for every KD 1 paid through their eligible cards at participating stores," he

explained.

AlArbeed further highlighted the integrated and diverse benefits available to KFH cardholders, noting that customers holding Green, Silver, and Black tiers earn reward points on every transaction, whether locally or internationally. They can also access a full range of redemption options, including redeeming points for shopping vouchers at participating merchants, exclusive deals and special offers through the online marketplace, as well as travel bookings such as flights, hotels, and car rentals. Customers can also transfer their points to loyalty and rewards programs offered by global partners participating in the KFH Rewards Program.

Meanwhile, Group CEO and Vice Chairman of Trolley, **Mohammed Yaqoub Boodai**, expressed his delight regarding the strategic partnership with KFH: "We are pleased to join the KFH Rewards program, a step that reflects our commitment to delivering added value to our customers. This partnership allows KFH customers to redeem their points easily and flexibly while shopping at Trolley, enhancing their experience with greater variety and rewards."

Reaffirming its commitment to human capital investment

Burgan Bank signs strategic partnership with KIBS & participates in Hult Ashridge Executive Program

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: In continued efforts to advance senior leadership excellence, Burgan Bank announced signing a strategic partnership with the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS), with the Bank participating in the acclaimed Hult Ashridge Executive Program. Expanding on the Bank's existing partnership with KIBS, the two parties announced their collaboration in delivering the specialized bespoke program in a signing ceremony held at KIBS.

This comes as part of Burgan Bank's leading human capital development strategy in line with its commitment to embedding ESG standards across its operations as well as its active contribution to achieving Kuwait Vision 2035 goals.

"In line with our ongoing commitment to reinforcing Burgan Bank's strategic focus on developing future-ready leaders, we are proud to add the Hult Ashridge Executive Program to the Bank's repertoire of Learning and Talent Development efforts, delivered in partnership with KIBS," said **Mr. Naqeeb Amin**, General Manager – Group Human Resources Team at Burgan Bank. "As the banking sector continues to face new challenges and increasing demands for governance, efficiency, and adaptability, it is vital that we remain committed to empowering our executive leaders with the skills and strategic vision that enhance their ability to make informed decisions and lead teams



Naqeeb Amin



Al-Nibari

effectively supporting the Bank's progress and long-term goals."



Mr. Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer of Burgan Bank – Kuwait, (pictured center) with the team from the Institute of Banking Studies, together with the General Managers and their deputies participating in the program.

On her part, **Ms. Rana Al-Nibari**, Director General at KIBS, said: "Serving the banking sector is a core focus of the Institute's mission, particularly in developing executive leaders to meet their professional needs and aspirations within the rapidly evolving banking landscape. As the training arm of the banking sector, the Institute is committed to delivering high-quality specialized training programs and development pathways in partnership with leading international organizations."

These programs aim to cultivate banking leaders who are capable of making effective strategic decisions and driving innovation and development within their institutions. The Institute also emphasizes providing advanced educational and training experiences that integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application, thereby enhancing the capabilities of

executive leaders and supporting the sustainable growth and competitiveness of the banking sector."

It is worth noting that more than 20 general managers and deputy general managers were selected to attend the program, tailored in line with Burgan Bank's strategic business and leadership goals as well as the participating managers' individual needs. Following Hult Ashridge's signature approach, the program deploys immersive learning, assessments and psychometrics, organizational development consulting, and coaching, covering a wide range of cornerstone topics including leadership in the modern era, cultural change, sustainable leadership, growth and innovation, as well as diversity, equity, and belonging.

In addition to the Hult Ashridge program, Burgan Bank continues to invest in the sustainable and tailored progression of its leaders through its flagship talent development program Ro'ya, which offers four different streams

that cater to different leadership levels: Future Leaders, Rising Leaders, Transformational Leaders, and Visionary Leaders.

Under the umbrella of Burgan Bank's long-term partnership with KIBS, numerous aspiring employees and leaders have completed the KIBS certification programs, including Credit Management, Advanced Credit Management, Risk Management, Bank Branch Operation Management, Assistant Bank Branch Management, Bank Wealth Management, and Bank Relationship Management for High-Net-Worth Customers. This comes as part of Burgan Bank's commitment to its role as previously certified Great Place to Work® in fostering a culture of continuous learning that prioritizes advancing Kuwaiti professionals and preparing the finest national talents to compete and lead within Kuwait's banking sector.

Al Tijaria advances ESG strategy, confirms dividend distribution

Commercial Real Estate Co. AGM approves 3% cash dividend and 3% bonus shares

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: **Mr. Abdulfatah M. R. Marafie** – Chairman of The Commercial Real Estate Co. K.P.S.C. "Al Tijaria" announced the holding of the Ordinary & Extraordinary General Assembly meetings of the company on Monday, April 20, 2026, with a quorum of 81.362% of the shareholders present.

Al-Tijaria Ordinary General Assembly approved the recommendation of the Board of Directors of the company to distribute cash dividends at a rate of 3% of the nominal value per share, along with bonus shares at a rate of 3%.

The Extraordinary General Assembly approved the increase in the Company's capital in accordance with the distribution of bonus shares, as well as amendments to certain articles of the Memorandum of Association and the Articles of Association, including aligning the Company's objectives with the new codes and symbols of the International Classification of Activities adopted in the State of Kuwait.

Al-Tijaria had previously announced that the financial results for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2025, resulted a net profit of KD 16,314,480 (Sixteen Million three hundred fourteen thousand four hundred eighty Kuwaiti Dinars), with a growth of 4.6%, the EPS was 9.01 fils with growth of 6% compared to 2024. The results also witnessed an improvement in all financial indicators, with growth in return on shareholders' equity, total assets, and company capital by 3.4%, 1.3%, and 1.6%, respectively, compared to the previ-



Al Tijaria General Assembly meeting.

ous year.

Marafie also added that "the company remains committed to its methodology and strat-

egy based on maintaining the diversity of its real estate and investment portfolio in terms of size, nature of investments, and geographic

distribution within a business plan aimed at balancing risks and returns. This involves engaging in promising income-generating in-

vestments that benefit our shareholders.

He also explained that we have incorporated and integrated the principles and factors of sustainability (environmental, social and governance) into all aspects of our operations, projects and procedures, which enhances the decision-making processes, improves operational efficiency, supports sustainable financial performance, supports competitiveness and responds to investor requirements, ensuring their alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) issued by the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), and the objectives of "Kuwait Vision 2035," which aims to achieve sustainable and balanced economic growth that is integrated with social progress and environmental protection.

He also highlighted the company's ongoing dedication towards its role in social responsibility that the company has organized a series of events and initiatives throughout the previous year across a range of humanitarian, social, environmental, health, and educational initiatives.

Marafie concluded his statement by praying that God would protect Kuwait and its people from all harm, and to bless the country with lasting peace, safety, and stability under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah; and His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. May God preserve and protect them."



A group photo taken on the sidelines of the raffle.



Head of Personal Banking Mohammad Al-Qattan and General Manager of Retail Banking Johair Marafi with the winner of the annual draw.



The winner of the annual draw, Malek Gail and his family.

48 winners over 4 days with valuable cash prizes

ABK announces Alfouz account's deferred draw winners

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has announced the winners of the deferred draws for its Alfouz account, with a total of 48 winners across the weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual draws covering the period from April 2025 to March 2026.

The draws were conducted over four days at the Bank's Head Office in the presence of representatives from external audit firms Grant Thornton and Deloitte. They were also broadcast live on the Bank's official YouTube channel to ensure the highest standards of transparency and integrity.

The weekly draws saw 36 customers each win KD 10,000 each, while eight customers received KD 20,000 each in the monthly draws. The quarterly draws awarded three customers KD 100,000 each. Finally, the grand annual prize of a KD 5,000 monthly salary for 10 years was awarded to one winner.



Johair Marafi

Weekly Draw Winners

- EMAD ALI MOHAMMAD
- AHMAD FATHI ALSAEED
- FATEMAH OJAIMAN ALOJAIMAN
- FOWZ MOHAMMAD
- MAHMUD HUSSAIN ALMOSWI
- HAMDY MAHMOUD ALI
- HEBAH KHALEL BASHEER
- AWATEF YOUSEF ALSABAH
- HUSSAIN ALI ALSHEMALI
- SAAD SHAABAN ALHUSSAIN
- HAMEDA TAHA ELHELAWY
- SAMEERA ABDULLAH ARIF



ABK representatives and external auditing firms during withdrawals.

- SAUD NASER ALTAMI
- SARA SUTLAN MOHAISEN
- AWATEF AHMAD ALABDULLAH
- ABDULLAH HUSSAIN ALOMAR
- AHMED ALI AHMED
- SALAM ATTAR
- GHALIAH HAMAD ALHERZ
- AKBAR HJE ZADA
- FAISAL MALEH ALDHAFEER
- YOUSEF MELFI ALENEZI
- REFAAT ZAKARIA HANNA
- AZKALANY AHMED ABDELAZIZ

- DANAH ISSAM QUTTAINEH
- DANAH SALMAN ALSHATTI
- HEBAH BARRAK ALTUKHAIM
- MOHAMED YOUNES YOUNES
- MOHAMMAD HUSSAIN ALALI
- JAMIL SALIM ALLABBAN
- MARYAM EBRAHIM KHALVATI
- ABDULMAJEED YAQOUB ABDULLAH
- NAJAT ABDULSAMAD MAQAMES
- SHARAF AKBAR BHAI
- CHAND IQBAL IBRAHIM
- GHADAH ABDULLAH ALBASSAM

Monthly Draw Winners

- KAMAL TAQI MUSTAFAWI
- FATHEYAH AHMAD ALAQEELI
- MOHAMMAD HUSSIN ALSAYGH
- ABDULMAJEED MOHAMMAD ALHARSHANI
- TALAL HUSSAIN MUZAFFAR
- MOHAMMAD TALEB JAMAL
- MARIAM HUSSAIN KHAJAH
- ZEINAB ABDULATIF ABOELKHAIR

Quarterly Draw Winners

- AMINA EBRAHIM ALMETHEN
- BISWAJIT SHIL
- ASHRAF ABDULMOTALEB EID

Annual Draw Winner

- MALEK MOHAMED GALIL

ABK congratulated all winners and wished them continued success, noting that through the Alfouz draw account, it will continue to offer rewarding opportunities that reflect its commitment to delivering advanced banking services and placing customers at the heart of its priorities.

On this occasion, **Johair Marafi**, General Manager of Retail Banking at ABK, said, "The return of the Alfouz draws represents a fresh start built on greater transparency and innovation, aimed at making the banking journey both rewarding and dependable for our customers."

Marafi further noted that the Bank fully understands the expectations customers place on the Alfouzdraw account and therefore remains committed to ensuring fairness and equal opportunity for all participants through adopting the latest technologies during the draws.

She added that the Bank will continue to strengthen its innovation journey to deliver best-in-class banking services that reflect ABK's commitment to meeting the aspirations of all its customer segments.

An Iraqi captain keeps sailing despite the threat of attack amid regional war

BAGHDAD, April 20, (AP): Aboard an oil tanker plying the tense waters between the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz, Iraqi Captain Rahman Al-Jubouri continues to work in one of the world's most volatile maritime corridors, where the U.S.-Israel war with Iran has disrupted global trade and left some crews stranded and exposed to attacks.

The hostilities are not new for al-Jubouri, a veteran who has worked at sea since 1984 and lived through decades of upheaval, including the Iran-Iraq War and the 1991 Gulf War. Once again, he finds himself operating in high-risk waters, as sporadic military strikes threaten vessels seeking to navigate through chokepoints like Bab el-Mandeb and the Persian Gulf.

"Work has become a real risk; we don't know when we might be bombed. We're sailing over a ball of fire," he said.

Al-Jubouri has been on board his tanker, the Palau-flagged Sea Moon, for four months. Currently he and his crew are sailing from the Gulf of Aden toward the Gulf of Oman to unload oil at Ras Isa port in Yemen. He spoke to The Associated Press by phone.

Although his route does not pass

through the Strait of Hormuz itself, it is still considered high-risk because he is close to the entrance to the strait. The journey has seen delays because of security considerations and logistical disruptions amid the regional war sparked by the U.S.-Israeli attacks on Iran.

The war has put commercial vessels in the crossfire amid the ongoing standoff between Washington and Tehran over the Strait of Hormuz. Several tankers have been targeted in attacks carried out by Iranian forces and allied groups. Intermittent disruptions and threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint for global oil flows, has also left vessels delayed, rerouted, or stranded in the Gulf.

On Sunday, American military forces forcibly seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship that tried to get around a naval blockade near the strait, the first such interception since the blockade of Iranian ports began last week.

The dangers of his work mean his crew undergoes regular safety drills to prepare for potential attacks. "We've trained them on how to respond if the ship comes under fire, God forbid," he said.

Last year, while docked at a Yem-

eni port, his vessel came under bombardment. "I immediately cut the ropes, prepared the engines, and left the port at my own risk to protect the crew and the ship," he said.

Shrapnel struck the tanker as it pulled away, causing minor damage, but the crew escaped unharmed. Despite the ongoing threat, the vessel later returned to port operations and resumed its planned route.

Not all of al-Jubouri's crew can bear the dangers of the job, however. His team has thinned from 27 sailors to 17, he said. Fear drove them away.

The psychological toll is compounded by long stretches at sea. For four months, al-Jubouri has not seen his family. Like many sailors, he struggles with homesickness.

"We suffer from being away from our families and our homelands," he said. While internet access on board allows crew members to stay in touch, the distance feels especially stark amid the strain of an ongoing war.

Basic supplies, at least, remain steady. Food and bottled water are regularly replenished at port, with no major shortages reported.

Al-Jubouri's four decades at sea allow him to adapt under pressure, he said.

Oil prices jump as Hormuz standoff disrupts tankers

Brent rises above \$96

NEW YORK, April 20, (AP): Oil prices rose in early trading Sunday as a standoff between Iran and the U.S. prevented tankers from using the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf waterway that is crucial to global energy supplies.

The price of U.S. crude oil increased 6.4% to \$87.88 per barrel after trading resumed on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. The price of Brent crude, the international standard, climbed 6.5% to \$96.25 per barrel. The market reaction followed more than two days of growing hopes and dashed expectations involving the strait. Iran, which effectively controls the passage, said Friday that it would fully reopen the passage off its coast to commercial traffic. Crude prices plunged more than 9% on the news.

Tehran reversed its decision on Saturday, after President Donald Trump said a U.S. Navy blockade of Iranian ports would remain in effect. Over the weekend, Iran's Revolutionary Guard fired on several vessels. Trump reported the forcible seizure of an Iranian-flagged cargo ship that tried to get around the blockade.

The US-Israeli war against Iran, now in its eighth week, has created one of the worst global energy crises in decades. Countries in Asia and Europe that import much of their oil from the Middle East have felt the most impact of halted

supplies and production cuts, although rapidly rising gasoline, diesel and jet fuel prices are affecting businesses and consumers worldwide.

Asked when he thought U.S. motorists would again see gas cost less than \$3 a gallon on average, Energy Secretary Chris Wright said prices at the pump might not go down that much until next year.

"But prices have likely peaked, and they'll start going down," Wright told CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday.

The price of crude oil - the main ingredient in gasoline - has fluctuated dramatically since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, and as Iran retaliated with airstrikes on other Gulf states. Crude traded at roughly \$70 a barrel before the conflict, spiked to more than \$119 at times, and previously closed Friday at \$82.59 for U.S. oil and \$90.38 for Brent.

Industry analysts have repeatedly warned that the longer the strait is closed, the worse prices could get. A fragile, two-week ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran is set to expire Wednesday, while escalating tensions in the Strait of Hormuz puts the fate of new talks to end the war into question.

Even if a lasting deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz emerges, analysts say it could take months for oil shipments to return to normal levels and for fuel prices to go down. Backed-up tanker traffic, shipowners concerned about another sudden escalation, and energy infrastructure damaged during the war are factors that could impede production and shipment volumes from returning to pre-war levels.

What's On

SPOTLIGHT



Got a birthday or event?
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Aiming to enhance its customers' digital shopping experience

NBK gives Visa cardholders 10% cashback on Amazon, Shein, and Temu purchases

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: In line with its commitment to enhancing and enriching its customers' international digital shopping experience through unique campaigns with exceptional offers, National Bank of Kuwait launched a wide campaign targeting Visa Prepaid and Credit Card holders to encourage international purchasing transactions made through the most visited international e-commerce shopping platforms.

This campaign gives eligible NBK Prepaid and Credit Card holders 10% cashback when shopping through Amazon US, Shein, and Temu stores, and spending a minimum of KD 100 on these stores combined during the campaign period which starts from 14 April 2026 to 16 May 2026, with a maximum cashback of KD 26 per customer.

To benefit from the offer, customers must pre-register through the campaign's dedicated registration page, ensuring a smooth and seamless experience.

The campaign includes a wide

range of Visa cards issued by NBK. Holders of any of the following Credit Cards are eligible:

NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card
NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card
NBK Visa Signature Credit Card
NBK Visa Platinum Credit Card
NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Signature Credit Card
NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Infinite Credit Card
NBK-KPC Visa Infinite Credit Card
NBK-Harrods Visa Infinite Credit Card

Moreover, holders of the following Prepaid Cards can also enjoy the cashback offered by the campaign:

NBK 247 Cashback Visa Platinum Prepaid Card
NBK Avios Visa Signature Card
NBK - Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Platinum Prepaid Card

On this occasion, Anwar AlBallam AVP - Cards Services Management commented: "The launch of this campaign comes at a time when international e-commerce is



AlBallam: We are committed to enhancing our customers' buying power and providing for them an easier and more beneficial.

We are keen to design offers of real value that are relevant to our customers' daily lifestyles.

experiencing rapid growth, driven by changing consumption patterns and customers' increasing reliance on digital channels. At NBK, we are constantly striving to be closer to our customers, not only by offering innovative banking products, but also by designing offers of real value that

are relevant to their daily lifestyles and actual needs".

AlBallam added: "This campaign reflects our commitment to enhancing our customers' buying power and providing them with an easier and more beneficial global shopping experience, as well as



benefiting from the widespread use of Visa cards".

Finally, AlBallam noted that NBK continues to offer innovative initiatives that reinforce its position as a leading financial institution in digital solutions and distinguished banking services in

Kuwait and the region.

Through this campaign, NBK affirms its commitment to promoting the use of bank cards for international online purchases, supporting digital transformation, and providing competitive advantages that meet customer expectations.



Pravasi Welfare Kuwait leaders during a meeting with Capt. Abdul Wahab Ibrahim Al Shatti, CEO of Kuwait Airways.

Second Dammam-Kochi charter set for April 21

Pravasi Welfare Kuwait arranges charter flight for stranded expats

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: In a significant humanitarian effort, Pravasi Welfare Kuwait, an expatriate association serving the Indian community in Kuwait, has successfully arranged a special charter flight to assist expatriates affected by ongoing travel disruptions caused by the Middle East conflict.

The Kuwait Airways chartered flight departed from Dammam, Saudi Arabia on April 7, carrying more than 250 passengers, and safely arrived in Kochi. This initiative has brought immense relief to expatriates, particularly those on visit visas and others facing uncertainty regarding their return amid the crisis.

To ensure smooth travel procedures, a dedicated check-in facility was set up at Khairan Mall, where Pravasi Welfare leaders and volunteers efficiently coordinated passenger processing. Passengers were also provided with snack packs prior to departure, enhancing their travel experience.

The return leg of the same charter flight has also been organized, enabling expatriates in Kerala to travel back to Kuwait. This has been especially beneficial for individuals with urgent work commitments or expiring visas,

offering timely support during a critical period.

Pravasi Welfare Kuwait emphasized that these services are being provided at affordable rates, despite a sharp increase in airfares and limited intervention from authorities during the ongoing crisis.

A second chartered flight, arranged in coordination with Al Hind Travels, is scheduled for April 21 on the Dammam-Kochi sector, with a return journey planned for April 22.

Earlier, Pravasi Welfare Kuwait leaders met with Capt. Abdul Wahab Ibrahim Al Shatti, CEO of Kuwait Airways, who assured full support to the expatriate community during this challenging time. The meeting was attended by President Rafeeq Babu Ponnundam, Treasurer Shoukath Valanchery, and Vice President Layik Ahamed. The charter flight project was led by Khaleel Rahman.

Notably, Pravasi Welfare Kuwait had previously organized a charter flight during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing fully free tickets to stranded expatriates with the support of generous donors – further demonstrating its continued commitment to community welfare.

KIG Kuwait hosts successful blood donation camp at Adan Blood Bank

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: A blood donation camp organized by Kerala Islamic Group (KIG) Kuwait was successfully conducted at Adan Blood Bank on Friday. The event witnessed an overwhelming response, with more than 175 registrations and 126 donors, reflecting a strong spirit of social responsibility and community service.

Members of the association along with the Malayalee community actively participated and donated blood with great enthusiasm. Considering the current situation in Kuwait, the association organized the camp as a meaningful contribution to the society.

The program was led by KIG General Secretary Sabik Yousef, CP Naisam, Abdulrazak Nadvi, Shafi P.T and area and unit leaders

of KIG Kuwait who graced the occasion and contributed to its success.

During the inaugural address, KIG President Anwer Saeed emphasized that blood donation is a vital social responsibility, highlighting that a single donation can save multiple lives.

KIG arranged refreshments for the donors and distributed certificates of appreciation as a token of gratitude.

The organizers expressed their sincere thanks to the medical staff of Adan Blood Bank for their valuable support and extended special appreciation to all the donors for their generous contribution.

The association also conveyed its gratitude to the committee members for their dedicated efforts in making the event a grand success.



Photo during the event.

Blood donation camp by KJPS Kuwait hailed as model community initiative

KJPS Kuwait, BDK host successful blood donation camp



Photos during the event.



KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Kollam Jilla Pravasi Samajam (KJPS), Kuwait, in association with the BDK Kuwait Chapter, successfully organized a blood donation camp at Jabriya Central Blood Bank.

The camp was conducted as part of its commitment to social service and humanitarian support, with a large number of members voluntarily coming forward to donate blood. KJPS is a fraternity of expatriates from Kollam district in Kuwait, working beyond caste, religion, and political differences, and

warmly welcomes all Kollam district residents to join its activities.

The camp was led by KJPS Executive Member Deepu Chandran along with BDK Kuwait volunteers. All donors were honored with certificates of appreciation.

The camp was inaugurated by KJPS President Binil T.D. The welcome address was delivered by BDK General Convener Nimish Kavalam, and the vote of thanks was delivered by KJPS Treasurer Ajay Nair. Felicitations were

given by KJPS General Secretary Shahed Labbha, Deepu Chandran, and BDK coordinators Rajan Thoitathil, Manoj Mavelikkara, and Nalinakshan.

The event was well coordinated by the KJPS Kuwait Executive Committee. BDK Kuwait noted that such initiatives play a vital role in promoting voluntary blood donation. Organizations and institutions interested in conducting blood donation camps or awareness sessions may contact BDK Kuwait at 69997588.



Left: Fish Liew reacts after receiving the Best Actress award for the movie 'Someone Like Me.' Right: Michelle Wai reacts after receiving the Best Supporting Actress award 'Ciao UFO.' (AP)



Left: Patrick Leung Pak Kin with the Best Director award for the movie 'Ciao UFO.' Right: Tony Leung Ka Fai reacts after receiving the Best Actor award for 'The Shadow's Edge.' (AP)



Cast and crew of the movie 'Ciao UFO' celebrate on stage after winning the Best Film award at the 44th Hong Kong Film Awards in Hong Kong on Sunday, April 19. (AP)

'Mummy' debuts at third

'Super Mario' still tops box office in third week

LOS ANGELES, April 20, (AP) — "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie" and "Project Hail Mary" dominated the North American box office again this weekend, leaving "Lee Cronin's The Mummy" in third place for its debut.

The Mario sequel has spent all of its first three weekends in the first place spot, this time adding \$35 million, according to studio estimates on Sunday. The Universal release has now made \$747.5 million worldwide.

"Project Hail Mary" meanwhile dropped only 15% in its fifth weekend, earning \$20.5 million and bringing its domestic total to \$285.1 million. Worldwide it's at \$573.1 million. Amazon MGM's hit is in the midst of another run on IMAX screens, after ceding them to "Mario" for two weeks. Filmmakers Phil Lord and Chris Miller, along with star Ryan Gosling, made an appearance at the industry trade show CinemaCon last week to thank theater owners for helping to make it the year's highest earning original film.

The weekend left "Lee Cronin's The Mummy," which opened wide in 3,404 locations, in third place with \$13.5 million. The R-rated movie, directed by the filmmaker behind "Evil Dead Rise" and produced by Jason Blum's Blumhouse and James Wan's Atomic Monster, did not resonate with critics or audiences, recording a 45% on Rotten Tomatoes and a lackluster C+ CinemaScore.

The film, starring Jack Reynor, follows a family whose missing daughter reappears, mummified and living. It devolves into a "a gross-out bloodfest," according to a review for The Associated Press. But it also only cost a reported \$22 million to produce, and with \$20.5 million from international showings, it already has a worldwide total of \$34 million.

"Horror movies had their biggest year in 2025," said Paul Dergarabedian, Comscore's head of marketplace trends. "So far that's not happening in 2026."

The Bob Odenkirk-led action movie "Normal," about a visiting sheriff in a Midwestern town, also opened this weekend, earning an estimated \$2.7 million. Directed by Ben Wheatley and released by Magnolia, "Normal" was better re-

ceived by critics (77% on Rotten Tomatoes) but also got a C+ CinemaScore from audiences, who were 65% male.

This weekend also had several high profile limited or art house releases, including the Lorne Michaels documentary "Lorne," and David Lowery's "Mother Mary," starring Anne Hathaway as a tormented pop star and Michaela Coel as her estranged designer. "Lorne," a Focus Features release, opened in 414 theaters in North America, earning an estimated \$270,000. A24's "Mother Mary" opened on five screens and made \$168,063.

Neither were enough to make the top 10, but one independent that did was the comedy "Busboys," co-starring David Spade and podcaster Theo Von, which managed to land in eighth place with \$1.6 million from 800 theaters.

Last year on this weekend, Warner Bros. opened "Sinners" to \$48 million. While the weekend is down from a year ago, the overall box office is still up over 16% from this time last year, and Dergarabedian gives a lot of credit to "Project Hail Mary."

Things will likely pick up next weekend as the Michael Jackson movie "Michael" arrives in theaters. Early tracking suggests the Lionsgate release is poised to earn more than \$60 million (some put it as high as \$75 to \$90 million) in its first weekend in North America, which would make it the biggest ever for a musical biopic. The current record-holder is "Straight Outta Compton" which opened to \$60 million in 2015. "Bohemian Rhapsody" debuted to \$50 million and went on to earn over \$910 million worldwide.

With final domestic figures being released Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at US and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore:

1. "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie," \$35 million;
2. "Project Hail Mary," \$20.5 million;
3. "Lee Cronin's The Mummy," \$13.5 million;
4. "The Drama," \$4.8 million;
5. "You, Me & Tuscan," \$3.8 million;
6. "Hoppers," \$2.9 million;
7. "Normal," \$2.7 million;
8. "Busboys," \$1.6 million;
9. "Bhooth Bangia," \$977,582
10. "A Great Awakening," \$823,667.

Film



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Natalie Grace in a scene from 'Lee Cronin's The Mummy.' (AP)

Arab characters bring authenticity to 'Mummy' reboot

Cronin's 'Mummy' gets demonic teen twist

LOS ANGELES, April 20, (AP) — The tagline for "Lee Cronin's The Mummy" is "Some things are meant to stay buried." That also applies to the misguided "Lee Cronin's The Mummy," which should definitely stay deep underground for eternity.

Let's face it, Mummy has always been the lamest of the classic, old-school monsters, a grunting, slow-moving and poorly bandaged zombie. Dracula has a bite, after all, and Frankenstein's monster has superhuman strength. What's Mummy going to do? Lumber us to death?

Cronin evidently believes there's still life in this old Egyptian cursed dude, despite being portrayed as the dim-witted straight guy in old Abbott and Costello movies or appearing as high priest Imhotep in the Brendan Fraser franchise.

So Cronin has resurrected The Mummy but grafted it onto the body of a demon possession movie. His Mummy is actually not a man at all, but a teenage girl who is controlled by an ancient demon and grunts a lot.

"Lee Cronin's The Mummy" - the title alone is a flex, like he gets his name on this thing like Guillermo del Toro, John Carpenter or Tyler Perry? - is overly long, constantly ping-pongs between Cairo and Albuquerque, New Mexico, and after a sedate

first half, plows into a gross-out bloodfest at the end that doesn't match the rest of the film.

Cronin, behind the surprise 2023 horror hit "Evil Dead Rise," is weirdly obsessed by toes and teeth, and while he gets kudos for having an Arabic-speaking main actor (a superb May Calamawy) and portraying real-feeling Middle Eastern characters, there's a feeling that no one wanted to edit his weirder impulses, like some light, inter-family cannibalism.

It starts with the abduction of a Cairo-based family's young daughter, who resurfaces eight years later in a 3,000-year-old sarcophagus, cata-tonic and showing symptoms of severe trauma. The sarcophagus literally has dropped out of the sky as part of a plane crash.

"She just needs our care and support and time," the dad (Jack Reynor, remaining good despite the slog) says until his daughter starts moving like a feral creature, doing horror-movie bone cracking poses, projectile vomiting, creeping behind walls and eating bugs. You know, like most teenagers.

He teams up with our Cairo-based cop to unravel the mystery of what happened to his eldest daughter, who starts messing with her family - levitating some, hypnotizing others to slam their heads into wood beams, all with a creepy, sing-

song voice. It's The Mummy as influencer.

"We can't fix her if we don't know what happened to her," says dad, who goes so far as consulting with an expert on the cursive writing system used for Ancient Egypt.

Cronin leans into all the horror cliches - storms, dollhouses, flickering lights, muttered spells, whacked-out cults, bathtubs filled with rotting water, skittering insects and random coyotes - to establish a staid and eerie foundation, only to go over-the-top gorefest at the end, which prompted laughter at a recent showing.

The Egyptian-US detective story grafted onto this monster movie is a nice touch but gets lost, and there's perhaps the weirdest use of The Band's classic song "The Weight." (Cronin also uses a Bruce Springsteen song.)

In publicity material for the movie, Cronin reveals that he made his movie after realizing there hasn't been a truly terrifying version made of "The Mummy." He's right. Even after his own offering.

"Lee Cronin's The Mummy," a Warner Bros. Pictures release that is currently in theaters, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for strong disturbing violent content, gore, language and brief drug use. Running time: 133 minutes. Half a star out of four.

Variety

NEW YORK: New York City Mayor **Zohran Mamdani** is still making money from his short-lived career as a multilingual rapper, tax filings show.

But the 34-year-old Democrat's meteoric rise as a celebrity politician has brought only a modest increase in hip-hop profits: he took home \$1,643 in music royalties last year, up only slightly from \$1,267 in 2024, according to the filings.

Mamdani, who rapped under the monikers "Young Cardamom" and "Mr. Cardamom," joked Thursday that New Yorkers should "go to Spotify" if they want to help his bottom line. "A lot of people say they're lis-



Mamdani

tening," he added. "They're not listening."

Mamdani began rapping in high school, releasing socially conscious songs in his 20s on subjects ranging from Indian flatbread to colonialism. He has described himself as a "C-list rapper" following in the footsteps of his childhood heroes, including the indie-rap group Das Racist.

The tax filings, shared with reporters Thursday, showed the bulk of Mamdani's 2025 earnings came from his \$131,296 salary as a state Assembly member. His wife netted an additional \$10,010 for graphic design work. In total, they reported a joint income of roughly \$145,000.

As mayor, Mamdani is set to earn a salary of \$258,750 this year. (AP)

NEW YORK: Chris Pronger played for five teams during nearly two decades in the NHL. He has bounced around just as much since his playing days came to an end.

Writing a book is the latest chapter of the Hall of Fame defenseman's winding post-career journey. "Earned: The True Cost of Greatness from One of Hockey's Fiercest Competitors" came out Tuesday.

"I've done a lot of different things," Pronger said in a phone interview. "I went down the path of working in the league office, and then I worked for a team and then I took a break from hockey and helped my wife build out her business and kind of had the entrepreneurial bug and started to dive into business in that regard. And now kind of full-circle. I've kind of come back into hockey in the sense of broadcasting and public speaking."

A stick to the right eye and the ensuing injury and concussion forced him to call it quits in 2011. Pronger said his first steps were getting healthy, retraining the eye and dealing with the post-concussion symptoms.

"That took some time," Pronger said. "That was a challenge just in watching the games. You still think you can play. I had to realize first and foremost, this is not happening. I'm not physically able to do it." (AP)



Russian film director Aleksandr Sokurov holds an envelope with a letter to Russian director and Chairman of the Union of Cinematographers of the Russian Federation Nikita Mikhalkov, while speaking prior to the screening of his movie 'Director's Diary' on the sidelines of the 48th Moscow International Film Festival in Moscow, on Sunday, April 19. (AP)

Brazilian superstar talks new album, 'SNL' and faith

Anitta, like you've never heard her before

NEW YORK, April 20, (AP) — The lights are low in Studio 8H. All eyes — and all cameras, of which there are at least half a dozen — are on Anitta. The Brazilian superstar stands in the center, flanked by dancers and a small band lining the stage. It's quiet enough to hear a pin drop. A stand-in announces, "Ladies and Gentlemen, Anitta," before a flash of red light fills the room. And just like that, it's show time.

This is the famed "Saturday Night Live" set at New York City's 30 Rockefeller Plaza, and Anitta is running through two new songs — "Choka Choka" featuring Shakira, and "Varias Quejas," a Spanish-language version of an Olodum classic, a cultural group from Bahia, Brazil — during rehearsal last week.

Both songs are standouts from her forthcoming album, "Equilibrium," an eclectic mix of Brazilian funk, samba, bossa nova, semba, reggae, electronic pop, Portuguese, Spanish and English — the kind of release that could only be made mainstream by Brazil's most globally popular musician since Astrud Gilberto sang "The Girl From Ipanema" over six decades ago.

"I think this is the most Brazilian thing I've ever, ever done on television in America," Anitta told The Associated Press in the NBC offices shortly thereafter.

And "Equilibrium?" "100% my most Brazilian album," the artist born Larissa de Macedo Machado says. "I really wanted to do an album honoring my roots."

"Equilibrium" is a sonic jump from her last release, 2024's "Funk Generation." That was a full-on tribute to Brazilian funk — what is frequently referred to as funk carioca or baile funk and is heard in working-class neighborhoods known as favelas around Rio de Janeiro. It's a combination of Brazilian rhythms, African and electronic music and rap that has been

stigmatized like hip-hop and reggaeton before it. The genre still exists on "Equilibrium," but so does a myriad sounds — and beliefs — from her homeland.

"Some of the songs are honoring some entities from Yoruba culture, from Orishas," she says, referring to the religion that originated in West Africa and its divine spirits, like on the track "Naná." "One of the songs talks about God and how do I see God in life."

It should come as no surprise to Anitta fans: In 2024, she released a music video for the song "Aceita," which featured a video depicting rituals of the Afro-Brazilian faith Candomblé, sparking controversy in a country where religious intolerance is all too common. Elevating marginalized populations, religious groups and also women, residents of favelas, LGBTQ+ and Black people has always been a core feature of Anitta's public persona.

Naturally, "Equilibrium" is also a full-on embrace of community. The album is stacked with Brazilian collaborators, like the rising songwriter Melly, Liniker's award-winning samba rock-and-then-some, the Brazilian reggae band Ponto de Equilíbrio and countless others. Even "Choka Choka," the assertive single with Colombian superstar Shakira, is a love letter to Anitta's culture: The "She Wolf" singer performs in Portuguese.

"Anitta wanted to create something for Brazil, but with an international touch," said "Choka Choka" co-producer Daramola in a press statement. Its Brazilian funk percussion "has a lot of energy, a lot of intensity. And who better to represent that sound than Anitta and Shakira?"

The song, like the rest of "Equilibrium," seeks to deliver a universal message with regional sounds. Where she could've leaned into conventional, commercial music trends, she doubled down on what

makes Anitta, Anitta instead. Clearly the world — and "Saturday Night Live" — are paying attention.

In the past, "If I wanted to reach certain audience, I would do more English or Spanish or whatever," she says. "And I just think ... I don't know if people are accepting better. I don't care that much as I used to."

She still sings in three languages, but Portuguese takes a front seat. That may be because this is the freest Anitta has sounded on record. Consider a song like the syrupy "Vai Dar Cão" featuring rapper Ebony and producer Papatinho, with its sample of DJ Mandrake and MC Tikão's "A Pedido," built over a late-night-at-the-club interpolation of Art of Noise's 1984 New Age classic "Moments In Love." Anitta's raps are earned show boasts, something that doesn't feel out of place next to the nylon-string classical guitars of a softer song, like "Temura."

On "Equilibrium," specificity and storytelling is key. "The last song, we also bring a mantra from the God Tara, which is a female God, from another type of religion," she says.

Anitta is referring to "Ouro," a collaboration with the Brazilian duo Emanazul who describe their work as medicine music. She calls the song a "meditation."

"I don't want people to think this is one type of thinking, one direction. I like to join forces," she says. "I think that's what this album is about: honoring Brazilian roots, honoring everything that I think can make us feel elevated."

If she sounds self-actualized, that's because it is her ambition for the album. "I think the main message is, like, we are all one. We live in a planet, Mother Earth. It's our home. We're supposed to just live in harmony with each other, respect each other's flavors, decisions, ways of communicating. We should be just, like, admiring our differences," she says.



Anitta poses for a portrait in New York on Thursday, April 9, (AP)



A visitor sits among the daffodils in the courtyard of the Beguinage Ten Wijngaerde of Bruges, Belgium, Tuesday March 10, 2026. (AP)

Ancient women's refuge still thrives in Bruges

Belgium's Beguinages: Tranquil oases in a world of noise, chaos

BRUGES, Belgium, April 20, (AP) — The clatter of suitcases rolling over cobblestones, motorboats chugging along a canal and visitors chattering in a smattering of languages provide a soundtrack to Bruges that makes it clear you are in one of Belgium's most touristic cities.

And yet, about two dozen women residents and visitors have found a hidden sanctuary from its bustle in a spot over a small bridge and under an ornate arch with an engraved Latin phrase "sauvegarde," or "safe place" in English.

Nestled in a sea of yellow daffodils lies an oasis of calm and tranquility founded in 1245: the Princely Beguinage Ten Wijngaerde of Bruges.

For 22 years, Trees Dewever has called this beguinage her home. She said it provides "an overwhelming feeling of calm and I think we need that in this world."

Her neighbor, 23-year beguinage resident Jo Verplaetsen, said the spirit of the medieval shelter is today soothing and social. "Each day you are thankful to be here," she said.

However serene now, the beguinages emerged after the 12th century as an antidote to devastation.

Conflicts in the Middle Ages ravaged the male population, creating a glut of widows and single women who needed some kind of stability. They often chose the looser rules of the beguinages instead of stricter convents, said Michel Vanholder, a volunteer at the Grand Beguinage Church of Mechelen.

"They didn't want to go become nuns but nevertheless they wanted to live together without men because there were not enough men to marry," he said.

Women who joined were called beguines, and while forbidden to marry while residing in the beguinages, they were allowed free egress, could own their own property and did not take religious vows of celibacy and poverty like nuns in adjacent convents.

"Women who didn't want to become real nuns or religious could have an in-between form, becoming a beguine," said Brigitte Beernaert, who moved into the Bruges beguinage more than 20 years ago.

Women in the beguinage often worked caring for the sick and poor, but also earned money with needlework and weaving lace. Some plowed profits back into the community.

But the beguinages were at different times embraced and persecuted by the Vatican. One prominent beguine, the French Christian mystic Marguerite Porete, was condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake in 1310.

Novelists Ken Follett, Charlotte Brönte and Umberto Eco have written about the beguines and their male counterparts the beghards.

Architecturally, the beguinages were



Brigitte Beernaert, (left), and Jo Verplaetsen speak during an interview in a house inside the Beguinage Ten Wijngaerde in Bruges. (AP)



Swans sleep outside the gate of the Beguinage Ten Wijngaerde in Bruges. (AP)

designed for like-minded women to live in comfort, quiet and safety, with small gardens tucked into either easily accessible alleys or around a main square with houses facing a common courtyard. The heart of the community was almost always a chapel or church.

Today, UNESCO recognizes as world heritage sites 13 beguinages in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking northern half of Belgium. German tourist Biata Weissbaecker who was visiting Bruges with her husband Achim said that such spaces were and remain crucial.

"Women need a place like this: a safe place that gives them the possibility to go inside themselves." While the last beguine in Belgium, Marcella Pattijn, died in 2013 at the age of 92, the central tenet of the beguinage community has persevered over the past 800 years.

"Once you are in here, you are safe — that was of course literal in the

Middle Ages, once you lived here, the law couldn't take you away," she said. "Today it's more like a safe place for women alone."

The beguinage of Bruges to this day still allows only women, although the grounds are now owned and maintained by the city itself, with residents renting from the city.

The beguinages of Belgium organize public activities hoping to foster community within through gardening, and outside through open houses.

A few of the Bruges residents recently planted raspberry bushes against the wall near the canal and they keep bee hives for honey. "The world is terrible for the moment, and this gives us the impression that it's still safe here," said Beernaert. "This gives Bruges already a little bit of a small paradise, if you want. And living inside that paradise feels unbelievable."

Music

Peixoto spreads message of peace and coexistence

Priest DJ spins techno tribute to late Pope Francis in Argentina's capital

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, April 20, (AP) — Pope Francis reappeared in Argentina's capital a year after his death, but it wasn't a miracle: It was through the hands of a DJ-priest.

Guilherme Peixoto is a Portuguese Catholic priest who, in his 50s, has become a celebrity in the world of electronic music. He hosted a rave Saturday in Buenos Aires in homage to the Argentine-born leader of the Catholic church who died in April 2025.

As young and old, Catholics and agnostics alike, danced to the music Peixoto controlled from his DJ booth, three enormous screens projected images of the late Popes Francis and John Paul II as well as white doves.

"God bless you, and let's dance," a voice-over said before Peixoto appeared in priestly attire and headphones at the historic Plaza de Mayo. He then placed his hands on the console and for the next two hours mixed techno and religious melodies.

"This is a unique opportunity to see him, and it's free," said Jesús Martín, a 54-year-old Spaniard and electronic music fan. "In Ibiza, you have to pay 150 euros, and up to 2,000 euros for VIP."

Peixoto — better known as Padre Guilherme — has become a global sensation, performing around the world to large audiences and amassing a following of 2.8 million people on Instagram and over 220,000 monthly streams on Spotify. He was ordained a priest in 1999, partly out of religious vocation and partly to fulfill a promise his mother made to God when he suffered a life-threatening illness as a child.

Electronic music became a hobby alongside his priestly career. In the 2000s, he began playing at universities and organizing parties to raise funds for his parish, but he asked that no one take his picture for fear of reprisals from his superiors.

Those fears dissipated when Monsignor Jorge Bergoglio assumed leadership of the Catholic Church as Pope Francis in 2013.

"He often said, 'Don't be afraid,'



Portuguese Catholic priest, Padre Guilherme performs an open-air DJ set at the Plaza de Mayo, honoring the first year anniversary of Pope Francis' passing in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Saturday, April 18. (AP)

that we had to go out to the peripheries and that 'We shouldn't be afraid to use our hands.' These messages were an inspiration." Peixoto recalled in an interview with The Associated Press ahead of his performance in Buenos Aires.

So, he enrolled in a DJ school, contacted electronic music producers and began composing his own tracks. Eventually, invitations to participate in festivals and play in clubs across Portugal began to arrive.

The priest burst onto the world stage after his performances at World Youth Day in 2023, before the open-air Mass celebrated by Pope Francis.

"I will never lose this connection with Pope Francis," Peixoto said. "He was the one who touched my heart with this facet of music."

Many attending his Saturday rave knew little about the priest-DJ. "I learned about him when the tribute to Francis was first announced. I came to remember the Pope, but I think what he does is very original, as long as it's done respectfully," Silvia Garaggiola, 60, said.

Saturday's set list included Peixoto's hit "El Grano de Mostaza" and remixes of Bad Bunny and Queen.

From the Medusa Festival in Cullera, Spain, to Dreamfields in Mexico, or the Hi Ibiza club — in that Spanish resort town often dubbed the "Vatican" of electronic music — Peixoto broadcasts a message of peace and coexistence to thousands of young people, the vast majority of whom are not practicing Catholics.

Amid the smoke of tobacco and marijuana cigarettes, several groups of teenagers danced and imitated the DJ priest's hand movements, while laser lights gave Plaza de Mayo the appearance of a nightclub.

"It sounds really good," commented 17-year-old Ileana González. "I have zero religion, but I'm having fun."

The Curia's resistance to modernization, its rejection of sexual diversity and the scandals involving the abuse of minors have erected a wall between the Catholic Church and younger generations — a barrier that Pope Francis sought to dismantle through his revolutionary papacy.

Tanzania steps up heritage restoration

Zanzibar revives historic Stone Town

ZANZIBAR, Tanzania, April 20, (Xinhua) — Stone Town, the historic core of Tanzania's Zanzibar City, is undergoing a wide-ranging restoration program to preserve its architectural and cultural integrity, according to a local official.

Suhad Sultan Alawi, director of Control and Monitoring at the Stone Town Conservation and Development Authority, told Xinhua that this year alone, the government has allocated about 11 billion Tanzanian shillings (about 4.31 million U.S. dollars) to the

effort. The initiative, which also includes the upgrading of streets, roads and public spaces, reflects a renewed commitment by authorities to safeguard the island's heritage.

As a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of East Africa's most treasured cultural landscapes, Stone Town is defined by its maze of narrow streets, coral rag architecture, intricately carved wooden doors, and a living heritage shaped by African, Arab, Per-

sian, Indian and European influences.

Alawi told Xinhua that restoration progress has been steady, despite the inherent complexity of restoring historic structures. Around 20 buildings have already undergone major renovation, including five funded directly by the government, while development partners and private investors are supporting others through public-private partnerships.

Among the most prominent projects is the restoration of the iconic House of Wonders, which is now about 60 percent complete, Alawi said. Other notable efforts include the Old Fort and the historic High Court building in Vega, which is nearing completion.

Several smaller buildings have already been successfully restored, he added, noting that the process has not been without challenges.

"Many of the specialized materials required for restoration, particularly for Grade I heritage buildings, are not available locally and must be imported, often resulting in long delays," he said.

For example, key structural elements for the House of Wonders, such as cast iron columns and beams, have had to be sourced from abroad, with shipping timelines of up to six or seven months. Alawi said that even traditional materials like mangrove poles can be difficult to procure consistently.



Pedestrians walk past the Catholic Museum Zanzibar in Stone Town, Zanzibar, Tanzania, March 24, 2026. (Xinhua)

Strong foundation for future cancer research and cancer intelligence

Massive cancer genome study to unlock new treatment paths

SAN DIEGO, April 20, (AP): Researchers from Inocras, a bioinformatics-led company harnessing the power of whole-genome data and proprietary analytics to advance precision health, and the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard will jointly present new insights from a collaborative initiative to analyze large-scale whole genome data during the AACR Annual Meeting 2026 in San Diego. The collaboration delivers one of the largest cancer whole-genome analyses from over 8,000 cancer whole-genomes, generated by the NCI's The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA), across more than 30 cancer types.

For two decades, cancer genomic data has underpinned many of the most important discoveries in cancer genomics. However, most studies have relied primarily on whole-exome sequencing (WES), which covers only ~1-2% of the genome, leaving the majority of the genome unexplored. The Inocras-Broad collaboration analyzes whole-genome sequences (WGS) released by TCGA, delivering an unprecedented, well-curated genomic dataset that can serve as an ideal training set for building artificial intelligence (AI) models to usher in a new era of whole-

genome AI-driven precision oncology.

TCGA WGS data was analyzed in parallel with two variant calling pipelines from Broad and Inocras; the December 1, 2025 analysis freeze marks a joint commitment to ensure variant call quality, integrity, and reproducibility. All the data were consolidated into a single frozen dataset to enable a consistent analysis across both groups and robust benchmarking of computational and AI methods.

"With this analysis initiative, we are collectively setting a new standard for cancer genomics," said the principal investigators (PIs) of the Inocras-Broad collaboration: Drs. Gad Getz, PhD, a professor of pathology at Harvard Medical School, Director of Bioinformatics at the Krantz Family Center for Cancer Research and Dept. of Pathology at Massachusetts General Hospital and Core Institute Member at Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard; Esther Rheinbay, PhD, Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center and Associate Member at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard; and Young Seok Ju, MD, PhD, co-founder of Inocras and Associate professor

at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology. "Whole-exome data has already transformed our understanding of cancer based on a narrow slice of the genome. Now, with harmonized full whole-genome insights, researchers can explore the complete landscape of cancer to identify noncoding driver mutations, genome ploidy assessment, structural variants (SVs) across intergenic and intronic regions, and mutational signatures, among other new insights to further advance translational cancer research."

Leveraging high-depth, PCR-free WGS, the new analysis of the somatic mutation landscape in 31 cancer types improved the discovery of new driver events by incorporating the analysis of non-coding regions, genome-wide copy number alterations, and genomic rearrangements.

Some of the insights include: Across all tumors, (i) more than 250 million variants were identified with >1 million somatic SVs, as well as (ii) new coding and non-coding candidate driver mutations, (iii) new genomic signatures of chromosomal instability, (iv) new promoter/enhancer somatic copy number alterations, (v) new patterns of alterations in the previously

understudied X and Y chromosomes, and (vi) new candidate SV drivers; moreover, the data show (vii) pathogenic and likely pathogenic germline variants in established cancer predisposition genes affecting about 10% of all cases.

Through the initiative, the PIs have together built a robust foundation to analyze cancer whole genomes at industry-scale. "The Inocras-Broad collaboration reflects our belief that the most impactful discoveries emerge from open, rigorous, and deeply collaborative science," said Jehee Suh, CEO of Inocras. "Through this partnership, we are not just generating findings - we are building the foundation of a scalable, whole-genome-driven ecosystem for cancer research and clinical translation. I believe this foundation will accelerate discovery, enable clinical adoption, and advance the next generation of cancer intelligence."

The PIs from Inocras and the Broad Institute will jointly present data highlights and discuss future initiatives during the Exhibitor Spotlight session "TCGA and Beyond: Whole-Genome Data Powering the Next Era of Cancer Intelligence" on Monday, April 20th.



This photo taken on April 15, 2026, shows the operating arms of a surgical robot developed by Chinese surgical robotics company Edge Medical during a surgery in Warsaw, Poland. (Xinhua)

'3D view feels like inside body'

Chinese surgical robots gain ground in Poland

WARSAW, April 20, (Xinhua): In an operating room at a leading medical institute in Warsaw, Poland, a Chinese-made surgical robot moves with quiet precision under the control of urologist Pawel Wisz.

The system, developed by Chinese surgical robotics company Edge Medical, was introduced at the National Medical Institute of the Ministry of Interior and Administration in 2025. It has since joined the hospital's daily surgical practice.

With a 3D view magnified up to 10 times, it allows surgeons to operate as if they were inside the patient's body, Magdalena Augustyn, a senior clinical robotics manager at Polish medical device distributor Meden-Inmed, explained to Xinhua.

While routinely used in the operating room, the robot has also made it possible for the team to carry out remote procedures.

Just a month earlier, Wisz operated from a remote surgery control center in China's southwest city of Chengdu, nearly 7,000 kms away, controlling the robot back in Warsaw. As part of an international surgical robotics conference hosted by the West China Hospital of Sichuan University, Wisz and his team carried out two cross-border operations at a remote surgery center: one heart procedure and one on the urinary system.

"It was a fantastic experience, and we had strong technical support throughout," institute director Piotr Suwalski told Xinhua.

"The requirement for signal reliability is extremely high," Wisz noted. During the cross-border procedures, network latency was kept to just 30 milliseconds.

"For comparison, a human blink takes about 15 milliseconds," he said. "In practice, you don't feel the delay. It feels like a normal local operation."

The strong performance of China's remote robotic surgery technology has strengthened the Polish team's confidence in its reliability. Wisz noted that the technology is already well established in clinical practice in China, while Europe is still at an early stage of adoption.

The institute is among at least 10 hospitals in Poland that have introduced Chinese surgical robots in recent years, according to Pawel Rusinek, business development director at Meden-Inmed.

"The quality of Chinese products has improved significantly, and they are now able to compete with leading global brands," he told Xinhua, adding that orders have also come in from other Eastern European countries, including Romania and the Czech Republic.

Rusinek noted that flexibility is another key reason the distributor chose to work with Chinese suppliers. "When we suggest changes, whether technical or related to the business model, the response is quick. They listen and adapt more easily than European or American companies," he added.

"Having the equipment is one thing. Training doctors to use it is even more important," Suwalski said, pointing to China's structured training systems. He added that the institute plans to establish its own robotic surgery training center by the end of the year for doctors in Poland and across Europe.

Suwalski also said the institute is preparing to receive its second Chinese-made robot, a single-port system designed to operate through a single incision, which could reduce trauma and speed up patient recovery.

"This would be a unique installation in Eastern Europe," Suwalski said. He is expected to lead a delegation to South China's Shenzhen for training on the new system.

"It's a very interesting technology, and I'm sure it will develop quickly," he said. "We are excited to see it."

'Move to prioritize polluters over people'

EPA's chemical plastic recycling rule changes spark environmental fears

NEW YORK, April 20, (AP): The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is reconsidering whether facilities that recycle plastic chemically should be held to the same strict air pollution standards as incinerators.

The possible change is alarming environmental advocates who say it would lead to more dangerous pollution spewing into communities, with fewer or no checks at the federal level. The plastics industry disputes that, saying it would clear up confusion while still controlling emissions.

The world is pumping millions of tons of plastic pollution into the environment every year. While dozens of countries and many environmental groups have urged caps on production, industry and several big oil-producing countries have resisted, arguing instead for improvements in reuse and recycling.

Chemical recycling uses heat or chemicals to break down plastics. The main method, a process known as pyrolysis, has long been regulated as incineration by the Clean Air Act. The EPA limits emissions from incinerators of nine air pollutants, including toxic particulates, heavy metals and dioxins.

The agency says a potential new rule could instead recognize pyrolysis as manufacturing.

The American Chemistry Council, an industry group, has long argued for such a change.

"The definition of incineration is to destroy it, right? You're literally trying to make it go away," said Ross Eisenberg, president of America's Plastic Makers, who leads ACC's plastics advocacy. "That's not what they're doing here. They are trying to preserve it and recover the materials, which is recycling, which is manufacturing."

Judith Enck, a former EPA regional administrator who now heads Beyond Plastics, opposes what she said would be a "much weaker level of environmental protection."

"Chemical recycling companies know that if they want to operate, they need to get this essential Clean Air Act permit and they don't like it," she said. "They have spent decades trying to convince EPA to change the rules of the game. Republican and Democratic administrations have declined to do this. But they have hit the jackpot with the Trump administration."

The EPA regulates pyrolysis under section 129 of the act, which reduces air pollution from four categories of solid waste incineration units. The agency told The Associated Press that a final rule in 2005 that included "pyrolysis/combustion units" under that section was vague and caused confusion for the industry.

EPA said it's taking public comment for a potential rule that could recognize pyrolysis as manufacturing



Ground up plastics that Alterra Energy receives from recycling facilities, move along a conveyor at the start of their process that transforms the material into a liquid that is then used in the manufacturing of plastic in Akron, Ohio, Sept. 8, 2022. (AP)

under a different section, 111, of the Clean Air Act.

John Walke, who leads the Natural Resources Defense Council's national clean air advocacy, said Section 111 doesn't regulate as many pollutants as 129. He also argued that EPA's plan is skipping crucial steps in a lengthy, required rulemaking process.

Walke also said the EPA move would amount to the immediate deregulation of these facilities under the act. He said it would take several years to follow the legal process to regulate the industry under another section, leaving a gap where no federal emissions standards would apply.

"You could have a facility that was controlled on a Monday, preventing those hazardous air pollutants from being emitted into the atmosphere, and on Tuesday, the facility would have legal permission to turn off installed pollution controls to allow the unlimited release of hazardous air pollution into the same community that was better protected on Monday," he said. "Why would they do that? Why would they turn off an installed pollution control device? Because it costs money to operate them."

Eisenberg disputed that. He said other sections of the Clean Air Act would still apply, and facilities get state permits, so the emissions would still be controlled and surrounding communities would be safe. They are "so heavily regulated," Eisenberg said.

More than 90% of plastics aren't recycled, according to the American Chemistry Council. It promises that chemical, or advanced, recycling can change that. As a complement to traditional mechanical recycling, chemical recycling can help dramatically reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills while generating a diverse range of products, the ACC says.

The process breaks plastics down

into liquid and gas to produce an oil-like mixture or basic chemicals, that can be used to make new plastics or fuels. It's like "unbaking a cake," Eisenberg said.

Environmental groups say advanced recycling is waste disposal, not recycling, and a distraction from real solutions like producing and using less plastic.

There are six pyrolysis plants, operating in Ohio, Texas, North Carolina, Indiana and Georgia, plus one under construction in Arizona and another in West Virginia, and a small test project in Maryland, according to the American Chemistry Council. The ACC has been lobbying states and Congress to pass laws to regulate chemical recycling as manufacturing. Twenty-five states now do, and legislation is pending in Congress.

Despite that legislative success, Eisenberg said the number of proposals to build these plants has dwindled in recent years, in part because of the permitting process.

"I often ask people to take a step back," he said. "Do you want more recycling? If the answer is yes, then we should do what we can to make sure that you can bring more recycling online."

Eisenberg said they've made clear to the Trump administration that revising the Clean Air Act is a priority. EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin toured Exxon-Mobil's Baytown, Texas, facility to see chemical recycling in person last year.

In March, the EPA published a notice requesting comment on a proposed rule to consolidate regulations for another type of incinerator, with a small section soliciting comment on removing the reference to pyrolysis. The EPA mentioned it at the end of its press release on air curtain incinerators, too.

Tampering cited

Baby food pulled over rat poison

VIENNA, April 20, (AP): Baby food brand HiPP is recalling some of its baby food jars after samples in Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic tested positive for rat poison, officials said.

Authorities believe the tampering occurred in 190-gram (6.7-ounce) jars of baby food made with carrots and potatoes for 5-month-olds that were sold from SPAR supermarkets in Austria. The first sample tested positive for the poison on Saturday.

"This recall is not due to any product or quality defect on our part. The jars left our HiPP facility in perfect condition," HiPP said in a statement. "The recall is related to a criminal act currently under investigation by the authorities."

HiPP said it is recalling all of its baby food jars sold at SPAR supermarkets - which include SPAR, EUROSPAR, INTER-SPAR and Maximarkt stores - in Austria as a precaution. Customers can get full refunds even without a receipt. Vendors in Slovakia and the Czech Republic have removed all of the brand's baby jars from sale.

Free care: The 28th Chinese medical team, based in Lome, on Friday organized a day of free medical consultations, along with donations of medicines, at the Sino-Togolese sugar company (SINTO), located in Anie, about 180 km north of the Togolese capital.

A total of 150 employees of the sugar company, a product of China-Togo cooperation, benefited from the consultations, which were held as part of the "100 teams for 1,000 villages" initiative.

"We fulfill our medical mission through concrete actions and bear witness to the deep and enduring friendship between China and Togo," said Guo Juanjuan, head of the 28th Chinese medical team.

She noted that Chinese doctors carry out daily diagnoses, surgical operations, as well as teaching and training activities, in hospital wards, operating rooms and rural clinics.

"We now regard Togo as our second homeland and Togolese patients as our own family," she added.

Mao Shi, CEO of SINTO, said the voluntary consultations embody the benevolence of Chinese doctors and provide sincere and valuable support to the sugar company.

Fires that surge at night are tougher to fight

Climate change extends wildfire-prone conditions

WASHINGTON, April 20, (AP): Burning time for North American wildfires is going into overtime. Flames are lasting later into the night and starting earlier in the morning because human-caused climate change is extending the hotter and drier conditions that feed fires, a new study found.

Fires used to die down or even die out at night as temperatures dropped and humidity increased, but that's happening less often. The number of hours in North America when the weather is favorable for wildfires is 36% higher than 50 years ago, according to a study Friday in Science Advances.

Places such as California have 550 more potential burning hours than the mid-1970s. Parts of southwestern New Mexico and central Arizona are seeing as much as 2,000 more hours a year when the weather is prone to burning fires, the highest increase seen in the study, which looked at Canada and the United States. The research looked at times when conditions were ripe for fire, but that didn't mean fires occurred during all that time.

Fires that surge at night are tougher to fight and included the Lahaina, Hawaii fire in 2023, the Jasper fire in Alberta in 2024 and the Los Angeles fires in 2025, the study said. Maui's fire ignited at 12:22 a.m.

It's not just the clock that is getting extended. The calendar is too. The number



A firefighter battles the Canyon Fire on Aug. 7, 2025, in Hasley Canyon, Calif. (AP)

of days with fire-prone weather increased by 44%, which effectively added 26 days over the past half century.

It's mostly from warmer, drier nighttime weather, with a bit of extra wind, the study authors said.

"Fires normally slow down during the night, or they just stop," said study co-author Xianli Wang, a fire scientist with the Canadian Forest Service. "But under extreme fire hazard conditions, fire actually burns through the night or later into the night."

And Wang said Earth's warming atmosphere means it's like to get worse.

Fires that don't "go to sleep" get a running start the next day, making it harder to knock them down. University of California Merced fire scientist John Abatzoglou, who wasn't part of the study, said in an email. "Nights aren't what they used to be - that is, more reliable breaks for wildfire," he added. "Widespread warming and lack of humidity is keeping fires up at night."

Wildland firefighter Nicholai Allen,

who also founded a firm that makes home fire prevention tools, said it's very difficult to fight fires at night.

"You have to understand that you have snakes and bears and mountain lions and all the stuff you have in daytime," Allen said, noting a colleague was bitten by a bear. "But at night, they're really scared and they're running away from the fire."

The Canadian researchers analyzed nearly 9,000 larger fires from 2017 to 2023 using a weather satellite and other tools to get hour-by-hour data on atmospheric conditions during the fires, such as humidity, temperature, wind, rain and fuel moisture levels. They created a computer model that correlated weather conditions and fire status and applied to historical data in Canada and the United States from 1975 to 2016.

Scientists have long said heat-trapping gases from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas make nights warm faster than days because of increased cloud cover that absorbs and re-emits heat down to Earth at night like a blanket. Since 1975, summers in the contiguous US have seen nighttime lowest temperature warm by 2.6 degrees Fahrenheit (1.4 degrees Celsius), while daytime highest temperatures have gone up 2.2 degrees Fahrenheit (1.2 degrees Celsius), according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Composite image unveiled

AIMS experts map over 1,000 hidden coral reefs

SYDNEY, April 20 (Xinhua): Scientists have discovered and mapped over 1,000 previously uncharted coral reefs in northern Australia, vastly expanding known marine habitat in the region.

The reefs, stretching from Houtman Abrolhos in the state of Western Australia through to western Cape York in the state of Queensland, have until now been mostly invisible and overlooked in conservation and development planning, said a statement of the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) released Monday.

The Marine and Coastal Hub project, led by AIMS in partnership with the University of Queensland, unveiled the reefs which are typically hidden in sediment-rich waters, it said, adding they were revealed not by sea expeditions but through advanced analysis of satellite imagery.

Combining around 200 satellite images of the area, the team created a composite image, which allowed them to "peek deeper into the water column" and map the reefs, researchers said.

The work revealed that northern Australia had a similar quantity of reefs as the Great Barrier Reef, though many were much smaller, said AIMS e-Atlas Project Manager Eric Lawrey.

"It's a vast set of reefs that's been largely unknown about," Lawrey said, adding that the reefs, being a habitat for a wide range of marine life, were possibly known by locals.

Previously, most of the northern Australian coastline was unsurveyed. The best mapping could be found in the marine charts, which did not distinguish between coral reefs and rocky reefs as they were simply designed to warn vessels to stay clear.

The team mapped and classified over 3,600 coral and 2,900 rocky reefs, creating the first comprehensive view of northern Australia's reef boundaries, with final datasets available through public data portals, bolstering marine ecosystem protection.

SPORTS

Fitzpatrick holds off Scheffler in nerve-shredding playoff

Green rallies to win JM Eagle LA Championship for 3rd time in 4 years

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C., April 20, (AP): Matt Fitzpatrick of England delivered another magnificent shot in a playoff at Harbour Town to quiet the pro-American crowd and take down the world's best player, hitting 4-iron to 13 feet for birdie to defeat Scottie Scheffler for his second title in the RBC Heritage.

Scheffler, trailing by three shots with four holes to play, forced a playoff with a pair of late birdies for a 4-under 67 and some help from Fitzpatrick, who hit a poor chip from right of the green and missed a 20-foot par putt for his only bogey of the day and a 70.

The large gallery that was allowed to come onto the fairway short of the 18th green in regulation filled the Calibogue Sound with endless chants of "U-S-A! U-S-A!" They returned outside the ropes to see Fitzpatrick hit 4-iron into a stiff breeze to a pin just over the bunker.

Scheffler followed with his worst swing of the day, a 6-iron he fanned so badly that it came up 37 yards short of the hole. He hit a superb pitch to 8 feet, but never had to putt when Fitzpatrick made the winning putt.

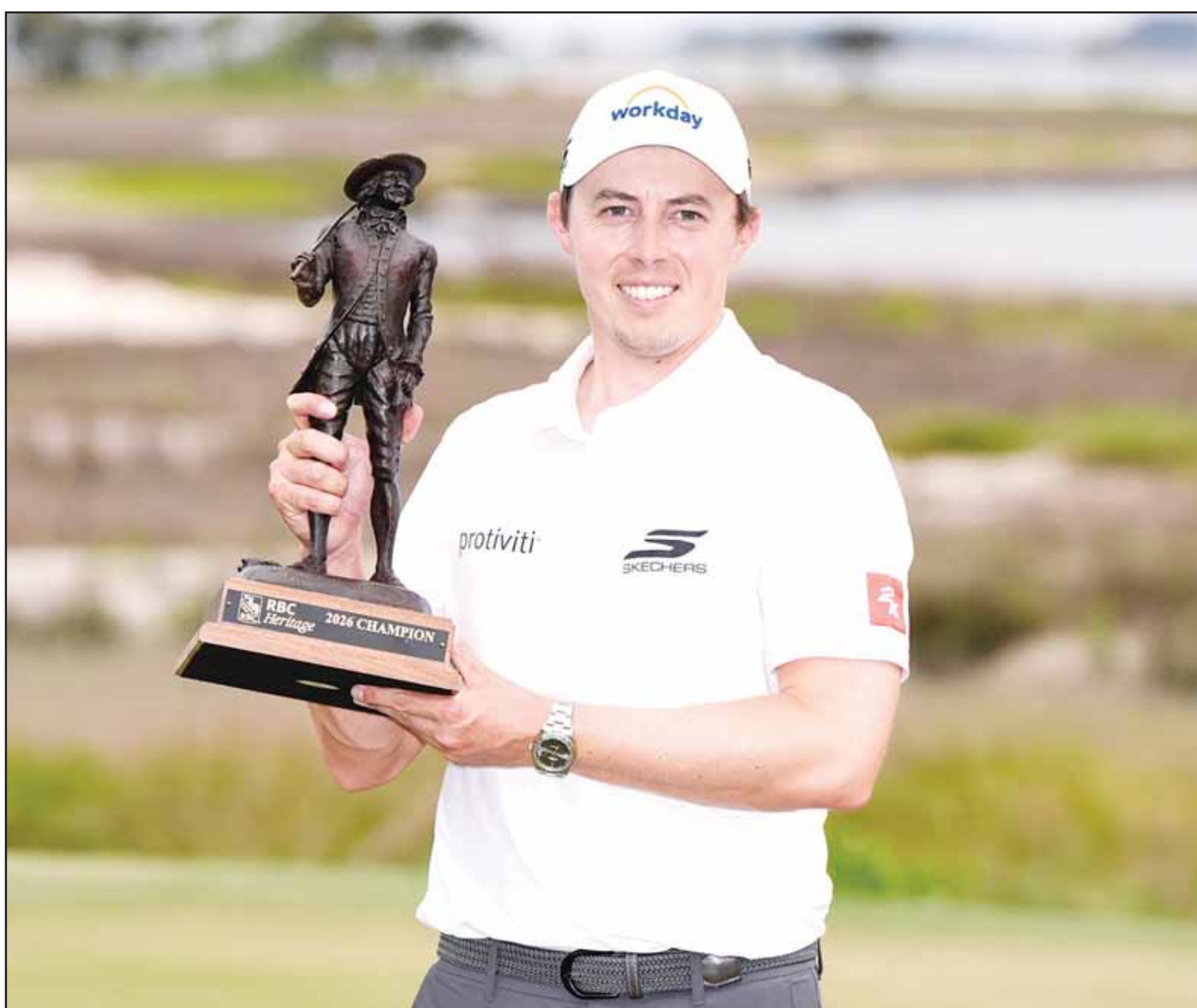
They finished at 18-under 268. The playoff was almost a repeat from when Fitzpatrick defeated another American favorite, Jordan Spieth, in a playoff at the RBC Heritage three years ago.

Fitzpatrick won for the second time in the last month. After a runner-up finish at The Players, he won the Valspar Championship. The victory, his fourth on the PGA Tour and 13th worldwide, moves him to a career-high No. 3 in the world ranking.

Stewart Cink pulled away from the field with an astonishing stretch around the turn Sunday to close with a 9-under 63 for a six-shot victory in the Senior PGA Championship, his first senior major and third win of the year on the PGA Tour Champions.

Cink was one shot behind going into the final round at Concession Golf Club, and then he removed all drama with a remarkable run.

It started with an eagle on the par-5 seventh. He closed out the front nine with back-to-back birdies to



Matt Fitzpatrick, of England, poses with the trophy after winning the RBC Heritage golf tournament in Hilton Head, S.C. (AP)

seize control, and then he poured it on with a 35-foot birdie putt up the slope and with perfect speed that took the break and dropped for birdie on the par-3 11th.

Cink, who won the 2009 British Open in a playoff over Tom Watson at Turnberry, finished at 19-under 269, missing by one shot the record to par of 20 under by Sam Snead in the 1973 Senior PGA at PGA National.

Ben Crane closed with a 68 to finish second.

Hannah Green won the JM Eagle LA Championship on Sunday for the third time in first four years and the first at El Caballero, holing a 12-foot birdie putt on the first extra hole.

Six strokes behind playing partner Sei Young Kim for a few moments on the 11th green, Green closed with a 4-under 68 to match Kim (70) and Jin Hee Im (67) at 17-under 271 on the tree-lined layout.

In the playoff on the par-4 18th, Green hit a wedge from 130 yards and curled in the right-to-left break-

ing putt after Kim - eight strokes ahead with five holes to go Saturday in the third round - left a 35-foot birdie try short.

Im - penalized a stroke for slow play Saturday - reached the green in three after hitting her drive to the right.

Green also won the event in 2023 and 2024 at Wilshire Country Club. The 29-year-old Australian player joined Hyo Joo Kim as the only two-time winners this season on the LPGA Tour and ran her worldwide

2026 victory total to four.

Green has eight career LPGA Tour victories. She won the tour's HSBC Women's World Championship in Singapore early last month and also took the Women's Australian Open and Australian WPGA.

Jon Rahm capped off a chaotic week on LIV Golf when he closed with a 7-under 64 for a six-shot victory Sunday in LIV Golf Mexico City, his second victory this year on the Saudi-funded circuit.

The week has been filled with

uncertainty surrounding the Saudi-funded league, with CEO Scott O'Neil writing a memo to staff to say LIV was assured of funding through the end of the year amid reports speculating about the league's financial future.

Bryson DeChambeau withdrew from the final round, citing an injury to his wrist that he did not want to further aggravate. DeChambeau, who was trying to become the first player to win three straight times on LIV Golf, was 16 shots behind Rahm when he stopped playing.

Rahm motored along, and so did his Legion XIII team, which won for the first time this year.

Dylan Menante played bogey-free Sunday and closed with a 9-under 63 to pull away in the Tulum Championship at PGA Riviera Maya and win by six shots for his first title on the Korn Ferry Tour.

Blades Brown, the 18-year-old who graduated high school in January, stumbled out of the blocks with another chance to win his first pro tournament. Brown closed with three birdies in his last four holes to salvage a 70 and finish alone in second. The consolation was moving to 10th on the Korn Ferry Tour points list.

The top 20 at the end of the season earn PGA Tour cards.

Menante was one shot behind Brown going into the final round and had four birdies in six-hole stretch on the front nine, and then adding five birdies on the back nine to finish at 19-under 269.

Agathe Laisne of France closed with a 4-under 69 and won the Joburg Ladies Open on the fifth playoff hole for her second title this year on the Ladies European Tour. Cassandra Alexander bogeyed the last hole for a 66 that led to the playoff and was eliminated with par on the first extra hole. Laisne outlasted Kirsten Rudgeley (67) on the fifth extra hole at the par-5 18th that was reduced to a 78-yard pitch-and-putt contest because of fading sunlight. Mason Greene shot 4-under 67 for a two-shot victory in the ECP Brazil Open at the Rio Olympic Golf Club, the opener of the PGA Tour Americas season. Sayaka Takahashi closed with a 4-under 68 to hold off Ai Suzuki and win the KKT Cup Vantelin Ladies Open on the Japan LPGA.

... Minsun Kim closed with a 3-under 69 for a one-shot victory over Yesung Jun in the Nexen Saint Nine Masters on the Korea LPGA.

Botswana athletes face stricter testing

India classed high risk for doping in track and field

MONACO, April 20, (AP): Track and field investigators have classed India as an "extremely high" risk for doping and imposed stricter testing on athletes from Botswana including a stellar men's sprint team ahead of the 2027 world championships.

The Athletics Integrity Unit announced its decisions Monday days after India - which is currently bidding for the 2036 Olympics - hosted World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) leaders who challenged the country to improve its poor record.

"The doping situation in India has been high-risk for a long time and, unfortunately, the quality of the domestic anti-doping program is simply not proportionate to the doping risk," the AIU's chairman David Howman said in a statement.

India has produced the most positive doping tests in track and field since 2024, the AIU said, and now will be subjected to stricter "minimum testing requirements for their national team athletes."

The list of highest-risk countries that India joins also included in 2025

Belarus, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russia and Ukraine.

Botswana, Cuba and Peru are classed as second-tier risks by the AIU and their athletes must now give at least three no-notice samples in training to be eligible for upcoming major events, including the worlds next year in Beijing.

Botswana runners also face increased testing before the country hosts the World Relays in Gaborone next month.

This was imposed because of "an inadequate response to repeated warnings about low testing levels, and an increase in performance at international level," Howman said.

Botswana won two gold medals and a bronze at the 2025 worlds in Tokyo, all by men's 400 meters runners in the individual and relay events.

Cuba won a gold medal and two bronzes in Tokyo after having "the highest percentage of athletes with zero out-of-competition tests among the top 40 nations," the AIU said.

Bahrain's high-risk was downgraded and the country was praised by Howman for a "vast improvement of the anti-doping situation."

The AIU operates independently from the World Athletics governing body and since 2019 has held member federations accountable for anti-doping programs operating in their nation.



Howman

Paredes fires Boca past River Plate

BUENOS AIRES, April 20, (Xinhua): Leandro Paredes scored his third goal of the season as Boca Juniors secured a 1-0 away win over rival River Plate in Argentina's Apertura tournament.

Paredes converted a penalty on the stroke of halftime at the Monumental Stadium after Lautaro Rivero handled the ball inside the area.

The hosts controlled more than two-thirds of possession but could only manage three shots on target against a disciplined Boca defense.

The result leaves Boca third in Group A with 24 points, three behind leader Estudiantes, after 14 matches. River is second in Group B with 26 points, three shy of leader Independiente Rivadavia.

"The important thing was to win," Paredes told reporters after the match. "We came here to get the three points and we did it in the best way possible. I'm very happy and very proud of this group, which little by little is becoming a team of men that plays well and knows how to fight."

The former Paris Saint-Germain, Roma and Juventus midfielder added: "We knew it was going to be a very tough game because of everything that had been said beforehand. The pitch wasn't in the best condition either. But we're delighted that we won and we're continuing our strong run."

Elsewhere in Argentina's top flight, Rosario Central won 2-1 at home to Sarmiento, Talleres prevailed 2-0 at home to Deportivo Riestra and Racing drew 1-1 at Aldosivi. Paraguayan defender Gustavo Gomez scored an early goal as leader Palmeiras edged to a 1-0 home win over Athletico Paranaense in Brazil's Serie A.

Gomez lashed a low drive into the far corner after Paranaense failed to deal with Andreas Pereira's delivery from a corner.

The hosts were reduced to 10 men early in the second half when Murilo Cerqueira received a second yellow card for a bad challenge on Colombian winger Kevin Viveros.

Milan steadies Champs League push with victory at Verona

MILAN, April 20, (AP): AC Milan boosted its chances of qualifying for next season's Champions League and moved back into second spot in Serie A with a 1-0 win at Hellas Verona.

Adrien Rabiot scored the only goal of the match shortly before halftime.

The Rossoneri had been left nervously looking over their shoulders after back-to-back losses against Napoli and Udinese. But the victory lifted Milan eight points above fifth-placed Como and back into second after Napoli's loss against Lazio the previous day.

Juventus remained within three points of Milan with a 2-0 win over Bologna. Milan hosts Juventus next week.

Milan and Napoli are 12 points behind Serie A leader Inter Milan with five rounds remaining. If Inter beats Torino next Sunday and both Milan and Napoli fail to win, the Nerazzurri would clinch the title.

Rabiot was by far the best player of the first half and he broke the deadlock in the 41st minute. The France international won the ball in midfield and then spread it to Rafael Leão, before racing into the area to receive the through ball back and sweep it into the bottom right corner.

Matteo Gabbia was making his first appearance after two months out with injury and thought he

Juventus beats Bologna



Juventus' Khephren Thuram celebrates after scoring a goal during the Serie A soccer match between Juventus FC and Bologna, in Turin, Italy. (AP)

had doubled Milan's lead in the 74th but it was ruled out for an offside earlier in the move.

Gabbia also denied Verona a huge goalscoring chance at the other end.

Verona is 10 points from safety.

Before Juventus' match in Turin, there was an emotional tribute to former Juventus and Austria goalkeeper Alex Manninger, who died after his car was reportedly hit by a train in Salzburg on Thursday.

Manninger spent four seasons at Juventus and helped it to the Serie A title in 2012.

Former teammates Gianluigi Buffon, Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini were among those carrying out flowers for Manninger. They laid those down in the goalmouth along with his jersey, while fans voiced the chant they used to sing for Manninger.

Jonathan David headed Juventus into an early lead, within 90 seconds of kickoff. Khephren Thuram doubled his side's advantage with another header, early in the second half.

Cremonese remained without a win at home in Serie A since early December after it was held to a 0-0 draw by Torino and could drop into the relegation zone.

Cremonese is a point above 18th-placed Lecce, which plays Fiorentina on Monday.

Pisa remained level on 18 points with Verona at the bottom after losing 2-1 at home to Daniele De Rossi's Genoa, which came from behind for the win and moved 12 points above the drop zone.

Strong showing for 23XI Racing

Reddick passes Larson on final lap of OT to win NASCAR Cup Series race in Kansas

KANSAS CITY, Kan., April 20, (AP): NASCAR driver Tyler Reddick is riding the kind of Cup Series hot streak that Michael Jordan once enjoyed in his playing days.

Oh, you can bet the NBA Hall of Famer is enjoying this one, too.

Reddick roared by Kyle Larson on the final lap of overtime to win at Kansas Speedway on Sunday, becoming the fourth driver to win five of the first nine races in NASCAR's top series in a season. Chase Briscoe wound up third while Denny Hamlin, who co-owns 23XI Racing along with Jordan, had to watch from fourth as his driver reached victory lane yet again.

"This kid is on fire. I don't know what to say. I don't think I can cool him down," Jordan said. "When you win it's always fun, and right now it's fun for everybody at 23XI. Me being here and being able to see all the wins, I am so happy for the team."

All four of the 23XI cars finished in the top 15 on a banner day for the team.

"Got to deliver for the boss man," Reddick said of Jordan. "If he's going to come hang out with us, we have to get him dubs."

Sunday's race had been caution-free except for stage breaks until Cody

Ware spun as the white flag was about to fly.

Hamlin was leading at that point, and it looked as if he was about to win his record-extending fifth race at Kansas. Instead, all of the leaders had to pit, and even though Hamlin beat Reddick off pit road, the field was bunched up for the overtime restart.

Larson, trying to end a 32-race win-

less streak, lined up behind Hamlin on the inside, and he launched to the lead when the green flag flew. Chaos ensued behind them as Christopher Bell bounced off Reddick and Hamlin and the No. 5 car began to pull away.

Reddick came charging down the backstretch on the final lap, though, and he pulled alongside Larson as they went through the final corners. The No.

45 edged ahead as the checkered flag flew, and Jordan began to pump his fist in the pits in celebration.

The last driver to win five of the first nine Cup Series races was Dale Earnhardt in 1987.

"Just really blessed with the late caution," Reddick said. "Was that nuts or what? I couldn't believe it."

Hamlin was happy Reddick won again. But it came at his expense, and he was decidedly unhappy about that. Asked of his frustration level, Hamlin replied: "Obviously it's not winning. It's Cody Ware, six laps down, wrecking. I don't know. Add it up."

Larson, the defending race winner, said his car's balance was off after taking two tires on the final stop, leaving him on the podium for the third time without a win this season. Briscoe and Hamlin were followed across by another 23XI driver, Bubba Wallace.

"It was good execution for the restart there," Larson said. "I got to the lead and I thought I could cruise right there to the checkered."

Except that Reddick is the only one who seems to be doing that these days. Even when he doesn't win, he's had his Toyota running up front. He was fourth last week at Bristol and has been in the top 15 in every start this season.



Denny Hamlin (11) Tyler Reddick (45) Kyle Larson (5) and Christopher Bell (20) head down the front straightaway after a restart with two laps remaining during a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, Kan. (AP)

Billion-dollar attack

France boasts a rich scoring depth other World Cup teams only dream of

PARIS, April 20, (AP): France will have rich depth in attack at the World Cup. About a billion dollars' worth.

That's the estimated total value of the attacking players France is expected to bring to the tournament, from two-time World Cup final scoring sensation Kylian Mbappé to rising star Désiré Doué.

For coach Didier Deschamps the headache is not about who to choose, but who to leave out of his starting lineup for France's World Cup opener against Senegal on June 16.

He has a huge amount of talent to complement the prolific scoring of Mbappé, who is enjoying another prolific season with Real Madrid and needs one more goal to tie Olivier Giroud as France's all-time leading scorer with 57 goals.

There's the speed and finishing of Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembélé; the clinical scoring and exquisite passing of Michael Olise; the maverick skill of the technically gifted Rayan Cherki; or the fleet-footed runs of fellow newcomer Maghnes Akliouche.

According to estimates from soccer website transfermarkt and the CIES Football Observatory, which take into account the remaining time on a players' contract, France's 10 attacking players are worth 855 million euros, which is a fraction over \$1 billion.

Here's a look at the top players.

Unsurprisingly, the 27-year-old Real Madrid superstar leads the way at 200 million euros (\$236 million).

Mbappé is followed by the Bayern Munich star Olise at 140 million euros. The London-born Olise's form has been scintillating for Bundesliga champion Bayern with 18 goals and 25 assists in 44 games.

The 20-year-old Doué has three years left on his PSG contract and is valued at around 115 million euros compared to 100 million euros for Dembélé, who has two years left to run at PSG and is eight years older.



In this file photo, Bayern's Michael Olise, left, challenges for the ball with Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe during the Champions League quarterfinal second leg soccer match between Bayern Munich and Real Madrid in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Their goal-scoring PSG teammate Bradley Barcola - who starred against Chelsea in the Champions League - comes in next at 70 million euros, followed by

Cherki at 65 million.

Cherki first caught the eye six years ago when he was 16, scoring twice in a French Cup game for Lyon. He has entered a new dimension since joining Manchester City in the offseason for what is now looking like a bargain fee of 36 million euros.

He scored a fine solo goal against Arsenal in their Premier League table-topping clash on Sunday.

His ability to create goals with his intuitive passing have surprised even City coach Pep Guardiola - who worked alongside two of the world's finest passers in Lionel Messi and Iniesta at Barcelona - and Cherki's value could rocket if he does well at the World Cup.

Akliouche scored in both legs for Monaco against PSG in a closely-contested Champions League playoff and his galloping runs from deep make him hard to track. He is also capable of brilliant individual goals, scoring a superb overhead kick for Monaco last season.

He is valued at 50 million euros along with Inter Milan forward Marcus Thuram, who has hit form in recent weeks as Inter closes in on the Serie A title.

Thuram adds to France's attacking options thanks to his heading ability, a strong point shared by Jean-Philippe Mateta.

The imposing striker is a consistent scorer for Premier League side Crystal Palace and has netted two goals in three appearances for Les Bleus.

Mateta is expected to join a bigger club next season and is valued at 35 million euros, ahead of former PSG forward Randal Kolo Muani. He is on loan at Tottenham and, although he has lost form, he would likely fetch 30 million if PSG sold him.

Kolo Muani almost wrote his name into World Cup history in 2022, but missed a chance right at the end of extra time in the final, which France lost on penalties to Argentina despite a hat-trick from Mbappé.

Bundesliga done, Bayern eyes bigger prizes in treble chase



Bayern players celebrate after their team clinched the German league title after a Bundesliga soccer match between Bayern and Stuttgart in Munich, Germany. (AP)

Kompany brings harmony as Bavarians seal title in first big season

BERLIN, April 20, (AP): Bayern Munich wrapped up another Bundesliga title on Sunday, the club's 13th in 14 years, after a record-breaking season that could still get better.

Kompany also earned praise for speaking up against racism after José Mourinho blamed Real Madrid star Vinicius Júnior for provoking the abuse he receives, and he welcomed the appointment of Marie-Louise Eta as the first female coach in the Bundesliga last week.

Kompany has brought harmony to Bayern, a club previously known as "FC Hollywood" for all the tabloid headlines it generated.

The Bundesliga is just the first of a potential treble of trophies with Bayern next facing Bayer Leverkusen in the semifinals of the German Cup on Wednesday before it takes on defending champion Paris Saint-Germain in the semifinals of the

Champions League.

The Bundesliga is seen within the club as the minimum target for the season and this is Bayern's record-extending 35th German championship. Apart from the first in 1932, when it was decided by regional champions in a knockout competition, all the others

came after the Bundesliga's formation in 1963. Bayern is always keen to assert its domestic dominance. Leverkusen's triumph in 2024 was an outlier that spurred Bayern to back-to-back titles and may be the start of another long run.

Bayern bounced back from the



Bayern's Jamal Musiala shoots by Stuttgart's Finn Jeltsch during a Bundesliga soccer match between Bayern and Stuttgart in Munich, Germany. (AP)

trauma of 2012 - when it lost the Champions League final in Munich to Chelsea, as well as the Bundesliga and German Cup final to Borussia Dortmund - by winning the Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup treble the following season under Jupp Heynckes.

The Bundesliga this season is just the first step as Bayern chases another treble. Here's a closer look at how it was won:

Bayern smashed its own league record for goals scored in a season by clocking five against St. Pauli to take its tally to 105 goals last weekend. The previous record was 101 goals scored by Bayern's 1971-72 team featuring Franz Beckenbauer and Gerd Müller.

England forward Harry Kane was among the scorers in the title-clinching 4-2 win against Stuttgart on Sunday to extend the record to 109 goals. And there are still four rounds remaining.

Kane took his club tally for the season to 50 against Real Madrid in the Champions League semifinals. It's 51 now. He has 32 goals in 27 Bundesliga games so far.

Monaco rallies to draw 2-2 with Auxerre

Endrick stars as Lyon beats PSG to give Lens renewed hope in Ligue 1 title race

PARIS, April 20, (AP): Brazil forward Endrick scored one goal and created another as Lyon won 2-1 at leader Paris Saint-Germain to go third in Ligue 1 and boost its chances of Champions League qualification.

PSG's fifth league defeat of the season left it one point ahead of second-placed Lens, with PSG having a game in hand. But PSG still has to travel to Lens in May, after the league postponed their game on April 11 due to PSG's involvement in the Champions League.

Coach Paulo Fonseca's Lyon leads fourth-placed Lille on goal difference with the top three gaining direct entry to the Champions League and the side in fourth entering qualifying.

Fonseca recently criticized Endrick following some mediocre performances and benched him against Lorient last weekend. Endrick came on and played a part in both goals in a 2-0 win.

He gave Lyon the lead on Sunday in the sixth minute. The livewire 19-year-old made a clever run behind the PSG defense to meet Afonso Moreira's pass and score with a crisp shot past goalkeeper Matvei Safonov.

Lyon hit PSG with a classic counterattack in the 18th as Endrick sent Moreira clean through from halfway and the 21-year-old Portuguese forward hit a low shot into the left corner.

PSG striker Gonçalo Ramos had a penalty saved by Lyon goalkeeper Dominik Greif in the



PSG's Achraf Hakimi, left, and Lyon's Ruben Kluijver challenge for the ball during the French League One soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Olympique Lyon in Paris, France. (AP)

33rd. Moments later PSG midfielder Vitorino Lima limped off with a right ankle injury.

Safonov kept out a curler from Moreira in the second half.

Moreira was outstanding cutting in from the left flank and pushed his case for a first callup to the Portugal side. PSG midfielder Fabián Ruiz came on late in the game for his first appearance in three months following a knee injury.

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia pulled a goal back four minutes into stoppage time with a curler from 20 meters out, but Lyon was a worthy winner and PSG coach Luis Enrique hugged Fonseca.

American forward Folarin Balogun scored for the eighth straight league game as Monaco rallied to draw 2-2 with Auxerre.

Seventh-placed Monaco is one of several sides chasing a Champions League place next season. Balogun equalized with a penalty in the 59th after being knocked over by goalkeeper Donovan Léon. Former Barcelona midfielder Ansu Fati got Monaco's other goal with a low drive from the edge of the penalty area three minutes earlier.

Midfielder Kévin Danois and striker Lassine Sinayoko had put Auxerre 2-0 up.

La Liga action resumes

Real Madrid under pressure

MADRID, April 20, (Xinhua): After a weekend pause for the Copa del Rey final between Real Sociedad and Atletico Madrid, La Liga returns with a midweek round that, combined with next weekend's fixtures, brings seven consecutive days of top-flight action in Spain.

Tuesday's schedule features four matches with implications at both ends of the table, from the title race and European qualification to the battle against relegation.

Real Madrid returns to the Santiago Bernabeu for the first time since last week's Champions League exit to Bayern Munich. Madrid faces Deportivo Alaves nine points behind leader Barcelona with 21 points left to play for, and anything other than a win would all but end the club's slim title hopes.

Coach Alvaro Arbeloa has almost a full squad available, with only Raul Asencio sidelined by a stomach problem. However, with little margin for error and an expectant home crowd, his side will need to show urgency and intent.

Alaves arrives one point and one place above the relegation zone and could drop into the bottom three if it fails to win and Elche beats Atletico Madrid on Wednesday. The Vitoria-based side is unbeaten in four matches since Quique Sanchez Flores took

charge, including a 3-3 draw away to Real Sociedad, and forwards Toni Martinez and Lucas Boye pose a threat.

Earlier, Athletic Club will host Osasuna in a key match for the home side, which sits six points clear of the relegation zone. Club president Jon Uriarte returns to the directors' box after being re-elected unopposed for another four-year term, while Athletic looks to end a run of 15 league games without a clean sheet dating back to December 6 and to see Nico Williams return to form.

Mallorca faces Valencia in another meeting of sides near the bottom. Back-to-back wins have lifted Mallorca to 15th, two points above Elche, while Valencia is one point above its host after consecutive defeats. Mallorca will look to 21-goal striker Vedat Muriqi and winger Jan Virgili to provide attacking edge.

Girona hosts Real Betis in Tuesday's final match, with the home side aiming to secure the points needed to ease relegation concerns. Girona is without striker Vladislav Vanat for the rest of the season, while Abel Ruiz is also sidelined with a hamstring injury.

Betis arrives on a seven-match winless run in the league and after a shock Europa League exit to Sporting Braga, where it squandered a 2-0 lead to lose 4-2 at home. The result has put coach Manuel Pellegrini under scrutiny for the first time in nearly six years.

Barcelona hosts Celta Vigo on Wednesday, with three matches scheduled that day and another three on Thursday.

Earthquakes stun LAFC

Bouda ends Lloris clean sheet run

LOS ANGELES, April 20, (AP): Ousseni Bouda scored two goals in the second half, ending Hugo Lloris' scoreless run to begin the season at 593 minutes, and the San Jose Earthquakes stunned Los Angeles FC 4-1 in an early Western Conference showdown.

San Jose (7-1-0) moves into a first-place tie with the Vancouver Whitecaps in the Western Conference and Supporters' Shield races in the Earthquakes' second season under head coach Bruce Arena.

Daniel De Sousa Brito missed a chance to tie Lloris with a sixth clean sheet on an own goal by Reid Roberts in the 74th minute. He had three saves.

Bouda used assists from newcomer Timo Werner - his third - and Beau Leroux to find the net in the 53rd minute after a scoreless first half.

Werner, sidelined the past two weeks with a lower-body injury, took a pass from Leroux three minutes later and scored his first MLS goal for a 2-0 lead. Leroux's assists gives him four, matching his total last season in 33 appearances as a rookie.

An own goal on Ryan Porteous in the 59th minute made it 3-0 in a span of six minutes. Bouda's fourth goal of the season capped the scoring in the 80th minute. Niko Tsakiris notched his career-high fifth assist.

Lloris finished with two saves in a second straight loss for LAFC (5-2-1), third in the West. Lloris sat out a 2-1 road loss to the Portland Timbers.

San Jose has won all four of its road matches.

LAFC was 6-0-1 at BMO Stadium in all competitions entering play, outscoring its opponents 17-1.

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John Korir, of Kenya, breaks the tape to win the Boston Marathon in Boston. Korir broke the Boston Marathon course record on Monday, riding a tailwind to outrun the fastest field in event history and win in an unofficial 2 hours, 1 minute, 52 seconds for his second straight victory. (AP)

Sports

Sheikh Jaber puts Kuwait on motorsport map with F4 Championship podium finish

KUWAIT CITY, April 20, (KUNA): Kuwaiti driver Sheikh Jaber Athbi Al-Sabah achieved second place in the rookie category of the Formula 4 (F4) Championship, which was held over two days in the United Kingdom.

The event featured 31 drivers from various countries, including competitors supported by Formula 1 teams such as Mercedes-Benz, Red Bull, and McLaren.

In a phone call with KUNA, Sheikh Jaber expressed his satisfaction with his strong performance throughout the races, noting that securing second place came despite competing against highly skilled and experienced drivers.

He added that his main objec-



Kuwaiti driver Sheikh Jaber Athbi Al-Sabah celebrates on the podium.

ive in participating in international competitions is to raise Kuwait's profile on the global motorsport stage and highlight the capabilities of Kuwaiti drivers, stressing that this result serves as motivation to continue his racing career.

This season marks Sheikh Jaber's debut in the championship, where he claimed second place on the rookie podium and finished seventh overall in what is considered one of the most competitive Formula 4 series.

He also noted that his car featured the national "Arfaj flower" emblem, symbolizing the strength and resilience of front-line personnel in Kuwait amid the current challenges facing the country.

Kuwait handball body nominates two members for Arab Federation elections

KUWAIT CITY, April 20, (KUNA): The Kuwait Handball Association announced the nomination of two of its board members for the upcoming elections of the Arab Handball Federation, set to take place next June.

The nominees are Talal Al-Otaibi for a seat in the Executive Office, and Ahmad Al-Mutawa for membership in the Referees Committee, the association said in a statement on the social media platform X.

In remarks to KUNA, Al-Otaibi expressed pride in the nomination, affirming his commitment to serving Kuwaiti sports in any position he assumes.



Talal Al-Otaibi

For his part, Al-Mutawa described his nomination to the

Arab Federation's Referees Committee as both an honor and a major responsibility. He praised the efforts of the Kuwait Handball Association and its continued support.

He added that the opportunity would help enhance the experience of Kuwaiti sports cadres in a way that serves the development of the game, stressing his full commitment to representing Kuwait in the best possible manner and working within a team spirit to achieve shared goals.

The nominations come as part of the Kuwait Handball Association's strategy to strengthen Kuwait's presence in regional and international sports arenas.

Spurs soar as Wemba explodes for 35 in playoff debut

Thunder trounces Suns in Game 1

OKLAHOMA CITY, April 20, (AP): Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 25 points and the Oklahoma City Thunder began their title defense with a 119-84 rout of the Phoenix Suns in Game 1 of their first-round Western Conference playoff series.

The reigning league MVP made just 5 of 18 field goals but went 15 of 17 at the foul line before sitting out the fourth quarter.

Jalen Williams scored 22 points and Chet Holmgren added 16 for the top-seeded Thunder, who will host Game 2 on Wednesday.

Devin Booker scored 23 points and Dillon Brooks scored 18 on 6-of-22 shooting for the Suns, who shot 34.9% from the field.

Phoenix broke out to a 5-0 lead as the Thunder started cold following a



San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama (1) drives to the basket over Portland Trail Blazers forward Toumani Camara (33) during the second half in Game 1 of a first-round NBA playoffs basketball series in San Antonio. (AP)

week off.

Oklahoma City heated up quickly. Brooks was called for a flagrant-one foul in the first quarter for hitting Holmgren in the face. The Thunder went on a 12-2 surge after that to take a 24-14 lead.

Spurs 111, Trail Blazers 98

In San Antonio, Victor Wembanyama scored 35 points in his playoff debut and San Antonio rolled to a victory over Portland in Game 1 of their first-round Western Conference playoff series.

Wembanyama's 21 first-half points set an NBA record for the most in the opening half of an NBA playoff debut since the league's play-by-play era began in 1997. His 35 total points set a Spurs franchise record for the most in a playoff debut, surpassing Tim Duncan's 32 in 1998.

Stephon Castle and De'Aaron Fox each added 17 points and combined for 15 assists for San Antonio.

Deni Avdija had 30 points and 10 rebounds to lead Portland, which beat Phoenix 114-110 in Tuesday's play-in game to earn the No. 7 seed.

Scout Henderson, the No. 3 pick in the 2023 draft behind Wembanyama and Charlotte's Brandon Miller, added 18 points.

Game 2 is Tuesday night in San Antonio before the series heads to Portland for Games 3 and 4.

Celtics 123, 76ers 91

In Boston, Jayson Tatum had 25 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists in his first playoff game since rupturing his right Achilles tendon last season, and Boston rolled past Philadelphia in Game 1 of the first-round series.

Jaylen Brown scored 26 points and Neemias Queta added 13 for the second-seeded Celtics.

Tatum scored 21 points in the first half, playing in just his 17th game this season following surgery last May to repair his Achilles tendon.

Boston never trailed, building a 35-point lead as coach Joe Mazzulla gave minutes to 12 players. The Celtics connected on 16 3-pointers.

Game 2 is Tuesday night in Boston. Tyrese Maxey had 21 points and eight assists for the 76ers, who played



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Jalen Williams (8) shoots in front of Phoenix Suns forward Oso Ighodaro, right, during the second half in Game 1 of a first-round NBA playoffs basketball series in Oklahoma City. (AP)

without Joel Embiid. The 2023 MVP continues to recover following an appendectomy on April 9. It's unclear when he will be able to return.

Paul George scored 17 points and V.J. Edgecombe added 13. Philadelphia was 4 of 23 from 3-point range.

Maxey was hounded by a Celtics defense that contested 12 of his 14

shot attempts in the first half and held him to 8 of 20 from the field.

Philadelphia's 64-46 halftime deficit was its largest in a playoff game against Boston since 1982.

Magic 112, Pistons 101

In Detroit, Paolo Banchero had 23 points, nine rebounds and four assists to lead eighth-seeded Orlando to a win over top-seeded Detroit in Game

1 of their first-round series, extending the longest home playoff losing streak in NBA history.

Detroit has dropped 11 straight home games in the postseason, a drought that dates to 2008.

The Pistons will get another chance against Orlando on Wednesday night in Game 2.

Detroit's Cade Cunningham scored

a playoff career-high 39 points and Tobias Harris added 17 for the Pistons, but the rest of their teammates were quiet offensively.

Franz Wagner scored 11 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter to help seal the victory for the Magic, who never trailed. Orlando's Desmond Bane and Wendell Carter scored 17 points each and Jalen Suggs had 16.

Kuwait Club ready for Muras clash

Qadsia rues missed calls, difficult conditions in defeat

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 20: Kuwait Club completed final preparations for its decisive clash against Kyrgyz club Muras United in the West Zone final of the AFC Challenge League, as Qadsia's exit from the Gulf Champions League was attributed to difficult circumstances and controversial officiating.

Qadsia's 2-0 defeat to Qatar's Al-Rayyan in the semifinal in Doha was influenced by several factors that disrupted the team's campaign. The suspension of sporting activity in Kuwait since early March due to regional conditions affected match readiness, while delays in securing travel visas further hampered preparations and led to a late arrival in Qatar.

The "Yellow" side also missed several key players; most notably, captain Bader Al-Mutawa, in addition to Khaled Ibrahim, Talal Al-Fadhel, Abdulaziz Wadi, and Mubarak Al-Fanani.



Qadsia and Al-Rayyan players battling for the ball (not seen) during the Gulf Champions League match.

Refereeing decisions added to Qadsia's problems as the officiating crew, led by Bahraini referee Ammar Mahfoodh, was criticized for not

awarding a clear penalty to Mehdi Humaidan and for overlooking a foul on goalkeeper Hamid Al-Qallaf in the build-up to Al-Rayyan's second goal, despite VAR being in use.

Qadsia coach Nabil Maaloul acknowledged that Al-Rayyan deserved the victory, citing its technical and physical superiority, while praising his players for their effort under difficult conditions.

Al-Rayyan's Spanish coach, Vicente Moreno, expressed satisfaction with his team's performance and qualification, noting their strong cohesion and confidence, while expecting a tough and balanced final.

Kuwait SC resumed training in Bishkek ahead of facing Muras United at Dolen Omurzakov Stadium. The Kuwaiti side advanced after a 5-3 win over Oman's Al-Shabab, while Muras United secured a 3-0 victory over Lebanon's Al-Ansar. The winner will meet the Cambodian side Preah Khan Reach Svay Rieng in the final scheduled for May 9, with the venue yet to be determined.

Head coach Nebojsa Jovovic opted for light training for players who featured in the previous match to avoid injuries, especially with limited recovery time between fixtures.

Ronaldo reaches 25-competition scoring landmark in career

RIYADH, April 20: Cristiano Ronaldo, captain of Saudi Arabia's Al-Nassr, has scored in 25 different competitions across his illustrious career after opening the scoring against UAE side Al Wasl in the AFC Champions League Elite quarterfinals on Sunday.

The Portuguese forward registered his first goal in the continental competition after appearing once in the group stage, where he provided an assist, before finding the net 11 minutes into the match held in Dubai.

Ronaldo has now scored in 25 separate tournaments during his career with Sporting CP, Manchester United, Real Madrid, Juventus, Al-Nassr, and the Portugal national team.

His 969 career goals have come across a wide range of competitions, including domestic leagues and cups in Portugal, England, Spain, Italy, and Saudi Arabia, as well as major tournaments such as the UEFA Champions League, Europa League, FIFA Club World Cup, UEFA Super Cup, AFC Champions League Elite, Arab Club Champions Cup, and AFC Champions League 2.

With Portugal, Ronaldo has also scored in the FIFA World Cup, UEFA European Championship, UEFA Nations League, and FIFA Confederations Cup.

He has featured in two competitions where he did not score: the UEFA Cup with Sporting CP (before its rebranding as the Europa League in 2009), and the Community Shield during his time with Manchester United.