



Amir receives credentials of five new ambassadors

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received credentials of several ambassadors to Kuwait.

The envoys included Bob Dorji of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Sullini Said of Brunei Darussalam, Paramita Tripathi of the Republic of India, Yang Xin of the People's Republic of China, and Songchai Chaiphayut of the Kingdom of Thailand.

The ceremony was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Director of His Highness the Amir's Office Lieutenant General Jamal Al-Thayab, and Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Abdulaziz Mishal Al-Sabah.

Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs at the Amiri Diwan Mazen Al-Issa, Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocol Affairs Minister Plenipotentiary Abdulmohsen Al-Zaid, and Commander of the Amiri Guard Major General Bader Al-Sahloul, were also in attendance.



India's Ambassador to Kuwait Paramita Tripathi presents her credentials to HH the Amir.



China's Ambassador to Kuwait Yang Xin presents his credentials to HH the Amir.



Bhutan's Ambassador to Kuwait Bob Dorji presents his credentials to HH the Amir.



Brunei Darussalam's Ambassador to Kuwait Sullini Said presents his credentials to HH the Amir.



Thailand's Ambassador to Kuwait Songchai Chaiphayut presents his credentials to HH the Amir.

DIPLOMATIC CLOCK RESETS AS U.S.-IRAN CEASEFIRE NEARS EXPIRY

Kuwait rejects attempts to weaponize sea routes

'Mideast in most dangerous phase in decades'

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Kuwait Armed Forces General Staff disclosed that the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team at the Land Force Engineering Unit dealt with shrapnel and explosive remnants until 6:00 pm on Tuesday.

In a press statement, the General Staff stressed that the explosions

heard during this period are due to the disposal of the abovementioned remnants.

At the regional level, the Arab League convened an extraordinary session of foreign ministers via videoconference on Tuesday to address Iranian attacks against Arab states. The meeting, chaired by Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdulatif Al-Zayani, was held at Bahrain's request with the backing of member states.

Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit reaffirmed the unified Arab position rejecting the attacks, which have targeted several countries since February 28 using

Continued on Page 5

Gulf peers surge ahead

Kuwait's FDI growth remains weak despite reforms: experts

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The total cumulative foreign direct investment (FDI) in Kuwait reached KD 1.97 billion from the beginning of January 2015 until March 31, 2025.

These investments are distributed throughout 34 countries and involve 105 major investment entities, according to the 2024/2025 report of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA).

The report explained that KDIPA attracted approximately KD 222.8 million in FDI during the same year, represented by 10 investment entities.

Indirect foreign investment in Boursa Kuwait also recorded notable activity. Around KD 4.8 billion in foreign investment flowed into banking sector shares on Boursa Kuwait

by the end of the first quarter of this year. This figure is significant, despite a decline compared to the last quarter of the previous year, which was estimated at around KD 5.1 billion.

In this regard, economic expert

Qais Al-Ghanim stated that the growth of indirect investments in Boursa Kuwait is driven by investors' focus on quick profits through stock trading, as these provide immediate returns without the need for major expenditures such as buildings, licenses, equipment, and operating costs.

He indicated that direct investments typically require at least two years before generating returns.

Al-Ghanim noted that despite laws aimed at encouraging foreign investment in Kuwait, attracting foreign capital and directing it toward direct

Continued on Page 5

Digital complaints surge ahead

Kuwait tightens compliance net

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for February revealed a surge in regulatory activity, along with notable shifts in consumer behavior, increased support for digital platforms, and mixed growth in several economic sectors, most notably precious metals and trademarks.

The data showed a clear escalation in the efforts of the Commercial Control Department, which issued 1,275 violation reports in February, marking a 27 percent increase compared to January.

Licensing violations saw a significant rise, reaching 130 cases,

Continued on Page 5

Amir praises legacy of acting icon

'Lady of Gulf Screen' Al-Fahad passes away

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Tuesday, a cable of condolences to the family of the late distinguished artist Hayat Al-Fahad.

His Highness praised her remarkable artistic career, rich with excellence and creativity, and her prominent contributions to enriching the artistic movement in Kuwait through numerous high-quality works characterized by strong national spirit and widely admired at local, Gulf and Arab levels.

His Highness prayed to Allah the Almighty to bestow vast mercy upon the deceased, and grant her family, relatives and admirers patience and solace.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also extended condolences to the family of the late Hayat Ahmad Youssef Al-Fahad, honoring her remarkable career and her significant contributions to the cultural scene at the national, Gulf, and Arab levels. He highlighted her impactful works, known for their quality and national spirit, and wished her family strength and comfort.

Kuwait mourned the loss of Hayat Al-Fahad, who passed away on Tuesday after a career spanning nearly six decades, during which she delivered a rich body of work across television, theatre, radio, and cinema. Widely regarded as one of the most prominent figures in Gulf drama, she earned titles such as "Lady of the Gulf Screen" and "Dean of Gulf Drama."

Born in 1948, Al-Fahad began her career at the Ministry of Health before working as a radio presenter from 1965 to 1968, later dedicating herself fully to the arts. She made her acting debut in 1962 in the television series "Aailat Bu Jassoum,"



Hayat Al-Fahad

one of Kuwait's earliest productions, and went on to star in numerous acclaimed works including "Jurh Al-Zaman," "Al-Dayah," "Abla Nour," "Al-Bait Bait Abouna," "Umm Haroun," and "Afkar Ommi."

She was also a co-founder of the Arab Gulf Theatre Group in 1963 and appeared in several stage productions such as "Al-Dahiya," "Harim Saadat Al-Wazir," "Bye Bye Arab," and "Saif Al-Arab." Beyond acting, Al-Fahad was an accomplished writer.

The Ministry of Information also expressed deep sorrow over her passing, with Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology and Acting Minister of Information and Culture Omar Al-Omar extending condolences to her family. The ministry described Al-Fahad as a pioneering figure whose work addressed social issues with depth and sincerity, noting her professionalism, strong presence, and lasting influence on Kuwaiti and Gulf art.

See Also Page 12

Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

From a Gulf citizen ... President Trump, may God bless you

I speak as a Gulf citizen, and express my thoughts and feelings. My following words are directed to US President Donald Trump for expressing my gratitude on my own behalf and on behalf of a large segment of the people of the Arabian Gulf.

Mr. Trump, you have done what previous American presidents failed to do. Some of them, at various points, even supported the Iranian regime and strengthened the remnants of Iraqi terrorism, contributing to its expansion in the Middle East.

The Iranian regime has infiltrated some Arab countries and sought to systematically destroy the countries it has influenced, including their people and resources.

Since 1979, the Iranian regime has sought to implement its slogan of exporting the revolution by weakening the national fabric of some societies and fueling sectarian strife that had been dormant for centuries.

Mr. Trump, the Iranian regime has shown no mercy to its own people, so how can it be expected to treat its neighbors?

For 47 years, the Gulf states have tried to avoid confrontation with Iran, not out of weakness, but in an effort to find

common ground. The Gulf states hoped to find wise Iranian leadership so that this region would not become an arena of conflict, especially given its highly sensitive geographical location and economic importance.

Therefore, Saudi Arabia's initiative, represented by the Beijing Agreement in March 2023, was intended to serve as a foundation upon which future Gulf-Iranian relations could be built.

Nevertheless, Tehran has continued to strain relations with Gulf capitals. Iran has fueled the internal conflict in Yemen, turning this once-great country into a devastated and fragmented one.

It has also encouraged Houthi militias to provoke Saudi Arabia and attempt attacks on the Two Holy Mosques.

Continued on Page 5

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172 lose Kuwaiti citizenship status

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Two decisions issued by the Higher Committee for Kuwaiti Citizenship Investigation were published on Tuesday in the supplement edition of the official gazette "Kuwait Al-Youm," regarding the revocation of Kuwaiti citizenship of 172 individuals.

The first decision, No. 5/32/2026, stipulates the revocation of Kuwaiti citizenship for six individuals based on Article 10 of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959 and its amendments.

The second decision, No. 5/33/2026, stipulates the revocation of citizenship for 166 individuals based on Article 11 of Amiri Decree No. 15/1959.

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

Regarding a Kuwaiti woman who is naturalized on the basis of her marriage to a Kuwaiti man, her Kuwaiti

Continued on Page 5



8 Annual General Assembly Meeting of KIC approved 40% Cash Dividends and 28.84% Bonus shares for year 2025



8 LuLu launches 'World Food Festival' as regional retail gains momentum



Prayer Timings

Fajr 03:53 Asr 15:22
 Sunrise .. 05:16 Maghrib .. 18:18
 Zohr 11:47 Isha 19:39

Kuwait, India ties long-term, time-tested, historic: envoy

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Ambassador of India to the State of Kuwait, H.E. Mrs. Paramita Tripathi, presented her credentials today, 21 April 2026, to His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, in a formal ceremony at the Bayan Palace. Prior to the ceremony, the Ambassador was accorded a Guard of Honour. Ambassador Tripathi is the 20th and the first woman Ambassador of India to the State of Kuwait.



Ambassador Paramita Tripathi

His Highness the Amir warmly welcomed the Ambassador and conveyed his best wishes for her success in fulfilling her responsibilities. He also underscored the historic and friendly relations between India and Kuwait, highlighting strong civilizational ties and vibrant people-to-people connections. He reaffirmed the high importance attached by Kuwait interest to the enhancement of bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

During the audience, Ambassador Tripathi conveyed the warm greetings and best wishes from the Hon'ble President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi and the 1.4 billion people of India. She reaffirmed the special relationship with Kuwait as a trusted friend, a respected voice in the Gulf and as an important member of the GCC.

The Ambassador expressed India's solidarity with the State of Kuwait in light of the current regional situation, and reiterated India's unequivocal support for peace and stability. She conveyed India's commitment to continued engagement with Kuwait in advancing shared objectives.

The Ambassador expressed appreciation for the continued support extended to the Indian community

in Kuwait, which serves as a living bridge between the two nations. She highlighted the shared commitment of both countries to further strengthen the India-Kuwait Strategic Partnership by deepening cooperation across key sectors, including trade and investment, defence and security, energy and healthcare, science and technology, innovation and skill, and people-to-people ties.

The Ambassador emphasized the importance of enhancing collaboration on regional and global issues of mutual interest, underscoring the shared commitment of both countries to rule of law, international law and the UN.

India and Kuwait enjoy historically close and friendly relations, underpinned by strong historical and economic ties, geographic proximity, cultural affinity, and deep-rooted people-to-people connections. This year marks the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Kuwait.

Kuwait hails UAE, rejects terrorism and extremism

Defense Minister briefs cabinet on current regional situation

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Kuwait's Cabinet commended the vigilance of UAE security authorities in dismantling a terrorist cell involved in activities aimed at undermining national unity.

The cabinet reaffirmed Kuwait's firm rejection of all forms of terrorism and extremism, expressing full solidarity with the UAE.

This came in the Cabinet's weekly meeting under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, after which Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereedah Al-Maousherji delivered a statement outlining the outcomes.

At the outset, the Cabinet was briefed on a written message addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

The message was received by His Highness the Prime Minister from UK Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Secretary David Lammy during his recent visit to Kuwait, focusing on bilateral relations and ways to enhance them, as well as regional and international developments.

The Cabinet also listened to a briefing by Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on the latest regional developments and the ongoing military situation in light of recent Iranian attacks on Kuwait.

He noted that army explosive ordnance disposal teams have been handling remnants of shrapnel and unexploded ordnance during a ceasefire period, explaining that any explosion sounds heard are due to these disposal operations.

In turn, Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on diplomatic efforts undertaken by the ministry and its missions abroad to keep pace with recent developments.

He also outlined the outcomes of his recent visits to Bahrain, where he



PM Diwan photo His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs the meeting.

met King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al-Zayani, as well as to Egypt, where he met President Abdulfattah Al-Sisi and Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty.

The Cabinet was further briefed on a series of phone calls conducted by the Foreign Minister with counterparts from brotherly and friendly countries to discuss regional developments.

Kuwait's cabinet welcomed the announcement by US President Donald Trump of a ceasefire in Lebanon last Friday, praising efforts by Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, and reaffirming Kuwait's support for Lebanon in measures to assert state authority and maintain security and stability.

In this regard, the cabinet condemned the attack targeting the French contingent of the UN Interim

Force in Lebanon, which resulted in one fatality and several injuries, stressing the need to hold perpetrators accountable and reaffirming support for UNIFIL's role.

The cabinet reviewed reports from ministers and government entities on measures taken to raise readiness to the highest levels to ensure the safety of citizens and residents and secure essential needs amid current military and security developments.

It also urged citizens and residents to verify information and rely on official sources, warning against spreading rumors or unverified news, stressing that legal action will be taken against violators to safeguard public order.

The cabinet mourned the passing of former Justice Minister Ghazi Obaid Al-Sammar, praising his contributions and service to the nation.

The cabinet approved several items on its agenda and referred others to relevant ministerial committees for further study.

It affirmed that it will remain in continuous session to monitor ongoing developments at both the domestic and regional levels.

'Stick to traffic rules during rain'

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Ministry of Interior, represented by the General Traffic Department, has urged motorists to adhere to a set of traffic regulations and guidelines during rainfall, reports Al-Anba daily.

These regulations and guidelines were outlined in an awareness brochure aimed at enhancing road safety and reducing accidents in unstable weather conditions.

The General Traffic Department emphasized the importance of responsible driving, stressing the need to avoid using mobile phones while driving and to

ensure tire safety before setting off, as this directly impacts vehicle stability and balance on wet roads.

It also advised motorists to avoid driving through flooded areas, stay updated on weather warnings and forecasts, drive below the maximum speed limits, and maintain a safe following distance to allow for better response times in emergencies.

The department further emphasized the importance of using windshield wipers to ensure clear visibility and avoiding sudden braking, which can cause skidding and loss of vehicle control.

Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali visits Pastor Emmanuel Gharib



Left: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah with Pastor Emmanuel Gharib. Right: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Pastor Emmanuel Gharib with guests and visitors.



Amiri Diwan photos

By Bassam Al-Qassab
 Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, visited the Diwan of Pastor Emmanuel Gharib at the National Evangelical Church of Kuwait (N.E.C.K.) on the occasion of resuming the reception of guests and visitors of the diwaniya, in a move reflecting his commitment to strengthening communication with all segments of society.

This visit comes within the framework of Sheikh

Hamad's approach of openness to all segments, and the consolidation of values of brotherhood and co-existence that characterize Kuwaiti society. He was also keen to meet with attendees of the diwaniya and exchange friendly conversations in an atmosphere of friendliness and mutual appreciation.

For his part, Pastor Emmanuel expressed his deep appreciation and gratitude for this kind gesture from Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali, stressing that the visit reflects the spirit of love and communication that unites the people of Kuwait and highlights the depth of human relations among various segments of so-

ciety.

He noted that the N.E.C.K. Diwan will remain an open platform for dialogue and engagement, aimed at promoting the values of tolerance and mutual understanding.

Pastor Emmanuel also praised the commitment of national leaders to supporting such community initiatives.

He said the visit reflects a well-established image of national cohesion and reaffirms that Kuwait will continue to be a model of coexistence and harmony among all its components under its wise leadership.

KCCI, Pakistan teams hold talks

'Food supplies to Kuwait will continue unabated'

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) held a video conference on Tuesday, April 21 with a delegation from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, headed by the Pakistani Ambassador to Kuwait, Dr. Zafar Iqbal.

According to a press release issued by KCCI, the meeting, initiated by the Pakistani side, aimed to express solidarity and cooperation with Kuwait and to ensure the continued availability of essential food supplies in light of the current circumstances in the region due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

KCCI welcomed the Pakistani delegation, emphasizing the deep-rooted economic relations between Kuwait and Islamabad, which reflect decades of cooperation and strong trade ties.

KCCI expressed its appreciation for the Pakistani Embassy's initiative to enhance cooperation in the food supply sector. The initiative includes providing information on Pakistani exporters and organizing meetings with representatives of the Kuwaiti private sector to strengthen trade relations and explore further trade and investment opportunities between the two countries.



KCCI photo Pakistan Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Zafar Iqbal led the talks with KCCI.

KCCI affirmed its readiness to coordinate with the relevant authorities and stakeholders in Pakistan to facilitate this cooperation and support arrangements that contribute to the efficient flow of essential food

supplies. Meanwhile, Ambassador Dr. Iqbal thanked KCCI for its continued cooperation and for organizing the event, emphasizing the importance of joint efforts during this period, particularly in the food and basic commodities sector.

The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry stated that Pakistan has an abundance of food products such as rice, vegetables, and fruits, and expressed its readiness to cooperate with Kuwait to secure the necessary supplies and its hope for long-term trade relations.

The meeting included a presentation by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) on the food and agricultural sector, highlighting the high-quality, competitively priced products available in Pakistan, including meat, fish, rice, vegetables, fruits, and dairy products.

A visual presentation was also given by Jazeera Airways, which currently operates cargo flights in addition to a limited number of passenger flights through Dammam Airport in Saudi Arabia.

Pros and cons of distant studies faced by teachers and students

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Consultant psychiatrist Dr. Nawaf Al-Qudairi said the transition to distance learning resulted in complex psychological challenges, which affected the cognitive focus and time management of students, not to mention the escalation of anxiety and stress, particularly during rigorous assessment periods.

In a statement to Kuwait TV, Al-Qudairi clarified that while distance learning is not a novel paradigm – given the previous experience during the COVID-19 pandemic – it necessitates a rapid evolution in pedagogical approaches and varied degree of expertise among educators.

He pointed out that the role of educators is more complex now, especially when dealing with primary level students whose attention span tends to be shorter. He stated that the domestic environment

presents an array of distractions, which are absent from the traditional school setting. He said this requires a strategic move by teachers to optimize engagement through diversified methodologies and segmenting curricula into concise and stimulating modules. He elaborated on the distinction between in-person and virtual instruction, indicating that the disparity extends beyond content to include human interaction.

He disclosed that certain factors like non-verbal communication, vocal tonality and facial expressions, which are vital for establishing a strong teacher-student relationship and achieving comprehensive understanding – are remarkably diminished behind digital screens.

Regarding older students, he asserted that even if these students have a more sophisticated capacity for comprehension, they are also susceptible to various forms of stress resulting from the absence of a traditional institutional environment.

MoH denies 'old' viral post alleging medical test fraud

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

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Ministry of Health denied the content of a social media post that was first published on August 31, 2020 and then was recirculated in March 2023 and again in April 2026.

In an official statement, the ministry confirmed that the matter had been addressed at the time and is completely unfounded and based on no factual evidence.

It urged everyone to verify information and refrain from spreading or sharing unreliable news.

The ministry indicated that legal action is being taken against anyone who deliberately defames the national health institution or spreads false rumors, stressing that no violations will be tolerated.

It also posted on its X account a screenshot of the post, which alleged that a Kuwaiti girl was admitted to Mubarak Hospital and that her test results were manipulated.

Other Voices

The 'priest's' second option

By Ahmad alsarraf

Israeli analyst Daniel Levy says, "To understand the idea behind these moves, we must go back to the events of October 7, the brutality of the Israeli response, and the setbacks to its efforts toward regional integration, with the normalization process with the Arabs coming to a halt.

Here, Netanyahu faced a difficult choice - either resume

regional normalization efforts through an approach more compatible with the Palestinians, or adhere to his position of rejecting any Palestinian future.

By choosing the second option, Netanyahu had to remove Iran from the regional balance of power. This step requires direct and large-scale American military intervention along with Israel.

In the days leading up to the Iranian war, two influential former Israeli security figures noted in an article for the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security that major Sunni regional states believed that toppling or significantly weakening the Iranian regime would solidify Israel's position as the dominant regional power.

Achieving this goal requires not only the collapse of Iran, but also the weakening of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, forcing them to rely on Israel for security and energy export routes. In other words, the consequences of the war, the targeting of GCC states by Iranian drones and missiles, can be seen as an intentional feature of Israel, not merely an unfortunate side effect."

As expected, when Israel and the United States launched this war, the GCC states' access to global markets via the Strait of Hormuz was severely affected. When Israel escalated the war by targeting Iranian energy infrastructure, Iran carried out its threat to attack the Gulf states.

Netanyahu seized the opportunity to call for alternative routes to the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

He envisioned extending oil and gas pipelines westward across the Arabian Peninsula to Israel and its Mediterranean ports. In public statements, Netanyahu linked some aspects of his project to the concept of Greater Israel.

During the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel, Netanyahu shared his vision of creating an integrated system, similar to a six-sided alliance in or around the Middle East, encompassing India, Arab states, African countries, Greece and Cyprus, and Asian countries, with Israel at the center of this alliance.

A recent Hebrew-language article by two senior figures at the IDF's official Strategic Institute clarified these points, stating that the Israeli army would not be limited to direct territorial invasions, but would instead establish control over areas far from Israel's borders without occupying or governing them.

Israel would be granted a dominant position, like the "King of the Jungle," thereby establishing a regional order that advances Israel's objectives.

In his recent speeches, Netanyahu has begun to portray Israel not only as a regional power, but as a global superpower seeking to position itself at the center of a regional alliance capable of sustaining itself even in the event of a decline in American influence.

Netanyahu has stated that this six-way alliance would be used against the radical Shiite axis and the emerging radical Sunni axis.

Israel has not hesitated to identify the next potential threat it may face, which is Turkiye.

Levy said some might view talk of a Greater Israel as typical wartime hyperbole, but recent Israeli policy suggests that doing so would be a mistake.

This perpetually militaristic mindset is deeply embedded in parts of the Israeli political class, the government, the opposition, the security establishment, the new right-wing elite, and the media.

However, this approach carries serious risks of overreach and backlash, posing a potential danger to Israel itself, as well as tensions that the region may not tolerate.

All of this is taking place while some of us are preoccupied with outdated historical grievances and animosities, at a time when Israel is actively pursuing its ambitions and goals.

Amid our complete preoccupation with the treacherous attacks on our countries by our neighbor Iran, other dangers surrounding us must not be overlooked.

We hope that our government is aware of these serious matters. Israel speaks about them openly, with blatant disregard for how they are perceived by us.



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diwaniya ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Cloud economy ... hybrid lane can mitigate threats

“REGIONAL countries, including Kuwait, are striving to make the cloud economy a cornerstone of economic diversification, aiming to attract investments, reduce capital costs, and enable companies to launch operations without the need to purchase expensive equipment, instead paying only for usage,” columnist **Sheikh Eng. Fahad Dawood Al-Sabah** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

“The cloud economy encourages startups to implement artificial intelligence models and analyze big data instantly. This model presents a realistic vision, as its importance lies in its reliance on massive data volumes stored in small spaces, which helps save significant costs and reduce energy consumption.”

“However, recent circumstances have highlighted the risk of a potential closure of the Strait of Hormuz, whose importance extends beyond its role of being an energy transit route. It also serves as a vital hub for submarine internet cables running along the seabed of the strait and the Red Sea. If these cables are disrupted, it could lead to a collapse in the emerging regional cloud economy.”

“Therefore, data sovereignty is crucial, as whoever owns the servers holds the power. Complete reliance on global companies could leave national digital security vulnerable to international tensions.”

“In this context, the ability to monitor field sites and analyze radiation readings via cloud platforms provides real-time analysis and enables immediate action, in addition to developing advanced capabilities to keep pace with this evolution.”

“This highlights the need for a hybrid approach based on multiple elements to secure the cloud economy, which has proven in recent years to be the new oil, a powerful engine capable of supporting many companies simultaneously.”

“There are some operational risks that can be mitigated through this hybrid approach, ensuring the continuity of field operations even in the event of cloud service disruptions due to regional instability.”

“With the success of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic, the cloud economy is emerging as an engine of the Fifth Industrial Revolution. However, it requires a robust security framework to protect both its physical assets on the ground and its software in the digital realm.”

“To mitigate the risks of the cloud economy in Kuwait, especially given rapid geopolitical shifts, a strategy based on operational flexibility is needed. This strategy should adopt a “sovereign hybrid cloud” model rather than relying entirely on global companies that could be affected by international conflicts.”

“The solution lies in localizing sensitive data, keeping vital information within Kuwait’s borders in local data centers. The use of global clouds should be limited to general, non-sensitive tasks, while maintaining a fully independent local backup in case of submarine cable outages or cyberattacks on global cloud systems.”

“Strengthening operational flexibility in the technical field is crucial, as operational disruptions caused by cloud connectivity issues can be extremely serious.”

“The solution involves adopting edge computing, diversifying technology sources, and building partnerships with companies that offer technological alternatives that are not subject to the same political pressures as other Western providers.”

“The focus should be on localizing technology and making the new national cybersecurity regulations launched by the National Cybersecurity Center in Kuwait binding by 2026.”

“These measures enhance digital security and help reduce the risk of cyberattacks.”

Also:

“In recent weeks of this war, the end of which is still uncertain, many scenes have emerged that reflect the overall situation in the Gulf region, particularly Kuwait,” columnist **Eng. Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

“The Kuwaiti and Gulf armed forces have proven their ability to confront aggression without the need for external support. This shows that self-reliance, when supported by modern weaponry, is capable of defending nations and safeguarding security and stability.”

“This does not mean that alliances are unnecessary. Rather, it means that complete dependence on them is not viable. Self-reliance has become essential through a strong home front, a capable defense force, and well-planned security operations. Reliance on others is necessary only in areas where it is not readily available.”

“There are many honorable examples that reflect the courage of our army, our armed forces, and our security personnel.”

“This situation reflects what a responsible society can be, one that adheres to the instructions of the relevant authorities and where individuals work to instill a sense of security among the public. Moral stability is necessary to avoid unintentional mistakes that could be exploited.”

“Following the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988 and the weakening of its armed forces, the Iranian regime adopted a guerrilla warfare strategy. The Revolutionary Guard became the backbone of the state, supported by affiliated groups in its strategic regional sphere, particularly in countries where conditions allowed the spread of its ideology.”

“These groups created vulnerabilities in some countries, but such risks have

been mitigated through proactive security measures.

“Iran’s objective is to weaken existing states and attempt to infiltrate others, capitalizing on a stereotypical image based on grand slogans that resonate with the consciousness of Arab public opinion, such as “liberating Jerusalem.”

“Those who were deceived have failed to realize that media propaganda is an integral part of the Iranian regime’s strategic approach, leading some to assume that anyone who opposes it is an enemy.”

“This has appeared at many critical moments, particularly in the recent war, which continues in various forms.”

“There are numerous flaws that Arab countries must overcome if there is a genuine intention to restore Arab solidarity.”

“The current option available to the Gulf states is to rely on their own military capabilities, strengthen the internal front, and reinforce the cohesion between the people and their political leadership. The Gulf states possess capable and trained human resources, diverse and modern weaponry, independent leadership, and supportive populations.”

“There does not appear to be any factor missing that would prevent us from confronting aggression if it were imposed upon it.”

“It is essential to refute Iranian claims through a well-considered strategy rather than impulsive reactions, as adversaries often benefit from exploiting ill-considered responses.”

“According to Sahih Muslim, “it is enough of a lie for a person to narrate everything he hears”. This hadith clearly warns against speaking without knowledge and emphasizes a person’s responsibility to verify what they hear before passing it on.” Kuwaiti writer **Fatima Nasser Al-Muzayel** wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

“It is not a trivial matter in the realm of ethics, nor a marginal matter; rather, it is a principle for which each of us is accountable. It is also a stern warning against a deep-rooted flaw that does not fade with time but instead renews itself through more capable means of infiltration.”

“For a person to transmit everything they hear without verification, reflection, or discernment is neither sound nor wholesome behavior. It represents a moral failure that not only opens the door to falsehood but also grants it legitimacy to infiltrate minds, even if the person did not intend it.”

“The comprehensive saying, “It is enough of a lie for a person to repeat everything he hears,” establishes a strict standard of responsibility in speech.”

“In this sense, lying is not measured solely by the intent to fabricate, but also by the consequences of the act of spreading what is unverified, unbeneficial, or harmful. The deeper insight is that the transmitter may be sincere in his intentions, but the impact may be deceitful.”

“Some may think that speaking about others “for verification purposes only” is an ethical justification, but true verification is not achieved through dissemination, rather through restraint.”

“The question that should be asked is not merely, “Is what I heard true?” but also “Do I have the right to pass it on, and is there any genuine benefit in transmitting it?”

“Verification is an internal responsibility that preserves society, whereas spreading information is an external action that may harm it.”

“Words are a responsibility, not an unrestricted freedom, especially in an age where many speak before they think. Words have transformed from being a trust to becoming a spectacle, from a measure of truth to a tool of exposure. People often speak out of a desire to participate not out of wisdom but out of a desire to be first rather than being accurate.”

“This is where social trust begins to erode, because societies do not collapse from blatant lies alone, but from an accumulation of half-truths and unverified reports.”

“Therefore, the moral guidance is clear in the saying, “Silence is wisdom, and few practice it.” Silence here is not weakness, but awareness; not withdrawal, but a moral choice that prioritizes the well-being of society over the individual’s impulse to speak. Habitually repeating everything heard produces a troubled mind, preoccupied with details, consumed by chaos, and unable to distinguish between what is important and what is trivial.”

“At the societal level, gatherings and platforms can become arenas where truth is distorted and manipulated. Suspicion becomes the norm and certainty the exception, and relationships grow fragile and insecure. A person of sound judgment is selective, as they speak only of what is beneficial, transmit only what is appropriate, and speak only when their words are an asset rather than a burden.”

“Silence regarding what distorts meaning is better than repeating it, and withholding what is inappropriate is more eloquent than circulating it, even under the guise of curiosity or concern.”

“In conclusion, not everything heard should be said, and not everything said should be justified. When words are removed from their context without verification, they become harmful, and when they are separated from their intended purpose, they become a troubling distortion. Our societies today are in greater need of ethical speech than of a multitude of speakers.”

— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty

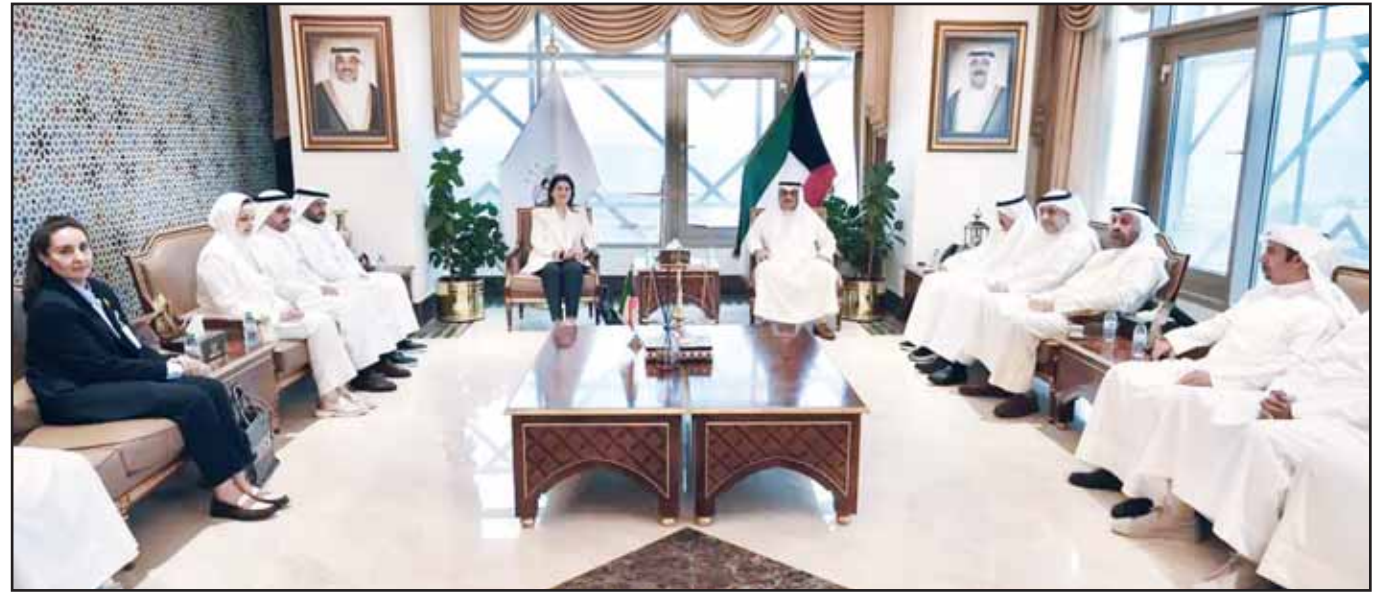


Al-Sabah



Fatima Al-Muzayel

‘Protecting public funds is national priority’



Kuwait's Attorney General Counsellor Sa'ad Al-Safran and chairperson of the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Dr. Rana Al-Fares and the accompanying delegations during the meeting.

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Kuwait’s Attorney General Counsellor Sa’ad Al-Safran and chairperson of the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Dr. Rana Al-Fares discussed on Monday means of strengthening constitutional coordination and sharing expertise in a manner that contributes to accelerating the pace of measures and boosting investigation accuracy.

This came in a statement following an official visit made by Al-Fares to the Public Prosecution headquarters, Nazaha said in a statement.

Protecting public funds is a maximum national priority, the statement quoted Al-Safran as saying, stressing the need of constitutional integration between the Prosecution and Nazaha in safeguarding the state’s assets.

Al-Fares evaluated the efforts exerted by the Prosecution and its continued cooperation, it stated.

She affirmed that the outcomes of the meeting would be materialized into immediate executive measures which would contribute to raising the efficiency of joint action.

Both sides agreed on setting a mechanism to share technical and legal expertise and information related to corruption cases and benefit from the best practices of both sides, according to the statement.

They also underlined that protecting public funds is a main priority to avert corruption and boost the confidence of society in the state’s institutions, it noted.

Co-op head fined in ‘power abuse’

Lawyer jailed 3 years, appeal fails

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Criminal Court imposed KD2,000 fine on the chairman of a cooperative society for abusing his power, causing losses totaling KD196,650 to the cooperative.

The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) filed a complaint, followed by an investigation which proved the chairman improperly returned a support check from the company providing oil change, tyre repair and electricity services. He breached the regulatory protocols, such that he failed to collect the mandatory fee equal to 15 percent of the check value.

By disregarding the financial entitlements of the cooperative, the defendant caused economic damage and his act is considered exploitation of his administrative authority.

Lawyer jailed 3 years: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Sanea, sentenced a lawyer to three years in prison with hard labor, reports

Al-Seyassah daily.

This is the first final ruling issued under the newly enacted law on the establishment of specialized criminal courts to adjudicate crimes related to external and internal security and acts of terrorism.

The defendant was convicted of disseminating false news and malicious statements through the ‘X’ platform regarding the status of individuals whose citizenship was revoked as per Article Eight of the Nationality Law.

The Public Prosecution stated that the accused exploited social media platforms to publish misinformation and allegations unsupported by data or official documentation. Such conduct is deemed an attempt to mislead the public, incite societal unrest, and challenge the laws and regulations.

Investigations revealed that the defendant deliberately spread rumors about the nationality files and improperly addressed matters falling within the sovereign purview of His Highness the Amir.

By disseminating inaccurate information regarding the grievances of those whose citizenship was withdrawn, the defendant committed a grave violation and exploited institutional discourse.



Participants of meeting from Kuwait and UAE.

Kuwait, UAE exchange expertise in crisis time

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): The National Crisis Management Center (AMAN) team held a virtual coordination meeting with the UAE’s National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority (NCEMA), aiming to strengthen cooperation and exchange expertise in crisis and emergency management.

In a press statement on Tuesday, the team said that the meeting addressed ways to develop joint coordination mechanisms and share best practices in emergency response, while also reviewing successful experiences from both sides in dealing with various types of crises and disasters.

The team emphasized the importance of continuing such meetings to enhance national preparedness, strengthen integration among relevant entities, and unify efforts and information to support rapid response and mitigate the impact of crises.

The statement also noted that the meeting discussed several joint future initiatives designed to enhance institutional capabilities in crisis and disaster management, keeping pace with evolving challenges.

Building rules violated

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Engineering Audit and Follow-up Department of Hawally Municipality carried out its fifth inspection campaign on construction violations, which resulted in the issuance of 12 warnings for building code violations, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In an official statement, the Public Relations Department of Kuwait Municipality announced that inspection campaigns are ongoing to monitor construction activities in all six governorates. These campaigns aim to enforce building regulations and ensure compliance with municipal requirements and standards across residential, industrial, commercial, agricultural, investment, and craft properties.

The department confirmed that field campaigns will continue in all governorates according to a set schedule.

FAO role lauded

Kuwait secures supply chain for food security

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Dr. Reem Al-Fulaij, State Minister for Development and Sustainability Affairs, has affirmed that Kuwait attaches paramount importance to strengthening food security at both regional and international levels.

Speaking during the ministerial meeting of the 38th Regional Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which was held virtually on Monday, Dr. Al-Fulaij noted that this focus is essential in light of the rapid challenges currently facing the global community, particularly regarding food supply chains and geopolitical repercussions.

The Minister emphasized the urgent necessity of intensifying international cooperation and coordination to address current obstacles and recent developments in the region. She specifically pointed to the disruptions in trade movement and energy supplies, explaining that these conditions have directly impacted the stability of food supply chains.

Dr. Al-Fulaij warned of the broader implications these disruptions have on global food commodity prices, cautioning that the effects are most severe for the world’s most vulnerable nations.

To navigate these exceptional circumstances, Dr. Al-Fulaij called for the adoption of practical and strategic measures. She highlighted the importance of diversifying import sources, strengthening strategic food reserves, and enhancing local production capabilities.

The Minister also underscored the vital role of the FAO in supporting member states through the provision of technical studies, reports, and national capacity-building initiatives.

By facilitating the transfer of knowledge and modern technologies, Dr. Al-Fulaij believes the organization is a key partner in achieving long-term food security sustainability.

She concluded her speech by expressing hope that the conference’s discussions would foster greater regional and international cooperation to stabilize supply chains and support sustainable development goals across the region.



Dr. Al-Fulaij

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MUGHAL MAHAL

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FOR KEEPING US SAFE

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Leaders review developments, boost coordination on security

Kuwait's FM engages Saudi, Qatar and UAE in regional talks

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan have discussed the current regional developments.

Over a telephone call conducted by the Kuwaiti minister, both sides also focused on efforts regarding these happenings and means of strengthening international and regional security and stability, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a

statement on Monday.

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah conducted on Monday a telephone call with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

During the call, both sides discussed the current regional developments and efforts regarding them, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

They also focused on the means of strengthening international and regional security and stability, it noted.

Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah conducted on Monday a telephone call with UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

During the call, Sheikh Jarrah condemned the terrorist plot aimed at undermining the UAE's national unity and stability,

the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

Sheikh Jarrah also affirmed Kuwait's full solidarity with, and support for, the UAE to take all measures aiming to preserve the country's security, stability and sovereignty, according to the statement. In addition, both sides discussed the current regional developments and efforts regarding them as well as means of strengthening international and regional security and stability, it noted.

MEW allocates KD261m for power and water upgrades

CAPT extends bid deadline for substations

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The total approved expenditures for implementing and maintaining electricity and water networks in the budget for the current fiscal year reached KD261 million -- KD200.119 million for the electricity network and KD60.917 million for

the water infrastructure -- in order to guarantee the continuous provision of vital utility services.

Meanwhile, the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) extended the deadline for submitting bids for establishing three primary substations for the Cloud Data Center, including the feeders and accessories, to May 12, instead of May 5, to give more companies a chance to participate in the tender.

By providing the essential infra-

structure for government cloud data centers, this project aims to modernize work mechanisms and strengthen the digital system of the country as per the international technological standards.

It is worth noting that the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy will construct the three main substations in Sulaibiya, North Saad Al-Abdullah City and Al-Mutlaa, according to the agreement between the Kuwaiti government and Google, with an estimated total cost of more than KD22 million.

IICO concludes student camp in Benin

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): The International Islamic Charity Organization concluded a training camp in the Republic of Benin, targeting 100 university students to reinforce Islamic values and cultural awareness.

Deputy Director-General for Projects Ibrahim Al-Bader told KUNA on Tuesday that the camp offered a model for educational and advocacy work for youth.

He noted it was hosted at Abom-



Al-Bader

ey-Calavi and Parakou universities, with 50 students at each center, under a program tailored to address contemporary intellectual and cultural challenges.

Al-Bader added the camp

focused on strengthening Islamic values, providing balanced knowledge, and nurturing talents while protecting participants from harmful ideas.

He stated the total cost reached about KD 8,500, covering meals, transport, educational materials, instructors' remuneration and related activities.

He stressed these efforts are supported by donors in Kuwait to empower individuals educationally and culturally and enhance their positive impact on society.

Together in Strength: Symbol of solidarity

ICSK Junior honours Al Arfaj, Kuwait's national flower and symbol of unity

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: To love Kuwait is to honour its laws with absolute sincerity, to uphold its customs with deep reverence, and to guard its peace as fiercely as one guards one's own.

The Indian Community School, Kuwait-Junior, proudly celebrated the indomitable spirit of Al Arfaj – Kuwait's revered national flower – through a stirring school activity, "Together in Strength." Students passionately crafted Al-Arfaj badges, solidarity cards, and powerful slogans, drawing profound inspiration from a bloom that flourishes magnificently even in the harshest desert conditions. Just as Al-Arfaj never surrenders its fragrance or grace under adversity, ICSK-Junior reaffirmed its firm solidarity with Kuwait, pledging steadfast faith in its visionary leadership.

In times of challenge, loyalty must shine brightest – standing shoulder to shoulder with Kuwaiti brothers and sisters, united in purpose and bound by an unbreakable vow – to honour Kuwait with every breath and every deed. Together, Kuwaiti nationals and expatriates form an imperishable bond. ICSK-Junior, inspired by the eternal spirit of Al Arfaj, pledges to nurture this bond in every child, every classroom, and every heartbeat of its vibrant community.

Students showcased their remarkable creations before teachers and peers during vibrant online sessions – a resounding accomplishment to unity, resilience, and gratitude.



Top & above: Students craft badges, slogans inspired by Kuwait's national flower.



ICSK-Junior staff proudly wear Al Arfaj badges, symbolizing unity, resilience, and solidarity with Kuwait during the "Together in Strength" activity.

Students urged to pay semester fees

PAAET sets tuition payment deadline

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Deanship of Admissions and Registration at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) has advised students enrolled in paid programs to visit the deanship to complete the payment of tuition fees for the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year.

The deanship clarified that the payment period will start on Tuesday and will continue until Thursday -- from 9:00 am to 12:00

noon, indicating that students should go to the Registrar's Office on the second floor of Building Two in Adailiya.

It stressed the importance of adhering to the specified dates to guarantee the achievement of educational and training objectives and prevent the disruption of academic procedures.

It added that this step is part of a strategy aimed at easing procedures for the students, urging the concerned students to follow its official channels and to obtain information only from official sources to curb the spread of rumors.



MoHE photo

Officials from the Ministry of Higher Education and Abdullah Al-Salem University during the signing of a lease agreement for buildings at the Keifan campus.

Keifan buildings to host ministry offices

Higher Education signs lease deal with Abdullah Al-Salem University

By Abdulrahman Al-Shammari

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Ministry of Higher Education signed a contract with Abdullah Al-Salem University to lease several of its buildings located on the Keifan campus.

The leased facilities include a headquarters for the ministry and buildings for its affiliated entities, including the General Secretariat of Public Sector Universities, the General Secretariat of Private Sector Universities, and the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation.

The agreement was signed in the presence of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Dr. Bader Al-Basiri, and the Acting Secretary General of Abdullah Al-Salem University, Dr. Adel Al-Hussainan.

This step comes within the ministry's commitment to enhancing the efficiency of government expenditure and rationalizing operational costs.

The signing of the agreement is based on the circular No. 1/1999 of the Ministry of Finance regarding the utilization of land and buildings among government entities, following approvals from the relevant regulatory bodies and the Fatwa and Legislation Department.

From Abdullah Al-Salem University's side, the acting Vice President for Planning, Institutional Excellence, and Innovation, Dr. Fawaz Al-Enezi, and university department directors attended the contract signing.

From the Ministry of Higher Education's side, Assistant Undersecretary for Support Services Saadoun Buarki, Assistant Undersecretary for Scholarships and Equivalencies Dr. Faisal Al-Adwani, and ministry department directors attended the event.

Dr. Mona Al-Ahmad, Director of Abdullah Al-Salem University, affirmed that signing this contract comes within the framework of strengthening integration among higher education institutions and reflects the university's role as a supportive partner to state institutions, as well as flexibility in utilizing and integrating government resources.

She explained that the university is keen to support national efforts aimed at developing the institutional work environment and providing the elements of success for educational institutions. Hosting the Ministry of Higher Education and its affiliated entities at the Keifan campus represents a qualitative step that enhances coordination and integration among the relevant institutions and contributes to raising performance efficiency and achieving common goals.

On his part, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Dr. Bader Al-Basiri, confirmed that this step comes within a comprehensive organizational plan aimed at optimizing the use of government assets and facilities, and utilizing available spaces in a way that achieves added value and contributes to raising the level of institutional performance.

He explained that this contract will contribute to providing a modern and integrated work environment that supports the development of work mechanisms and enhances the quality of services provided, in addition to achieving financial savings by reducing operational expenses and maximizing the use of available resources.

The move to Abdullah Al-Salem University's buildings in the Keifan campus will take place after the completion of comprehensive maintenance and renovation works, which are expected to be finished in approximately one and a half years.



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Continued from Page 1

From a Gulf

Till today, Iraq continues to suffer from external influence, which has enabled sectarian militias to obstruct the restoration of constitutional institutions. The role of these militias has expanded, with Iran using them as a proxy to attack Kuwait and some Gulf states, destabilize the region, and target Gulf infrastructure.

The mullahs' regime raised the slogan "Death to America, Death to Israel," but it never sought to achieve it; rather, it used the slogan merely as a cover for its regional expansionist strategy.

Iran used the slogan "Death to America, Death to Israel" only to manipulate the emotions of a segment of the Arab population, whose minds had been influenced for decades by the slogan "Liberation of Palestine."

Those who adopted the slogan of liberating Palestine ended up making useless compromises. The peace initiatives announced by Riyadh, the latest of which was at the Beirut Summit, were intended as the foundation for a fair settlement, but the Iranian regime opposed and distorted them because it knows they expose its slogans.

The Iranian regime has destroyed Syria - a land of civilization - and the beautiful Lebanon, where it committed serious crimes.

Mr. Trump, today "Operation Epic Fury" has revealed the weakness of the Iranian regime, which has become nothing more than a propaganda mouthpiece.

Mr. Trump, you have awakened the Iranian people, who may benefit from the outcomes of this "Epic Fury" to rid themselves of the burden that has weighed on them for 47 years, especially considering the five ethnic groups that suffered immensely under the Iranian regime, and endured massacres and atrocities.

Mr. Trump, thank you. You have saved the Middle East from a racist, sectarian, and terrorist regime with this monumental step.

Mr. Trump, you have been great. The people of the Middle East will always remember you. God bless the United States, and God bless President Trump.

Brave President Trump, they are new Tatars. You know very well what the Tatars did in the Middle East in the past.

Kuwait rejects

ballistic missiles and drones, including Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and Iraq.

Ministers are reviewing a draft resolution reflecting a collective Arab stance condemning the attacks and expressing solidarity with affected states. The resolution is also expected to propose mechanisms to document violations, assess damages, and pursue compensation through diplomatic and legal channels, while reaffirming the right of Arab states to self-defense under Article 51 of the

UN Charter.

In Geneva, Kuwait warned that attempts to use international straits for financial or political coercion amount to "legal piracy." Speaking at the 67th session of the Assemblies of WIPO, Kuwait's Permanent Representative Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen stressed the need to safeguard international navigation, particularly in the Strait of Hormuz, to ensure the flow of patented innovations and technological goods.

He said imposing illegal fees or restrictions on shipping violates Article 26 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and condemned actions by Iran and its regional proxies that threaten ports, research infrastructure, and state sovereignty. He also cautioned against rising cyberattacks targeting academic institutions and scientific databases, warning that theft of research data poses a serious threat to humanity's future.

Al-Hayen called for urgent international measures to protect intellectual property systems and reinforce legal accountability, emphasizing the need to shield innovation from disruptions that hinder development.

Meanwhile, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations and Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia Miguel Ángel Moratinos warned that the Middle East is facing one of its most dangerous periods in decades.

In remarks to KUNA in Madrid, Moratinos described the region as experiencing "disintegration, deep division, and widespread human suffering," with no clear path to peace. He criticized reliance on military force, urging a shift toward dialogue, negotiation, and respect for international law.

He praised Kuwait as a model of adherence to international legitimacy, citing its 1991 liberation, and encouraged it to continue strengthening regional cooperation, particularly with Arab states. Moratinos also warned that dependence on foreign military bases would not ensure stability, describing the current approach as a "security trap" that yields counterproductive outcomes.

He stressed that lasting security can only be achieved through peace, adding that the current crisis requires deeper solutions beyond temporary ceasefires and that sustainable resolution depends on the will of the region's people.

In latest development, the United States and Iran have signaled they will hold a new round of ceasefire talks in Pakistan, two regional officials said Tuesday, as leaders on both sides warned they were prepared for more fighting if a fragile two-week truce expires without a deal.

Neither the U.S. nor Iran has publicly confirmed the timing of the talks in Islamabad, with Iranian state television denying any official was already in Pakistan's capital.

Pakistan-led mediators received confirmation that the top negotiators, U.S. Vice President JD Vance and Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher

Qalibaf, will arrive in Islamabad early Wednesday to lead their teams in the talks, the regional officials told The Associated Press.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief reporters.

A ceasefire that began April 8 was set to expire Wednesday.

Both sides remain dug in rhetorically. U.S. President Donald Trump has warned that "lots of bombs" will "start going off" if there's no agreement before the ceasefire deadline, and Iran's chief negotiator said that Tehran has "new cards on the battlefield" that haven't yet been revealed.

The ceasefire seemed likely to be extended if talks resume. White House officials have said that Vance would lead the American delegation, but Iran hasn't said who it might send. Iranian state television on Tuesday broadcast a message saying that "no delegation from Iran has visited Islamabad ... so far."

Iranian state TV long has been controlled by hard-liners within Iran's theocracy. The on-screen alert likely reflects the ongoing internal debate within Iran's theocracy as it weighs how to respond to the U.S. Navy's seizure of an Iranian container ship over the weekend.

On Tuesday, the U.S. said its forces boarded an oil tanker previously sanctioned for smuggling Iranian crude oil in Asia. The Pentagon said in a social media post that U.S. forces boarded the M/T Tifani "without incident."

The U.S. military did not say where the vessel had been boarded, though ship-tracking data showed the Tifani in the Indian Ocean between Sri Lanka and Indonesia on Tuesday.

The statement added that "international waters are not a refuge for sanctioned vessels."

172 lose

citizenship is revoked after the death of her Kuwaiti husband or dissolution of the marriage for any reason, unless she has children with him and has not married a non-Kuwaiti.

A naturalized woman who has children with her Kuwaiti husband does not lose her Kuwaiti citizenship as long as she does not remarry a non-Kuwaiti. Her citizenship is revoked if she reclaims her original nationality, acquires another nationality, or carries a passport of another country.

Article 11 stipulates that a Kuwaiti man loses his citizenship if he voluntarily acquires a foreign nationality. Consequently, his wife loses the citizenship if she is a Kuwaiti by naturalization, unless she informs the Minister of Interior of her desire to retain her Kuwaiti citizenship within a year when she found out about her husband's naturalization.

Minor children also lose their Kuwaiti nationality if they are included in their father's new nationality under the law

pertaining to that nationality, provided that the minor is Kuwaiti as per Article One of this law. They must inform the Minister of Interior of their desire to keep their Kuwaiti citizenship within one year of reaching the age of maturity.

Kuwait tightens

an increase of 141 percent.

The number of newly opened shops declined to 12, a decrease of 67 percent, while the number of closed shops rose to 74, an increase of 124 percent. This reflects a clear trend toward market regulation by closing violators rather than expanding the issuance of new licenses.

The number of complaints decreased to 181, a 13 percent drop, while complaints submitted through digital channels, including the online portal, What'sApp, and the Sahel app, rose to 4,922, an increase of 19 percent. These figures reflect a structural shift in consumer interaction with regulatory bodies and a growing reliance on digital platforms for reporting issues.

The advertising and promotional licensing sector witnessed notable activity during February, with discount transactions rising sharply to seven transactions, a 250 percent increase. Overall discount transactions also increased to 68, up by 172 percent, reflecting active marketing efforts by companies.

In contrast, promotional offers from cooperative societies and supermarkets declined by 14 percent, suggesting a shift in marketing strategies within this sector.

Seasonal and emergency offers continued to rise, reaching 71 transactions, a 58 percent increase. Transactions involving the distribution of free gifts remained relatively stable.

Recall notices recorded a sharp decline of 91 percent, while the number of vehicles recalled due to defects also decreased.

The precious metals sector witnessed strong activity during February, with fees collected for testing reaching approximately KD 583,900, an increase of 42 percent. The amount of gold tested exceeded 3.5 million grams, in addition to 36.5 million grams of silver.

The activity also included testing of diamonds, platinum, and titanium, reflecting high trading volumes in the sector and its connection to the market and investment trends.

At the Real Estate Services and Valuation Department, the number of transactions rose to 79, an increase of 16 percent, while brokerage license renewals grew by 33 percent.

Requests to cancel brokerage licenses decreased by 50 percent, which may indicate relative stability in the number of professionals operating in this sector.

The total number of licensed Kuwaiti brokers reached 1,810, along with 13 GCC brokers and 133 real estate appraisers.

In the context of combating money laundering and terrorist financing, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry continued to strengthen oversight, conducting 12 high-risk inspections (an increase of 20 percent), 10 medium-risk inspections, and 14 low-risk inspections.

Penal measures were also taken, including the issuance of 7 orders and 12 fines totaling KD 11,000 in the precious metals sector, in addition to warnings and other regulatory actions in the real estate brokerage sector.

In the trademarks sector, applications recorded significant growth, reaching 1,102 transactions, an increase of 12 percent.

Registered and issued trademark certificates reached 977, up by 21 percent, reflecting increased activity in trademark registration and intellectual property protection.

Renewal applications declined, which may indicate the expiration of some trademarks or restructuring in ownership. Patent applications showed mixed performance, with individual applications increasing by 25 percent, while corporate applications declined by 15 percent.

In terms of international relations, the value of certificates of origin reached approximately KD 194 million, with notable increases in exports to Europe and Africa, compared to a sharp decline of 87 percent in exports to GCC countries.

The trade fair sector witnessed increased activity, with 93 licenses issued for temporary exhibitions within Kuwait, representing a 16 percent increase.

Licenses for gold and jewelry exhibitions declined by 58 percent, which may be linked to changes in demand or market regulation.

Regarding food subsidies, the total amount reached approximately KD 27 million, with basic commodities accounting for the largest share at KD 15 million, despite a 6 percent decrease.

Subsidies for milk and infant formula increased by 17 percent, while subsidies for construction materials declined by 23 percent.

The number of beneficiaries of food subsidies exceeded 2.34 million individuals, reflecting the state's continued role in supporting essential commodities.

Kuwait's FDI

investment requires, above all, a supportive economic environment, strong purchasing power, and solid political and economic stability.

He pointed to Saudi Arabia's success in attracting foreign direct investment, attributing it to its political strength and competitiveness, including the application of the principle of reciprocity in taxation policies with other countries.

Al-Ghanim revealed that a number of international companies have begun relocating investments from European markets due to high taxes, and are in-

creasingly investing in countries with more flexible tax systems, such as Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, economic analyst Mohammed Ramadan confirmed that the volume of foreign direct investment in Kuwait remains very low, not exceeding KD 2 billion, compared to tens of billions of dinars invested in some Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, Dubai, and Bahrain.

He stressed that despite the Kuwaiti government's efforts to diversify income sources and provide incentives to attract foreign investment, it is still necessary to adopt the approaches and mechanisms used by neighboring countries to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).

Regarding the significant gap between indirect foreign investment and direct investment, Ramadan explained that indirect investments are based on stocks and financial transactions that seek a safe haven, relying on the strength and resilience of the Kuwaiti economy. Government support for economic activity encourages foreigners to invest in stocks and banks rather than in direct operational projects. Direct investment is the most important for the Kuwaiti economy, as it serves as a true indicator of the performance of the local economy.

Ramadan attributed the decline in FDI in Kuwait to several factors, foremost among them the economic environment, which he said is still not sufficiently attractive to FDI.

He clarified that before entering any country, an investor carefully assesses where to place their capital in order to achieve satisfactory returns, and tends to focus direct investments on markets that are flexible in their approach to foreign capital.

Ramadan pointed out that attracting and increasing foreign direct investment in Kuwait requires not only amending existing investment laws, but more importantly establishing a dedicated investment zone with its own legal framework, use of the English language, and a free-market model, similar to the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC).

In addition, researcher Ahmed Al-Mutairi prepared a study titled "Foreign Direct Investment in Kuwait," which included several recommendations, most notably:

- Ensuring equal treatment for foreign and national investors under existing legislation
- Establishing a grievance committee within KDIPA that guarantees impartiality and has a mixed composition
- Providing a guarantee that the investor's viewpoint regarding violations is heard before any penalties are imposed
- Regulating free zones under the Direct Investment Law.
- Adopting a standard for determining the nationality of foreign legal entities seeking direct investment in the State of Kuwait.



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Sheinbaum demands explanation after US officials die after operation in Chihuahua

Shooting at historic pyramids in Mexico kills Canadian and injures at least 13

MEXICO CITY, April 21, (AP) — An armed man standing atop one of the historic Teotihuacan pyramids opened fire on tourists Monday, killing one Canadian and leaving at least 13 people injured at the archaeological site north of Mexico's capital, authorities said.

The shooter was identified as 27-year-old Julio Cesar Jasso of Mexico, a state official told the AP on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak about the case. Jasso later died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, authorities said, and security officials found a gun, a knife and ammunition. Jasso was the sole assailant in the attack, the State of Mexico government confirmed on Monday night.

The local government said seven people were wounded by gunshots. How the other people were injured was not disclosed, but a number of people fell when shooting started, some while climbing on the pyramids.

Those taken to hospitals for treatment were six Americans, three Colombians, one Russian, two Brazilians and one Canadian, the local government said. The youngest person who was injured was 6; the oldest was 61, Mexican authorities said.

Video and photos published by local media showed a man, later identified

as Jasso, standing with a gun on top of a pyramid while people ducked for cover. A number of gunshots rang out in the videos.

The Teotihuacan pyramids, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are a series of massive structures on the outskirts of Mexico City built by three different ancient civilizations. As one of Mexico's most important touristic destinations, the site drew more than 1.8 million international visitors last year, according to government figures.

The shooting took place shortly after 11:30 a.m. when dozens of tourists were at the top of the Pyramid of the Moon. The standing on the structure's platform began firing upward, according to a tour guide who was at the scene and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity for safety reasons.

"Some people, because they were scared ... threw themselves face down on the ground, and the rest of us started to go down," the guide said, recounting how the shooter, upon seeing the tourists descending the pyramid's steps, began firing.

Another group of visitors lay motionless on the pyramid's platform to avoid being targeted by the shooter, who authorities have not yet identified. Brenda Lee, of Vancouver, British



Forensic workers carry the body of a victim down a pyramid after authorities said a gunman opened fire, in Teotihuacan, Mexico on April 20, (AP)

Columbia, said she was waiting to buy a souvenir when she and others in her group thought they heard firecrackers.

"Before we knew it, someone said, 'No, that's gunfire, run,' and we saw people coming off the top," she told CTV News, one of Canada's national television broadcasters.

"There were thousands of people

there and there were a lot of gunshots that just kept coming," Lee said.

The scene quickly turned chaotic as people tried to escape, Lee said.

"And then a fellow jumped," she said. "It was someone trying to get away, and he dropped to the next level, but he fell on his back, and it was ... it just was awful."

In past years, staff at the archaeological site carried out security scans before people entered the area but have since stopped, one local guide noted.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum wrote on social media that the shooting would be investigated and that she was in touch with the Canadian Embassy.

"What happened today in Teotihuacan deeply pains us. I express my most sincere solidarity with the affected individuals and their families," she wrote.

Anita Anand, Canada's foreign affairs minister, said on X that as a "result of a horrific act of gun violence, a Canadian was killed and another wounded in Teotihuacan" and that her "thoughts are with their family and loved ones."

Also:

MEXICO CITY: Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Monday she would demand explanations over what US and Mexican officials were doing in northern Chihuahua when they died in an accident over the weekend, noting that any joint collaborations between the local government and the U.S. without federal permission would be a violation of Mexican law. The crash, following an operation to

destroy a clandestine drug lab in a rural area, has reignited a debate over the extent of US involvement in Mexican security operations. Speculation was only fueled by Sheinbaum, local officials and the US Embassy appearing to contradict each other and at times themselves, and offering sparse details about the US officials who died.

"It was not an operation that the security cabinet was aware of," Sheinbaum told journalists. "We were not informed; it was a decision by the Chihuahua government."

It comes at a key moment for the relationship between the two neighboring nations as Mexico faces escalating pressure from US President Donald Trump crack down on cartels and Sheinbaum underscores Mexico's sovereignty.

Sheinbaum said her government would investigate the incident to ensure no laws were broken after the deaths on Sunday, adding that state governments must have authorization from Mexico's federal government to collaborate with US and other foreign entities "as established by the Constitution."

Chihuahua Attorney General César Jáuregui said Sunday the officials died while returning from the operation to destroy labs of criminal groups.

Lat/Am

Drone attack kills 3 Colombian soldiers: Colombian rebels on Monday launched drone strikes that killed three soldiers and injured two others, authorities said, as the use of these weapons becomes increasingly common in the South American country.

Colombia's army said that the attack took place in Ipiales, a municipality in the southwest of the country that borders Ecuador. It attributed the strike to a group known as Comandos de la Frontera.

"Our operations in the area will continue and we will intensify our offensive in order to locate and neutralize those who were responsible," the army said in a statement. (AP)



'May 15 deadline for counting votes in Peru': Peru's electoral tribunal on Monday set a deadline for officials to finish counting votes and name the candidates advancing to the second round in the nation's highly contested presidential election.

The tribunal said that Peru's elections agency ONPE has until May 15 to publish full voting tallies and say which two candidates will participate in the second round. More than 30 candidates participated in the April 12 election and the top two contenders must go to a runoff on June 7, because none of the candidates garnered more than half the votes. (AP)



Cuba confirms meeting with US officials: Cuba's government on Monday confirmed that it had recently met with US officials on the island as tensions between the two sides remain high over the U.S. energy blockade of the Caribbean country.

Senior US State Department officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, had said on Friday that American diplomats flew earlier in April to the island for the first time since 2016 in a new diplomatic push. Neither US nor Cuban officials have said exactly when the meeting took place nor which US officials took part.

Alejandro García del Toro, deputy director general in charge of US affairs at the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said on Monday that the U.S. delegation included assistant secretaries of state, and that the Cuban delegation included representatives at the level of deputy foreign minister.

The exchange was conducted "respectfully and professionally," he said, adding that the U.S. delegation did not issue any threats or deadlines as has been reported in some US media. (AP)

Pope Leo blasts colonization of minerals in Equatorial Guinea

MALABO, Equatorial Guinea, April 21, (AP) — Pope Leo XIV arrived in Equatorial Guinea on Tuesday on the fourth and final leg of his Africa journey, and denounced the "colonization" of Africa's minerals and the "lust for power" in a country whose repressive leader has been in office since 1979.

Adoring crowds in the largely Catholic country lined the road from the airport into the capital, Malabo, cheering the first pope to visit since St. John Paul II in 1982. Wearing his formal red mozzetta cape, Leo thrilled the flag-waving masses by arriving at the presidential palace in his open-sided popemobile.

"There is a lot of joy today because we waited 44 years for the pope to come," said Diosdado Marques, a senior Catholic official in the country. "It's a bless-



Pope Leo XIV

ing for the country, we hope many things will change and we will deepen our faith."

The former Spanish colony on Africa's western coast is run by Africa's longest-serving president, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who has been accused of widespread corruption and authoritarianism.

The discovery of offshore oil in the mid-1990s transformed Equatorial Guinea's economy virtually overnight, with oil now accounting for almost half of its GDP and more than 90% of exports, according to the African Development Bank.

Yet more than half of the country's nearly 2 million people live in poverty. And rights groups including Human Rights Watch - as well as court cases in France and Spain - have documented how revenues have enriched the ruling Obiang family rather than the broader population.

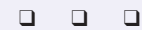
Leo, who arrived from Angola, met with Obiang at the presidential palace and then addressed government authorities, diplomats and civil service representatives.

Africa

Nigeria charges 6 with treason: Nigerian authorities have charged six people, including a retired major general and a serving police inspector, with terrorism and treason, over an alleged plot to overthrow President Bola Tinubu, according to a charge sheet seen by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The six were all in custody. A seventh suspect, former Bayelsa state Gov. Timpre Sylva, is accused of helping to conceal the plot and is still at large.

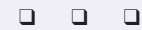
In the 13-count charge sheet, authorities said suspects "conspired with one another to levy war against the state to overawe the president of the Federal Republic." (AP)



Top commander defects to Sudan army: A high-profile paramilitary commander in Sudan has changed sides and joined the country's army in a move welcomed by army chief Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan shortly after the war entered its fourth year.

Burhan on Sunday welcomed Maj. Gen. al-Nour Ahmed Adam, who defected earlier this month from the Rapid Support Forces. The ruling sovereign council posted a video on social media showing Burhan's meeting with Adam, who is known as al-Qubba, in Sudan's Northern province on the border with Egypt.

"Doors are open to all those who lay down arms and join the path of national reconstruction," Burhan, who chairs the sovereign council, said in a statement. The RSF didn't comment on the defection. (AP)



Rwanda, Uzbekistan establish diplomatic ties: Uzbekistan and Rwanda have officially established diplomatic relations, according to Uzbek Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov.

A joint communique on the establishment of diplomatic ties was signed Saturday by Saidov and Rwanda's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Olivier Nduhugirehe on the sidelines of the fifth Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Türkiye, Saidov said on social media Saturday.

The two ministers also signed a memorandum of understanding on creating a mechanism for political consultations, which provides a legal framework for regular dialogue on key regional and international issues.

Saidov noted that establishing ties with Rwanda is a significant step in Uzbekistan's strategy to expand cooperation with the African continent. Rwanda has become the 167th country to establish official diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan. (Xinhua)

Luxon survives party leadership vote months before election in NZ

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, April 21, (AP) — New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said Tuesday that he had survived a vote on his leadership among his own party's lawmakers, after recent slumps in the polls prompted speculation he might be ousted.

The vote was held behind closed doors during a routine meeting of Luxon's center-right National Party lawmakers and was sought by the Prime Minister himself. Luxon emerged afterward to read a brief statement announcing the vote and departed without taking questions from reporters.

"The last week, there has been intense media speculation about my leadership," Luxon said, adding that he had called for a confidence vote "to put that media speculation to rest."

His party caucus had "answered clearly and decisively," the Prime Minister said. "It has backed my leadership."

He did not say that the vote had been unanimous. Nicola Willis, the party's deputy leader, said later Tuesday that vote had been a secret ballot with only scrutineers knowing the final tally, but that Luxon must have received a majority.

The confidence vote happened



New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, right, speaks to reporters at Parliament in Wellington, New Zealand, after a vote among his own lawmakers about his leadership of the National Party, on April 21. (AP)

months ahead of New Zealand's next national election, scheduled for Nov. 7. Recent drops in the polls for National had prompted speculation from analysts that he would face a leadership challenge.

That was seen by party lawmakers as an unwelcome distraction in an election year for National, which has governed New Zealand in a right-wing

coalition government since the 2023 vote. Luxon, a former airline executive who entered Parliament in 2000, has led the party since 2021.

While two recent New Zealand prime ministers - National's John Key and Labour's Jacinda Ardern - have voluntarily quit the post, it would have been extremely unusual for lawmakers to oust a sitting prime minister.

Fired former UK official describes political pressure to approve Mandelson as US envoy

LONDON, April 21, (AP) — The top official behind the decision to approve Peter Mandelson's appointment as British ambassador to Washington said Tuesday that he felt political pressure from Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office to rush through the appointment, despite security concerns.

Claims by former Foreign Office head Olly Robbins that Starmer's office had a "dismissive attitude" to security vetting increase the heat on Britain's leader, who is facing calls to resign over the appointment of the friend of Jeffrey Epstein to one of the UK's most important diplomatic posts.

The prime minister fired Robbins last week after the revelation that Mandelson was approved for the job in January 2025 against the recommendation of the government's security vetting agency.

Robbins said the concerns about Mandelson did not relate to his relationship with Epstein. He declined to say when questioned by lawmakers what led the government's vetting agency to flag Mandelson as a poten-



Former Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) boss Sir Olly Robbins appears before the Foreign Affairs Committee at the Houses of Parliament in London on April 21. (AP)

tial security risk.

Robbins said the vetting agency considered Mandelson a "borderline case" and was "leaning toward recommending against" giving him security clearance. Robbins decided to clear

him anyway.

Starmer has called it "staggering" that Foreign Office officials failed to tell him about the security concerns, which he says he only found out about last week.

Ammunition explosion kills 3, injures 1

Japan scraps ban on lethal weapons exports

TOKYO, April 21, (Agencies) — Japan on Tuesday scrapped a ban on lethal weapons exports, a major change in its postwar pacifist policy as the country seeks to build up its arms industry amid worries over Chinese and North Korean aggression.

The approval by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's Cabinet of the new guideline clears a final set of hurdles for many arms sales, including of Japanese-developed warships, combat drones and other weapons.

China criticized the change in policy, but it has been largely welcomed by Japanese defense partners like Australia and attracted interest from Southeast Asia and Europe.

Opponents say the change violates Japan's pacifist constitution and will increase global tensions and threaten the safety of the Japanese people.

The new policy will "ensure safety for Japan and further contribute to the peace and stability in the region and the international society as the security environment around our country rapidly changes," Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara told reporters. "The government will strategically promote defense equipment transfers to create a security environment that is desirable for Japan and to build up the industrial base that can support fighting resilience."

Japan has long prohibited most arms exports under its post-World War II pacifist constitution. It has made recent changes because of rising global and regional tensions, but exports were limited to five areas: rescue, transport, alerts, surveillance and minesweeping.



Japanese warship the JS Yahagi, a Mogami-class stealth frigate from Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force, is docked in Darwin, Australia, on June 6, 2025. (AP)

The new guidelines scrap those limits and allows the export of equipment such as fighter jets, missiles and destroyers. That's a major change from existing exports such as flak jackets, gas masks and civilian-use vehicles that Japan has sent to Ukraine and intelligence radars sold to the Philippines.

For now, such exports will be limited to 17 countries that have signed defense equipment and technology transfer agreements with Japan. They also must be approved by the National Security Council, and the government will monitor how the weapons are managed afterward.

Japan remains committed to strict screening and export controls to third

countries and will not offer lethal weapons to countries at war, officials said, but granted that exceptions could be made to that limit.

Also:

TOKYO: Three people were killed and one injured after an ammunition explosion occurred during a training exercise on Tuesday morning at a Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) training area in Oita Prefecture, public broadcaster NHK reported.

The explosion took place during training at the GSDF's Hijudai maneuver area in southwestern Japan, where multiple personnel were caught in the blast, the report said, citing sources related to the defense ministry.

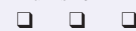
America

Former Hawaii gov Ariyoshi dies: Former Hawaii Gov. George R. Ariyoshi - the nation's first Asian American governor - has died at age 100.

Ariyoshi, a Democrat who led the state from 1973 to 1986, died peacefully while surrounded by family on Sunday night, according to a statement Monday from current Gov. Josh Green.

"Governor Ariyoshi devoted his life to Hawai'i with humility, discipline and an unwavering sense of responsibility to the people he served," Green said. "He led our state during a pivotal moment with quiet strength and integrity, and his legacy as a trailblazer and public servant will endure for generations."

Ariyoshi was a three-term governor who first rose to the position in October 1973. Three years earlier, he had been elected lieutenant governor, and he then became acting governor when Gov. John Burns fell ill with cancer. (AP)



Texas well site blast triggers large fire: An explo-

sion at a Texas natural gas or oil well site set off a large fire that was seen for miles and led to some evacuations, but caused no injuries, authorities said Tuesday.

The Nacogdoches County Sheriff's Office received numerous calls late Monday of a loud explosion in Etoile in eastern Texas, a small, rural community about 140 miles (225 kilometers) northeast of Houston.

The sheriff's office said the explosion happened at an oil well site. The city of Nacogdoches, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) away, described it as a natural gas well, based on information it received from the Texas Department of Public Safety, city spokesperson Kevin Meyer said Tuesday. (AP)



2 killed, 5 injured in N.Carolina shooting: A planned fight among young people escalated into a mass shooting at a North Carolina park Monday morning that left two teenage boys dead and five other people injured, authorities said.

Winston-Salem police Capt. Kevin Burns said a 16-year-old and a 17-year-old died at the scene after being shot around 10 a.m. at Leinbach Park, near a middle school. Five others between the ages of 14 and 19 were shot and suffered injuries ranging from critical to minor, Burns said at a news conference. Four of those victims are female, officials said. (AP)

Growth of 5% compared to the same period last year while EPS reached 9.59 fils

Al Marzouq: KFH reports net profit attributable to the shareholders of the bank of KD 176.5 million for Q1 2026

AlShamlan: High operating profit and outstanding financial performance despite challenges

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) **Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq** announced that KFH achieved a net profit for shareholders of KD 176.5 million for the first quarter of 2026, representing an increase of 5.0% compared to the same period last year.

Earnings per share for the first quarter of 2026 reached 9.59 fils; an increase of 5.0% compared to the same period last year.

Net financing income for the first quarter of the year reached KD 332.0 million; an increase of 4.1% compared to the same period last year.

Total operating income for Q1 2026 increased to KD 496.4 million, supported by growth across all core business activities, representing an increase of 6.0% compared to the same period last year.

Net operating income for the first quarter of 2026 increased to KWD 340.6 million; an increase of 10.3% compared to the same period last year. This improvement was driven by a 6.0% increase in total operating income, alongside a 2.2% decline in total operating expenses, which led to an improvement in the cost-to-income ratio to 31.4% during the first quarter of 2026, compared to 34.0% in the same period last year. This underscores the Group's focus on operational excellence and resource optimization.

The Group has continued to strengthen its financial position, as evidenced by a growth in total assets to KD 43.6 billion in Q1 2026, a 1.9% increase compared to year-end 2025. Financing receivables as of the end of the first quarter of 2026 stood at KD 21.8 billion. Additionally, shareholders' equity stood at 5.6 billion for the same period.

Depositors' accounts reached KD 21.4 billion as at the end of Q1 2026, up 1.9% compared to year-end 2025.

The capital adequacy ratio reached 19.23%, a level that exceeds regulatory requirements and confirms the strength of the Group's capital base.

Balanced Growth

Al Marzouq stated that growth in financial indicators during the first quarter of the year reflects the Group's sustained ability to achieve balanced growth amid the rapidly evolving and challenging operating environment at the regional and global levels. This is driven by robust core banking activities, improved operational efficiency, solid risk management, and the continuous diversification of income sources across the Group.

He added that these results underscore the strength of the Group's strategy, which strikes a balance between growth and financial resilience while enhancing its ability to create sustainable value for shareholders and customers alike.

Looking ahead

Al-Marzouq pointed out that, in the coming phase, the Group will continue to focus on strategic priorities. These include maintaining a strong financial position, improving asset quality, increasing income, enhancing expenditure efficiency, advancing digital infrastructure and services, elevating customer experience, and capitalizing on market opportunities, all within a solid risk management framework.

International network

Al Marzouq stressed the Group's continuous efforts to cement its position as a pioneer in Islamic finance with an influential regional and global presence, capitalizing on its international network spanning 10 countries with over 600 branches. He added



KFH Chairman Hamad Al Marzouq

- Navigating challenges with a flexible business model and robust risk management
- Sustaining a leading role in supporting the Kuwaiti market and national economy
- The only Kuwaiti bank among the top five in S&P's Top Middle East and Africa Banks



KFH Group CEO Khaled AlShamlan

- Achieving sustainable growth by maximizing value for shareholders and enhancing operational efficiency
- Seamless banking services and high operational efficiency
- Diversifying funding sources and expanding financing capacity for infrastructure and productive sectors in Kuwait

that this global footprint represents a key strength in the Group's business model, not only in terms of scale and presence, but also in terms of income and financing diversification, as well as operational resilience.

First locally and fifth regionally

Al Marzouq noted that KFH maintained its position as the largest listed company on Boursa Kuwait by market capitalization, at approximately KD 15 billion. It also ranked fifth among banks in the Middle East and is the only Kuwaiti bank listed among the top five in S&P's "Top 20 Middle East and Africa Banks". This reflects KFH's status as a dominant global Islamic banking force based in Kuwait.

Empowering the local economy

Al Marzouq emphasized KFH's pivotal role in driving the Kuwaiti economy and local market forward and providing prudent financing solutions to the corporate sector. This strategy aligns with the bank's focus on advancing corporate banking and institutional financing while delivering financial services to the retail and SME sectors. He emphasized that the Bank considers this role a core element of its mission as a leading national financial institution, combining commercial growth with economic responsibility.

Social role and sustainability

Al Marzouq emphasized that KFH continues to strengthen its social impact through major community contributions, most recently donating KD 2 million to a national debt-relief initiative

organized by the Ministry of Justice.

He highlighted that KFH has previously contributed more than KD 20 million toward settling the debts of thousands of defaulting individuals, noting that the bank's cumulative commitment to debt relief has reached approximately KD 61 million.

Al Marzouq noted that KFH's strategic contributions to social responsibility earned it the "World's Best Islamic Bank for CSR" award from Global Finance. Furthermore, KFH was named "Best for Sustaining Communities - Middle East" award recognizing its leadership in sustainable practices and its commitment to EESG standards.

Operational efficiency and strong financial position

KFH Group Chief Executive Officer, **Khaled Yousef AlShamlan** stated that Q1 2026 financial indicators were supported by growth in net financing income, net fees and commissions, and increased operating income, in addition to the ongoing contribution of the international subsidiaries in supporting profitability and diversifying income across the Group.

He further mentioned that the financial results reaffirm the Group's capacity to accomplish balanced and measured performance that combines maximizing value for shareholders and enhancing operational efficiency. Additionally, these results underline the strong financial position and high solvency, despite regional developments. He indicated that KFH adopts a solid and effective risk management policy, enhancing its resilience to navigate challenges, face material risks, ensure operational continuity, and support economic growth. This policy also capitalizes on technological infrastructure which drives operational

sustainability and deliver long-term profitability.

Diversified financing solutions

As part of diversifying financing solutions, AlShamlan highlighted the successful issuance of USD 1 billion in senior unsecured Sukuk with a five-year maturity, marking the third issuance under KFH's USD 4 billion sukuk programme.

He explained that the issuance reinforces the Group's financing capacity to efficiently finance its operations. It also provides more flexibility in managing the financing structure and supports the Group's role in financing infrastructure projects and productive economic sectors within Kuwait, while supporting clients' regional and international expansion.

"KFH has strengthened its leadership in the primary and secondary markets for the International Islamic Liquidity Management (IILM) Sukuk Program. KFH secured the top position as both a Primary and Secondary Dealer".

Uninterrupted operational efficiency

AlShamlan noted that to expand market share and elevate service quality, KFH has continued to deliver competitive digital solutions for corporate and retail customers through its various digital channels and smart branches. He emphasized the resilience of KFH's operational processes, which ensure high efficiency and the regular provision of all banking services under various conditions. These results are underpinned by proactive, flexible planning designed to maintain performance stability and seamless service continuity.

Investing in human resources

AlShamlan emphasized the priority KFH places on its workforce, highlighting a steadfast commitment to developing employee capabilities and nurturing their professional and academic potential. Recognizing staff as the cornerstone of the bank's success, he noted that receiving several prestigious awards from the Brandon Hall Group in Human Resources underscores the bank's successful investment in human capital and its leadership on both a local and global levels.

Global recognition

AlShamlan stated that KFH's excellence has been widely recognized globally, earning several prestigious awards during the first quarter of the year. These include "Best Bank in Kuwait" from EMEA Finance, "Most Valuable Bank" from Forbes Middle East, "World's Best Islamic Bank" from Global Finance, and "Safest Private Bank in the Middle East" from Euromoney, in recognition of its leadership in private banking and wealth management. The Group also received several other international accolades.

Key financial indicators - Q1 2026:

- Net profit attributable to shareholders: KD176.5 million
- Growth rate 5%
- EPS: 9.59 fils
- Net financing income: KD 332.0 million
- Total operating income: KD 496.4 million
- Net operating income: KD 340.6 million
- C/I ratio: 31.4%
- Financing receivables: KD 21.8 billion
- Total assets: KD 43.6 billion
- Depositors' accounts: KD 21.4 billion
- Capital adequacy ratio: 19.23%



بيت التمويل الكويتي
KFH

Praise be to Allah

176.5

KD Million

Net Profit Attributable to the Shareholders for Q1 2026

	31/03/2026	31/03/2025	%
Net Profit for Shareholders "KD Million"	176.5	168.1	5.0
Earnings per Share "Fils"	9.59	9.13	5.0
Total Financing Income "KD Million"	864.8	751.4	15.1
Net Financing Income "KD Million"	332.0	318.9	4.1
Total Operating Income "KD Million"	496.4	468.1	6.0
Net Operating Income "KD Million"	340.6	308.9	10.3
	31/03/2026	31/12/2025	%
Total Assets "KD Million"	43,555	42,760	1.9
Financing Receivables "KD Million"	21,830	21,817	0.1
Depositors' Accounts "KD Million"	21,435	21,029	1.9
Shareholders' Equity "KD Million"	5,627	5,747	(2.1)

Customers who transfer their salary can receive a cash welcome gift of up to KD 1,200

Gulf Bank launches a special offer for Kuwaiti salary account customers

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Gulf Bank has launched a special offer for Kuwaiti government salary account customers, through which customers can receive a cash welcome gift of up to KD1,200 when transferring their salary to Gulf Bank, in addition to a package of benefits designed to support their financial needs.

Kuwaiti Salary Account customers at Gulf Bank enjoy a wide range of benefits, including automatic enrollment in Kuwait's fastest rewards program "Gulf Points", enabling customers to redeem points for cash, book airline tickets, hotels, and cars, and enjoy a unique shopping experience through the first banking e-commerce store of its kind.

Customers also benefit from exclusive discounts at leading car dealerships, as well as 0% interest offers at selected agencies. In addition, they may obtain a consumer loan of up to KD25,000 with a flexible repayment period of up to 5 years, and a housing loan of up to KD70,000 with a repayment period of up to 15 years and a grace period of either 12 or 24 months. Further benefits include a free safe deposit box for one year and a lifetime credit card.

This offer is available to all Kuwaitis working in the government, semi-government, and oil sectors, as well as newly recruited employees transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank, provided their monthly salary exceeds KD600. Gulf Bank also offers a dedicated promotion for retirees, who can receive a cash welcome gift of up to KD500 when transferring their pension

- Housing loan of up to KD70,000, with a grace period of either 12 or 24 months
- Consumer loan of up to KD25,000, with a flexible repayment period of up to 5 years
- Lifetime credit card and automatic enrollment in Kuwait's fastest rewards program
- Exclusive discounts at leading car dealerships, with 0% interest on selected vehicles
- Retirees can receive an instant cash gift of up to KD500 when transferring their salary



account to the Bank.

Gulf Bank remains committed to keeping pace with the aspirations of its salary account customers and listening closely to their needs, in order to offer some of the most competitive benefits in the banking sector. This reflects the Bank's ongoing efforts to reward its customers and support them

in achieving their goals.

Customers can open a salary account at any of Gulf Bank's branches through the Gulf Bank mobile application, which provides a distinctive banking experience by simplifying procedures and transactions and offering solutions built on ease, efficiency, and transparency.

Transactions jump 43%

Kuwait real estate sees strong weekly rebound

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The periodic statistical report issued by the Real Estate Registration and Documentation Departments at the Ministry of Justice showed recovery in market performance on April 12-16.

Trading activity witnessed growth in both deal volume and aggregate value, catalyzed by a significant rebound in the commercial real estate sector.

The sector recorded a massive 300 percent surge in transaction numbers and 1,902 percent leap in value, concluding major weekly deals that bolstered the market momentum.

The data indicated that the cumulative number of transactions increased to 92, compared to 82 in the preceding week or 12.2 percent increase.

Total transaction value rose to about KD74.423 million, 43.2 percent increase from KD51.977 million in the previous period, underscoring a strategic rise in institutional and private market engagements.

The private residential sector registered 67 transactions with a total val-

ue of KD25.345 million, compared to 62 transactions worth KD27.509 million in the previous week. This is an 8.1 percent increase in volume, while total value rose by 7.9 percent, a trend toward heightened activity in lower-value asset classes.

The volume of investment transactions totaled 17, valued at KD21.683 million, compared to 18 deals worth KD23.1 million in the preceding week. This is a marginal 5.6 percent decline in volume and 6.1 percent decrease in value, suggesting continuous caution and data-based observation in the specific sector.

The commercial sector emerged as the main propeller of the local real estate landscape during the third week, as the number of transactions rose to eight deals worth KD27.395 million, a sharp increase from only two transactions valued at KD1.368 million previously.

The sector achieved unprecedented growth, with the deal count leaping by 300 percent and value surging by 1,902 percent, indicating the transformative impact of high-value transactions on the aggregate market results.

Main 50 leads gains

Boursa Kuwait closes higher

KUWAIT CITY, April 21, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait ended Tuesday's session in positive territory, with the All Share Index rising by 26.13 points, or 0.29 percent, to close at 8,895.19 points. Trading activity saw 488 million shares change hands through 28,573 transactions, with a total value of KD 109.1 million (about USD 356.7 million).

The Main Market Index outperformed, gaining 71.96 points, or 0.88 percent, to reach 8,282.17 points. Trading volume stood at 313.8 million shares across 16,513 deals, valued at KD 44.8 million (approx-

mately USD 146.5 million).

The Premier Market Index recorded a more modest increase, adding 17.74 points, or 0.19 percent, to close at 9,487.19 points, with 174.2 million shares traded through 12,060 transactions worth KD 64.2 million (around USD 209.9 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index led gains, climbing 154.95 points, or 1.72 percent, to 9,183.93 points. A total of 273.2 million shares were traded via 13,062 transactions, with a value of KD 39.4 million (roughly USD 128.8 million).

UN warns of slower growth, higher inflation in Asia-Pacific

UNITED NATIONS, April 21, (Xinhua): The ongoing conflict in the Middle East is adding fresh pressure to the economic outlook of Asia and the Pacific, disrupting energy and commodity markets and trade and connectivity routes at a time of already high global economic uncertainty, according to a new UN report released at the UN headquarters on Monday.

The 2026 edition of the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, published by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), highlighted that rising energy and food prices, along with weaker global demand, are dimming economic growth prospects and increasing the cost of living across the region.

ESCAP projected that developing economies in the region will grow by an average of 4 percent in 2026, down from 4.6 percent in 2025, and inflation will rise to an average of 4.6 percent in 2026, up from 3.5 percent in 2025, reversing recent gains in inflation stability. Despite this moderation, the region is expected to remain the fastest-growing developing region globally.

However, sustaining this performance will require a gradual shift from a primarily export-driven growth approach toward stronger domestic and regional sources of demand. Key priorities in this regard include boosting productivity, expanding social protection, improving access to finance, and strengthening digital and physical connectivity across the region. Deeper regional cooperation will be critical to offset the effects of global economic fragmentation, the report said.

Low-skilled workers and low-income households are particularly vulnerable, as they are more exposed to rising living costs and have limited access to social protection, while high public debt vulnerabilities and a likely increase in interest rates due to higher inflation expectations may

constrain the ability of governments to respond to the latest economic shocks, it added.

"Policymakers are navigating rising global trade protectionism, economic policy uncertainty and geoeconomic fragmentation. Their eventual impact would be disproportionate for countries with smaller room for policy support and for people having limited access to social protection," UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana said in the preface of the report.

The ongoing global energy crisis is another wake-up call for the region to strengthen energy resilience, including through homegrown renewable energy. An energy transition could help reverse years of regression in Sustainable Development Goal 13 on climate action, the report said.

"This is especially critical today, as we witness in real time the effects of a dependence on fossil fuels, where every conflict risks sending shockwaves through the global economy," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his foreword to the report, underscoring that the Asia-Pacific region "has long been a global growth engine, marked by economic resilience, steady growth prospects and innovative economies."

In the report, ESCAP cautioned that transition policies must be carefully designed to avoid unintended socioeconomic consequences. Measures to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, expand renewable energy and improve energy efficiency could increase inflation, weaken fiscal positions, increase poverty and widen income inequality if not implemented in a calibrated and consultative manner.

ESCAP also found that economic policy issues are still only weakly integrated into most national transition strategies, and suggested that policy choices need to reflect country-specific conditions.

Marking 65 years with expansion and talent initiatives

Annual General Assembly Meeting of KIC approved 40% Cash Dividends and 28.84% Bonus shares for year 2025

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: The Ordinary & Extraordinary General Assembly of Kuwait Insurance Company met on Monday, April 20, 2026 and approved all items on the agenda, including, the distribution of cash dividends to the shareholders at a rate of 40%, i.e. Forty Fils per share, as well as the distribution of bonus shares at 28.84%, with the aim of increasing the company's capital from KD 19 million to KD 25 million.

The capital increase aims to support the company's expansion plans by obtaining a reinsurance license and strengthening its ability to grow in the future.

The Gross profit for 2025 amounted to KD 11 million (USD 36 million), while net profit reached KD 8.9 million (USD 29.2 million), with earnings per share of fils48.53.

During the year, the Gross Written Premium reached KD 60.6 million (USD 198.6 million). The total insurance revenue amounted to KD 60.9 million (USD 199.5 million), and net operating profit amounted to KD 3.2 million (USD 10.5 million).

KIC recorded a growth in the Net investment income for the current period which amounted to KD 5.9 million (USD 19.3 million) compared to KD 5.5 million (USD 18 million) for the same period last year, representing an increase of 7.2%.

Retained earnings increased to KD 88.8 million (USD 291 million) during 2025 compared to KD 85.2 million (USD 279 million) for the previous year, reflecting an increase of KD 3.6 million



Talal Behbehani and Sami Sharif

(USD 11.8 million) equal to 4.2%.

The CEO of the company, Mr. Sami Sharif, stated that all the success we have achieved are the results of significant effort made in the past years to build the foundation that enable the company to achieve sustainable growth in profits and premiums. The company enjoys a strong and stable financial base.

He also added that the company was awarded the "Most Trusted Comprehensive Insurance Company" award for 2025 from The Global Economics magazine, a foundation specializing in launching annual rankings in economics and business. This follows its recognition as the "Most Trusted Insur-

ance Company" in 2024 by the same magazine.

Mr. Sharif added that in addition to profits and premiums, the company maintains an excellent credit rating from AM Best and Moody's at A- and A3, respectively, with a stable outlook. We are proud to continue receiving these ratings, placing us among the leading local and regional companies in the insurance services sector.

This year, the company is celebrating its 65th anniversary as the first insurance company in Kuwait and in the GCC, portraying its strong position as a leading insurance company in the Kuwaiti market. The company launched a marketing campaign to

mark its 65th anniversary through advertisements, outdoor displays, and social media platforms across Kuwait.

Kuwait Insurance Company also launched a Kuwaiti Actuarial Expert Training Program, offering specialized positions and training in actuarial sciences, a field considered rare globally. This initiative reflects the company's commitment to supporting national talent and developing a new generation of insurance professionals.

Reaffirming its commitment to corporate social responsibility, the company renewed its partnership with "Omniya" for plastic waste recycling, aimed at enhancing environmental awareness.

Kuwait Insurance Company is keen in investing and developing the staff by providing training and enrolling them for educational programs, which will develop them in providing insurance services to organizations, individuals, and stakeholders. With this step, they not only serve the interests of the society but also of the State of Kuwait.

In conclusion, Mr. Sharif expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Insurance Regulatory Unit for raising the standards of the Kuwait Insurance sector globally and for making the Insurance activities regulated and organized in the State of Kuwait.

We continue to look forward to accomplishing a lot in the coming years and we take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed in helping us achieve our goals, including the Board of Directors, the shareholders, and the company's employees.

Yusuffali emphasizes resilience and global sourcing

LuLu launches 'World Food Festival' as regional retail gains momentum

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Reinforcing the strong return to normalcy across the Middle East's retail landscape, LuLu Group has officially launched its GCC-wide "World Food Festival", marking a renewed phase of consumer engagement, business confidence, and regional economic momentum.

The festival was inaugurated today at LuLu Hypermarket, Al Rai, Kuwait City, by Yusuffali M.A., Chairman of LuLu Group, in the presence of prominent dignitaries including Muntaser Jasim Al Wazzan, Chairman of Mezzan Holding; Abdul Latheef Al Bahar, General Manager of Al Bahar; and Bader N. Al Hajery, Managing Director of Al Hajery, along with senior management of LuLu Group and key stakeholders.

The launch comes at a time when the region is witnessing a steady and confident return to normal business conditions, with retail activity regaining momentum and consumer sentiment strengthening across markets. Industry players are resuming planned activations and large-scale initiatives, reflecting the resilience of the region's economy and the effectiveness of coordinated efforts between governments and the private sector.

Speaking at the inauguration, Yusuffali M.A. said:

"We are happy to see business and consumer confidence returning strongly across the region. The past period has demonstrated the resilience of the UAE and the wider GCC, where the leadership, government authorities, and private sector worked hand-in-hand to overcome challenges and ensure stability. We sincerely thank all authorities for their continued support, which enabled us to maintain uninterrupted supply chains and serve our customers without disruption."

He further added: "As we move forward, initiatives like the 'World Food Festival' reflect our commitment to bringing communities back to vibrant retail experiences. With our global sourcing network and strong logistics capabilities, we continue to ensure consistent availability, quality, and price stability for customers across all markets."

The World Food Festival, being rolled out across LuLu stores in the GCC, celebrates the region's multicultural fabric by bringing together a diverse range of food products and cuisines from around the world. From



Yusuffali M.A., Chairman of LuLu Group, inaugurates the GCC-wide World Food Festival at LuLu Hypermarket, Al Rai, Kuwait City, in the presence of dignitaries and senior management.

fresh produce and premium meats to global pantry essentials, specialty ingredients, and ready-to-eat delicacies, the festival offers customers an authentic taste of home – no matter where they are from.

Leveraging its extensive sourcing network spanning over 26 countries, LuLu has curated a comprehensive as-

sortment of country-specific products, ensuring that customers can access their favourite foods and ingredients from their home countries. This initiative underscores LuLu's position as a truly global retailer catering to the diverse tastes of millions of residents across the GCC.

Designed as both a celebration and

a catalyst for renewed retail energy, the festival will run across all GCC markets, featuring themed food activations, live cooking experiences, and special promotions across categories. It is expected to further boost footfall, enhance customer engagement, and contribute to the continued revival of retail activity across the region.

Inflation pressures mount as gas prices hit \$4

US retail sales jump as gas prices surge on Iran war

NEW YORK, April 21, (AP): Shoppers accelerated their spending in March from February, but they spent most of their money at the gas pump.

A spike in gas prices due to the Iran war, now in its eighth week, resulted in a hefty 1.7% gain in retail sales in March after a revised 0.7% increase in February, according to the Commerce Department's report on Tuesday. The report marks the first read on spending to capture the effects of the Iran war.

Excluding gas prices, the number was a slim 0.6%, helped in part by government tax refunds and warm weather.

Business at gas stations rose 15.5% percent.

Elsewhere, sales at department stores rose 4.2%, while sales at furniture and home furnishings stores were up 2.2%. Online retailers saw a 1% gain. Consumer electronics and appliance stores posted a 0.9% increase.

The snapshot offers only a partial look at consumer spending and doesn't include things like travel and hotel stays. But the lone services category - restaurants - registered a more modest gain of 0.1%.

"It's a blowout retail sales figure for March," Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union, wrote in a report. "Stripping out the big surge in spending on gas due to the Middle East conflict, it's a solid but more modest 0.6% increase."

She noted that the impact of tariffs is visible in the high spending on electronics and appliances due to higher prices. A small increase at restaurants may indicate some early signs of pullback as consumers have to spend more at the pump, she said.

"Overall, the American consumer is still healthy," she added. "Extra income from tax refunds is helping many households weather this oil shock, but that extra money won't last forever."

The Iran war began Feb. 28 and has shut down the Strait of Hormuz, cutting off one-fifth of the world's oil supply.

Late last month, U.S. gas prices jumped past an average of \$4 a gallon for the first time since 2022. According to AAA, the national average for a gallon of regular gaso-



Shoppers move amid items for outdoor cooking on display in a Costco warehouse Thursday, March 12, 2026, in east Denver. (AP)

line was \$4.02 on Tuesday - over a dollar more expensive than it was before the war began on Feb. 28.

Economists had believed that an unusually large jump in tax refunds would kick start spending at the start of the year. But spiking gas prices are taking a bite out of that money.

Shoppers aren't just feeling it at the gas pump, but are

also starting to see unforeseen costs everywhere, including when they travel such as higher baggage fees. They will also likely see higher prices on different products ripple through the supply chain as companies start to pass on higher transportation costs to shoppers.

In fact, the largest monthly jump in gas prices in six decades caused a sharp spike in inflation last month, cre-

ating major challenges for the inflation-fighters at the Federal Reserve and increasing already significant political hurdles for the White House.

Consumer prices rose 3.3% in March from a year earlier, the Labor Department said earlier in April, up sharply from just 2.4% in February and the biggest yearly increase since May 2024. On a monthly basis, prices rose 0.9% in March from February, the largest such increase in nearly four years.

Excluding volatile food and energy, core prices rose 2.6% in March from a year earlier, up from 2.5% in February.

Major retailers including Target and Walmart are expected to release their fiscal first-quarter earnings results next month, which will offer some clues on how the Iran war is affecting spending.

Heading into the war, shoppers were already cautious. But Bryan Eshelman, Americas leader of retail and a partner and managing director at consultancy AlixPartners, noted his retail clients see their customers pulling back even more now.

"Particularly in the low-end economy, people are shifting from wants to needs," he said. He noted that a recent analysis of shoe shopping habits in March by AlixPartners with trade group Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America showed that shoppers are focusing less on specialized footwear and more on shoes that covers various occasions.

"They know the prices are high, and they're going to buy fewer pairs," he said.

R.J. Hottovy, head of analytical research at Placer.ai, noted that for seven straight weeks, traffic at non-discretionary retailers like grocers outpaced that of discretionary merchants. But that trend was reversed with the week of April 6, helped by the distribution of tax refunds and spending tied to spring break and Easter.

But after the data goes past Easter trends, future visits will largely depend on consumer sentiment regarding broader macroeconomic conditions and gas prices, Hottovy said. The firm tracks people's movements based on cellphone usage.

US invokes DPA to overcome energy infrastructure delays

Trump pushes LNG expansion amid security concerns

WASHINGTON, April 21, (KUNA): US President Donald Trump has issued a Presidential Determination to accelerate the development of natural gas and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) infrastructure, citing "critical" national defense requirements and the need to bolster allied energy security.

The directive, issued late Monday, invokes Section 303 of the Defense Production Act (DPA) of 1950 to categorize gas transmission, processing, and storage facilities as "essential industrial resources" for national security.

The President underlined that current infrastructure deficits, including "inadequate pipelines and

export capacity," leave the United States and its strategic partners "dangerously exposed" to international commodity market volatility weaponized by "hostile foreign actors."

The determination follows a 2025 National Energy Emergency declaration (Executive Order 14156), which sought to decouple US and allied reliance on foreign energy sources.

According to the memo, the White House determined that the US industry is unable to meet necessary capacity targets in a "timely manner" due to systemic "permitting delays, infrastructure bottlenecks, and financing constraints."

By invoking the DPA, the US leader has author-

ized the Secretary of Energy to bypass specific regulatory hurdles and utilize federal "purchases, purchase commitments, and financial support" to expedite project completions.

The President further noted that these federal interventions represent the "most cost-effective and practical" means to avert a technology shortfall that would "severely impair" the nation's defense readiness.

The Secretary of Energy has been directed to immediately implement the order, leveraging all available financial instruments to facilitate the expansion of domestic liquefaction and critical distribution networks.

AI tool to navigate 330 mln reviews

Yelp launches AI Chatbot to simplify review search

SAN FRANCISCO, April 21, (AP): Online review aggregator Yelp wants to harness artificial intelligence to make it easier for users to find information curated by other people.

Although Yelp's users have always been able to dive into its reservoir of 330 million local business reviews, they sometimes find themselves drowning in a sea of commentary from other people about restaurants, doctors, plumbers, roofers and a smorgasbord of other merchants - a problem the new chatbot assistant is designed to solve.

For instance, if a user asks Yelp's new assistant for a good place to get coffee with a dog, the app will show recommendations alongside relevant reviews.

"This chatbot can really understand 500 reviews in a second whereas a consumer might say, 'Well, I read the first five reviews, so I guess that's good enough,'" said Yelp CEO Jeremy Stoppelman, who co-founded the company 22 years ago.

Analyzing and explaining vast amounts of information in an easily digestible summary is something that other leading chatbots such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, Anthropic's Claude, Perplexity's answer engine and Google's AI overviews already have been doing.

Yelp believes its chatbot will stand out by pointing to the reviews that led to its recommendations and conclusions. The San Francisco-based company decided to create an AI chatbot that shows the evidence underlying its findings, after a survey found that most consumers worry the technology provides misinformation or fabrications.

"People want AI chatbots to be transparent about where they are getting the data from, they want to see the reviews alongside the results when they're doing local search," said Craig Saldanha, Yelp's chief product officer. "So we are trying to make sure the human connections stay front and center while AI handles all the drudgery of making those connections."

Yelp has been looking for a spark during an AI boom that has more than doubled the value of the tech-driven Nasdaq composite index while its stock price is stuck at roughly the same level as the end of 2022, shortly after OpenAI released ChatGPT.

Although Yelp business reviews have always been popular among

consumers looking for recommendations about places to eat and shop, the company hasn't been able to overcome people's almost reflexive habit of turning to Google when they're searching for almost anything.

Google was already synonymous with search by the time Stoppelman and Russel Simmons launched Yelp in 2004, but its results about local businesses often were either inadequate or inaccurate.

To help fill the void, Google signed a two-year licensing agreement to gain access to Yelp's reviews. But the partnership fell apart when Google began to summarize various information about various topics - including restaurant recommendations in a particular neighborhood - in a way that gave consumers less reason to click on links that sent them to other sites.

That phenomenon has hurt Yelp and other free online services that make most of their money from advertising; Yelp depends on Google for more than 70% of its web traffic in the U.S.

The tensions came to head when Yelp accused Google of improperly raiding its business reviews and favoring its own services. Those allegations helped trigger an investigation by the Federal Trade Commission that ended with a 2013 settlement that only required Google to make a few relatively minor changes.

But the complaints about Google's tactics didn't stop, triggering a U.S. Justice Department lawsuit that culminated in a 2024 decision condemning the search engine as an illegal monopoly. But a federal judge last year rebuffed the government's request to break up Google, and instead ordered less drastic changes - a decision that was shaped by the way more people now rely on chatbots to inform them instead of search engines.

Yelp is pursuing its own antitrust lawsuit against Google in a case scheduled for a May 2028 trial.

As part of its effort to diversify and increase its annual revenue of \$1.5 billion, Yelp already is licensing some of its data to OpenAI for potential usage in ChatGPT while betting that its chatbot's emphasis on connecting people will still reel in more traffic to its service.

"With this new technology, we really think you are going to be able to find that needle in a haystack and have a far more personalized experience," Stoppelman said.

Ternus set to lead Apple through AI and market headwinds

Apple veteran Ternus to take helm in Sept

LONDON, April 21, (AP): Apple's next CEO John Ternus is a company veteran who rose through the iPhone maker's hardware engineering ranks but until now has maintained a low profile.

Ternus will take over as chief executive in September for Tim Cook, who turned Apple into a \$4 trillion, tech colossus during his 15-year reign after the death of co-founder Steve Jobs.

Ternus, 50, has spent almost his entire career with Apple. He joined the company 25 years ago and has spent the past five years overseeing the engineering that underlies the iPhone, iPad and Mac.

It's made him a prime contender to succeed Cook who on Monday, when Apple announced the change in leadership, hailed Ternus as "without question the right person to lead Apple into the future."

Ternus worked on some of Apple's signature products under Cook, including the Apple Watch, AirPods and Apple Vision Pro. He was also involved in the MacBook Neo, "arguably one of the most disruptive products" that Apple has released in a while, said Ben Wood, chief analyst at CCS Insight.

"This mentorship will undoubtedly ensure a smooth transition, and initially, I expect very few changes to the company's strategy," Wood said.

The appointment appeared to be carefully timed, following Apple's 50th anniversary celebrations and ahead of its annual WWDC developers conference in June.



John Ternus, Apple's V.P. of Hardware Engineering, discusses the latest development for the iPad Pro during an event to announce new products Tuesday Oct. 30, 2018, in the Brooklyn borough of New York. (AP)

The change also arrives at a pivotal time for the Cupertino, California, company. While Cook led Apple through an iPhone-fueled era of prosperity, Apple has fallen behind in the artificial intelligence race. Apple has stumbled in its efforts to deliver new features built on AI, as was promised nearly two years ago.

"The challenge for the new CEO is really to make sure Apple is able to crack AI as the new user interface and reinvent human machine interaction," Forrester Research analyst Thomas Husson said.

Wood says attention at WWDC will be on the new CEO's AI strategy, and what the company will do next after turning earlier this year to Google - an early leader in the AI race - to help make the iPhone's virtual assistant Siri more conversational and versatile.

"A big strategic question is how far Apple will invest in building its own AI platform versus relying on other companies' models and platforms," Wood said.

Ternus will also be tested by host of other challenges that don't involve his expertise in hardware.

"Apple faces a turbulent market

amid geopolitical uncertainty and macroeconomic pressures," Wood said. "The consumer electronics industry faces a perfect storm, with memory chip shortages and the war in the Middle East having widespread implications for consumer confidence. Apple will also need to decide how much it wants to continue its deep reliance on China for manufacturing."

Ternus is not well known outside of the Apple universe. He joined the company in July 2001, according to his LinkedIn profile, which does not have any posts.

Before joining Apple, he spent four years as a mechanical engineer at Virtual Research Systems. He graduated in 1997 from the University of Pennsylvania, where he was a member of the swim team and for his senior project developed a mechanical feeding arm for quadriplegics controlled by head movements.

In a 2024 commencement speech to the university's engineering school, Ternus said he was intimidated when he first started working at Apple and wasn't sure he belonged. He learned to "always assume you're as smart as anyone else in the room but never assume you know as much as they do."

"There will always be new skills to master and new people to learn from," he said.

Ternus said in Apple's announcement that he was "humbled to step into this role, and I promise to lead with the values and vision that have come to define this special place for half a century."

Court hears Google denial in \$125 mln Chromebook case

Google testimony challenges key claim in Indonesian corruption trial

JAKARTA, April 21, (AP): Google's investment in Indonesia's ride-hailing company GoTo wasn't in anyway connected to the country's Education Ministry's decision to procure Chromebooks for schools during COVID-19 pandemic, former Google executives testified in court on Monday.

The testimony undercut a central allegation by prosecutors in the closely watched corruption trial of Nadiem Anwar Makarim, the co-founder of Gojek and the education minister at the time of the procurement. It took place during the transition to remote learning in schools when classrooms were forced to shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Makarim, 41, was arrested in September following an investigation into the procurement of Chromebook laptops that prosecutors say caused \$125 million in state losses.

Scott Beaumont, former president of Google Asia Pacific in 2019-2014, Caesar Sengupta, former general manager and vice president in 2018-2021, and William Florence, a former executive, testified at Jakarta's Corruption Court on Monday via Zoom.

"The case centers on the allegation that Makarim 'enriched himself' in connection with the Chromebooks procurement in 2020-2021, according to the indictment. Prosecutors said he pressed Google to

invest in PT Aplikasi Karya Anak Bangsa, known as PT AKAB, the parent company of Gojek.

Makarim, who was education minister in 2019-2024, allegedly favored Google's Chromebook despite a ministry research team refusing to recommend the laptop model due to ineffectiveness in regions lacking internet access.

The purchase of more than 1.2 million Chromebooks was designed to strengthen Google's dominance in Indonesia's educational sector. The program was linked to Google's investments of about \$787 million in PT AKAB through Google Asia Pacific, lead prosecutor Muhammad Fadli Paramajeng said.

Makarim received about 809 billion rupiah (\$48.2 million) in connection with the program, prosecutors alleged.

Beaumont denied the allegation. "There was no connection at all between Google's investment in GoTo and any of the conversations with the Ministry of Education," he told the panel of three judges. Makarim's Gojek merged with the country's biggest e-commerce firm Tokopedia to form the GoTo Group in 2021.

Sengupta also denied the charges. Google has previously stated that Chromebooks are designed for the realities of the classroom, including those in remote areas. While optimized for

the cloud, they are offline-capable even without connectivity. It also said that Google licenses software and does not dictate Chromebooks' pricing.

Makarim, a Harvard University graduate, co-founded Gojek in 2009, and remained until 2019, when the company was valued at over \$10 billion. He stepped down to join the cabinet of former Indonesia President Joko Widodo.

Prosecutors allege his resignation from PT AKAB and Gojek was a "strategic concealment" to mask conflicts of interest while Makarim appointed close associates as directors and "beneficial owners," allowing him to maintain indirect control over company decisions.

He faces a possible sentence of life imprisonment if found guilty.

Makarim has previously denied any wrongdoing, saying he did not personally receive funds from Chromebook procurement or related services. His defense argued that he divested from PT AKAB upon taking office, his wealth fell by more than 50% during his term and procurement decisions were made by technical teams and officials, not the minister.

The verdict could come as soon as this month. Two former Education Ministry officials and a former tech consultant also were charged in the case, while another staff member remains at large.



A Yelp logo is shown on a tablet at the company's office, in San Francisco, Feb. 14, 2023. (AP)

Business Plus



Energy shockwaves hit every corner of the economy

When oil prices spike, where does the money go?



Adrian Perez, of Dallas, pumps gas into his vehicle at Fuel City, Friday, April 17, 2026, in Dallas. (AP)

By **Matthew E. Oliver**, Georgia Institute of Technology and **Tibor Besedeš**, Georgia Institute of Technology

Over time, companies may decide to spend some of that windfall on building more production capacity or pipelines to get more oil and gas to market.

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

The market for oil is global, which is why events like the war in Iran affect oil prices - and prices of the wide range of products made from oil - literally everywhere. Federal data shows that the price at the primary crude oil hub in the U.S. was US\$66 a barrel in late February 2026 - before the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran - and \$101 a barrel on April 13. Similar price increases have reverberated around the globe.

As an energy economist and an international trade economist, we field a lot of questions during such

episodes, because when oil prices go up, manufacturers, businesses and ultimately consumers pay more. Crude oil may be the most important commodity in the global economic system.

It's a literal fuel for the industrial economy. It powers the engines that drive transportation and paves the roads vehicles drive on. It's a source for plastics from which the world's products get made and packaged, and a key ingredient at some point in almost every supply chain. Even fertilizers that boost the food supply are made from it. In short, it is difficult to imagine modern life without oil and its derivatives.

And when its supply changes, its price changes. Economists explain this using a fundamental model of our field: the supply-demand diagram. When there's less of something to go around, competition among consumers who want it and

companies that need it can drive the price up.

Sometimes this process can play out over time, allowing people to adjust their purchasing or activities to dampen price shocks. But when a significant source of the world's oil is effectively blocked without much advance notice, such as when the U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, prices can rise sharply in a short period of time.

A natural question many people ask when oil prices spike is: Where does all that additional money go, and who benefits from it?

Some people have written entire books dissecting all the places that money goes when it leaves consumers' pockets. But ultimately, the bulk of the money heads in the direction of the source of the oil itself - the oil companies.

What they do with the money varies widely, depending on where

in the world an oil company is operating and who owns it. What also matters is the business environment - the set of laws and regulations - in which the company operates.

Oil producers in the Middle East face significant new risk because of the war in Iran, including threats to production, processing locations and shipping routes. These risks raise their costs for insurance, security and transportation.

But production costs in the region are relatively low, so higher global oil prices typically still translate into strong profits.

For a major exporter such as Saudi Arabia, the government owns and controls nearly all oil production, so high prices generally benefit the government's finances and investments, even during a war. In Saudi Arabia, oil revenue has historically been used to fund public spending.

The Permian Basin, the largest oil field in the U.S., is a long way from the Persian Gulf. When global oil prices rise because of the war in Iran, oil companies operating in West Texas effectively get a windfall gain: Prices rise more quickly than costs, at least in the short run.

The immediate effect is more income from higher prices. The money largely goes to company owners - meaning shareholders - through dividends, debt reduction, company-backed purchases of its own stock, and reinvestment in drilling and production. Over time, companies may decide to spend some of that windfall on building more production capacity or pipelines to get more oil and gas to market.

In the North Sea, between the island of Great Britain and Scandinavia, a mix of multinational and government-owned companies produce most of the oil.

In the U.K., private shareholders are the primary beneficiaries of higher profits from increased oil prices, though an additional tax on oil and gas companies' profits means the government also collects a significant share of the money, which it uses to help pay public expenses.

In Norway, oil revenues flow into the Government Pension Fund Global, the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, valued at over \$2 trillion. Laws govern how much, and for what purposes, money can be withdrawn from the fund, supporting public spending and preserving wealth for future generations. This is a similar model to Alaska's state-owned program, funded by oil revenue, that pays for government services and sends an annual dividend to every permanent resident.

Russian oil is subject to stringent economic sanctions imposed by major industrial countries as a response to the Russian invasion and occupation of parts of Ukraine. While the U.S. cannot control how much Russia charges for its oil, it can control services needed to move Russian oil around the world. Under current price sanctions, Western shipping, insurance and financing can be used to ship and sell Russian crude oil only if the price is below \$60 per barrel.

Russia's oil industry is dominated by government-controlled companies whose leaders maintain close ties to President Vladimir Putin. The dealings of those shadowy figures are often shrouded in secrecy, but it is likely that they and Putin's military-industrial complex - not the Russian people - are the main beneficiaries of high oil prices.

Everyday U.S. consumers may not like the idea of their hard-earned cash going into the already deep pockets of any of these groups. But in the short run, there's not much to do but pay the price. For the long run, however, people around the world are already thinking and talking about, and opting for, sources of energy that don't depend on fossil fuels. (AP)

Bonds back in play as yields climb

Near retirement? Cut stock risk now

With worries about a slowing economy looming over the market, high-quality bonds will tend to be particularly well situated

For investors hurtling toward retirement, sitting tight with stocks has been the path of least resistance in recent years. Stocks, especially U.S. names, have soundly outperformed bonds.

However, recent events should serve as a wake-up call to take some risk off the table and give bonds a closer look. Stocks have recently encountered some volatility but they're still near all-time highs. That provides pre-retirees and retirees with an opportune time to scale back equity exposure and plow the proceeds into safer assets like cash and high-quality bonds.

The key benefit that bonds confer to a retirement-decumulation portfolio is their lower volatility. Even though bond returns are apt to be lower than stocks', bond returns are much more reliable.

In retirement portfolios, holding a component of lower-risk assets mitigates "sequence risk" - the prospect of encountering big

portfolio losses early in retirement. Because equity-heavy portfolios have the potential for bigger losses than balanced or more bond-heavy ones, that leaves them more vulnerable to sequence risk.

In addition to bonds' lower volatility, today's higher yields point to better return prospects from bonds over the next decade than was the case a few years ago. That's because bonds' starting yields and subsequent returns are closely correlated. The yield on 10-year Treasury bonds sat at about 50 basis points in the summer of 2020, but today, it's about 4.3%. Not only does that improve bonds' forward-looking return prospects, but higher yields also give bondholders more protection against price declines than they had when yields were ultralow. (Even if a bond or bond fund's price declines, the investor still receives their yield.)

There's a time-period-specific reason to consider bonds, too. With

worries about a slowing economy looming over the market, high-quality bonds will tend to be particularly well situated. Bond returns have been reliably positive in recessionary environments.

Finally, for retirees who worry that they're too late to de-risk because market volatility is already underway, they shouldn't sweat the timing too much. Stocks' extended run leaves many portfolios equity-heavy today. A portfolio that was 60% stocks/40% bonds five years ago would be nearly 80% equity today, without any additional purchases of stocks.

First, what not to do: jettison stocks and go all-in on safety. Yes, uncertainty reigns over both the economy and markets. But the best way to confront uncertain times is with humility and a portfolio that's diversified enough to perform reasonably well in a variety of scenarios. While recessions and sequence risk are a particularly big problem for portfolios that are too

stock-heavy, inflation is the chief threat for portfolios that are too timid and bond-heavy. That's because the return potential of an all-bond portfolio is relatively constrained, so inflation will tend to gobble up a bigger percentage of returns than is the case with balanced or more equity-heavy portfolios. The Bucket portfolios that I write about include stocks for the good times, bonds for recessionary periods and flights to safety when stocks fall, and cash for when both stocks and bonds struggle, as they did in 2022.

How much you drop into each of those three buckets depends on your spending rate and your proximity to spending. In my standard three-bucket setup, I earmark one to two years' worth of withdrawals for cash and another five to eight years' worth of portfolio withdrawals in bonds. Spending from those two buckets could tide you through an extended equity-market downturn. You don't want to start building

out the cash position until you're a few years from retirement, as the opportunity cost is too great.

If your portfolio's current allocations are dramatically out of whack with your targets and you are already retired or expect to retire within the next few years, it's wise to de-risk as swiftly as practical. If retirement is further into the future and/or your current allocations are only modestly away from your targets, you could take a more gradual approach to enlarging your safety portfolio, dollar-cost averaging from stocks to bonds and/or steering new contributions to safer assets.

Finally, de-risking has the potential to trigger a tax bill. You won't owe any taxes if you focus your rebalancing activities on tax-sheltered accounts. But if you need to rebalance your taxable portfolio, it's best to use new contributions to address the imbalance and/or get some tax advice on the implications of selling appreciated equity holdings. (AP)

editor's choice



Singer faces murder, abuse and mutilation charges

Singer D4vd pleads not guilty to murder of 14-year-old girl

LOS ANGELES, April 21, (AP): Singer D4vd pleaded not guilty Monday to a murder charge in the death of a 14-year-old girl who was last known to be alive nearly a year ago and whose dismembered and decomposed body was found in the entertainer's apparently abandoned Tesla.

The charges revealed key details and were among the first concrete public moves made in a grisly and horrific case that had been under a largely secret investigation in the seven months since Celeste Rivas Hernandez was found dead.

The 21-year-old D4vd, whose legal name is David Burke, was charged with first-degree murder, lewd and lascivious acts with a person under 14 and mutilating a body, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office said. A defense lawyer entered not guilty pleas to all counts on behalf of Burke, who made his first court appearance Monday. He appeared behind glass in a custody area, dressed in black. A judge said he would continue to be held without bail.

The girl's parents appeared at the hearing. They looked down as they entered the courtroom and sat in the audience. They did not speak to reporters outside court.

Authorities alleged the Houston-born alt-pop singer killed Rivas Hernandez to protect a career on the rise after she threatened to re-

port their sexual relationship. His debut album, "Withered," was released just two days after authorities said she was last known to be alive. She was reported missing by her family in 2024, when she was 13. That was her age when, according to allegations in a criminal complaint, the singer engaged in continuous sexual abuse of her for at least a year from September 2023 to September 2024. California law penalizes abuse of a child under 14 especially harshly.

Authorities, who described her Monday as a "runaway," said Rivas Hernandez was 14 when she was killed with a sharp object on or around April 23, 2025, a day she was at Burke's house in the Hollywood Hills.

Prosecutors allege Burke mutilated her body about two weeks later.

The murder charges include special circumstances - lying in wait, committing crime for financial gain and murdering the witness in an investigation - that could carry the death penalty. Prosecutors haven't announced whether they will seek it.

The witness Burke is alleged to have killed is Rivas Hernandez herself, who could have given testimony about the sex crime allegations.

"We believe the actual evidence will show David Burke did not murder Celeste Rivas Hernandez," lead defense attorney Blair Berk said in court. "We would like to have the



Left: David Anthony Burke, whose stage name is D4vd, is arraigned Monday, April 20, in Los Angeles on charges of killing a 14-year-old girl, Celeste Rivas Hernandez, whose dismembered body was found in his car. Right: A photo of Celeste Rivas Hernandez is displayed. (AP)



evidence come into the light of day." Berk told the judge that after media reports of months of secret grand jury proceedings, she would like a public preliminary hearing to take place as soon as possible so a judge can decide whether there is enough evidence for trial.

Burke is entitled under California law to have the evidentiary hearing within 10 court days of his arraignment. Nearly all defendants waive their right to have it happen that fast, but he didn't. A hearing to work out

what will happen next was scheduled for Thursday.

"We'll be very happy to put on the evidence that we've collected," said Deputy District Attorney Beth Silverman, the lead prosecutor.

The case is a "a parent's nightmare," Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman said at a news conference Monday announcing the charges.

The long-dead body of Rivas Hernandez was found inside a Tesla that was towed from the Hollywood Hills

on Sept. 8, when Burke was on tour in support of his album. It was a day after she would have turned 15.

Her family had reported her missing from her hometown of Lake Elsinore, about 70 miles (112 kilometers) southeast of Los Angeles.

The singer had been under investigation by an LA County grand jury looking into the death. The probe was officially secret, but its existence - and Burke's designation as its target - was revealed in February when his mother, father and brother objected in a Texas court to subpoenas demanding they testify. The 2023 Tesla Model Y was registered in the singer's name at their address, according to court filings. Authorities did not publicly acknowledge him as a suspect until his arrest Thursday.

Police investigators searching the Tesla in a tow yard found a cadaver bag "covered with insects and a strong odor of decay," court documents said. Detectives partially unzipped the bag and found a head and torso.

Investigators from the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner's Office removed the bag and "discovered the arms and legs had been severed from the body," according to court documents. A second black bag was found under the first, and dismembered body parts were inside it. No cause of death has been publicly revealed, and police got a judge

to block the release details of the autopsy. The court order was expected to be lifted after the charges.

"I had the chance to meet with some of the family members of Celeste and their grief is incalculable as to what happened to their daughter," Hochman said.

D4vd, pronounced "David," gained popularity among Gen Z for his blend of indie rock, R&B and lo-fi pop. He went viral on TikTok in 2022 with the hit "Romantic Homicide," which peaked at No. 4 on Billboard's Hot Rock & Alternative Songs chart. He then signed with Darkroom and Interscope Records and released his debut EP "Petals to Thorns" and a follow-up, "The Lost Petals," in 2023.

The Associated Press confirmed that D4vd was dropped by Interscope last year.

When the body was discovered, the singer continued his North American tour, but when reports of his possible involvement spread widely, he canceled the final two shows and a European tour that was to follow.

On April 11, about two weeks before the killing, he made his debut appearance at the Coachella music festival, where he talked to the AP.

"I was such an internet kid. The internet is really what I claim as my home," he said. "My neighborhood was Instagram and the society was the internet."

Fashion

'Size 2' challenged

Met Gala exhibit making room for diverse bodies

NEW YORK, April 21, (AP): On a sultry summer day in Brooklyn last year, artist and couture designer Michaela Stark found herself in a studio surrounded by 175 cameras, for a photo shoot unlike any she'd done before.

Clad only in her signature corsetry that binds the flesh, Stark stood in the midst of a circle as the cameras captured all angles of her body, simultaneously - part of an intricate process known as photogrammetry. The goal: to scan her body and build a mannequin - three, actually - for display in one of the world's top museums, the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And at the Met Gala, no less.

"It was definitely a bit nerve-racking," recalls Stark of the "intimate and vulnerable" experience. But, she quips, "something about being naked on a 40-degree (Celsius) day in a corset that isn't hiding anything kind of takes the awkwardness away from the situation, actually."

The mannequins, and others based on real-life models like Stark, will be featured in "Costume Art," the upcoming spring exhibit at the museum's Costume Institute that's launched by the starry May 4 gala. It's part of an effort to add an element of body positivity to a show that examines the dressed body in art over the centuries, says curator Andrew Bolton.

Mannequins

Bolton notes that the classic fashion mannequin is usually around a women's size 2. The idea of these new mannequins, which will accompany the more traditional ones, is to stress that in the history of art, certain body types have been ignored or excluded - the corpulent body, the disabled body or the aging body, for example. But they, too, are part of the story.

The aim was "to challenge a history of museum mannequin display that's very much characterized by thin, abled and standardized bodies," Bolton says. Rather than simply adapt existing mannequins, curators wanted to base the new mannequins "on a diverse range of real bodies with real, lived experiences."

So, along with Stark, Bolton re-

cruited models like Sinéad Burke, the Irish disability activist who was born with dwarfism; Aimee Mullins, the athlete, actor, model and activist who wears prosthetic lower legs; and Aariana Rose Philip, a musician and model who uses a wheelchair, among others. Nine real-life models were used to create 18 new mannequins. Seven additional mannequins represent shapes like the pregnant body and the thin male body but aren't based on real people.

Museum

And these 25 new mannequins will not be consigned - as some are - to retirement after the show, which opens to the public May 10. When "Costume Art" ends in January 2027, they'll join the museum's permanent collection, for future use.

This element of permanence is exciting to Stark, who has created looks for Beyoncé and has her own, body-positive line of lingerie called Panty. Her three mannequins will be wearing her own designs, and will appear in the Reclaimed Body and Corpulent Body sections.

Stark has long used corsetry techniques in unconventional ways. While corsets have traditionally been used to mold the body to classic ideas of beauty, Stark uses the same techniques "to actually emphasize those parts of the body that we've been conditioned to hide. It's using the corsets to bring back power to the female form."

The designer feels her participation in the Met's exhibit could not come at a more crucial moment - a time when the industry's commitment to body positivity appears to be fading.

"It's a really interesting moment in time for the Met to be doing this show because obviously we've seen the complete rapid decline of the body positivity industry," she says. "Designers left, right, and center are just starting more and more to refuse to work with plus-size models." Her own experience is backed up by a recent Vogue Business Size Inclusivity Report, which cited a decline in plus sizes on the runways of four major Fashion Week cities for the Fall/Winter 2026 season.



A Di Petra dress by designer Dimitra Petra appears on a pregnant mannequin, (from left), an ensemble by Michaela Stark on a mannequin in Stark's image, a Burberry ensemble by Christopher Bailey on a mannequin image of Sinéad Burke, (foreground), an ensemble by designer Karoline Vitto, on a mannequin model of Charlie Reynolds, and an outfit by designer Maria Grazia Chiuri for the House of Dior on a mannequin model of Yseult, are displayed in a room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art during preparations for the Met Gala exhibit 'Costume Art' on April 14, 2026, in New York. (AP)

Film



Lady Gaga attends 'The Devil Wears Prada 2' world premiere. (AP)



Heidi Klum arrives at 'The Devil Wears Prada 2' premiere, (AP)



Ciara at 'The Devil Wears Prada 2' world premiere. (AP)



Meryl Streep, (from left), Emily Blunt, Stanley Tucci, and Anne Hathaway attend 'The Devil Wears Prada 2' world premiere at David Geffen Hall on Monday, April 20, in New York. (AP)



Elizabeth Cordry, (from left), Anna Wintour, and Bee Shaffer attend 'The Devil Wears Prada 2' world premiere. (AP)



Coco Rocha at 'The Devil Wears Prada 2' world premiere. (AP)

Music tycoon accused of \$100m investor fraud scheme

S. Korean police seek to arrest K-pop mogul behind BTS

SEOUL, South Korea, April 21, (AP): South Korean police said Tuesday they are seeking to arrest music mogul **Bang Si-Hyuk**, chairman of the agency behind K-pop supergroup BTS, as they expand an investigation into allegations that he illegally gained more than \$100 million in an investor fraud scheme.

The Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency confirmed that it has asked prosecutors to request a court warrant for arresting Bang, founder and chairman of HYBE.

Bang's legal team in a statement to The Associated Press did not directly address the accusations but expressed regret that police were seeking his arrest "despite our full and consistent cooperation with the investigation over an extended period."

"We will continue to cooperate with all legal

procedures and make every effort to clearly explain our position," the statement said.

Bang has been under investigation since November over allegations that he misled investors in 2019 by telling them HYBE had no plans to go public, inducing them to sell their shares to a private equity fund before the company proceeded with an initial public offering. Police believe that the fund may have paid Bang around 200 billion won (\$136 million) in a side deal that promised him 30% of post-IPO stock sale profits.



Bang

Bang, a music executive and producer who founded HYBE as Big Hit Entertainment in 2005, is widely seen as one of the most powerful figures in K-pop, overseeing some of the industry's most popular acts, including Seventeen, Le Sserafim and Katsyey in addition to BTS.

Bang's legal troubles are a major public relations setback for HYBE, coming as BTS embarks on a global tour after a nearly four-year hiatus as its members served for mandatory military service.

BTS performed in front of tens of thousands of international fans at a free comeback concert in Seoul last month and have also held several concerts in South Korea's Goyang city and Tokyo. The group is to kick off a series of U.S. events with a concert in Tampa, Florida, later this month.

Obituary

Final bow ... eternal spotlight

Passing of Hayat Al-Fahad leaves an artistic void

By Faleh Al-Enezi and Mufreh Hijab
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 21: Renowned actress Hayat Al-Fahad died on Tuesday, concluding a career of more than 60 years filled with valuable contributions that shaped a significant era in the history of the Arab and regional art movements.

The pure soul of the leading lady of Gulf television, who was born in 1948, ascended to the Creator, marking a profound loss for the artistic community.

Although the icon of Kuwaiti drama has departed, her presence remains. Her voice continues to resonate within homes. The faces she portrayed with excellence still look back from the screens, ensuring that true art transforms into a living memory.

The passing of Al-Fahad is a milestone, because she functioned not just as an actress but as a complete human being who achieved a high level of synergy with her audience. She carried the pain of the people and the strength of the Gulf character, utilizing sophisticated narrative tools to transform them into impactful stories.

Her artistic journey began during an era when the path was not easy, yet she carved out an illustrious position through genuine talent and determination. She had a remarkable capacity to elicit laughter and tears with sincerity, making viewers see themselves in every role she played.

Since her early days in television, she left an indelible mark. Starting with her debut in "A'lat Bujassum" in 1962 and continuing through "Ibn Al-Hattab," "Al-Masir," "Al-Dana," "Dars Khususi," "Al-Aswar," "Al-Ghuraba," "Ala Al-Dunya Al-Salam," "Khalati Qumasha," "Ruqayya wa Sabiq," "Thaman Umri," "Al-Akh Saliha," "Baya'at Al-Nakhi," "Afkar Umri," "Souq Al-Maqasis," "Al-Jaddah Luluwa" and "Al-Bayt Bayt Abouna," she solidified her position as a pillar of Gulf drama.

In impactful social dramas, she shone brightly in works such as "Dam'at Yateem," "Al-Fariya," "Umm Haroun," "Margaret" and "Qurrat Aynak," which served as her farewell to her audience before suffering a clinical setback that necessitated medical oversight for nearly a year.

The late icon was meticulous in her choices, always striving to address human issues through performances filled with pain and sincerity. She knew how to modernize work mechanisms within art, transforming sorrow into beauty and suffering into a story worth telling.

Her career extended beyond television to cinema, where she participated in films such as "Bas Ya Bahar," which is considered a landmark in Gulf cinematic history. Her performance reflected an ability to exert influence even under the most challenging production conditions.

She also participated in the Saudi film, "Najd," and many other films that left a clear mark on regional cinema.

The late "Umm Suzan" was an important figure, appearing in television specials such as "Wahm," "Awrak Al-Kharif" and "Haroub."

In Kuwaiti theater, she performed in "Da'a Al-Deek," "Bani Samit," "Haram Sa'adat Al-Wazir," "Bye Bye Arab," "Ard wa Qard," "Saif Al-Arab" and "Qannas Khaitan."

She was also a writer, crafting several works to ensure the idea was conveyed clearly. She wrote from the heart, so she touched hearts.

Today, as we bid her farewell, we feel that we lost a vital part of our collective memory and heritage.

This woman, who entered our homes and integrated with our lives, is now gone. She has passed away, but her work remains, her voice endures, and her presence lingers in the hearts of all the beneficiaries of her art.

Her name will forever be etched in the history of Gulf art as an irreplaceable icon.

May Almighty Allah have mercy on her, and may her enduring presence make us feel that she has not departed.



Hayat Al-Fahad



Photos by Samer Shiqr
Kuwait mourns deeply as Hayat Al-Fahad is laid to rest, with crowds paying final respects to the Gulf drama legend.

Variety

PARIS: Elon Musk has been summoned to Paris on Monday, where investigators are looking into allegations of misconduct related to the social media platform X, including the spread of child sexual abuse material and deepfake content.



Musk

The world's richest man and Linda Yaccarino - the former CEO of X - have been summoned for "voluntary interviews," while other employees of the platform are scheduled to be heard as witnesses throughout this week, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

It remains unclear whether Musk and Yaccarino will travel to Paris. A spokesperson for X did not respond to questions from The Associated Press and Yaccarino's current company, eMed, did not answer a request sent to the press email. (AP)

NEW YORK: FBI Director Kash Patel sued The Atlantic magazine for \$250 million on Monday, claiming an article that talked about his alleged excessive drinking was false and a "malicious hit piece."

The Atlantic, in response, said it stood by its reporting and would vigorously defend against the "meritless lawsuit."

In the article, posted on the magazine's website on Friday, author Sarah Fitzpatrick said Patel is deeply concerned about losing his job and that "he has good reasons to think so - including some having to do with what witnesses described to me as bouts of excessive drinking." (AP)

LONDON: A London judge ruled Monday against the father of Amy Winehouse who sued his daughter's friends for profiting off the late singer's memorabilia.

Mitch Winehouse, who was administrator of this daughter's estate, sued Naomi Parry and Catriona Gourlay in the High Court over the \$1.2 million (890,000 pounds) they earned at auction in the US from items he claimed they did not have the right to sell.

Amy Winehouse was 27 when she died from alcohol poisoning in her London house in 2011.

Parry, who was also Winehouse's stylist, and Gourlay said they either owned or were given the 150 items that included dresses, shoes, scarves, earrings and purses. (AP)

Royals



A plate with photos of late Queen Elizabeth II is on display for sale at a souvenir shop in London, on April 17. (AP)



Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla during a visit to the Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style exhibition at The King's Gallery, at Buckingham Palace in London, Monday April 20. (AP)

Britain marks 'the queen' centenary

Late Queen Elizabeth II's legacy still looms over monarchy a century later

LONDON, April 21, (AP): Queen Elizabeth II lives on at the Cool Britannia gift shop across the road from Buckingham Palace.

Four years after the queen's death, the shop is doing a brisk business in mugs, tea towels and key rings bearing the likeness of Britain's longest-reigning monarch as the nation marks the centenary of her birth on Tuesday. Items featuring her son King Charles III? Well, not so much.

"We still sell more than the king any day," said Ismail Ibrahim, the store's manager.

The late queen's memory looms over the monarchy after a 70-year reign that saw her evolve from the glamorous young sovereign who cheered Britain during the gloomy post-war years to the beloved national grandmother who rallied the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When she died in September 2022, Elizabeth was the only monarch most Britons had ever known. Even now, mention of "the queen" is more likely to evoke thoughts of Elizabeth than of Queen Camilla, Charles' wife.

But the passage of time has also tarnished the late queen's legacy. While she is celebrated

as a symbol of tradition and continuity who helped unite Britain as the end of empire, economic struggles and mass migration changed the nation's perception of itself, revelations about the former Prince Andrew's links to the sex offender Jeffrey Epstein have raised questions about why she let the problem fester for years.

"Despite her absence, Elizabeth II remains this key presence whenever we think about the monarchy," Ed Owens, author of "After Elizabeth: Can the Monarchy Save Itself?" told The Associated Press.

"She's certainly the most significant figure in the history of the institution in the last 100 years and, I think, therefore deserves probably the attention that's going to be focused on her in connection with what would have been her 100th birthday."

The festivities include a Buckingham Palace reception where Charles will congratulate centenarians who share the late monarch's birthday, and the dedication of a memorial garden at Regent's Park in central London. An exhibit of the

queen's fashions is already underway.

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor wasn't meant to wear the crown. Born on April 21, 1926, she started her long life not in a castle but at 17 Bruton St., a townhouse in London's Mayfair district.

As the elder daughter of King George V's second son, Elizabeth was expected to live the life of a minor royal. Dogs and horses, a country house, a suitable match - a comfortable but somewhat anonymous life - seemed her future.

But destiny intervened. A decade after Elizabeth's birth, her uncle King Edward VIII abdicated to marry the American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Elizabeth's father became King George VI, thrusting the young princess into the spotlight as heir to throne.

Elizabeth became queen the day her father died on Feb. 6, 1952. Just 25, she heard the news in Kenya and hurried home to take up her duties.

For decades, she presided over the annual opening of Parliament in crown and ermine robe, hosted banquets for visiting leaders at Buckingham Palace and made thousands of appearances across the UK, often wearing brightly colored

suits to make sure the people could catch a glimpse of their queen.

She also became a global ambassador for brand Britain, making more than 200 overseas trips that helped bolster ties with one-time colonies from India to Tanzania, former enemies Germany and Japan and long-time friends such as the United States.

Late in life, the queen became an internet star when she and James Bond star Daniel Craig used moviemaking sleight of hand to parachute into the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics and teamed up with Paddington Bear to celebrate her 70 years on the throne.

The king recalled his mother's impact on people around the world in a video tribute released Tuesday.

"Millions will remember her for moments of national significance; many others for a fleeting personal encounter, a smile, a kind word that lifted spirits, or for that marvelous twinkle of the eye when sharing a marmalade sandwich with Paddington Bear in the final months of her life," he said.

New tech seen as powerful tool for radiologists

AI mammography shows promise in detecting tough cancers

MARLBOROUGH, Mass., April 21, (AP): New research on Hologic's AI-driven breast cancer detection technologies, including a study focused on invasive lobular cancer, was presented at the Society of Breast Imaging (SBI) Symposium over the weekend in Seattle, Washington.

"Invasive lobular cancers are more challenging to detect on a mammogram because of their unique characteristics," said Mark Horvath, President of Breast & Skeletal Health Solutions at Hologic. "In the study, AI maintained high sensitivity for flagging these cancers, including some that had been interpreted as negative at a prior screening. These data add to a growing body of evidence that AI can act as a powerful supportive tool for radiologists as they review the full spectrum of breast cancers."

In this retrospective, single-center study, researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston reviewed invasive lobular cancer cases diagnosed over a 10-year period and grouped them into two categories: those detected by a radiologist during a routine screening exam (195 total) and "false negatives" that were diagnosed within a year of a routine screening exam initially interpreted as negative (44 total). Researchers then used Hologic's Genius AI® Detection solution to retrospectively analyze all 239 cases. In this co-



Hologic's AI-powered mammography technology was presented at the Society of Breast Imaging (SBI) Symposium over the weekend in Seattle, Washington. (AP)

hort, the technology identified and correctly localized close to 90% of the confirmed invasive lobular cancers.

New research suggests that, on average, 1 in 20 women worldwide will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime and, that if current rates continue, by 2050 there

will be 3.2 million new breast cancer cases and 1.1 million breast cancer-related deaths per year. About 10-15% of all breast cancers are invasive lobular cancers, while ductal cancers that originate in the milk ducts of the breast — such as invasive ductal carcinoma and ductal carcinoma in situ — occur more commonly. Invasive lobular cancer arises in the milk-producing glands (lobules) of the breast and, because of its unique biology and tendency to grow in a linear pattern, it may be more challenging to see on mammography. This may lead to later detection and a more advanced stage at diagnosis.

The AI algorithm also identified 43% of the invasive lobular cancer cases initially interpreted during routine screening as negative. Of note, as a retrospective analysis at a single institution, the study did not evaluate how use of AI in real time clinical practice would affect recall rates, biopsy outcomes or patient management.

Also at the Society of Breast Imaging Symposium, Hologic hosted a lunch and learn discussion with breast imaging experts focused on implementation of 3DQuorum imaging technology, which uses AI to reduce the number of 3D imaging "slices" radiologists need to review without compromising image quality, sensitivity or

accuracy.^{4,5}

The MGH study did not assess false-positive rates, recall rates or biopsy outcomes, and its single-center design may limit generalizability. AI performance was evaluated retrospectively and did not influence real-time radiologist decision-making; therefore, the observed gains represent a theoretical upper bound rather than a measured clinical impact. Additionally, the cohort included only patients with invasive lobular cancer, precluding comparison with other histologic subtypes.

Hologic's Genius AI Detection solution is an innovative mammography screening technology designed to locate lesions likely to represent breast cancer. Suspicious areas are highlighted at radiologists' workstations for concurrent reading to support smart, decisive interpretation. Hologic's deep learning algorithm is fed by the accumulation of a large, diverse patient base, providing rich insight and intelligence. For more information, please visit Genius AI Detection Technology.

Hologic, Inc. is a global leader in women's health dedicated to developing innovative medical technologies that effectively detect, diagnose and treat health conditions and raise the standard of care around the world.

Coastal areas at high risk

Salt in water may raise blood pressure: study

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

By Rajiv Chowdhury

Florida International University

When people consider what causes high blood pressure, they often think of lifestyle factors, such as eating salty foods, lack of exercise or smoking. However, an unexpected source of salt might also be raising blood pressure for millions of people: the water they drink.

As sea levels rise, more and more salt water tends to infiltrate global freshwater sources. I'm a public health researcher, and this raised a question for my team: Could saltwater intrusion be increasing the risk of high blood pressure worldwide?

In our analysis of existing research, we found that people exposed to saltier drinking water tend to have significantly higher blood pressure and a greater risk of hypertension. This link, as expected, appears strongest in coastal areas where seawater is increasingly contaminating freshwater supplies.

Our findings highlight an often overlooked environmental factor in cardiovascular disease that could become more problematic as climate change accelerates.

Hypertension - persistent elevated blood pressure - affects over a billion people worldwide and remains a leading cause of heart disease and stroke. However, global prevention efforts mainly focus on lifestyle - environmental factors generally receive much less attention.

One such factor is drinking water salinity, defined as the concentration of dissolved salts - primarily sodium - in water. In many coastal areas, groundwater is becoming saltier as rising sea levels push sea water into freshwater aquifers.

This is particularly problematic, since over 3 billion people live in coastal or near-coastal regions globally, many in low- and middle-income countries where groundwater is their main source for drinking water. In these coastal communities, people might inadvertently ingest large amounts of sodium just from drinking and cooking with saline water they cannot taste.

Researchers have long suspected that exposure to high salinity drinking water could affect people's blood pressure and cardiovascular disease risk. However, previous research on this topic has often been limited by variable study designs, mixed results, inconsistent and imprecise methods to measure salinity, and small

sample sizes. It's also unclear whether this risk, if it exists, varies by population.

To address this uncertainty, my team and I conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis that pooled data from 27 population-based studies involving more than 74,000 participants in the U.S., Australia, Israel, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Kenya and several European countries. Combining data across studies can address some of the core limitations of individual studies by enabling detection of relevant effects. Synthesizing evidence across diverse populations, settings and study designs can also improve generalizability by providing a more comprehensive picture.

The studies we examined focused on the association between sodium levels in drinking water and cardiovascular outcomes, including blood pressure, hypertension and other heart-related conditions. When we compared the health outcomes of people exposed to higher levels of drinking water salinity with those exposed to lower levels, we found a consistent pattern.

Those drinking saltier water experienced about 3.22 mmHg higher systolic blood pressure and about 2.82 mmHg higher diastolic blood pressure, on average. Overall, exposure to high salinity water was linked to a 26% increased risk of developing hypertension. These associations were strongest among coastal populations.

While these are modest increases at the individual level, even small shifts in blood pressure among large populations can have significant public health effects. To put it in perspective, the risk that higher water salinity levels poses to hypertension is similar to that of other cardiovascular risk factors, such as low physical activity, which increases hypertension risk by approximately 15% to 25%.

Our findings highlight the importance of considering environmental exposures alongside individual behaviors when addressing risk factors for high blood pressure.

Despite increasing evidence linking drinking water salinity to blood pressure, researchers still know relatively little about its effects on long-term cardiovascular diseases, such as heart attacks or strokes. My team and I identified very few studies examining these outcomes. Future research could explore how drinking saline water influences cardiovascular disease risk and what salinity levels are harmful to health.

Interestingly, current World Health Organization guidelines do not set any health-based standard for sodium levels in drinking water. This further highlights the need for stronger scientific evidence. (AP)

Workforce readiness urged

AI use in health care gaining ground across Europe: WHO

OSLO, April 21, (Xinhua): Artificial intelligence (AI) is gaining ground in health care systems across the European Union, with all 27 member states identifying better patient care as a key driver of AI development and most already deploying AI tools in clinical settings, according to a new report released by the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe on Monday.

Described by WHOEurope as the first comprehensive review of its kind focused specifically on the EU, the report was based on data collected between June 2024 and March 2025 under a multi-year funding agreement with the European Commission.

According to the report, 74 percent of EU countries are already using AI-assisted diagnostics, including tools for medical imaging, disease detection and clinical decision-making. Another 63 percent are using chatbots to support patient engagement. Nearly half of EU member states have also created

dedicated professional roles for AI and data science in health, while several countries are planning to introduce or expand AI training programs.

WHOEurope, which is headquartered in Copenhagen, said the findings point to a growing focus on workforce readiness as AI becomes more embedded in clinical practice. Countries are increasingly incorporating AI literacy into both pre-service education and continuous professional development to help health workers engage with the technology critically, maintain standards of care and uphold accountability in AI-assisted decision-making.

The report also highlighted the importance of public and stakeholder involvement in AI governance. It said 81 percent of EU member states are already actively involving stakeholders in shaping AI governance in health. Wider consultation with patients and the public, it added, would help strengthen trust and ensure AI tools reflect the needs of those they serve.



Participants lay face down on the grass during an integration circle at an ayahuasca retreat in Hildale, Utah, Oct. 15, 2022. (AP)

Attendees advised to research safety, medical support

Experts warn as psychedelic retreats boom with limited safety guardrails

WASHINGTON, April 21, (AP): Surging interest in the purported benefits of psychedelic drugs has given rise to books, documentaries and conferences dedicated to the mind-altering substances. Now add one more business to the list: psychedelic retreats.

Hundreds of outfits across the world are offering multi-day trips where attendees pay for drug-assisted experiences claiming to promote psychological healing, personal growth and other benefits.

Many have safety procedures in place, but they still carry "potential for physical, psychological, and interpersonal harms," researchers who surveyed dozens of retreats wrote in a recent paper in JAMA Network Open.

Currently no psychedelics have been federally approved in the U.S., although that may soon change. On Saturday, President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing the Food and Drug Administration to accelerate reviews of psychedelics that show potential for conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder. The order also directs law enforcement agencies to quickly lower restrictions on any psychedelic approved by the FDA.

The only drug to come before the FDA thus far, MDMA, was rejected as a PTSD treatment in 2024 due to concerns about its safety and effectiveness.

Dr. John Krystal, a Yale School of Medicine psychiatrist who has followed the field, says psychedelics should be approached as "a serious medical procedure that carries risks that must be carefully managed."

People who work in the field say today's retreats are far safer than those of prior decades, when psychedelic experiences were almost always conducted underground with few safety precautions.

"The sheer visibility of psychedelics has led to more demand for these retreats," said Brad Burge, who has worked with psychedelic nonprofits, drugmakers and retreat operators for nearly 20 years. "That growing market has allowed retreats to expand their services, hire more medical and coaching staff and take safety more seriously than we've ever seen in the past."

Here's what to know about the trend: Virtually all the drugs offered at retreats are illegal under US federal law, including magic mushrooms, ayahuasca, MDMA and LSD. vRetreat companies will not always make that explicit or sometimes claim that they are protected by a rare legal exemption for religious organizations that traditionally use psychedelics.

But only a handful of groups have formally obtained that legal status, including the Native American Church, which uses peyote in its ceremonies.

Some retreats are held in countries that don't restrict psychedelics, including Peru and Brazil, where ayahuasca - a psychedelic brew of Amazonian plants - has been used for centuries by Indigenous cultures.

No matter where they operate, experts say there are no industrywide standards or regulations for how participants are screened, prepared or monitored afterward.

"If there is no regulation, what does that mean about the quality of care you're going to have?" said Joshua White, founder of the Fireside Project, which runs a hotline for people experiencing distress during psychedelic trips. "I certainly fear that there could be a race to the bottom where there is no liability or accountability."

With essentially no oversight, potential attendees are on their own when vetting different options.

"It's really important that somebody interested in a psychedelic retreat do their research, talk to the organizers or facilitators to get more information about what is being offered and how," said Amy McGuire, a biomedical ethicist at Baylor College of Medicine and co-author of the JAMA Network Open study.

McGuire and her colleagues documented a wide range of practices, including some companies offering multiple psychedelic drugs over the course of their retreats.

Many retreats have health professionals on site, but their roles and responsibilities are often vague. In some cases, they take psychedelics alongside participants, which could impair their ability to respond in an emergency.

Important questions when evaluating retreats include:

- Do retreat staff have training and equipment to handle a medical emergency?
- Is there a hospital nearby and transportation to get there?
- Do staffers spend significant time helping participants prepare and process the experience?

Websites that compile user reviews, such as Retreat.guru, are one source for this information.

One of the most important safety steps happens before any retreat begins: screening out people with serious medical conditions who shouldn't take psychedelics.

More than half the retreats surveyed for the study excluded participants with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia. "Psychedelic drugs may worsen symptoms of psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia," noted Krystal, who was not involved in the research. "It is important that patients are carefully screened to ensure that appropriate patients enter treatment."

Significantly, all the retreats said they rely on potential customers to truthfully disclose their medical history and health conditions.

That approach carries risks, the authors noted, since people suffering from severe afflictions may withhold information if they think it could stop them from attending.

"When you're really desperate and hoping to access something that you think could help you, there's an incentive not to be truthful," McGuire said.

Another potentially risky practice: Nearly 90% of the surveyed retreats require or recommend that attendees stop taking certain medications, including antidepressants, before using psychedelics. These so-called "washout periods" ranged from one day to six weeks before the psychedelic experience.

Medical experts say safely tapering off antidepressants like Prozac can take six to 12 weeks and requires professional supervision.

After 35 yrs with Parkinson's, patient reclaims independent living

SHANGHAI, April 21, (AP): On World Parkinson's Day, Jiahui International Hospital shares an extraordinary case highlighting advanced Parkinson's disease care complexity, multidisciplinary collaboration, and functional recovery despite life-threatening complications.

A 75-year-old patient, Mrs. Zhang (pseudonym), with a 35-year history of Parkinson's disease, survived sudden duodenal perforation complicated by a liver abscess earlier in 2026. She overcame dual crises through a staged, team-based approach involving nine medical disciplines.

Her case was extremely complex: a ruptured small intestinal ulcer and infected liver cyst, compounded by severe malnutrition and other comorbidities. Initial symptoms of cough, confusion, and leg edema in January 2026 rapidly progressed to life-threatening infection. Imaging revealed abnormal air in the liver and an anomalous connection between the ulcer and liver cyst, while Parkinson's tremors hindered clear scanning.

Jiahui Health assembled a multidisciplinary team

including Neurology, General Surgery, Gastroenterology, ICU, Inpatient Care, Medical Imaging Department, Anesthesiology, Nutrition, and Rehabilitation. Radiologists used advanced imaging to overcome tremors; neurologists managed neurotransmitter balance again in the advanced Parkinson's disease stage; surgeons, gastroenterologists, and ultrasound physician targeted infection and perforation repair; anesthesiologists mitigated airway and medication risks; and ICU, nutrition, and rehabilitation teams supported recovery.

Adopting a cautious stepwise strategy to protect her fragile state, the team first stabilized her with antibiotics, nutrition, and drainage. They then performed high-risk surgery to repair the damage, with anesthesiology ensuring perioperative safety.

Postoperatively, focus shifted to Parkinson's disease management and recovery. The ICU and neurology teams carefully adjusted anti-Parkinson medications, sometimes by one eighth tablet dosage, balancing motor/non-motor symptoms control and

avoiding fatal dyskinesia. The nutrition team implemented a five step pathway to restore oral feeding and reverse malnutrition. Rehabilitation began with passive exercises and advanced to active training, rebuilding strength and mobility.

After one month of intensive care, Mrs. Zhang improved dramatically: from bedridden and disoriented to standing independently, self-feeding, and even writing a 100-character poem. Her case redefines outcomes for long term Parkinson's disease patients, showing how staged multidisciplinary care can reverse crisis and restore independence.

"This case embodies our commitment to whole-person, full-cycle care," said Dr. CHEN Yan, Chair of Neurology. "Parkinson's disease requires seamless cross-disciplinary collaboration, not only neurology, to address all patient needs."

On World Parkinson's Day, Mrs. Zhang's story reflects resilience, while Jiahui's MDT model delivers hope through compassion, precision, and transformative outcomes.

Measles control

Bangladesh rolls out vaccine drive

DHAKA, April 21, (Xinhua): The Bangladeshi government has launched a nationwide emergency measles-rubella vaccination campaign to contain a recent measles outbreak, aiming to reach nearly 18 million children.

Bangladeshi Health and Family Welfare Minister Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bokul inspected a temporary vaccination center in the capital, Dhaka, on Monday and inaugurated the drive.

Officials from the government's Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) said the drive targets children aged 6 months to 5 years.

More than 1.1 million children are expected to be vaccinated on the first day of the campaign, they added.

The emergency campaign was designed following experts' recommendations to quickly control the spread of the disease and ensure protection for children at risk. According to the Directorate General of Health Services, two more deaths from suspected measles were recorded in the 24 hours by 8 a.m. Monday, raising the total deaths to 183.

Also:

SINGAPORE: Singapore recorded 410 dengue cases in the first quarter of 2026, down 29.2 percent from the previous quarter, official data showed Tuesday.

According to the National Environment Agency, one fatality was reported during the quarter. The country's cumulative cases for the first 15 weeks of 2026 reached 501.

Cluster activity has also declined significantly. A total of 24 active dengue clusters were identified in the first quarter of 2026, about 56 percent fewer than in the third quarter of last year.

Virologically, Dengue Virus Serotype 2 (Den-2) remains the dominant strain, accounting for 48 percent of cases. However, Den-3 has surged sharply, rising from 19.1 percent in January to 40 percent in March, signaling a potential shift in infection patterns.

Farm vaccination

Bulgaria confirms anthrax outbreak

SOFIA, April 21, (Xinhua): The Bulgarian Food Safety Agency (BFSA) reported on Monday that the outbreak of anthrax at a farm with 28 buffaloes in Chernogor, a village located in the northeast of the country, has left nine buffaloes killed.

The remaining animals in the farm will be vaccinated, the BFSA said on its website.

"At this time, there are no data on infected people," the agency said.

The farm and its surroundings have been disinfected, and the movement of animals to and from the farm, as well as in the village, was prohibited, the agency said.

"BFSA teams are conducting daily monitoring of the animals in the affected area, tracking how the infection spreads, conducting clinical examinations, and checking for risky contacts with other animals and people," the agency added.

Under natural conditions, all herbivores, omnivores, and carnivores are susceptible to anthrax disease. Goats, sheep and deer are the most susceptible, followed by cattle, buffalo, camels, and horses, according to the agency.

'We don't want to put a lot of pressure on Jamal, but his return at that stage is vital'

Recovered Musiala feels like a new arrival for Bayern ahead of key tests

BERLIN, April 21, (Xinhua): After Bayern Munich sealed its 35th national title last weekend, Vincent Kompany said the return of Jamal Musiala feels like a new arrival for the club.

Ahead of Wednesday's German Cup semifinal against Leverkusen and Bayern's UEFA Champions League semifinal tie against Paris Saint-Germain on April 28 and May 6, the 23-year-old is stepping in after injuries to Serge Gnabry and Lennart Karl.

"We can expect something from him," Bayern's head coach said. "Now that Serge, sadly, can't be around, we benefit from his step-by-step return." Following a cautious comeback plan, with recovery breaks and gradually increased playing time, the England-born attacker is beginning to produce encouraging moments, including key

assists and goals.

Relief appeared to be written across his face after assists led to goals against Real Madrid and Stuttgart, not to mention the club's 101st goal of the season, which he scored in the 5-0 win over St. Pauli to equal Bayern's 197172 record.

Marking the moment, Bayern's communications department noted that Musiala was following in the footsteps of club icon Franz Beckenbauer, who scored the 101st goal 54 years ago.

"I am doing well," the German youngster said after his 45 minutes in the title-clinching match against Stuttgart.

The substitution had been planned, he said, adding "that my foot feels good." "We see he is enjoying his new freedom," Kompany said, noting that Musiala can enrich Bayern's



Stuttgart's Ramon Hendriks tries to tackle Bayern's Jamal Musiala during a Bundesliga soccer match between Bayern and Stuttgart in Munich, Germany. (AP)

attacking play with his dribbling and passing.

Concerns resurfaced in mid-March after "stress reactions" sidelined

the forward during the Champions League and the international window.

Now, however, stability appears to be returning for the son of a German mother and a Nigerian father.

Kompany underlined Musiala's importance after Gnabry suffered another setback, a long-term muscle injury that puts his World Cup participation at risk.

"We don't want to put a lot of pressure on Jamal, but his return at that stage is vital," the Bayern coach said, with Bayern still chasing success in the German Cup and the Champions League.

Musiala, a six-time national champion with 40 caps for Germany, spoke of relief and satisfaction as he joined Bayern's brief celebrations on the pitch on Sunday.

"We don't party now as there are more tasks ahead of us," Musiala said, adding that he was happy to be part of it again.

Champs League place slipping away

Marseille's chaotic season getting worse

PARIS, April 21, (AP): Two coaches in a season. The best player sold. A new president. A sporting director who resigned then stayed. A change of captain. Team-bonding trips to Spain.

It's another chaotic season at Marseille with the club facing the dismal prospect of failing to reach the Champions League. Marseille is sixth in Ligue 1 with only the top three qualifying directly and only four games left.

Sporting director Medhi Benatia, who quit in February following the departure of coach Roberto De Zerbi only to change his mind, launched a scathing attack on the players after Saturday's 2-0 loss at Lorient. Benatia has made several rants before but the same problems persist.

Habib Beye replaced De Zerbi and has lost five of nine matches - including an embarrassing French Cup quarterfinal defeat at home to Toulouse. After the Lorient game, Beye said he was "very angry" and prepared to make big changes.

However, the Lorient loss came after Beye took his players on a team-bonding trip to Marbella for the second time since taking charge, and it made no difference.

In a complete U-turn, the players will have double training sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday, according to sports daily L'Equipe, and will stay on site at the Marseille training camp from Thursday until Sunday's home game against Nice.

So what's going wrong at Marseille and who's really to blame for the ongoing chaos? Here's a look at some key points.

After every poor performance - Saturday's against Lorient; the 3-0 defeat at Bruges on the final day of the Champions League group stage that ended Marseille's hopes of making the playoffs; the humiliating 5-0 reverse at Paris Saint-Germain; the sloppy draw at Paris FC, or the 2-0 home defeat to lowly Nantes - the same phrase is repeated, whether by a player, a director, or the coach.

Namely that the performance in question was "unworthy of Marseille," which used to be France's biggest club. The first French team to win the Champions League in 1993, Marseille

held bragging rights over PSG until the latter won it last year.

But the harsh reality is that Marseille is no longer a big club in Europe, and maybe not even in France other than historically. For Marseille has not won a trophy since the League Cup 14 years ago, and has not won Ligue 1 since 2010.

After winning a tight league game against Lyon last season, the players did a lap of honor and posed for a group photo. It only served to underline how Marseille is a team which overly-celebrates individual wins in the absence of trophies.

Yet the perception about being a big club still persists.

Marseille's poor defending has been evident for several seasons, with central defender Leonardo Balerdi making countless high-profile blunders. He was at fault for both Lorient goals on Saturday, failing to mark the striker each time, having made a similar mistake in the French Cup loss to Toulouse.

Bafflingly, he has been kept in the side by Beye - a former defender himself. Beye stripped him of the captaincy and gave it to midfielder Pierre-Emile Højbjerg, but to no positive effect.

France midfielder Adrien Rabiot was Marseille's best player last season and helped the club finish second behind PSG.

He played only one game this season before being transferred out along with forward Jonathan Rowe, following their locker-room brawl at Rennes.

"When you see behavior like that, you can't let it go," Benatia said about Rabiot, who was sold to AC Milan and scored the winner on Sunday.

Rabiot has 57 caps for France and his assured presence and leadership qualities have been sorely missed. Marseille was bereft of leadership against Lorient and Benatia even accused his players of apathy.

"How many of the players after the game came (into the dressing room) and tipped the table upside down?" Benatia said. "None. Everything's spotless. All the (water) bottles are in place. Which means that you play for Marseille and you accept a performance like that?"

Wolverhampton relegated as Palace, West Ham draw



West Ham United's Mateus Fernandes and Crystal Palace's Brennan Johnson challenge for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Crystal Palace and West Ham United in London, England. (AP)

Brady, top female soccer executive, leaves role as West Ham vice-chair

LONDON, April 21, (AP): West Ham drew at Crystal Palace 0-0, gaining an important point in its fight to avoid relegation and ensuring the demise of the Premier League's bottom club Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Wolves cannot amass enough points in its last five games to avoid the drop and will return to the Championship for the first time since 2018.

Relegation looked inevitable for the Midlands club for most of a woeful season but even a string of more encouraging performances over the last couple of months could not save it.

The end came far from home in a listless match in south London.

West Ham had the better of the opening exchanges but the scoreline remained goalless at halftime. Although Palace perked up in the second half it did not create many chances and neither goalkeeper was very busy.

The point was nevertheless welcomed by the Hammers, who moved two clear of Tottenham Hotspur in 18th place.

"A point at the end of the day isn't the worst thing in the world," captain Jarrod Bowen said. "We're trying to keep West Ham in the Premier

League. We can't rely on anyone else, we need to look at ourselves and keep fighting to stay in the Premier League."

Palace, which has won only three of its last 26 Monday night games in the Premier League, remained in 13th.

Goalkeeper Dean Henderson's shutout was Palace's 12th clean sheet of the season, a record bettered only by the top two Arsenal and Manchester City.

"(That record) is an unbelievable return for our league executive," Henderson said. "The defensive unit is so good, anyone who steps in has been excellent. That's the foundations we've built and hopefully add some goals at the other end."

Meanwhile, Karen Brady, the most powerful female executive in English soccer, has stepped down from her position as vice-chair at West Ham to focus on other business interests and her role in the House of Lords.

The 57-year-old Brady previously worked as a director at Birmingham City, starting in the early 1990s, as part of a long association with the club's then-owner, David Sullivan.

They then worked together at West Ham, where Sullivan is the majority owner and Brady has been

vice-chair since 2010. She was instrumental in securing the club's move to the Olympic Stadium in 2016 and is regarded as influential in the world of Premier League shareholders that is largely dominated by men.

Brady has been a member of the House of Lords since 2014, when she was given the title of baroness, and also works on popular TV series The Apprentice.

In a statement, West Ham said she would be focusing in those roles as well as "mentoring and leadership initiatives" as part of her broader business interests.

"While this chapter closes, my passion for football and commitment to supporting the next generation of leaders remains undiminished," said Brady, who is married to former Canada soccer player Paul Pescholidis.

"I wish West Ham United every success for the future and look forward to following their continued achievements with pride."

West Ham joint-chair Daniel Kleinfink described Brady as "very highly appreciated in the Premier League leadership community and was an excellent representative of our club there."

Sabalenka, Alcaraz named Laureus sportsman & sportswoman of year



Belarusian tennis player Aryna Sabalenka poses with the award during the 2026 Laureus World Sports Awards ceremony in Madrid, Spain. (AP)



Carlos Alcaraz poses with his Laureus World Sportsman of the Year award during the 2026 Laureus World Sports Awards ceremony in Madrid, Spain. (AP)

MADRID, April 21, (AP): Tennis players Aryna Sabalenka and Carlos Alcaraz were named sportswoman and sportsman of the year at the Laureus awards while Paris Saint-Germain was the team of the year.

Alcaraz won the French and U.S. Opens last year plus the Australian Open in January. Sabalenka, the top-ranked woman, won her second consecutive U.S. Open last year.

PSG broke through with its first Champions League title in 2025.

Rory McIlroy, who successfully defended the Masters title this month, received the comeback of the year award.

Barcelona and Spain star Lamine Yamal, aged 18, won the

young sportsperson of the year prize.

Formula One champion Lando Norris received the world breakthrough of the year award.

German soccer great Toni Kroos won the world sporting inspiration award, and retired gymnast Nadia Comaneci got the lifetime achievement prize.

The world action sportsperson award went to American snowboarder Chloe Kim.

Brazilian Gabriel Araújo was the world sportsperson of the year with a disability.

The awards ceremony in the Spanish capital was hosted by tennis great Novak Djokovic and freestyle skier Eileen Gu.

BUCHAREST, Romania, April 21, (AP): Romania great Gheorghe Hagi has been hired as national team coach for the second time. He was appointed to replace Mircea Lucescu, who died two weeks ago.

The 61-year-old Hagi is widely regarded as Romania's greatest ever soccer player, having led the country to the World Cup quarterfinals in 1994. He also played for Barcelona and Real Madrid as a creative attacking midfielder.

His first stint as Romania coach was in 2001 and lasted three months, ending after failing to get the team through the playoffs for the 2002 World Cup.

Hagi has since coached clubs in Romania and Turkey - including Galatasaray and Steaua Bucharest - but is back in charge of the No. 56-ranked national team, which will not be at the World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The Romanians lost to Turkey in



In this file photo, former Romanian soccer star Gheorghe Hagi holds an autographed t-shirt after receiving the Star of Romania award, in Bucharest, Romania. (AP)

the playoffs, after which Lucescu fell ill and stepped down as coach. He died April 7, at the age of 80.

"It is an honor and a great responsibility to represent Romania once again, as I did as a player," Hagi said

in a statement released by Romania's soccer federation.

"I am convinced," he added, "that we can achieve beautiful things. I hope that the performances I had as a player, I will also have as a coach. I am convinced that we can become the best."

Romania last played at the World Cup in 1998. It reached the round of 16 at the European Championship in 2024, losing to the Netherlands.

Hagi's first games in charge will be friendlies against Georgia and Wales in June. Romania is in a Nations League group with Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Poland starting in September.

He has signed a contract through to the 2030 World Cup, with the task of "bringing the national team back into the elite of world football," the federation said.

Federation president Razvan Burleanu said his organization has made "several attempts over time" to get Hagi to become coach again.

SPORTS

Madrid reigns again with Youth League title

Navarro key to 4-2 shootout win

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, April 21, (AP): Real Madrid has at least earned one trophy this season and become a European champion again.

Madrid won the UEFA Youth League final - effectively the Champions League for under-19 teams - by beating Club Brugge in a penalty shootout after a 1-1 draw on a sun-splashed evening in Switzerland.

Madrid goalkeeper Javier Navarro was key to a 4-2 shootout win, saving from Brugge's Naim Amengai and Tian Koren.

The Spanish power's second title in the 12-year history of the UEFA youth competition came five days after elimination in the Champions League quarterfinals, where Madrid fielded no homegrown academy players in the starting lineup against Bayern Munich.

Club president Florentino Perez was present on Monday at the stadium of Swiss club Lausanne-Sport alongside UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin. Two months ago, Madrid and UEFA settled a years-long dispute over the failed breakaway Super League project driven by Perez.

Ceferin presented the players' medals and put his right arm around the shoulders of his fellow Slovenian Koren to console the tearful 16-year-old.

Madrid defender Diego Aguado scored the decisive spot kick beyond the dive of Brugge goalkeeper Argus Vanden Driessche. The teams went directly to a shootout without playing extra time.



Real Madrid's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Youth League final soccer match between Club Brugge and Real Madrid in Lausanne, Switzerland. (AP)

It was the second shootout win for Madrid in three days, after Navarro's saves helped the team beat Paris Saint-Germain on Friday in the semifinals, which also finished 1-1 on Lausanne's artificial turf.

On Monday, Madrid dominated the early play and influential winger Daniel Yáñez came close to scoring three times.

The lead came in the 23rd minute when center forward Jacobo Ortega

scored from a deft flick with his right heel in the goalmouth. The Brugge defense was in nervous turmoil and Madrid twice had chances in the next 90 seconds to double the lead. Brugge leveled in the 64th when

Tian Koren's surging run and low cross across the goal was met by Tobias Lund Jensen.

Madrid joined Chelsea with two UEFA Youth League titles. Barcelona has three, including last year.

Barcelona has a clear lead over Madrid in Spain's La Liga, and Real Sociedad won the Copa del Rey on Saturday, leaving Madrid's star-studded first team trophyless for a second straight season.

Hawks, Timberwolves bounce back

Mitchell, Harden lead way as Cavs take grip on series

CLEVELAND, April 21, (AP): Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points, James Harden added 28 and the Cleveland Cavaliers held on for a 115-105 victory over the Toronto Raptors on Monday night for a 2-0 lead in their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Evan Mobley had 25 points and eight rebounds for the Cavaliers, who had at least three players score at least 25 points in a postseason game for the second straight season and fourth time overall.

Cleveland - which never trailed - has won 12 straight playoff games against Toronto, tying the NBA postseason record for consecutive wins against an opponent. The streak began in the 2016 Eastern Conference finals, when the Cavaliers took the final three games. Cleveland swept Toronto in four games in the second round in 2017 and '18.

The Cavaliers also have 12-game winning streaks against Detroit and Atlanta, while the Los Angeles Lakers had a 12-game run against Seattle from 1980 through '89.

Scottie Barnes led Toronto with a playoff career-high 26 points. RJ Barrett had 22 points and nine rebounds.

The series shifts to Toronto for Game 3 on Thursday night.

Hawks 107, Knicks 106

In New York, CJ McCollum scored 32 points and Atlanta rallied to stun New York, tying their first-round playoff series at one game apiece.

McCollum led a late surge that was almost for naught when he missed two free throws with 5.6 seconds remaining. The Knicks rushed the ball up the court without any timeouts left, but Mikal Bridges



Minnesota Timberwolves guard Ayo Dosunmu (13) drives to the basket against Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic (15) during the second half in Game 2 of a first-round NBA playoffs basketball series in Denver. (AP)



Cleveland Cavaliers guard Keon Ellis, left, reaches for the ball in front of Toronto Raptors guard Ja'kobe Walter (14) in the second half in Game 2 of a first-round NBA basketball playoffs series in Cleveland. (AP)

missed a jumper as time expired.

The Hawks had trailed the whole second half and were down 12 af-

ter three quarters. Atlanta chipped away and a basket by McCollum gave the Hawks a 101-100 lead -

their first of the series in the second half - with 2:09 to play. He made another for a three-point lead, and after Jalen Brunson tied it with a 3-pointer, McCollum answered with another jumper to make it 105-103 with 33 seconds to play.

Jonathan Kuminga added 19 points off the bench and Jalen Johnson scored 17, including a basket with 10 seconds left for a four-point lead for the No. 6 seeds, who host Game 3 on Thursday.

Brunson had 29 points for the Knicks and Karl-Anthony Towns added 18.

Timberwolves 119, Nuggets 114

In Denver, Anthony Edwards scored 30 points, Julius Randle added 24 and Minnesota rallied past Denver to tie their Western Conference playoff series at one game apiece.

Denver had won 13 straight since losing on March 18.

Edwards turned the ball over with 31 seconds left and Christian Braun got fouled at the other end, but he missed one of two free throws, leaving Denver trailing 115-114 with 19 seconds remaining.

After a Minnesota timeout, Randle sank two free throws and Donte DiVincenzo added a breakaway dunk to cap the comeback from a 19-point first-quarter deficit.

Jamal Murray scored 30 points and Nikola Jokic had 24 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists. But the Nuggets' All-Star duo shot a combined 2 for 12 in the fourth quarter, managing a measly four points as the Wolves evened a best-of-seven series that shifts to Minneapolis for Game 3 on Thursday night.

Copa loss leaves injury worries for Atletico

Relegation-threatened Lecce halts losing run with draw vs Fiorentina

LECCE, Italy, April 21, (Agencies): English winger Jack Harrison scored his first Serie A goal for Fiorentina though a late equalizer from Tiago Gabriel gave Lecce a 1-1 draw and a vital point in its bid to avoid relegation.

With half an hour on the clock, the on-loan forward from Leeds curled a superb left-foot shot into the far corner. It was his first goal in 18 appearances and looked like giving Fiorentina a third consecutive league triumph.

Lecce had not scored for 357 minutes coming into the home fixture and its bad luck looked set to continue when Walid Cheddira and Lassana Coulibaly both had goal-bound attempts hacked clear by the Fiorentina defense.

However, Tiago Gabriel's glancing header from an Antonino Gallo corner after 71 minutes ensured a share of the points.

Avoiding a fifth consecutive defeat, third-to-last Lecce climbed to 28 points, the same as the team above it, Cremonese. The bottom three go down.

Fiorentina was eight points above them in 15th. The draw was Fiorentina's sixth straight league match without defeat.

Atletico Madrid has paid a worrying price for its defeat on penalties to Real Sociedad in the Copa del Rey final on Saturday night, with the news that Nigerian forward Ademola Lookman and striker Alexander Sorloth both ended the game with "physical problems" that make them doubts for Atletico's Champions League semifinal against Arsenal.

Lookman was taken off after 62 minutes of the final, with Atletico trailing 2-1 after scoring his side's first goal in a match that ended 2-2 after extra time. Sorloth came on as a second-half substitute and missed a vital penalty in the shootout that saw Real



Lecce's Santiago Pierotti, left, in action during an Italian Serie A soccer match between Lecce and Fiorentina in Lecce, Italy. (AP)

Sociedad lift the Copa del Rey.

"Ademola Lookman and Alexander Sorloth finished the Copa del Rey final with discomfort. The club's medical staff have conducted tests that advise maximum caution to avoid the risk of injury, so they will follow an individualized plan in the coming days, training separately from the group," the club website said, adding that the duo's return would "depend on how their discomfort progresses." Neither Lookman nor Sorloth was present at Monday's session with the first-team squad, and neither will play against Elche on Wednesday night or against Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

Lookman has been vital for Atletico coach Diego Simeone since joining from Atalanta in the January transfer window, making 18 appearances, 14 of them in the starting lineup, scoring seven goals, including the one that took Atletico past Barcelona in the Champions League quarterfinal last week, and providing four assists.

Indians bowl out Titans for 100

Mumbai stuns Gujarat with 99-run victory

AHMEDABAD, India, April 21, (AP): Mumbai Indians' losing streak in the Indian Premier League ended in stunning fashion after they bowled out Gujarat Titans for 100.

Mumbai's 99-run win wasn't forecast. The Indians had lost four in a row, Rohit Sharma was still unfit, they picked two debutants, and were 44-3 in the powerplay.

But Tilak Varma's unbeaten 45-ball 101 - his maiden IPL century - gave his bowlers something to defend, and they defended 199-5 in rousing style.

Impact substitute and left-arm fast bowler Ashwani Kumar took 4-24, Mitchell Santner 2-16, and spinner Allah Ghazanfar 2-17.

Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya took a wicket each in the powerplay as Gujarat's stacked top order of Sai Sudharsan, captain Shubman Gill, Jos Buttler, Washington Sundar and Glenn Phillips were blown away inside eight overs and reduced to 55-5 on their home ground.

The Titans were all out inside 16 overs and their three-win streak was crushed.



Mumbai Indians' Tilak Verma hits a six during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Gujarat Titans and Mumbai Indians in Ahmedabad, India. (AP)

"Ahmedabad has been a tough place for Mumbai Indians," captain Pandya said. "We played some good cricket. Feels very special because (the win) was much needed."

Left-hander Varma came into

Mumbai's sixth game with a season-best score of 20.

Varma was 19 off 22 balls. Then he scored 82 off 23. He was especially aggressive in the last six overs. Varma smacked Ashok Sharma for 26 runs from three

sixes and two fours in the 18th, and reached his hundred with a six and a four off Prasadh Krishna's last two balls in the final over that went for 22.

"Last five games I haven't had much time in the middle. So this game I wanted to spend time in the middle," Varma said. "So you saw the first 20 balls I was just batting ball by ball. Then later on I knew the ability I have. I was just seeing the situation and what the team needs and I was just stable and keeping my head still and following my basics. I have all the fancy shots."

He's the first IPL batter to outscore the opposition since 2020 when Lokesh Rahul's 132 trumped Royal Challengers Bangalore's 109.

Varma finished with seven sixes and eight boundaries. Naman Dhir supported him with 45.

Gujarat never got any momentum after Bumrah finally got his first wicket in the sixth game when his first delivery was sent by Sudharsan straight to point.

The IPL's biggest win of the season by runs lifted Mumbai off the bottom of the table.

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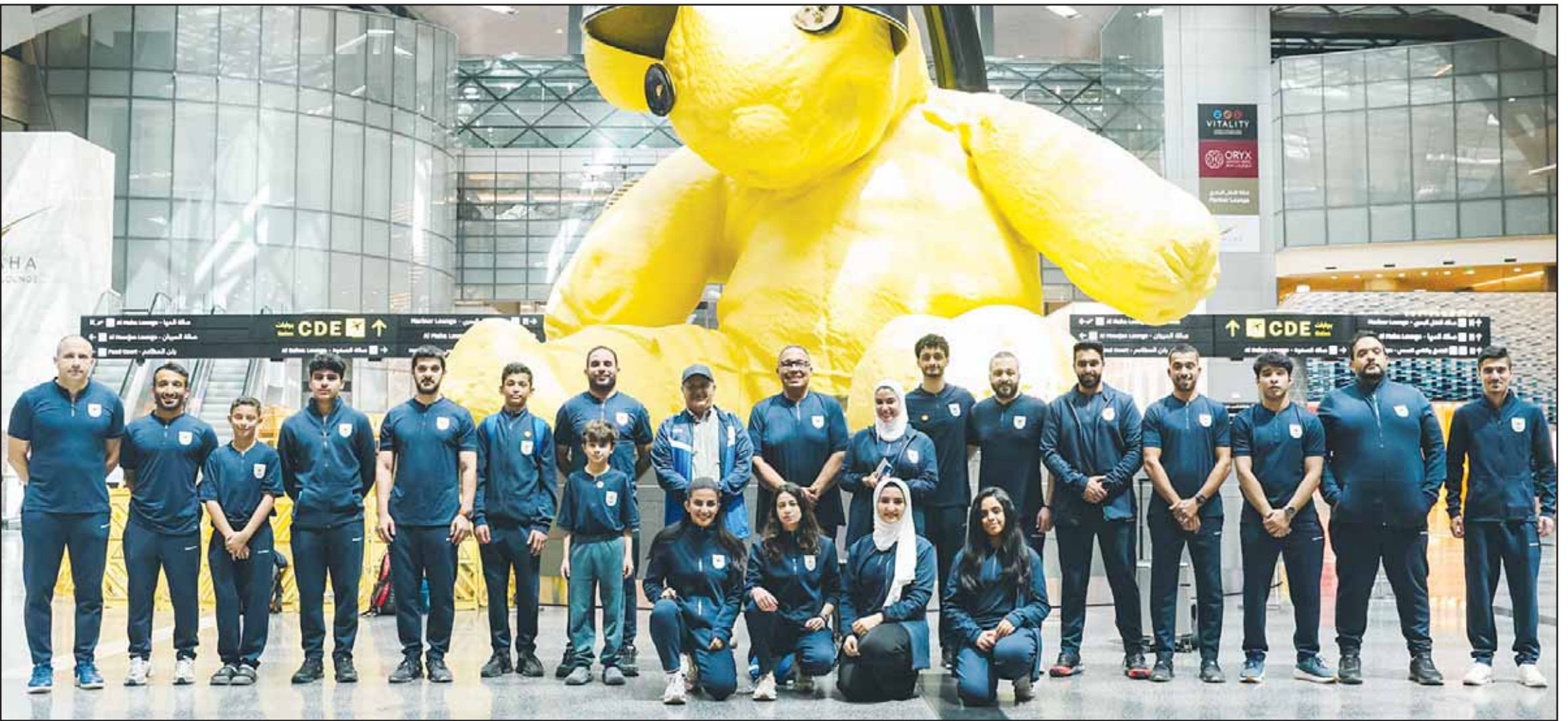
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Lamine Yamal poses with Laureus World Young Sportsman of the Year Award during the 2026 Laureus World Sports Awards ceremony in Madrid, Spain. (AP) – See Page 14

Sports



Kuwaiti delegation for the games.

Kuwait targets strong showing as Asian Beach Games get underway

Kuwait is represented by a 15-athlete delegation

SANYA, China, April 21: The 6th Asian Beach Games officially begin today, Wednesday, in the Chinese city of Sanya, with the event running until April 30 and featuring 45 Asian nations competing across 14 sports and 62 disciplines.

Kuwait is represented by a 15-athlete delegation, featuring both men and women selected to compete in five disciplines: aquathlon, teqball, climbing, sailing, and jiu-jitsu.

The Kuwaiti delegation arrived in Sanya after an overland journey via Qatar, before joining a special flight carrying Gulf delegations to the host city.

The team is headed by Kuwait Olympic Committee Assistant Secretary-General Captain Ali Al-Mari, with Dr. Hussein Al-Saeed serving as deputy head of delegation. The administrative staff includes Mohammed Atef, Abdulaziz Al-Mutawa, and Mohammed Al-Salameen, along with physiotherapists Alreem Al-Rashidi and Adhari Al-Rashidi. The athletes are: Ali Ashkanani, Fahd Al-Mar-



Team Kuwait holds a meeting after arriving in Sanya.

zouqi, Sayed Ahmed Behbehani, Sara Al-Ajmi, Hamad Al-Masoud, Abdulaziz Al-Mansour, Ali Anki, Zakaria Bouhamad, Nasser Bouarqib, Suleiman Al-Ibrahim, Hessa Al-Failakawi, Shahd Al-Mansour, Abdulaziz Al-Huwaidi, Mohammed Khalaf, and Youssef Al-Dosari.

Kuwait's delegation also took part in the team leaders' meeting, where Ali Al-Mari reviewed key organizational and technical matters to ensure

optimal preparation for competition. Al-Mari stressed that Kuwait's participation is an important step in strengthening its presence in continental competitions, noting that the appearance comes despite challenging circumstances and reflects the country's continued commitment to Asian sporting events.

He added that competing at this level offers valuable experience against Asia's top athletes, contributing to the

development of performance standards and long-term sporting growth in Kuwait.

Teqball athlete Salman Al-Ibrahim confirmed that training began immediately upon arrival in Sanya, with all athletes aiming for strong performances and competitive results across their events.

All Kuwaiti teams have now begun daily training sessions as schedules and venues have been finalized ahead of competition.

Organizers confirmed full readiness for the Games, the continent's leading beach sports event, with the opening ceremony set for the Tianya Haijiao Sunset Rock Theater under the theme "Meet With The Sea and Sky." The ceremony will feature three artistic segments showcasing Asia's cultural diversity and identity.

Advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, will be used to deliver a visually immersive experience blending real and virtual elements, highlighting the harmony between humans and nature.

The Asian Beach Games, organized by the Olympic Council of Asia, were first held in Bali in 2008, followed by Muscat (2010), Haiyang (2012), Phuket (2014), and Da Nang (2016). This edition marks the event's return after a 10-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Teqball team preparing for the games.



Kuwaiti officials attend press conference.

The Whites face stern Muras test

Kuwait Club looks to keep AFC Challenge League dream alive

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

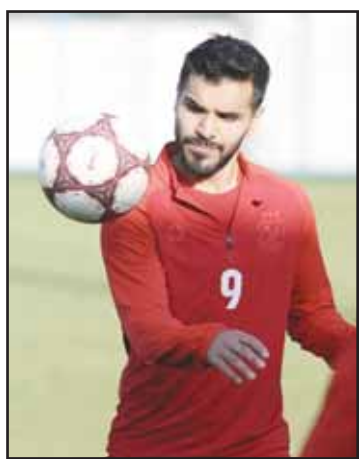
BISHKEK, April 21: Kuwait Club looks to keep its AFC Challenge League dream alive when it takes on Kyrgyz side Muras United at 5:00 PM today at Dolon Omurzakov Stadium in Bishkek, in the West Zone final.

The winner will advance to the tournament's final on May 9, where it will face Cambodia's Preah Khan Reach Svay Rieng, who secured the East Zone spot after a 4-1 aggregate win over the Philippines' Manila Digger.

Kuwait Club progressed after topping Group B with seven points, defeating Al-Ansar of Lebanon (3-2) and Bashundhara Kings of Bangladesh (2-0), alongside a 1-1 draw with Oman's Al-Seeb. It then edged past Al-Shabab of Oman 5-3 in the quarterfinals.

Muras United, meanwhile, finished top of Group C with five points, follows draws with Regar-

TadAZ of Tajikistan (0-0) and Al-Arabi of Kuwait (1-1), and a 2-0 win over Lebanon's Al-Safa. It carried that momentum into the quarterfinals with a commanding 3-0 victory over



Kuwait Club player steps up preparation for key clash.

Al-Ansar. "The Whites" face a demanding challenge, with Muras set to benefit from home support in Bishkek. However, Kuwait Club's strong continental pedigree – including three AFC Cup titles – could prove decisive in navigating the high-stakes encounter.

Under Montenegrin coach Nebojsa Jovic, Kuwait Club boasts a well-balanced squad filled with experienced locals and impactful foreign players, all aiming to end a 12-year wait for continental silverware, last achieved in the 2013-2014 AFC Cup campaign.

Muras, on the other hand, will seek to make the most of home advantage and continue its impressive run, hoping to emulate regional neighbor Arkadag, last year's champions.

It's confidence has been significantly boosted by the convincing win over Al-Ansar, widely regarded as one of the tournament favorites.

All eyes on Ronaldo as Al Nassr chases final spot against Al Ahli

DUBAI, April 21: Zabeel Stadium in Dubai hosts a major semifinal clash today as Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr takes on Qatar's Al Ahli in the AFC Champions League 2.

Al Nassr booked its place in the last four in commanding fashion, producing a dominant attacking display to defeat UAE side Al Wasl 4-0, reinforcing its credentials as strong contenders for the title.

Al Ahli reached the semifinals after a solid 3-1 victory over Jordan's Al Hussein Irbid, delivering a controlled performance.

The fixture also places Al Ahli in direct opposition to Cristiano Ronaldo's pursuit of a first continental title with Al Nassr. Since joining the Saudi club in early 2023, the Portuguese forward has delivered strong individual performances but has yet to claim a major trophy with the team, apart from the 2023 Arab Club Champions Cup.

At 41, Ronaldo remains central to Al Nassr's ambitions, with the club competing on multiple fronts, including a strong position in the Saudi Pro League, where they lead Al Hilal



AlNassr players led by Cristiano Ronaldo leave the pitch after beating Al Wasl.

by eight points and Al Ahli by ten with five rounds remaining.

Al Nassr impressed in the quarterfinals, scoring early and decisively against Al Wasl, netting three goals within the opening 26 minutes of a

4-0 victory.

The winner of today's semifinal will meet Japan's Gamba Osaka in the final on May 17. The Japanese side advanced after defeating Bangkok United 4-1 on aggregate.