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Kuwait PM chairs Supreme Petroleum Council
Page 4

HIGH SCHOOLS REBOOT CLASSROOM LIFE EFFECTIVE SUNDAY



Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

The GCC agreement: Much remains unfulfilled

ANYONE who reads the Charter of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) will find that the provisions of the final communiqué of the consultative summit held in Jeddah two days ago have been in place since 1980.

Therefore, the recommendations are not new, but rather long overdue. Logically, these steps – railways, electricity and water interconnection, joint oil pipeline, expediting the early warning system, intensifying military cooperation, and many other economic integration measures – are already enshrined in the Charter. So the question is, why has it been delayed for so long?

For 46 years, these countries have had ample time to work on integration in these areas, even when differences of opinion exist among members.

The goal is to achieve gains for the people, so political differences cannot preclude comprehensive development. The more positive commonalities, the stronger the cooperation in other areas becomes, which is the ultimate objective of the GCC.

Over the past four decades, the GCC has proven its resilience, based on its positive aspects.

Any delay in joint development projects is a step backward and contradicts the strategic stance maintained during the recent war in terms of dealing with the Iranian aggression.

This stance can be built upon in the future, especially given the several recent developments that cannot be ignored – from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz to the sectarian militias loyal to Iran that continue to attack some GCC member states.

Threats do not disappear, even if they subside for a time. Therefore, governments should not dismiss threats during periods of calm only to bring them back to the forefront when events unfold, as it happened in recent weeks.

Here we must speak frankly: the procrastination over these decades has led to disruptions that were long anticipated.

This is a negative point in the development decision-making process, which requires fewer summits of leaders and more of the daily

work of ministers and prime ministers, as it is a matter of fulfilling a duty, as stipulated in the GCC Charter.

In the recent war, the unthinkable happened: Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, impacting the oil industries of the GCC countries.

Disruptions also occurred in food supply chains and other essential goods. This test should be a crucial factor in the relentless effort to implement all pending projects among the GCC countries.

Moreover, it necessitates strengthening national security strategies – military, security, industrial and food-related.

The GCC states have several advantages that can be leveraged. Saudi Arabia overlooks numerous land and sea ports and covers an area exceeding two million square kilometers. Similarly, the United Arab Emirates and Oman have several sea ports. If these advantages are utilized properly, they will remarkably mitigate the impact of military and economic shocks.

Saudi Arabia proved its ability to secure supply chains for all GCC states during the recent war.

Here, we say better late than never. This applies to the GCC states today. They must begin implementing these programs immediately, or they will be delayed by differences of opinion that can be resolved among these brotherly nations.

They have weathered and passed many tests, from the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, through the events instigated by the Houthis, and up to the recent war.

All this experience can be built upon.

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Kuwait hits reset to full 'normalcy'

Hospitals revert to regular surgical rhythm

By Marwa Al-Bahawi
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Ministry of Health spokesman Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad announced the reinstatement of regular leave and full resumption of surgical procedures in all health facilities, effective Sunday.

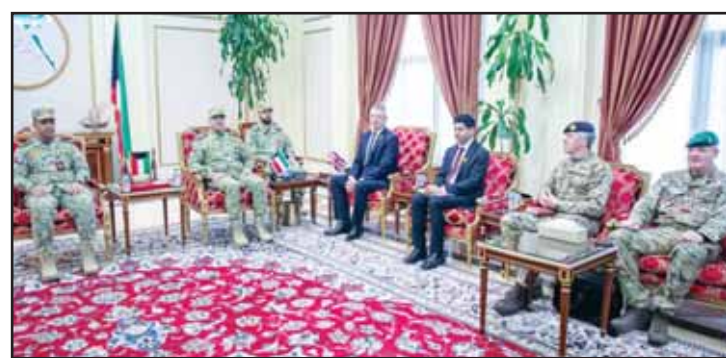
In a press statement, Al-Sanad affirmed that the full resumption of surgeries is in line with the approved

schedules and plans, reflecting the stability of performance indicators and the high efficiency of the health system.

He also emphasized the continuous close monitoring of operational indicators to ensure readiness levels are maintained, as well as the rapid response to any development.

He expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the medical and technical staff, who greatly contributed to the stability of the situation and ensuring the uninterrupted provision of health services as per the highest standards.

Continued on Page 5



UK Embassy photos
UK Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry Luke Pollard MP during high-level meetings in Kuwait

UK backs Kuwait's defence readiness in high-level visit

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: The British Embassy in Kuwait has welcomed UK Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry, Luke Pollard MP, on an official visit to the State of Kuwait, reaffirming the strength of the long-standing UK-Kuwait defence partnership and the United Kingdom's commitment to regional security. This is the second ministerial visit since the start of the crisis.

The Minister's visit comes at an important moment for Kuwait and the wider Gulf region. He welcomed the recent ceasefire agreement, noting that it brings a moment of relief to both the region and the international community, while underlining the continued importance of vigilance and preparedness.

During his visit, Minister Pollard expressed appreciation for Kuwait's leadership and the professionalism of its Armed Forces in safeguarding the country and the region. He also thanked Gulf



UK Minister Pollard, UK Ambassador Qudsi Rasheed with Commander Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah

partners for their role in protecting civilians, including British nationals residing in or transiting through the region.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait, Egypt fortify bilateral trade and investment relations

KUWAIT CITY, April 29, (KUNA): Minister of Commerce and Industry Osama Boodai discussed on Wednesday with Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait, Mohamed Abouelwafa, ways to enhance bilateral cooperation, particularly in the field of food security.

The Ministry of Commerce said in a statement to KUNA



MoCI photo
Minister of Commerce and Industry receives Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait.

Continued on Page 5

Kuwait condemns threats to submarine cables, data flow

GENEVA, April 29, (KUNA): Kuwait on Tuesday condemned what it described as blatant attacks carried out by Iran and its regional allies against the communications sector.

This came in a statement delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hain, before the Inter-

national Telecommunication Union (ITU) Council in Geneva.

Ambassador Al-Hain said such actions undermine state sovereignty and digital security, and called on countries to take a firm stance against threats to submarine internet cables that seek to impose a "comprehensive

Continued on Page 5

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

The student taught the arrogant professor the harshest lesson of his life

The professor told his assistant, "Bring us a bundle of grass, for we have a donkey in the lecture hall"

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Anything is possible as long as you do not carry the heart of a mouse

Do not oppose those with long experience in their profession, knowledge, or neighborhood

Kuwait spoils smugglers' hidden drug stash menu

KUWAIT CITY, April 29, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior foiled an attempt by a Gulf national to smuggle a large quantity of Captagon pills estimated at around half a million tablets.

The ministry represented by the General Department for Drug Control, announced on Wednesday, said in a press statement that the operation came within the framework of cooperation among Arab anti-narcotics agencies and ongoing coordination between the Criminal Security Office at the Embassy of Kuwait in Beirut and Lebanon's Central Anti-Narcotics Office.

It stressed that the shipment, which arrived through a maritime border port and was registered as food items, was tracked and found to contain psychotropic substances concealed in a sophisticated manner, leading to coordination with the General Administration of Customs to seize it.

The ministry also announced the arrest of the intended recipient, noting that around 500,000 Captagon pills were found inside the shipment, intended for trafficking.

The suspect and seized items have been referred to the competent authorities for legal action.

The Ministry of Interior affirmed its continued efforts to combat drug trafficking, enhance regional and international cooperation in pursuing smugglers, and enforce the law firmly to protect society from this serious threat.

Day by Day

SAUD Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, you were magnificent at the opening of your diwaniya, reflecting the noble character of your late father in welcoming visitors.

Saud, you have inherited the virtues of great men, and your diwaniya has carried the chivalry of your late father. Your diwaniya has always been a haven for men of noble character, deep respect, and genuine affection.

Saud, may God bless you. You have been a worthy successor to your late father.

Saud, all those who visited you at the opening of your diwaniya appreciated your warm welcome. Like father, like son.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar

Kuwait stands out with Expo Osaka design wins

KUWAIT CITY, April 29, (KUNA): Kuwait's pavilion at Expo Osaka 2025 has achieved a new international milestone by winning two awards at the globally renowned iF Design Award.

In remarks to KUNA, Assistant Undersecretary for Support Services at the Ministry of Information and Commissioner General of Kuwait at Expo Osaka 2025, Salem Al-Wotyan, said the pavilion's win came in two main categories, reflecting the integration between architectural design and communication content.

Continued on Page 5



Gulf Bank recognized by the International Business Magazine for Excellence in Corporate Banking and Customer Experience



KFH named World's Best Islamic Financial Institution by Global Finance

Booking frenzy hits Kuwait wedding halls

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Wedding hall bookings have seen a surge in demand, coinciding with the Ministry of Interior's announcement regarding the resumption of operations at public halls for events and occasions.

Continued on Page 5



Prayer Timings

Fajr	03:43	Asr	15:21
Sunrise	05:08	Maghrib	18:23
Zohr	11:45	Isha	19:46

'Cowardly act' to fortify US President's resolve

Air Force bases combat readiness, drones from Iraq discussed



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

PM Diwan photos

KUWAIT CITY, April 29, (KUNA): Kuwait's Cabinet condemned Tuesday the terrorist attack targeting the US President and Vice President last Saturday, noting that the "cowardly act" would further strengthen President Trump's determination to confront challenges in the service of the US.

This came in the Cabinet meeting, under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shereeda Al-Maousherji made the following statement:

Content

At the outset of the meeting, the Cabinet was briefed on the content of the phone call held on Monday between His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and US Vice President JD Vance, during which His Highness conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to US

President Donald Trump. His Highness affirmed Kuwait's leadership and the people's condemnation of the terrorist attack targeting the US President and Vice President last Saturday.

The call also reviewed the latest regional and international developments, including the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and its grave economic implications on maritime navigation, global trade, and energy supply security.

It further reviewed bilateral historical relations between Kuwait and the US, as well as cooperation in military and security fields, stressing the strength of the strategic alliance between the two friendly countries.

The Cabinet also heard a briefing from Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on the latest regional security developments and military updates in light of ongoing Iranian attacks on Kuwait.

The Minister also briefed the Cabinet on his inspection visit to several Air Force sites to assess operational readiness and combat preparedness, conveying greetings from His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, and the Prime Minister.

He further detailed the recent hostile attack targeting two northern border posts, carried out by explosive drones equipped with fiber-optic guidance systems launched from Iraq, which caused material damage without human casual-

ties. He said competent authorities immediately took necessary measures.

Efforts

The Cabinet expressed gratitude to several friendly and brotherly countries, Islamic, international, and regional organizations for their condemnation of the attack, reaffirming rejection of violations of Kuwait's sovereignty and solidarity with Kuwait in safeguarding its security and stability.

The Cabinet was also briefed on political and diplomatic efforts led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to follow up on regional and domestic developments.

It reviewed the outcomes of the Foreign Minister's official visit to Jordan on Sunday, where he met King Abdullah II and Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah II, conveying greetings from Kuwait's leadership and discussing bilateral relations and regional developments.

The Cabinet also reviewed the Foreign Minister's recent diplomatic contacts with counterparts in friendly and brotherly countries regarding regional developments and efforts to enhance security and stability.

In addition, the Cabinet was briefed on a visual presentation by Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Housing Affairs Abdul Latif Al-Mishari, in the presence of Kuwait Municipality Director General Manal Al-Asfour, on the

Fourth Structural Plan of Kuwait 2040, including development strategies across environmental, economic, sustainability, agricultural, industrial, tourism, energy, and ICT sectors.

The Cabinet tasked the Committee of the General Structural Plan and Urban Policies with following up on the implementation of the plan in coordination with relevant government entities.

In light of ongoing developments, the Cabinet reviewed reports on measures taken to raise government readiness to the highest level to ensure the safety of citizens and residents and secure essential needs amid regional military and security developments.

It also approved raising the attendance rate of government employees to 100 percent starting Sunday, May 3, 2026, and canceling previous Civil Service Bureau instructions limiting attendance, thereby restoring normal working hours, including evening shifts.

The Cabinet further approved the return of in-person schooling for secondary education students in all educational systems starting Sunday, May 3, 2026.

The Cabinet concluded by reviewing various agenda items, reports, and minutes, approving several and referring others to specialized ministerial committees for further study.

It affirmed that it remains in continuous session, given the rapid developments in the current circumstances.



Kuwait Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Bader Almunayekh hosts British Defense officials and many envoys from the GCC countries.

KUNA photo

Kuwait discusses ways to bolster GCC-UK defense ties

LONDON, April 29, (KUNA): The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the United Kingdom, Bader Almunayekh, received on Tuesday Minister of State for Defense Lord Vernon Coaker, Minister of the Armed Forces Alistair

Carns, senior officials of the UK Defense Ministry.

Several ambassadors of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries were present at the meeting, said the Kuwaiti Embassy in a press re-

lease.

The meeting witnessed a discussion on ways to bolster GCC-UK defense relations and also included praise for the strong historic ties between Kuwait and the UK, it added.

Gov't collects KD374mln from fines and penalties

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: The report on the budget for 2026/2027 fiscal year revealed that the total estimated revenues from fines, penalties and confiscations increased to KD374.610 million -- KD8.091 million higher than the KD366.519 million allocated in the last fiscal budget, with the aim of boosting the non-oil revenue streams of the country and achieve long-term financial stability.

The newspaper obtained a copy of the report, indicating that a large portion of the total revenues from this group are from the 'fines and penalties' category, which amounted to KD324.672 million -- KD200 million from traffic violations, KD47 million criminal fines and other fines amounting to KD72.258 million.

The 'confiscations' category recorded KD45 million related to the seizure of assets from money laundering and terrorism financing operations and KD47.638 million from confiscated guarantees, proving that the judicial system and national security requirements are balanced.

The report defined 'fines and penalties' as mandatory ongoing transfers ordered by the courts or judicial bodies due to violation of laws or administrative regulatory protocols, which include settlements that were finalized outside the judicial framework, in order to instill professional discipline.

Other Voices

The noble man Al-Masha'an

By Ahmad alsarraf

Sulaiman Al-Fahad Al-Masha'an and Abdul Latif Al-Thuwaini were among the citizens whose names were most closely associated with the citizenship file. Both represented the nation's collective memory in matters of national identity and lineage.

Al-Masha'an (Abu Musa'id) worked at the Ministry of Interior and played a major role in establishing and developing the General Directorate of Nationality, Passports, and Residency Affairs, eventually becoming its Director General. Later, he served as Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality and Passports Affairs.

A personal story about Abu Musa'id came to mind when I read the decree on the appointment of his son, Ambassador Hamad Al-Masha'an, as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Hamad Al-Masha'an played a major role in stopping the misappropriation of donation funds that were reportedly being spent abroad.

I was barely eighteen in 1962 when my father agreed to buy me a bright red Volkswagen Beetle.

I was standing in front of an ice cream shop on a side street off Fahad Al-Salem Street when a red Volkswagen pulled up beside me. Inside were four Europeans - two young men and two young women.

The driver asked me if I knew the address of a cheap hotel. I tried to tell them about a hotel I knew on the new street, but I failed.

I offered to host them at my parents' house in Kaifan, and told them they could sleep on the roof. They immedi-

ately agreed.

They had sleeping bags, and I spent a wonderful night with them. They told me about Swedish history.

They said they were on their way to Saudi Arabia to market financial bonds for a bank.

One week later, a British man came to the house. I do not know or remember how he found the address. He told me he needed my help. He said he had met the Swedish team in Riyadh and arranged for them to return to Kuwait in the same small Volkswagen.

He explained that they had encountered a serious problem. After crossing the Saudi border, they discovered that the Kuwaiti border that their visas were for single entry only, meaning they were not permitted to re-enter Kuwait. They had to return to Riyadh to obtain visas from the Kuwaiti embassy. They then went back to the Saudi border, but were denied entry because their Saudi visas were also single-entry.

They ended up spending the night in a dilapidated tent, along with the British man who refused to leave them, even though he was allowed to enter Kuwait without a visa.

They decided to ask him to contact me for help in getting into Kuwait.

They spent a difficult night in the buffer zone between the two border posts separating Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

I did not know how I could help them. I called my father, who told me to go and meet the late Sulaiman Al-Masha'an and introduce myself. Al-Masha'an welcomed us and contacted the border post, requesting that the Swedes be allowed entry and transferred to the Ahmadi passport office to process their visas.

Despite the border officer's objections, he insisted, and his request was granted. Abu Musa'id was a noble and decisive man.

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alsarraf

Kuwait Airways lands in Sudan

Khartoum now safe, ready to receive int'l flights: Balla

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Ambassador of the Republic of the Sudan to Kuwait, Awadelkarim Elrayah Balla, described the landing of the first Kuwait Airways flight at Khartoum International Airport yesterday after a period of suspension as a "historic milestone."

He expressed his delight at the occasion, saying, "The Blue Bird has returned to embrace the Blue Nile," a symbolic reference to the airport's location on the riverbank.

In a press statement, Ambassador Balla explained that this step sends a clear message that Khartoum is now safe and ready to receive international flights. The arrival of such a large civilian aircraft is practical proof of Khartoum International Airport's readiness and the gradual resumption of air traffic.

The ambassador expressed the deep gratitude of the Sudanese leadership and people to the State of Kuwait, praising Kuwait

Airways' role in transporting stranded Sudanese citizens, especially given the recent regional circumstances.

He affirmed that this step is an extension of the humanitarian and developmental support that Kuwait provides to Sudan.

Ambassador Balla indicated that the coming period may witness even greater cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the areas of air transport and trade.

He expressed his hope that Kuwait Airways would become a bridge for transporting Sudanese agricultural products to Kuwait, thus contributing to food security, taking advantage of the geographical proximity, which reduces flight time to no more than two hours and 25 minutes.

Ambassador Balla noted that the Sudanese community in Kuwait, estimated at around 40,000 people, represents an important pillar in strengthening bilateral relations, pointing to its diverse professional composition, including medical and educational personnel and skilled laborers.

The ambassador thanked the relevant Kuwaiti authorities, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the Public Authority for Civil Aviation, for their support of this initiative.



Ambassador Balla

United Arab effort vital to face digital challenges

TUNIS, April 29, (KUNA): The General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers announced on Wednesday the organization of a workshop on mechanisms for security and information awareness in the digital space.

In a statement, the Secretariat said the workshop comes amid the growing influence of the digital space and the rapid flow of information, underscoring the importance of security media awareness as a first line of defense to safeguard societies and enhance the readiness of security institutions to address evolving digital challenges.

The workshop was held via video-conference in cooperation with Egypt's Ministry of Interior, with the participation of officials from security media departments in interior ministries of Kuwait, Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, and Yemen, it added.

Director of the Arab Office for Security Awareness, Media and Human Rights Hisham Taher stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation among Arab interior ministries in media and information awareness.

He noted the need to continuously develop security media tools to keep pace with these challenges, enhance effective communication with the public, and reinforce societal awareness and trust between security institutions and communities.

The workshop concluded with several recommendations focusing on strengthening joint Arab security cooperation, exchanging expertise, and developing security media tools in awareness fields, to support building informed societies capable of confronting digital challenges.



Farwaniya Governorate photo Governor of Farwaniya Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah with the guests.

Gov. role in agri development projects wins PAAAFR praise

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Governor of Farwaniya Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah met with Director General of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Salem Al-Hay at his office on Wednesday. Director of the Implementation Department at PAAAFR Ayman Al-Habashi and Head of the Control Section Hamad Al-Dalal accompanied Al-Hay.

During the meeting, they discussed aspects of joint cooperation and ways to implement agricultural projects in the gov-

ernorate, as well as intensifying field efforts to improve services and ensure compliance with the regulations and requirements.

Both sides emphasized the importance of strengthening coordination among relevant authorities and working as a unified team in the interest of the public.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Al-Hay expressed his appreciation for the commitment of the Governor in supporting governmental efforts and overcoming challenges in the completion of development projects.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



The student taught the arrogant professor the harshest lesson of his life

THE professor used to mock his students frequently. One day he asked a student, "How many kidneys do we have?"

The student answered, "Four." The professor looked at him condescendingly, then called his assistant, saying, "Bring us a bundle of grass, for we have a donkey in the lecture hall."

The student, looking at the teaching assistant, said, "Bring me a cup of coffee with the grass."

The professor became furious and ordered the student to be expelled from the room. As he reached the door, the student stopped, turned back, and calmly said to the professor, "You asked me how many kidneys we have, didn't you?"

The professor replied, "Yes." The student explained that "we have" meant both the student and the professor together, so they had a total of four kidneys. He then continued, "I hope you enjoy eating the grass you ordered, while I go drink my coffee."

The student left medical school and never returned. He went on to work in media, eventually becoming the most famous satirist in Brazilian history, known as "Baron de Itare."

True intelligence lies in quick response and the ability to counter arrogance with one's own linguistic tools.

* * *

These rulers terrified Europe

Do you know which rulers Europe resented for centuries?

- Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror - He

• The professor told his assistant, "Bring us a bundle of grass, for we have a donkey in the lecture hall"

• The student told the assistant, "Bring me a cup of coffee with the grass"

• The student: "You asked me how many kidneys we have, didn't you? and I said four"

• The student: "We mean you and I, doesn't it?"

• He became the most famous satirist in Brazilian history

• Rulers who terrified Europe included Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, Suleiman the Magnificent and Saladin

• Tariq ibn Ziyad brought Islam into the heart of Europe

• Anything is possible as long as you do not carry the heart of a mouse

• Do not oppose those with long experience in their profession, knowledge, or neighborhood.

crushed the dreams of Constantinople and brought down the Byzantine Empire. Europe trembled when he conquered Otranto. He was on his way to conquer Italy when he died suddenly in 1481. Europe celebrated as if it had been saved from a great flood.

- Suleiman the Magnificent - He defeated Hungary and besieged Vienna, and Europe saw in his shadow the end of its security. He died before the walls of Szigetvár Castle in Hungary, and Europe celebrated the end of the threat to Vienna.

- Saladin - He liberated Jerusalem from the Europeans and shattered the myths of the Crusades. He fell ill after a long struggle, and Europe celebrated news of his passing.

- Tariq ibn Ziyad - He brought Islam into the heart of Europe and defeated the Visigoth armies in Andalusia. He later faded into historical obscurity after a glorious legacy, and Europe breathed a sigh of relief.

These figures are long gone, but they left an enduring imprint on Europe's memory and a lasting legacy of glory.

* * *

The frightened mouse and the magician

An Indian legend tells of a mouse who was constantly in distress because of his fear of cats. A magician took pity on him and transformed him into a cat, but he then became afraid of dogs. The magician transformed him into a dog, and he began to fear tigers.

The magician transformed him into a tiger, and his heart filled with fear of hunters. At this point, the magician gave up and returned him to his original form as a mouse, saying, "It won't help you."

Anything is possible as long as you do not carry the heart of a mouse. If you want to change, you must begin with your heart.

Beware of these:

- Do not engage in disputes with the young, the newly rich, or the newly powerful.
- Do not oppose those with long experience in their profession, knowledge, or neighborhood.
- Do not slander those of pure honor, reputation, and integrity.
- Do not flatter those of little intellect, experience, or goodness.
- Do not challenge those with strong faith, physical strength, or strong memory.
- Do not consult those of weak character, weak spirit, or weak argument.
- Do not bypass those of great heart, high ambition, and punctuality.
- Do not forget those of broad vision, patience, and resourcefulness.
- Do not try to persuade those of narrow character, limited perspective, or narrow thinking.
- Do not argue with those of little intellect, little age, or little experience.

•••••

Such is life. We crave and desire money while we are poor. After we acquire wealth, other desires arise. This is not the path for everyone.

•••••

O' Kuwait Municipality, please provide more opportunities for industrial and agricultural plots so that beneficiaries can take advantage of the available opportunities. Do not pay attention to the envious. Grant freedom to utilize the plots and impose taxes in return.

•••••

A wise man was asked, "How old are you?" He replied, "I am healthy."

He was asked if he was rich, and he replied, "I am not in debt."

He was asked if he had enemies, and he replied, "I live far from my relatives."

•••••

Life offers three choices - agree, be hypocritical, or leave. Choose whatever you want, but avoid the second option.

Sports federation heads fined in leave pay misappropriation

Pay daughter's rent, court tells father

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: The Criminal Court, headed by Judge Nayef Al-Dahoum, imposed a fine of KD3,000 on each of the current and former heads of a sports federation, a female athlete, and two female administrators after convicting them of misappropriating around KD30,000 in sports leave salaries, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The case is about the payment of sports leave salaries to the defendants despite the evidence that they did not engage in any sports activities or official duties during the relevant period, which the court classified as misappropriation of public funds.

It is worth mentioning that the defendants returned the misappropriated sums during the investigation of the Public Prosecution, a factor the court took into account when it issued its ruling.

The court had earlier annulled the decision of



Al-Dahoum

the prosecution to close the case and ordered referral of the defendants for trial, leading to the conviction of the defendants and the imposition of fines.

•••••

'Pay daughter's rent':

The Court of Appeals has ordered a man to pay his adult working daughter's rent after ruling that he had abandoned his parental responsibilities and left her to bear life's burdens alone.

In its ruling, the court explained that the father had relinquished his paternal role by compelling his daughter to work under difficult conditions in order to meet her basic needs. He forced her to leave the family home and live independently, despite her limited monthly income of KD 720.

According to the ruling, the daughter is required to pay KD 220 in rent, in addition to KD 247 in monthly car installments, leaving her with insufficient income to cover her basic living expenses.

The court directly addressed the father in its decision, emphasizing that the circumstances of the

case lacked any legal or reasonable justification.

•••••

Rulings on libel lawsuits: The Court of Appeals (State Security Circuit), presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Sanea, issued rulings on a number of online defamation and insulting HH the Amir cases.

In the first case, the court overturned the six-month prison sentence, KD3,000 bail and KD1,000 fine imposed on Fadel Al-Dabbous for insulting officials at the Central Agency for Remediating the Illegal Resident Status (CARIRS).

The court upheld his acquittal of spreading false news in another case.

In the second case, the court overturned the acquittal of a citizen and sentenced him to four years in prison for insulting HH the Amir and promoting the ideology of the Houthi movement, 'Ansar Allah', on social media.

His acquittal of committing a hostile act against the Gulf states was upheld.

In the third case, the court overturned the acquittal of another citizen and sentenced him to two years in prison with a three-year suspension of the implementation of the sentence for insulting the position of the Emirate in Waha region and assaulting an expatriate despite the latter's prior waiver, which has been accepted by the Criminal Court.

Iranians face noose in drug peddling

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: The Court of Appeals, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Sanea, with Judges Saud Al-Mutairi and Bassam Al-Ghunaim as members, upheld the death sentence imposed on three Iranians who attempted to smuggle more than 120 kilograms of hashish and 10,000 psychotropic pills.

Coast Guard personnel apprehended them near Kubbar Island, in coordination with the

Drug Control General Department, which conducted investigations. It was revealed that three Iranians on board a boat were found in the possession of the abovementioned narcotic substances. They were planning to put the drugs near Kubbar Island.

During the investigation, the defendants confessed they were supposed to receive KD10,000 each, after coordinating with an individual who agreed to pay such amount. However, they were caught in a well-planned entrapment and failed to smuggle the drugs.

MoJ forms committees to verify lineage claim

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Minister of Justice Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait issued two ministerial decrees - 256/2026 and 257/2026 - regarding the formation of the Lineage and Name Correction Claims Committee and its corresponding Grievance Committee, for a one-year term starting from the date of issuance of the decrees, in addition to the work of the original members.

Decree No. 256/2026 stipulated the appointment of Deputy Judge at the Court of First Instance, Judge Ahmad Al-Omar, as Chairman of the committee, and First-Class Judge, Judge Mishari Al-Buajjan, as a member, to serve on the Lineage and Name Correction Claims Committee.

Decree No. 257/2026 stipulated the formation of the Grievance Committee, with Deputy Judge at the Court of Appeal, Counselor Waleed bin Nasser, as Chairman, and Deputy Judge at the Court of First Instance, Judge Yousef Al-Asousi, and Head of Prosecution (B), Abdullah Abdulaziz Rashid Al-Mulla, as members.

The two decrees were issued after reviewing the laws regulating the civil service and the judiciary, and Decree-Law No. 53/2026 concerning the regulation of procedures for lineage and name correction claims, and based on the approval of the Supreme Judicial Council in its session held on April 14, 2026.

Court upholds KD 30,000 comp in fraud case from behind bars

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling issued by the Court of First Instance's Commercial Civil Circuit, Government 17, which obligated an individual and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, in his official capacity, to jointly pay compensation of KD 30,000 to a Kuwaiti woman for material and moral damages she suffered as a result of fraud committed while the defendant was incarcerated, reports Al-Rai daily.

During the court session, Lawyer Abdulmohsen Al-Qattan, representing the Kuwaiti woman, presented detailed legal arguments along with comprehensive documentation, including criminal judgments, prosecution investigations, and official certificates from relevant authorities confirming the defendant's liability.

He said the defendant had defraud-

ed his client of KD 25,000 by falsely claiming he could allocate her a state-owned plot, despite being in prison at the time of the crime.

The court explained that the defendant's commission of the crime from within his cell demonstrated a clear deficiency in oversight procedures within the correctional facility.

The defendant's ability to obtain a mobile phone and use it to commit the crime constituted a clear violation of prison regulations and revealed negligence in the performance of supervisory duties, thereby establishing the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior.

The court ruled that the defendant and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, in his official capacity, must jointly pay the awarded compensation.

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Kuwait urges stronger FAO role in safeguarding global food security

Draft resolution unanimously approved

KUWAIT CITY, April 29, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait on Tuesday stressed the essential role of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in safeguarding global food security and promoting sustainable international supplies amid ongoing world challenges.

This came in an address delivered by Kuwaiti Ambassador in Rome Nasser Al-Qahtani during the 180th Session of the FAO Council at the organization's headquarters in Rome to address the impacts of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz on regional and world countries, according to a Kuwait Embassy release.

Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Jordan submitted a draft resolution to the FAO Council during the session regarding the reflections of supply chain disruptions arising from the closure of maritime corridors and relevant impacts on regional and



KUNA photo
Kuwait's Ambassador to Rome, Nasser Al-Qahtani, during his chairmanship of the Kuwaiti delegation at the FAO session.

global food security.

Speaking during the meeting, the Kuwaiti ambassador said that this session came under critical circumstances involving serious disruptions to food and energy supply chains owing to the disruption of maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

He underlined that these repercussions affect not only the Gulf countries but also global food security across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The ambassador reiterated his country's vehement condemnation of the heinous Iranian attacks targeting Kuwait, GCC countries and Jordan, and the ensuing direct menace to international maritime security and the safety of supply chains.

He denounced such actions as constituting a flagrant violation of international law and undermining international efforts extorted to maintain market stability and ensure global food security.

The draft resolution was unanimously approved by the 49 FAO Council member countries during the FAO Council session.



PM Diwan photo
His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, Prime Minister, chairs the 130th meeting of the Supreme Petroleum Council.

Kuwait PM chairs Supreme Petroleum Council

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, chaired Wednesday the 130th meeting of the Supreme Petroleum Council. The Council reviewed agenda

items, including Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) projects, related strategies, and heard a briefing on implications of the United Arab Emirates' exit from OPEC and OPEC+. (KUNA)

Committee adopts updated specifications

Council sets stricter standards for private hospitals

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Head of the Technical Committee at the Municipal Council, Munira Al-Amir, affirmed that the committee is committed to developing regulatory frameworks that meet the needs of the state, particularly in vital sectors such as health, infrastructure, and logistics, thereby enhancing quality of life and reinforcing the principles of sustainable development.

In a press statement issued on the sidelines of the committee meeting on Tuesday, Al-Amir explained that the committee approved Schedule No. 10 concerning the requirements and specifications for private sector hospital buildings in various areas of Kuwait. This step aims to regulate the sector more precisely and professionally.

The system provides a clear definition of private hospital buildings, whether general or specialized, and outlines licensing procedures through coordination with relevant authorities, primarily the Ministry of Health, the Urban Planning Department, and the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF),



Al-Amir

ensuring the integration of health, technical, and safety aspects.

The new requirements focus on organizing spaces to ensure operational efficiency and service quality. A minimum hospital area has been set, varying according to whether it is multi-specialty or specialized, with the area increased if staff accommodation is included within the project. The regulations also emphasize prohibiting the establishment of hospitals in private and model residential areas to maintain urban balance and prevent conflicts between land uses.

The system addresses engineering aspects in detail by regulating building ratios and heights in line with the nature of healthcare activities, while exempting certain vital spaces such as basements, technical services, and corridors from building ratios.

Limited commercial spaces are permitted within the hospital to support ancillary services such as pharmacies and cafeterias, subject to strict controls to ensure the commercial aspect does not overshadow the healthcare function.

Al-Amir stressed that the regulations place significant emphasis on providing parking spaces within the plot boundaries, based on criteria related to the number of beds or rooms, to help reduce congestion.

She affirmed that the new system reflects the Municipal Council's commitment to implementing the highest standards of inclusivity by ensuring that hospital designs comply with the Kuwait Code for Accessibility for People with Disabilities, in addition to strict adherence to safety requirements issued by KFF.

Al-Amir highlighted that the committee approved the Ministry of Health's request to reallocate the site of the Sulaibiya Youth Camp to become a specialized healthcare facility for receiving and treating addiction patients, in accordance with the Cabinet's decision.

Kuwait deploys 64 Hajj caravans, nine entities

By Mohammad Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: The Ministry of Islamic Affairs announced that 64 Hajj caravans and nine government entities, including public benefit associations dedicated to serving pilgrims, will take part in the Hajj season this year (1447 AH).

The participating bodies include the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Health and Information, in addition to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Kuwait Fire Force (KFF), Public Authority for Youth (PAY), and Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN).

The ministry also confirmed the allocation of communication channels to assist the pilgrims, such as WhatsApp contact numbers available daily from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm and from 3:00 pm until midnight, as well as the 24-hour emergency hotline for the Kuwaiti Consulate.

It added that the headquarters of the mission in Makkah, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is situated in the Al-Naseem district at the Four Points Hotel, behind Al-Rajhi Mosque, to ensure ease of access and the provision of on-site services for pilgrims.

Two-week compliance deadline set

PAI issues warning to Murghab investors over safety breaches

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 27: The Public Authority for Industry (PAI) issued an official warning to investors operating in Murghab Industrial Area, specifically in Souq Al-Saffarin.

This measure is in line with efforts to maintain, develop and renovate the market.

According to a statement released by PAI on Monday, several violations were uncovered like the storage of prohibited materials, accumulation of debris and other infractions on shop rooftops, all

of which contravene regulatory requirements.

Shop owners were instructed to remove all non-compliant items and waste, and to regularize their premises within a two-week period from the date of the issuance of the warning.

PAI emphasized that failure to comply within the specified timeframe will result in enforcement action, whereby, it will proceed to remove the violations at its discretion. In such instances, it will not bear any legal liability, and shop owners will lose entitlement to compensation once the deadline ends.

All insurance cash deals now prohibited

IRU finalizes digital payment shift

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Head of the Insurance Regulatory Unit, Mohammed Al-Otaibi, stated that the decision to ban cash transactions in all insurance policies is in line with the state's drive towards digital transformation and aims to solidify the principles of transparency and governance by regulating payment and collection processes, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

In a press statement issued on Wednesday, Al-Otaibi clarified that implementing the ban will contribute to raising the level of oversight of financial flows, enhancing the protection of policyholders' and beneficiaries' rights, and improving the efficiency and speed of insurance transactions.

He emphasized the importance of compliance by all entities under the Insurance Regulatory Unit's supervision, noting the unit's continued commitment to developing and supporting the sector's sustainability and strengthening confidence in it, in line with best global practices and serving the national economy.

The Insurance Regulatory Unit had previously issued a decision prohibiting any cash transactions in insurance operations in all entities under its supervision.

Payment and collection processes must be conducted exclusively through electronic and banking channels approved by the Central Bank of Kuwait, with the exception of individual policies issued at border crossings for insuring non-Kuwaiti vehicles entering the State of Kuwait.

The decision aims to strengthen oversight of the insurance sector, enhance efforts to combat financial crimes and money laundering, deter any attempts to manipulate or conceal the sources of funds, and support the efforts of other regulatory bodies, most notably the Central Bank of Kuwait, which is responsible for protecting the national economy.

It is worth noting that this decision is the fourth regulating payment and collection processes in the insurance sector and an extension of the unit's efforts to reduce cash transactions.

The unit issued Decision No. 9/2020, which prohibited the collection of cash payments related to mandatory vehicle insurance policies, followed by Decision No. 57/2023, which prohibited cash transactions in life insurance and savings plans.

It then issued Decision No. 19/2025, which prohibited cash transactions in the issuance of other mandatory insurance policies.

Finally, Decision No. 32/2026 was issued, which completely prohibits cash transactions in all insurance policies.



Al-Otaibi



Weekdays (Saturday - Wednesday)		Price
One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast		BHD 53.361 / Net
One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast		BHD 119.173 / Net
Weekends (Thursday & Friday)		Price
One night stay in a Queen Bed Cabana for 2 persons with inclusive of Breakfast		BHD 61.000
One night stay in a Two Bedroom Chalet for 4 persons inclusive of Breakfast		BHD 136.198 / Net

Terms & conditions apply

Clergy and diplomats unite for Middle East stability

Ecumenical gathering for peace brings together leaders in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: On Tuesday, April 28, an emotional ecumenical prayer gathering for peace in Kuwait and across the Middle East, held at the Catholic Church, Holy Family Co-Cathedral in Kuwait City, brought together religious leaders from the various Christian churches and denominations present in the country.

The event was attended by numerous ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps from different nations, including the Apostolic Nuncio of the Vatican, Archbishop His Grace Eugene Nugent. Together, they joined Bishop Aldo Berardi, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia, who presided over the gathering, "Prayer for the Land of Goodness – State of Kuwait," in a united plea for the precious gift of peace.

"We lift our hearts to God at a time when wounds are many and cries of pain are rising in our region, in the Middle East," Bishop Aldo declared. Reflecting on the Gospel of the Sermon on the Mount, he emphasized that "to be peacemakers sometimes means going against the current, choosing dialogue when division prevails, and sowing hope when despair spreads."



Photos by Rezk Tawfiq

Bishop Aldo Berardi and Archbishop Eugene Nugent lead a diverse assembly of clergy, diplomats, and citizens in a symbolic prayer for regional peace and stability at Kuwait's Holy Family Co-Cathedral.

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait hits

Meanwhile, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced Wednesday the resumption of normal official working hours in all government entities at full 100 percent workforce, starting on Sunday, as per the decision of the Council of Ministers.

In a statement on the 'X' platform, the CSC disclosed that during its meeting on Tuesday, the Cabinet issued a directive on raising workforce capacity to full attendance effective May 3, thereby, restoring normal working hours without reductions, along with the resumption of evening shifts.

It added that a circular was issued Wednesday to all government entities about the return to full workforce level, reinstatement of evening work systems and resumption of standard official hours, including the seven-hour morning work schedule.

It stated that the circular mandates full compliance with the CSC regulations on official work, along with the amendments, and suspends the directives issued previously under the exceptional regional circumstances.

It indicated that the circular also cancels post-Ramadan working hour adjustments and any provision conflicting with the Cabinet decision, reaffirming the full return to regular official work system in government bodies.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education affirmed its readiness to resume in-person learning at all high schools (Grades 10, 11 and 12) starting May 3.

In a press statement, the ministry pointed out this step is in compliance with the decision of the Cabinet based on a comprehensive plan for the safe and regular resumption of in-person classes in high schools.

The ministry added that it will soon announce the organizational and administrative aspects of the resumption of in-person learning, along with an integrated plan for all academic levels, taking into consideration the current circumstances and whatever was achieved during the online classes.

This is within the preparedness framework of the ministry, confirming the field and technical readiness, as well as the commitment to ensure an organized resumption of in-person learning at high schools in the interest of the students and to guarantee the provision a safe and stable educational environment.

The ministry urged the parents and educational and administrative staff to closely follow up decisions and instructions through the official channels and avoid rumors or inaccurate information.

It affirmed that it is working hard to make plans compatible with the nature of transition phases through the development of evaluation mechanisms and educational support programs.

Earlier, the Cabinet decided to resume in-person education at high schools effective Sunday, after the suspension of almost two months due to security and military developments in the country and the entire region.

UK backs

The Minister emphasised that the United Kingdom continues to work closely with Kuwaiti partners on a daily basis - sharing expertise, delivering training, and supporting efforts to strengthen Kuwait's defence capabilities.

This cooperation includes the deployment of advanced systems such as Rapid Sentry and ORCUS, which enhance Kuwait's ability to detect and respond to drone and missile threats, helping to protect its airspace and critical national infrastructure. In addition, UK Air Battlespace Managers have been deployed to support airspace deconfliction during periods of heightened activity, while UK counter-drone specialists continue to provide training across the Kuwaiti Armed Forces.

These efforts build on a deep-rooted defence relationship. The British Military Mission has been present in Kuwait since 1992, working side by side with the Kuwaiti Armed Forces in advisory and training roles that continue to strengthen operational capability and interoperability.

During his visit, Minister Pollard held a series of high-level engagements with senior Kuwaiti officials. At Bayan Palace, he met with Kuwait's Minister of Defence, H.E. Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, alongside the Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces, H.E. Lieutenant General Khaled Saad Al-Shurraan, and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defence, H.E. Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Mubarak Al-Sabah. Discussions focused on strengthening bilateral defence cooperation and addressing shared security challenges.

The Minister also met with senior defence and security officials, the Commander of the Air Force, Brigadier General Nasser Abdullah Al-Sharidah, and the Chief of Armament and Procurement Authority, Brigadier General Sheikh Khalifah Al-Sabah, as well as the Director of Foreign Procurement, Colonel Sheikh Faisal Al-Sabah.

As part of his visit, Minister Pollard visited the Kuwait National Guard, where he met the Undersecretary, H.E. Lieutenant General Hamad Salem Al-Barjas, and the Kuwait Coast Guard, where he met the Director General, H.E. Commodore Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, highlighting the breadth of UK-Kuwait cooperation across defence and security institutions.

Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry Luke Pollard MP said: "Kuwait is a valued partner and this visit has reaffirmed the strength of our defence cooperation.

"From Rapid Sentry and ORCUS protecting Kuwait's skies, to our Air Battlespace Managers and counter-drone specialists working side by side with Kuwaiti forces, this is a partnership that delivers every day."

"I am proud of the role UK personnel have played alongside our Kuwaiti partners in protecting civilians and supporting Kuwait's security during a period of real threat to the region. The ceasefire brings relief, but our commitment to Kuwait's security endures."

British Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, H.E. Mr Qudsi Rasheed OBE said:

"This visit builds on a series of recent UK defence engagements in Kuwait and reflects a partnership that has spanned decades. We are grateful to our Kuwaiti partners for their professionalism and close cooperation - from training to providing systems like the Rapid Sentry - as we work side by side to support Kuwait's security and stability. The UK stands firmly alongside Kuwait."

UK Defence Attache, Captain Neil Marriott (Royal Navy) stated:

"This visit reflects the importance of continued cooperation on defence readiness and defence industry partnership between the UK and Kuwait."

The visit also included engagements with UK personnel deployed in Kuwait, where the Minister paid tribute to their contribution alongside Kuwaiti forces in protecting civilians and critical infrastructure during recent missile and drone threats prior to the ceasefire.

The United Kingdom and Kuwait continue to share a strong and enduring partnership, rooted in decades of cooperation and a shared commitment to regional peace, security, and stability.

Booking frenzy

The Ministry of Social Affairs revealed that the number of booking requests has exceeded 1,000 for the next three months.

Fayez Al-Daihani, Director of the Women, Children, and Community Development Department at the ministry, stated that preparations to receive bookings began last Sunday, with efforts made to ensure the halls are fully ready.

He noted that demand has been exceptionally high since reservations opened.

Al-Daihani pointed out that more than 20 halls are available for booking through the "Munasebat" program and the Sahel application, indicating that the ministry is in the process of adding a large number of halls within the next two weeks in all governorates of Kuwait.

He highlighted the coordination and cooperation with the Kuwait Fire Force to issue the necessary licenses, in addition to collaboration with relevant departments within the ministry and other government institutions.

Kuwait condemns

digital blockade" endangering global information flows and business activity.

Al-Hain stressed in his remarks that Kuwait and countries of the region have invested billions in building digital bridges linking East and West, reaffirming their categorical rejection of turning the communications sector into a tool for political pressure or digital coercion.

He warned that Iranian attacks not only undermine development but also violate state sovereignty and digital security, in addition to threatening vital

maritime routes, particularly the Strait of Hormuz.

The ambassador noted that Kuwait's position stems from the principles of the ITU constitution and related regulations, particularly Article 37, which obliges states to prevent harmful cross-border interference, the principle of due diligence requiring states to ensure their territories are not used to harm others' sovereignty, and Article 40, which prioritizes the protection of essential services.

He further noted that the GCC and Jordan's submission of the draft resolution comes amid the escalation of threats targeting digital infrastructure in several regional countries.

Kuwait, Egypt

that the meeting reviewed prospects for developing relations between Kuwait and Egypt across trade, economic, industrial, and investment sectors, in a manner that serves the shared interests of the two brotherly countries.

Both sides explored opportunities to strengthen cooperation and expand partnerships across various vital sectors, with a view to boosting trade exchange and supporting development paths, it added.

The ministry noted that the meeting comes within Kuwait's keenness to strengthen relations with brotherly countries and promote cooperation across all fields.

Kuwait stands

He noted that the pavilion won in the Interior Architecture for Exhibitions category, which focuses on spatial design, visitor experience, interaction, and journey flow within the pavilion, while the second award was in the Media Content and Storytelling category, which accompanies the visitor experience.

Al-Wotyan noted that the dual achievement underscores the pavilion's distinction in both architectural design and communication approach.

He added that the achievement reflects Kuwait's advanced position in design and innovation at the international level.

Expo 2025 Osaka officially opened to the public on April 13, 2025, and ran for six months until October 13, 2025, with participation from 158 countries and regions, including Kuwait.

The event, held under the theme "Designing Future Society for Our Lives," took place on the artificial island of Yumeshima in Osaka Bay, western Japan.

Elections on hold

Charity boards 'reconstituted'

By Fares Ghaleb

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: In a strategic move to strengthen the institutional governance capacity of the Ministry of Social Affairs and ensure the stability of civil society operations, the ministry intends to hold the general assemblies of public benefit associations whose boards of directors have completed their terms and are to be reconstituted by acclamation, say reliable sources.

Sources clarified that associations requiring elections will not hold their general assemblies during the current phase. They said the final decision concerning these associations will be issued later, in coordination with the competent authorities.

Sources added the procedures for appointing boards of directors for public benefit associations exempted from elections due to acclamation are expected to be completed in the coming period, in a manner that ensures full compliance within the regulatory frameworks.



الشركة العمالية للطاقة (ش.م.ك.م.)
Action Energy Company (K.S.C.C)

Reminder Announcement Invitation to Attend Ordinary General Assembly Meeting of Action Energy Company

The Board of Directors of Action Energy Company is pleased to invite the esteemed shareholders to attend the Ordinary General Meeting, scheduled to be held at 2:00 PM on Thursday, 7 May 2026, the meeting will be held either through physical attendance and voting at the Company's headquarters located at: Al-Asimah, Kuwait Free Zone, Block 1, Plot No. 4D, First Floor, P.O. Box 3866, Safat 13039, Kuwait, or through attendance, participation, and voting via the electronic system, in accordance with the policies and procedures manual for general assemblies through the electronic systems approved by Kuwait Clearing Company, and in line with the decisions and regulations issued by the competent regulatory authorities.

The right to attend and vote at the Ordinary General Meeting shall be granted to shareholders whose names are registered in the Company's records as of Monday, 27/04/2026 (Record Date). Please note that the last date to purchase shares entitling the shareholder to attend and vote at the meeting is Wednesday, 22/04/2026. The meeting will consider the items listed on the agenda.

To review the agenda, please visit the Company's website:
www.actionenergykw.com

Shareholders wishing to attend are kindly requested to contact the Company at Tel: 22247533 Ext. 7305 to collect the invitation and agenda, starting from Monday, 27/04/2026, during official working hours from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Board of Directors

INTERNATIONAL

King Charles III and Queen Camilla visit 9/11 Memorial, other NYC landmarks

NEW YORK, April 29, (AP) — King Charles III and Queen Camilla are headed to New York on Wednesday as part of their closely watched diplomatic visit to the US.

The royal couple's swing through the city comes midway through a four-day trip marking 250 years of American independence. It will be the first trip to New York by a reigning British monarch since Queen Elizabeth II visited in 2010.

They are expected to take part in a wreath-laying ceremony at the National 9/11 Memorial, where they will meet with first responders and the families of victims of the Sept 11 attacks. New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani and other dignitaries are also expected to attend the ceremony, which comes ahead of the 25th anniversary of the attacks.

The queen is then scheduled to visit the New York Public Library, where she'll deliver a new "Roo" doll to add to the library's famed collection of Winnie-the-Pooh stuffed animals, as the beloved children's character turns 100 this year.

The five dolls currently on display — Winnie-the-Pooh, Piglet, Tigger, Eeyore and Kanga — were the inspiration for the characters in A.A. Milne's children's books. They were owned by the English author's son, the real-life Christopher Robin, in the 1920s. The dolls were donated to the library in 1987 and are a centerpiece of the library's collection of children's literature. Roo, in the books, was a small brown kangaroo and son of Kanga.

The king, meanwhile, was expected to visit an after-school, urban farming effort that works with young people affected by food insecurity, as well as meet later with business and financial leaders in Manhattan.

The royal couple are then expected to attend a reception for the King's Trust, a charity Charles founded in 1976.

The four-day trip is Charles' first state visit to the US since he became king. His mother, Queen Elizabeth II, made four state visits to the US.

Monday, the king and queen joined President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump for tea at the White

House.

King Charles III marked the 250th anniversary of American independence from Britain with gratitude that the two countries united to build "one of the most consequential alliances in human history" while urging "that we ignore the clarion calls to become ever more inward-looking."

Speaking Tuesday to a joint session of the US Congress, Charles repeatedly highlighted the historical and cultural ties that he said have cemented an enduring bond between the United States and the United Kingdom. But even as he spoke in unifying, optimistic terms, he delivered a series of nuanced warnings encouraging leaders in the US to remain collaborative and engaged in global affairs.

He said the alliance between the US and the UK, tested anew by Trump's war in Iran, "cannot rest on past achievements." Charles urged "unyielding resolve" in backing Ukraine against Russia and heralded the NATO alliance that Trump has consistently undermined.



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump greet Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla at the South Portico of the White House as they arrive for a State Dinner on April 28, in Washington. (AP)

California candidates for gov tangle in messy TV debate

LOS ANGELES, April 29, (AP) — Eight candidates running to become governor of California lobbed heated criticism at each other Tuesday in a chaotic televised debate filled with interruptions, tense exchanges and verbal detours — even at times from moderators.



Bianco

The unruly format underscored the instability in a crowded race that has no clear leader, with mail ballots going to voters in less than a week.

Candidates sparred over questions ranging from how to cut gas prices to potential state charges against federal immigration agents to how best to contend with wildfires. Several sought to show their working-class roots, pitching themselves as the candidates who truly understand affordability woes.

The debate brought together the two leading Republicans, conservative commentator Steve Hilton and county sheriff Chad Bianco; and six Democrats, former US Rep. Katie Porter, San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan, billionaire Tom Steyer, former US Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and

state schools superintendent Tony Thurmond.

The candidates were asked to address the state's long-running homeless crisis, wildfire insurance shortages, projected budget shortfalls and staggering housing costs. Voters, meanwhile, are saddled with growing everyday costs for groceries, utility bills and gas.

A mostly mannerly debate last week without Villaraigosa and Thurmond on stage proved largely inconclusive, with no candidate managing a breakaway moment. It was the same case again Tuesday, but for different reasons.

With time running out to make an impression with voters, candidates appeared eager for conflict, and many questions resulted in interruptions as they tried to speak over each other. Answers were cut short, sometimes by moderators.

"Wow, that was a bit of a mess," said a college student in the crowd who was given an opportunity to pose a question to the candidates.

Becerra was targeted repeatedly, suggesting that other candidates see him gaining momentum. They and one of the moderators pressed him whether he could legally declare a state of emergency his first day in office and freeze home insurance rates, as he has pledged to do.

Hilton accused him of misunderstanding state law. But Becerra, who is also a former state attorney general, said his proposal is legal and noted that he led through states of emergency during the COVID-19 pandemic.

US to issue commemorative passports with Trump's picture for America's 250th birthday

WASHINGTON, April 29, (AP) — The State Department said Tuesday that it is preparing a limited release of commemorative US passports celebrating America's 250th birthday that feature a picture of President Donald Trump, who would be the first living president to be featured in the travel document.

The concept for the special passport, including a rendering of Trump's stern-looking visage, had been under consideration for months before finally being approved late Monday. Between 25,000 and 30,000 of the new passports will be available to applicants at the Washington, DC, passport office beginning shortly before July 4.

It's the latest instance of Trump having his name and likeness added to buildings, documents and other highly visible tributes. There are efforts to put Trump's signature on all new US paper currency, also a first for a sitting president, as well as to include his image on a gold commemorative coin to celebrate the country's founding.

The commemorative passport will be the default document for people applying in person at the Washington office, although those who want a standard passport will be able to get one by applying online or outside Washington, officials said.

"As the United States celebrates America's 250th anniversary in July, the State Department is preparing to release a limited number of specially designed US passports to commemorate this historic occasion," State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said.

"These passports will feature custom-



This rendering provided by the State Department shows an example of the limited release commemorative US passports that the department is preparing in honor of America's 250th birthday. (AP)

ized artwork and enhanced imagery while maintaining the same security features that make the U.S. passport the most secure documents in the world," he said.

The limited release passport will feature Trump's picture over a gold imprimatur of his signature to an interior page, while the cover will feature the words "United States of America" in bold gold print at the top and "Passport" at the bottom — a reversal of the standard cover.

In addition, a small gold laminate American flag, with the number 250 encircled by stars, will be at the bottom of the back cover.

The Bulwark reported earlier on the commemorative passports.

The only presidents featured in current US passports are in a double-page depiction of Mount Rushmore in South Dakota — George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln.

Other depictions include the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and scenes of the Great Plains, mountains and islands. Current passports also contain quotations from Martin Luther King Jr. as well as Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, John F. Ken-

nedy and Dwight Eisenhower.

The addition of Trump's picture and signature to the passport book is the newest step his aides have taken to increase the president's visibility, including adding his name to the US Institute of Peace building and the Kennedy Center performing arts venue.

Trump also has made waves with his plans for a new White House ballroom and a massive arch to be built at one of the entrances to Washington from Virginia.

Also:

WASHINGTON: A federal appeals court ruled Tuesday the Trump administration cannot jail immigrants without the chance to seek bond, citing "serious constitutional questions" related to what it said would otherwise be the broadest mass-detention-without-bond mandate in the nation's history for millions of noncitizens.

The unanimous ruling from a panel of the 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals in New York City sets the stage for a possible US Supreme Court appeal. That's because panels on the 8th and 5th circuit courts have already upheld the policy put in place by President Donald Trump's administration last July.

"Today, although we part ways with two other circuits that have addressed this question, we join the overwhelming majority of federal judges across the Nation to consider it and conclude that the government's novel interpretation of the immigration statute defies their plain text," Judge Joseph F. Bianco wrote for the panel, which included Judges Alison J. Nathan and Jose A. Cabranes.



In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Services on April 29, 2026, rescue workers put out a fire of a residential building destroyed by a Russian drone strike on Odesa region, Ukraine. (AP)

Another Russian oil facility burns after Zelenskyy touts Ukraine's drone reach

KYIV, April 29, (AP) — Another oil facility deep inside Russia was reportedly on fire Wednesday following what Ukraine's president claimed was his country's latest long-range drone attack.

The facility is in the Perm region of Russia, located in the Ural mountains more than 1,500 kilometers (900 miles) from Ukraine, Russian media said, with some unconfirmed reports saying it was a pumping station and storage complex. Perm Gov. Dmitry Makhonin said only that a drone hit an unspecified industrial facility, sparking a fire.

Russian officials have not been forthcoming about Ukrainian claims that Kyiv is carrying out more long-range attacks and that its domestically developed drones are increasingly accurate.

Advanced drone technology has become a defining feature of the battle as Russia's bigger army presses its more than four-year invasion of its neighbor. Ukraine's response has included a drive to develop new drones for attack and defense.

Also:

MOSCOW: Russia's traditional parade marking the 81st anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II this year will take place without tanks, missiles and other military equipment,



Troops march during a rehearsal for the Victory Day military parade at the Dvortsovaya (Palace) Square in St. Petersburg, Russia on April 28. (AP)

the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement late Tuesday.

It will be the first time in nearly two decades — and in the more than four years of Russia's war in Ukraine — that no military equipment will rumble through Moscow's Red Square on May

9, the day Russia celebrates its most important secular holiday. The Kremlin has used it to showcase its military might and global clout.

Victory Day parades on Red Square involved military equipment and various weaponry every year since 2008.

Starmer not to face probe

London knife attack injures 2

LONDON, April 29, (Agencies) — Two people were stabbed Wednesday in a London neighborhood with a large community and a 45-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder over what authorities called an antisemitic attack.

Counterterrorism police are investigating whether the stabbings are linked to a string of arson attacks on synagogues and other Jewish sites in the city.

Political leaders condemned the stabbing, with Prime Minister Keir Starmer saying that "attacks on our Jewish community are attacks on Britain."

The security organization Shomrim said a suspect "was seen running along Golders Green Road armed with a knife and attempting to stab members of the public" on Wednesday morning.

It said the suspect was detained by Shomrim members before being arrested by police, who used a stun gun on the man.

The Metropolitan Police said the victims, a man in his 30s and one in his 70s, were hospitalized in stable condition. The force said the suspect also tried to stab police officers but none were injured.

Also:

LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will not be investigated over claims that he misled Parliament regarding Peter Mandelson, the former British ambassador to the United States, after a House of Commons vote on Tuesday.

After more than five hours of debate, Members of Parliament voted 335 to 223 against a motion led by the Conservative Party that called for Starmer to be investigated by the House's Privileges Committee.

Europol task force nets 280 arrests

THE HAGUE, Netherlands, April 29, (AP) — An international task force formed to crack down on violence as a criminal service has led to 280 arrests in its first year, the European Union's police agency, Europol, reported Wednesday.

The arrests underscore a trend across the continent of criminals hiring people — many of them youngsters — via social media and messaging apps to carry out acts of violence ranging from assaults to murders in a chilling form of a gig economy.

"Violence is no longer confined to isolated acts or local dynamics. It is increasingly offered as a service: accessible, scalable and driven by online ecosystems that enable recruitment, coordination, and execution across borders," Europol said in a statement.

The agency set up the task force last year made up of police from Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. In its first 12 months it identified more than 1,400 people linked to violence as a service.

Europe

Belarus frees prominent journalist Poczobut: Prominent journalist Andrzej Poczobut has been released from jail in Belarus in a swap with Poland that saw a total of 10 people freed as the authoritarian leader of Belarus seeks improved relations with the West, officials in both countries said Tuesday.



Poczobut

Poczobut, a correspondent for the influential Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza and a leading figure among Belarus' Polish minority, was serving eight years in prison in a case condemned as politically motivated.

His 2021 arrest after covering pro-democracy rallies in Belarus drew widespread criticism. He later was awarded the Sakharov Prize, the European Union's most prestigious human rights award.

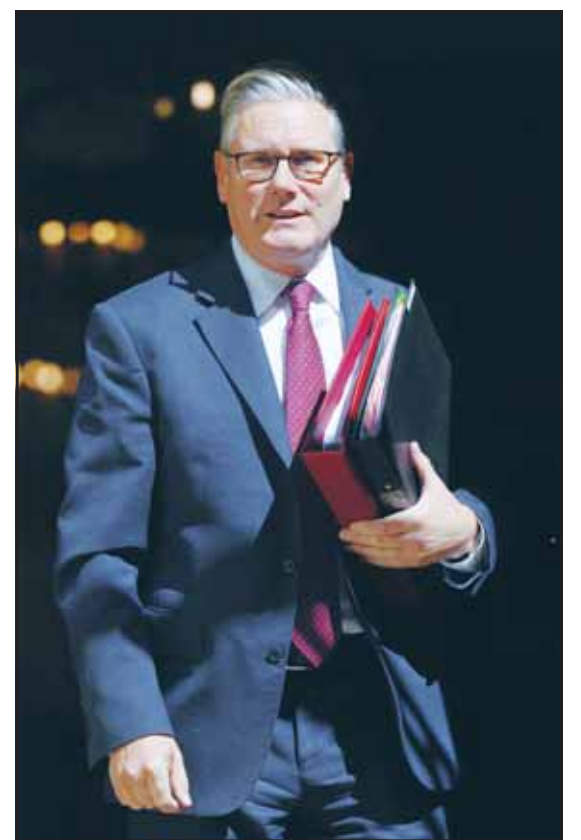
Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski called Poczobut a symbol of the fight for freedom in Belarus but also of the effectiveness of the Polish state in leaving no one behind. (AP)

Kosovo heads for another election: Kosovo is heading for its third parliamentary election in over a year after lawmakers repeatedly failed to elect a new president, pushing the young Balkan nation into renewed political uncertainty.

Parliament, which is tasked with choosing the presidents of Kosovo, on Tuesday faced a deadline by midnight to choose a successor to President Vjosa Osmani, whose term expired earlier this month. When it failed to do so, the legislature was automatically dissolved.

The early election must be held within the next 45 days, but a date for the new vote was not immediately announced.

Political analyst Ilir Deda predicted that the next election is likely to be held in June. The vote, Deda added, will test "whether people are willing to hold politicians accountable." (AP)



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer leaves 10 Downing Street to attend the weekly session of Prime Minister's Questions in Parliament in London on April 29. (AP)

Former first lady's prison sentence extended

S.Korea court sentences ex-prez Yoon to 7 years for charges including resisting arrest

SEOUL, South Korea, April 29. (Agencies): A South Korean appeals court on Wednesday sentenced ousted president Yoon Suk Yeol to seven years in prison for resisting arrest and bypassing a legitimate Cabinet meeting before his brief imposition of martial law in December 2024.

The conviction for obstruction of justice and other charges comes on top of a life sentence he has already received on rebellion charges stemming from his bawling authoritarian push, which triggered the most serious crisis for the country's democracy in decades.

Judge Yoon Sung-sik of the Seoul High Court said the conservative former president sidestepped a legally mandated full Cabinet meeting before declaring martial law, falsified documents to conceal the lapse, and deployed security officials "like a private army" to resist law enforcement efforts to arrest him in the weeks following his impeachment. Former president Yoon stood quietly as the verdict was delivered and made no comment.

A lower court in January sentenced Yoon to five years in prison but partially cleared him of abuse-of-power charges tied to the Cabinet meeting ahead of the martial law declaration, finding he was not responsible for the failure to attend of two members who were invited to attend.

The Seoul High Court reversed that acquittal, finding him guilty on all counts and ruling that he violated the rights of those two as well as seven other Cabinet members who weren't notified by convening only a select few to simulate a formal meeting.

Though brief, Yoon's Dec. 3, 2024 martial law decree threw the country into a severe political crisis, paralyzing politics and high-level diplomacy and rattling financial markets. The turmoil eased only after his liberal rival, Lee Jae Myung, won an early presidential election in June.

Yoon was suspended from office on Dec. 14, 2024 after being impeached by the liberal-led legislature and was formally removed by the Constitutional Court in April 2025.



Supporters of former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol stage a rally outside of the Seoul High Court in Seoul, South Korea on April 29. (AP)

Following his suspension from office, he refused to comply with a Seoul court's warrant to detain him for questioning, setting up a standoff in which dozens of investigators arrived at the presidential residence in early January 2025 but were blocked by presidential security forces and vehicle barricades. He was detained later that month, released by another court in March, and was then re-arrested in

July.

He remained in custody after that as a series of criminal trials, which are continuing, began.

Meanwhile, an appeals court has increased to four years the sentence for the wife of South Korea's Yoon for corruption, weeks after her husband was sentenced to life in prison for rebellion.

In January, ex-first lady Kim Keon Hee was sentenced to 20 months in prison in a district court for receiving gifts including a Graff diamond necklace and a Chanel bag from the Unification Church, which sought political favors from the government. However, she was acquitted of involvement in a stock price manipulation scheme before she became first lady.

Both parties appealed. On Tuesday, the Seoul High Court convicted her of receiving another Chanel bag from the church and on the price manipulation charge.

The couple suffered a fall from grace after Yoon's martial law imposition in December 2024 led to his impeachment and eventual removal from office. Yoon faces a slew of criminal trials related to his martial law debacle and other scandals. Investigators say Kim was not involved in Yoon's martial law enforcement.

The Seoul High Court said a first lady, being closest to a president, represents the country together with her husband and has a big influence on him. It said Kim failed to meet public expectations for her integrity and exploited her high-profile status to get the gifts from the Unification Church.

Kim's lawyers said they'll appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court. Independent counsel Min Joong-ki's team earlier requested a 15-year term. Kim's defense team has argued Min's investigation was politically driven.

Kim has been in jail since August, when the Seoul Central District Court approved a warrant to arrest her, citing the chance she might destroy evidence. When Yoon was in office, Kim was embroiled in scandals that hurt her husband's approval rating and provided political ammunition to his rivals.

Subcontinent

Pakistani prez in China for week-long trip: Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari's China trip runs from April 25 to May 1, and includes visits to Hunan Province and Hainan Province, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said on Monday.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, with bilateral ties maintaining strong momentum at a high level of development, Lin said at a regular news briefing.

China stands ready to work with Pakistan to promote friendly exchanges and cooperation at all levels and in various regions, and jointly build an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future, Lin added. (Xinhua)



Zardari

Pakistani attack kills 4 - Afghan gov't: Afghanistan's deputy government spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said on social media on Monday that Pakistan shelled eastern Afghanistan's Kunar Province with mortars and rockets earlier in the day, leaving four people dead and 70 others injured.

According to a statement released by Kunar Province authorities, the wounded were transferred to nearby medical facilities for treatment, while the local security situation remained tense.

Local media Tolo News reported that the Luqman-Spin

Boldak area in Kandahar province was also attacked by mortar shells. (Xinhua)

Armed men kill 5 in Afghanistan: Unidentified armed men gunned down five members of a family in eastern Afghanistan's Logar province on Monday, a statement of the provincial government office said.

Unknown armed men, according to the statement, entered a house in the vicinity of the provincial capital Pul-e-Alam early this morning, killing five family members, including the father, the mother, two sons and the bride of the house. (Xinhua)

Explosion damages railway line in India: An explosion damaged a railway line in the northern Indian state of Punjab, prompting authorities to issue an alert, police said Tuesday.

The blast went off on Monday night and ripped through a section of the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) railway track near Bathonia village in Patiala district, about 55 km southwest of Chandigarh, the capital city of Punjab.

According to police, the accused who detonated the blast was killed in the explosion and his body was found at the spot.

A senior police official, Varun Sharma, said it was a "detonation attempt".

"After getting whatever scientific evidence, including a SIM card from the spot, police have launched a technical investigation," Sharma further said. "We expect that we will soon unravel the whole conspiracy."

Following the blast, freight movement on the specific corridor stretch was briefly suspended to facilitate track repairs. (Xinhua)

Philippine congressional committee rules there's evidence to impeach VP

MANILA, Philippines, April 29. (AP): A Philippine congressional committee ruled Wednesday that there was "probable cause" to impeach Vice President Sara Duterte after looking into criminal allegations against her, including unexplained wealth, misuse of state funds and threats to have the president assassinated.

The Philippines, a bastion of democracy in Asia, has been plagued for decades by allegations of governance anomalies and political turbulence, including a raging political conflict between Duterte and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

The unanimous decision of the 53-member justice committee of the House of Representatives is the latest setback for the vice president, who has denied any wrongdoing. She has refused to answer specific allegations in detail.

The impeachment complaints centered on Duterte's alleged illegal use and mishandling of huge amounts of funds from the vice president's office and from her time as education secretary under Marcos.



Members of the House Justice Committee raise their hands as they vote during a congressional hearing on an impeachment bid against Vice President Sara Duterte at the House of Representatives in Quezon, Philippines on April 29. (AP)

At Wednesday's hearing, the National Bureau of Investigation said that comments made by Duterte during an online news conference in 2024 to

have Marcos, his wife and the House of Representatives speaker killed if she herself was assassinated was a threat to national security.



A soldier directs traffic on the Pan-American Highway in Cajibío, Colombia on April 26 as the road remained closed a day after an attack that killed at least 20 people and that authorities blamed on dissident groups of the former FARC rebels. (AP)

Violence escalates in Colombia with dozens of attacks before presidential vote

BOGOTA, Colombia, April 29. (AP): A spate of attacks against civilians and military bases in Colombia's southwestern region has raised security concerns as the country heads to a May presidential election in which crime is expected to be one of the top voter concerns.

Rebel groups have staged 26 attacks with explosives and drones since Friday, including a deadly blast Saturday on a highway between the cities of Cali and Popayan, according to Colombia's defense ministry. The death toll in that explosion rose to 21 people on Monday.

Violence in the region is nothing new. Illegal groups have sought to control the area for decades, deeming it strategic for illicit activities, such as illegal mining and drug trafficking, including the cultivation of coca leaf, the raw material for cocaine.

Authorities blamed a group known as the FARC-EMC for the lethal explosion, near a tunnel on the Pan-American Highway. The group is led by Nestor Vera - commonly known as Iván Mordisco - a former member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known by its Spanish acronym FARC, who refused to join a 2016 peace deal with the nation's government.

Sergio Guzmán, a political risk analyst in Colombia's capital, Bogotá, said that Mordisco's group could be trying to demonstrate that it has the capabilities to do serious damage, and is seeking to "establish its credibility" with Colombia's next government as it positions itself for future negotiations. "Part of what they are doing is establishing leverage towards the future," Guzmán said.

Under President Gustavo Petro, a former member of a guerrilla group, the Colombian government has attempted to stage peace talks with the nation's remaining rebel groups through a strategy known as "total peace."

The government has offered ceasefires to various groups in an effort to promote peace negotiations, but analysts say the strategy has failed, because these groups used the ceasefires to regroup, rearm and strengthen their grip over communities.

Groups like the FARC-EMC have been known to tax residents in areas under their control, and also forcibly recruit youth into their ranks.

"The government's peace policy has been naïve," said Javier Garay, a political science professor at Colombia's Externado University. "They thought that if they had a condescending attitude towards these groups they would receive a positive response."

In late 2023, the FARC-EMC entered peace talks with the Colombian government. But a faction led by Mordisco abandoned the talks in April 2024, and has been fighting the Colombian government since then.

Elizabeth Dickinson, a Colombia analyst at the International Crisis Group, said that Mordisco's group is particularly strong in the provinces of Cauca and Valle del Cauca, where it's fighting for control of drug trafficking routes and illegal gold mines.

For the past two years, Mordisco's group has also used drone attacks and car bombs, to respond to an offensive from the Colombian military in the Micay Canyon, a remote area covered with coca fields that is under the

FARC-EMC's grip. Dickinson said that the latest attacks in southwest Colombia are one way for the group to show that it can sustain its "asymmetrical war" against the government.

Colombia's defense minister on Sunday said that kidnappings and lockdowns enforced by rebel groups on communities had decreased in Cauca over the past year because of the government's actions.

In a nationally televised address Monday night, Petro said his government has fought drug trafficking and slowed down the cultivation of coca crops in Colombia, where he said 258,000 hectares (638,000 acres) were planted with coca in late 2025.

But the government's total peace strategy has come under fire from the opposition, whose candidates are hoping to benefit from the nation's security woes, as they promise to take a tougher stance on crime.

Petro is barred by Colombia's constitution from running for another term. But his party's candidate, Iván Cepeda, has promised to continue peace talks with rebel groups.

Cepeda said on X that he rejected the recent attacks in southwest Colombia, and urged authorities to investigate whether they were part of an effort to interfere with the election.

The request was echoed Monday night by Petro, who asked security forces in Colombia to investigate whether the explosives used in Saturday's attacks came from Ecuador, whose conservative government recently started a trade war with Colombia over security issues along their border.

Sudan's war leaves Khartoum with unexploded mines, other weapons

KHARTOUM, Sudan, April 29. (AP): Khaled Abdulgader noticed children using an unusual object as a football and tried to stop them. He grabbed it, and it exploded in his hand. He lost two fingers, and shrapnel sliced into his chest.

In a hospital for a checkup after last year's blast, he tried to stay positive. "I feel like, 'Thank God it was just my hands,'" Abdulgader said.

He is among hundreds of people who have been injured or killed by unexploded ordnance in Sudan's three years of war. That includes mines as well as weapons such as bombs, shells, grenades or rockets that failed to detonate, tens of thousands of items in all.

The government and aid groups say it's a problem particularly in and around Khartoum, where residents, many unfamiliar with the threat, have started to return after the Sudanese military recaptured the capital last year.

Nearly 60 people were injured or killed in Khartoum state last year, over half of them children, and 23 were injured or killed in the first three months of this year, 21 of them children, according to the United Nations.

Decades of conflict in Sudan have left unexploded ordnance scattered across the country, with a combined area of about 7,700 football fields contaminated.

More than half of that is the result of the war that erupted in 2023 between Sudan's army and the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group, with new



Members of Jasmir's demining team wear personal protective equipment, or PPE, at a demining site in Khartoum, Sudan on April 21. (AP)

areas such as Khartoum state affected.

Both the Sudanese army and the RSF have been accused of laying mines, according to aid groups, during the war as they fought for control of the capital.

"The presence of land mines and other explosive ordnance is of great concern to everybody," said Juma Abuania, the team leader for Jasmir, a Sudanese demining group.

He said it will take years to clear. Demining is a slow, careful process with staff covering 10 to 15 square meters a day.

Khartoum city is still a ghost town, strewn with remnants of fighting. Charred, abandoned buildings are pocked with bullet holes.

Walking through the streets, AP journalists saw a soldier emerge from a house with a small metal object that appeared to be a tail of a rocket-propelled grenade after being summoned by a resident to assess the threat.

A member of the military media accompanied the AP during the visit, including during interviews. The AP retains full editorial control of its content.

Attack a coup attempt: Kremlin

Mali's junta leader meets Russian ambassador

BAMAKO, Mali, April 29. (AP): Mali's junta leader met with Russia's ambassador to Bamako on Tuesday, authorities said, his first public appearance since the West African nation saw a massive, coordinated attack by Islamic militants and separatists over the weekend. Russia, the junta's key ally, called the attack a coup attempt.

The office of the military leader, Assimi Goita, released photos showing him meeting a Russian delegation led by the Ambassador Igor Gromyko in what appeared to be the presidential palace in Bamako, the Malian capital.

Later on Tuesday evening, Goita gave a televised address in which he vowed that military operations would continue. They were his first live comments since the coordinated attacks.

"Military operations will continue until the armed groups involved have been completely neutralized and security has been sustainably restored throughout the country," he said in the short address.

Earlier, the US Embassy in Mali issued a security alert, citing "possible terrorist movements within Bamako, including reports of forced school closures."

In power since a 2020 coup, the junta suffered a major attack on Saturday after al-Qaida-linked militants and the separatist Azawad Liberation Front group staged coordinated attacks on at least four cities in a region considered a global hot spot for terror-related deaths.

The near-simultaneous attacks struck Bamako's international airport, the nearby garrison town of Kati and several northern and central cities, including Kidal and Sevare.

The separatist group Azawad Liberation Front said its fighters eventually seized Kidal, after Malian and Russian



Mali's junta leader, Assimi Goita, (right), meets the Russian ambassador to Mali, Igor Gromyko, (second right), and other military and diplomatic officials at the Presidential Palace in Bamako, Mali on April 28. (AP)

forces withdrew from there. Mali's defense minister, Gen. Sadio Camara, was also killed in the attacks. Three days later, who was in control in areas that came under attack and the extent of casualties from the fighting remained unclear.

In his address, Goita alleged that foreign powers were aiding the various groups in their attacks.

"These attacks are not isolated incidents; they are part of a broader destabilization campaign devised and carried out by armed terrorist groups and their internal and external sponsors, who provide them with intelligence and logistical support."

Kuwait oil price reaches \$105.81 pb

KUWAIT CITY, April 29, (KUNA): Kuwaiti oil went up USD 2.02 per barrel to reach USD 105.81 pb in Tuesday's trading, compared to USD 103.79 pb on Monday's trading, according to Kuwait Petroleum

Corporation (KPC) on Wednesday. Globally, Brent Crude rose USD 3.03 pb to reach USD 111.26 pb, and US West Texas Intermediate crude rose USD 3.56 pb to reach USD 99.93 pb.

Business

Global awards highlight Gulf Bank's digital leadership

Gulf Bank earns dual global honors for innovation and service

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Gulf Bank has received two prestigious awards from International Business Magazine for 2026: Best Corporate Banking Mobile Application in the Middle East, and Excellence in Customer Experience in Banking. The recognition places Gulf Bank among a select group of financial institutions honored globally for their commitment to innovation and service excellence.

The awards reflect the Bank's sustained investment in digital transformation and its strategic focus on building banking experiences that prioritize the needs of customers. Over the past several years, Gulf Bank has significantly expanded its digital capabilities, driven by a clear vision to modernize how businesses interact with their bank and access financial services.

Gulf Bank's Corporate Banking Mobile Application stands as one of the most visible outcomes of this strategy. Designed specifically for the demands of corporate clients, the application gives businesses full control of their banking needs from any location and at any time. Core features include account management, local and international transfers, transaction monitoring, user access and authorization controls, and advanced cash and liquidity management tools. Together, these capabilities help businesses operate more efficiently and make faster, better informed financial decisions.

The application is built around an intuitive, user friendly interface developed



in line with the latest user experience standards, allowing clients to navigate key services quickly and with ease. It is also supported by robust cybersecurity infrastructure, ensuring that client data remains protected and that confidence in Gulf Bank's digital channels continues to grow.

Beyond the product itself, the Excellence in Customer Experience award recognizes Gulf Bank's broader approach to serving its clients. The Bank actively listens to customer feedback, adapts its offerings to meet evolving business requirements, and works to deliver solutions that are flexible, accessible, and tailored to the diverse needs of corporate clients across different sectors and business sizes.

Gulf Bank remains committed to investing in modern technology and adopting global best practices, reinforcing its position as a leading financial institution in the region and a trusted partner for the corporate sector. The Bank's ambition is clear: to anticipate the evolving needs of its clients and deliver banking experiences that are as forward looking as the businesses it serves.

International Business Magazine is a leading global publication covering business, finance, and economic affairs. Its annual awards program recognizes institutions around the world based on key criteria including innovation, service quality, customer experience, and overall institutional performance.



A view of Warba Bank's pavilion.

Bank aligns digital strategy with on-ground presence

Warba launches traveler initiative as Terminal 4 operations resume

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Warba Bank launched an initiative targeting travelers at Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 4 (T4) following the resumption of flight operations. The initiative reflects the bank's commitment to community engagement and its strategy to provide an integrated banking experience that combines social presence with digital innovation.

The bank's presence at Terminal 4 aims to provide direct engagement and support during the resumption of operational activity, aligning with the bank's core values of customer proximity and social responsibility.

Digital Strategy and Customer Engagement:

Abdullah Nasser Al-Shuail, Senior Director of Branches at Warba Bank, said the bank's relationship with its customers extends beyond traditional banking services.

"We aim to be present with our customers at various stages of their lives, delivering relevant and accessible services," Al-Shuail said. He added that the bank continues to invest in its digi-



Abdullah Al-Shuail

tal ecosystem to ensure flexible and secure services via its mobile application, meeting the needs of customers in an evolving digital landscape.

Terminal 4 Branch Operations: Al-Shuail said the T4 branch operates daily from 4:00 AM to 8:00 PM, in line with regulatory directives. The branch currently serves traveling cus-

tomers exclusively.

Other customers can access banking services through Warba Bank's nationwide branch network. Additionally, The bank also provides 24/7 support via its call center (1825555) and a dedicated WhatsApp service for travelers (51625555), ensuring continuous assistance.

Commitment to Community Engagement:

The bank said such community initiatives are a core part of its strategy, aimed at strengthening its partnership with society. Al-Shuail added that Warba Bank will continue to innovate customer-centric initiatives that build trust and shared value beyond traditional banking frameworks.

About Warba Bank: Warba Bank is a leading Islamic bank in Kuwait with a strong focus on Sharia-compliant digital banking. With one of the largest shareholder bases in the country, the bank delivers innovative financial products and services, reinforcing its position as a digital-focused institution.

Driving financial inclusion & security awareness

ABK strengthens cybersecurity under 'Let's Be Aware' campaign

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) continues to play a key role in the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign, aimed at promoting financial inclusion within Kuwaiti society and enhancing customer awareness on how to protect their personal data and confidentiality. This is achieved while providing access to a wide range of banking products, services, and solutions, as part of the Bank's ongoing collaboration with all relevant regulatory authorities.

The Bank continuously maintains and upgrades its technical and digital systems in line with developments in the banking industry. This comes as part of its ongoing commitment to enhancing its digital infrastructure and raising protection standards for its customers, thereby strengthening security and trust in conducting various banking and financial transactions.

These updates represent proactive steps taken by the Bank to address increasing cyber challenges and to provide a more secure banking environment for all customer segments.

All development processes are carried



out in accordance with international standards, without compromising service quality. On the contrary, they enhance system stability and reliability, ensuring the delivery of advanced technological solutions that provide a secure and seamless banking experience around the clock, while minimizing the likelihood of service disruptions for any reason.

The Bank is also enhancing its authentication protocols to ensure the highest levels of security when conducting transactions through the mobile application or website, while enabling faster and more efficient transfers and payments. In addition, advanced technologies have been activated to monitor any suspicious activities and to protect customer accounts instantly.

ABK remains committed to reminding customers of essential precaution-



ary measures, including not sharing PIN numbers or one-time passwords (OTP) via phone calls or text messages/ This is in addition to ensuring that official application updates are downloaded only from trusted stores, and ignoring suspicious links, particularly those claiming prize winnings or requesting personal data updates through external links.

This comes as the Bank continues to roll out various initiatives under the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign. This includes sending periodic SMS messages and notifications to customers, displaying campaign messages across branch screens, its website, and mobile application, as well as publishing advertisements across television, radio channels, and cinema screens. These efforts reflect the Bank's role and reinforce its leading position within Kuwait's banking sector.

Subsidiaries drive steady performance

CMS approves 7% cash dividend at AGM

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Contracting & Marine Services Company (CMS) held its annual general meeting recently at its headquarters at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), with an attendance rate of 93.5 percent.

CMS approved all items on its agenda, most notably the distribution of cash dividends at a rate of 7 percent of the nominal value, equivalent to seven fils per share, amounting to KD 1,600,634.

CMS achieved operating revenues exceeding KD 189 million during the fiscal year ending December 2025, marking an increase of 12 percent compared to 2024.

In this regard, Chairman and CEO of CMS, Eng. Ali Dughaim Al-Shammari, stated that the company recorded a net profit of KD 4.69 million, noting that these financial results represent exceptional performance over the past ten years.

He explained that the past period was characterized by rapid political and economic changes at both the regional and international levels, which directly and indirectly impacted the movement of local projects and investments, as well as liquidity levels in some sectors.

CMS dealt with geopolitical changes with a professional approach based on financial prudence, operational discipline, and highly efficient risk management, which contributed to maintaining stable performance and achieving the desired financial results.

The company focused on core operating activities with stable revenues as the safest strategic option in light of current volatility.

Eng. Al-Shammari emphasized that the achieved results reflect the fruits of efforts exerted over the past years to establish a solid foundation that enables the company to achieve sustainable profit growth, noting the company's aspiration for further achievements in the coming period.

He expressed his gratitude to the Board of Directors, shareholders, and company employees for their efforts and contributions to achieving these results.

At the operational level, Eng. Al-Shammari pointed out that the company continued during 2025 to implement its strategy aimed at strengthening operating activities with stable returns.

He indicated that the company achieved tangible progress in implementing existing operational contracts, most notably contracts for the supply and maintenance of industrial lift pump systems with oil companies.

Eng. Al-Shammari affirmed that these projects contributed to supporting regular cash flows, expanding the business base, and increasing the efficiency of utilizing available resources.

He stressed that the company achieved growth in attracting technical and administrative talent and in developing its operational infrastructure and technical workshops to meet the requirements of current and future projects.

Eng. Al-Shammari noted that the subsidiaries continued their positive performance, with Kuwait Drilling Company strengthening its operational position by continuing its work both inside and outside the State of Kuwait.

He stated that International Marine Construction Company continued to execute its specialized marine projects with high efficiency, along with the growing contribution of Zone Global Logistics Services Company in supporting the group's operations and providing integrated operational solutions.

Eng. Al-Shammari emphasized the company's continued commitment to its approach, which focuses on raising operational efficiency, rationalizing expenses, and optimizing asset utilization, in addition to exploring new opportunities for expansion in activities related to the energy sector and support services, thereby enhancing the company's ability to achieve sustainable growth.

Main market leads gain

Boursa Kuwait ends higher on Wed

KUWAIT CITY, April 29, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Wednesday's trading session on a positive note, with all major indices recording gains amid active market participation.

The General Index rose by 37.32 points, or 0.42 percent, to reach 8,906.67 points. A total of 536.5 million shares were traded through 30,283 cash transactions, with a total value of KD 113.17 million (approximately USD 346.3 million).

The Main Market Index led the gains, advancing 92.59 points, or 1.09 percent, to close at 8,601.56 points. Trading volume reached 355 million shares across 17,235 transac-

tions, valued at KD 53.8 million (approximately USD 164.6 million).

The Premier Market Index also posted an increase, rising 27.51 points, or 0.29 percent, to 9,433.80 points, with 181.5 million shares traded through 13,048 transactions worth KD 59.3 million (approximately USD 181.4 million).

Meanwhile, the Main 50 Index gained 47.28 points, or 0.51 percent, to reach 9,363.83 points. A total of 275.19 million shares were traded across 12,699 transactions, with a value of KD 42.4 million (approximately USD 129.7 million).

Tandon: The Case for Private Infrastructure in Resilient Portfolios

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: In a rapidly evolving investment environment, resilience has become a core priority for investors when building portfolios. Uncertainties such as persistent inflation, geopolitical realignment, and rapid technological acceleration are challenging traditional asset allocation and exposing the limitations of conventional diversification. This is what **Kashish Tandon**, CFA, CIPM, Executive Vice President – Investment Advisory at Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz", said during one of a series of webinars launched by Markaz to shed light on key market developments, emerging risks, and evolving investment opportunities across the globe. In this context, private infrastructure is emerging not merely as a defensive allocation, but as a structurally significant asset class positioned to deliver stability, visibility, and long-term value creation.

Built on Structural Necessity

The value of private infrastructure is underpinned by essential demand that endures across diverse economic environments. Demand for real assets is being reinforced by several long-term structural trends, including digitalization, decarbonization, deglobalization, and demographic shifts, all of which are redefining investment priorities around resilience, security, and essential services.

The exponential growth in data consumption, fueled by remote work, streaming, and the increasing adoption of artificial intelligence, is driving sustained demand for data centers, power capacity, and grid connectivity. Similarly, decarbonization is accelerating investment in

renewable energy, transmission, and storage as economies pursue net-zero targets while addressing energy security concerns. Deglobalization and nearshoring are reshaping supply chains, increasing the need for domestic logistics, transport, and energy infrastructure.

At the same time, population growth and urbanization are driving long-term demand for utilities, transportation, water, and digital access. Together, these forces are reshaping how economies invest and grow. Infrastructure sits at the center of this transformation, enabling both economic activity and societal function.

A Resilient Investment Profile Private infrastructure offers a distinctive set of characteristics that make it particularly relevant in today's environment. These assets are tangible, long-lived, and capital-intensive, with high barriers to entry that limit competition. Their cash flows are typically supported by long-term contracts or regulated frameworks, providing strong visibility.

From a portfolio perspective, this translates into consistent returns, stable income, and meaningful downside protection. Revenues are often linked to inflation through contractual or regulatory mechanisms, making infrastructure a natural hedge during periods of rising prices.

Performance Across Cycles The historical performance of private infrastructure demonstrates its ability to generate attractive returns with lower volatility compared to global equities, fixed income, and core real estate. It has performed consistently across both high- and low-growth environments, reflecting the essential nature of the services it pro-



Kashish Tandon, CFA, CIPM, Executive Vice President – Investment Advisory

vides. During periods of elevated inflation, it has been among the stronger-performing asset classes, supported by its ability to pass rising costs through to revenues.

Over the long term, this combination of stability and growth has enabled infrastructure to compound capital steadily, delivering superior outcomes relative to many traditional asset classes.

Evolution from Stability to Growth The role of infrastructure within portfolios is evolving. Historically viewed as a defensive, yield-oriented allocation, it is increasingly being recognized as a driver of returns.

This shift is being shaped by the convergence of multiple macro forces. Energy bottlenecks, supply chain fragility, and digital capacity constraints are highlighting the scarcity of critical infrastructure. At the same time, governments are prioritizing energy security and resilience, creating strong policy support

and investment tailwinds.

Infrastructure is also being redefined in strategic terms. Assets such as power grids, data networks, and transport systems are no longer seen solely as economic enablers, but as essential components of national and economic security.

The Markaz Approach

Capturing the full potential of private infrastructure requires a disciplined and diversified approach. Markaz focuses on maintaining balanced exposure across geographies and sectors, with allocations spanning North America, Europe, and other global markets, ensuring access to a broad set of opportunities.

From a strategy perspective, a mix of core, core-plus, and value-add investments enables participation across the risk-return spectrum. Core assets provide stable operating cash flows, while core-plus and value-add strategies introduce growth potential through expansion and development opportunities.

Sector diversification remains central, with exposure across energy and utilities, digital infrastructure, transportation, and environmental assets. This alignment with structural growth themes reinforces long-term resilience while capturing emerging opportunities.

Anchoring the Next Investment Cycle In an increasingly volatile global landscape, this asset class uniquely "draws strength from the very forces destabilizing everything else," providing a foundational layer of long-duration, collateral-backed cash flows that are often inflation-linked or regulated.

By securing exposure to the essential

physical systems enabling the future, such as AI-driven data centers and sovereign energy grids, you benefit from consistent income structural growth that has historically outperformed traditional assets with significantly lower volatility.

For investors, infrastructure provides the necessary stability and compounding power to navigate and capitalize on the next era of global economic transformation.

Disclaimer:

This press release has been prepared for promotional purposes and has been approved by "Markaz", and no necessary data about the investment in question has been omitted. Private real assets and private credit portfolio investments may be subject to the risks, investment returns and performance are difficult to predict and are not guaranteed. Therefore, prospective investors are required to review the constituent documents and should conduct their own analysis and research, as well as consult with their financial, legal, and other advisors specialized in making investment decisions regarding any strategy covered in this content, and understand that such an investment carries a high degree of risk of loss of the investment, and the amount of potential returns cannot be predicted or guaranteed.

The Private Real Assets Strategy is only intended and suitable for Qualified Professional Client/Professional Client by Nature as defined by the Kuwait Capital Markets Authority, and willing to accept the risks, known and unknown, associated with private real assets and private credit portfolio investing.

Seven prestigious awards for 2026

KFH named World's Best Islamic Financial Institution by Global Finance

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: In a further milestone underscoring its global leadership in Islamic finance, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Group has secured seven prestigious awards from Global Finance, as part of the 19th annual awards for the World's Best Islamic Financial Institutions for 2026.

- The awards are:**
- World's Best Islamic Financial Institution
 - World's Best Islamic Corporate Bank
 - World's Best Islamic Bank for CSR
 - World's Best Islamic Project Finance Provider
 - Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait
 - Best Islamic Bank in Bahrain (KFH - Bahrain)
 - Best Islamic Bank in Turkey (KFH - Turkey)

KFH Group Chief Strategy Officer, Eng. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem, stated that the awards are the fruits of a well-defined strategy anchored on AI-driven digital transformation, group synergy, and customer centricity. He noted that this recognition provides further momentum to build on recent achievements and to strengthen the Group's leading position in the global Islamic finance industry.

He added: "These accolades are a testament to the Group's continuous efforts to reinforcing sustainability, governance, and accelerating digital innovation, alongside delivering strong financial performance and achieving balanced, sustainable growth across its markets."

Al-Mukhaizeem further noted that the World's Best Islamic Financial Institution for 2026 affirms KFH's leadership in Islamic banking and its excellence in delivering innovative, Shariah-compliant products and services. It also reflects the Group's success in executing its strategy for sustainable growth and its ability to navigate evolving economic conditions and operational challenges, supporting its ambition to be ranked among the top 100 banks in the world.

Commenting on the awards; Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait, Best Islamic Bank in Bahrain (awarded to KFH-Bahrain) and Best Islamic Bank in Turkey (awarded to KFH-Turkey), Al-Mukhaizeem said that these recognitions reflect the consistent top performance and strong positioning of the Group's units across their respective markets. This success is driven by a unified and flexible strategy, carefully adapted to the specific dynamics of each market.

He highlighted KFH's standing as a leading global financial institu-



tion operating across a network spanning 10 countries, supported by robust financial strength and a strong competitive edge. This has led the Group to record profitability within the Kuwaiti banking sector and the wider market, in addition to leading all Kuwaiti private sector banks and companies in market capitalization, which has exceeded KD 15 billion.

Meanwhile, Group Chief Corporate Banking Officer at KFH, Yousef Almutawa, said that the world's Best Islamic Corporate Bank underscores growing international confidence in KFH's capabilities and its excellence in fostering long-term strategic partnerships with corporate clients. He highlighted the Bank's ability to deliver top-tier financial solutions that enable business expansion and strengthen competitiveness across local and international markets.

Almutawa also noted that KFH continues to record outstanding performance in corporate banking, driven by strategic growth, market leadership, and innovation in Islamic finance. He shed light on the Bank's role in leading a number of landmark deals that have reinforced its pivotal contribution to economic development.

Speaking about the "Best Islamic Project Finance Provider" award, Almutawa indicated KFH's leadership in financing major projects, underscoring its significant contributions to supporting key strategic sectors across Kuwait and the region. He highlighted the Bank's position as a main financing partner for projects in oil and gas, infrastructure, urban development, and services, among other vital industries.

He went on to say that KFH provides integrated corporate banking offerings, powered by digital transformation and flexible financing solutions. These services are tailored to the needs of diverse economic sectors that support sustainable development. "Through its online platform, eCorp, KFH provides an exceptional banking experience to its corporate clientele," added Almutawa. "This platform has witnessed strong growth in user adoption, especially following the launch of the enhanced e-services and upgraded mobile application."

He also highlighted the Bank's role as a strategic partner in supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), many of which have been established with KFH's corporate financing solutions.

Commenting on the "World's Best Islamic Bank for CSR" award, KFH Head of Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh, said that this achievement reflects the Bank's exceptional efforts and highlights its tangible impact and leadership in corporate social responsibility across the markets in which it operates. It also represents a clear vision that positions CSR as a strategic pillar of KFH's business model, reinforcing its standing as a leading financial institution that seamlessly integrates economic growth with sustainable social impact.

He added that winning this award at the global level reaffirms the Bank's leadership and distinguished position in integrating CSR at the core of its operations. This is demonstrated through a wide range of social initiatives spanning community development, education and healthcare support, youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, environment preservation, women's empowerment, and the development of digital skills among children and youth in addition to voluntary activities. He added that the Bank adopts ESG practices and implements awareness and community-driven initiatives aligned with develop-

mental goals, further cementing its position as a benchmark and pioneer in social responsibility.

Al-Ruwaieh emphasized that this recognition marks a new addition to the distinguished track record of KFH and serves as a strong motivation to further expand its community initiatives and strengthen purposeful partnerships, driving long-term, sustainable value for society.

He mentioned that KFH continues to play a leading national role in supporting social infrastructure and enhancing community well-being and quality of life through strategic initiatives and substantial investments in CSR. These long-term commitments reflect a forward-looking, sustainable approach that goes beyond the conventional concept of corporate social responsibility. Among the Bank's most prominent strategic social initiatives are:

- The contribution of over KD 61 million to defaulting debtors
- The contribution of approximately KD 8 million for the reconstruction of the damaged area in AlMubarakiya
- A contribution of KD 20 million to build 15 ambulance centers
- KFH also participated with a major share in the Covid19 Government Relief Fund amounting to KD

10 million

- KFH supported a sustainable development Initiative of Al Watania Area in Kuwait City

- Participating in the opening of the Addiction Treatment Center's tenth wing, an extension of the KFH's original 2005 initiative to establish the center.

- Pledging USD 20 million to Kuwait Red Crescent Society to support relief efforts for those affected by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

- Various cooperation programs with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, United Nations Development Programme, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

- Continuous leadership in delivering social contributions to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), the national manpower support program, and the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS), among other initiatives that reinforce KFH's leadership in CSR.

Meanwhile, Founder and Editorial Director of Global Finance, Joseph D. Giarraputo said: "As Islamic Finance continues its rapid growth, the leading organizations are focusing on digitalization, product innovation, and expanded banking services."

He added: "Global Finance's annual awards honor the institutions that are improving efficiency, attracting new customers, and best serving their clients."

Awards criteria

Global Finance relies on rigorous criteria. These include growth in assets, profitability, geographic reach, strategic relationships, new business development, and innovation in products. Other selection factors consider reputation, customer satisfaction, and the opinions of analysts and others involved in the industry.

All selections were made by the Global Finance editorial team after extensive consultations with bankers, corporate finance executives, and analysts worldwide. Entry submissions from Islamic Financial Institutions were also considered.

Global Finance

Founded in 1987, Global Finance has a circulation of 50,000 and readers in 185 countries. Global Finance's audience includes senior corporate and financial officers responsible for making investment and strategic decisions at multinational companies and financial institutions. Its website (GFMag.com) offers analysis and articles that are the legacy of 39 years of experience in international financial markets.

Weak rial fuels rising prices

Iran economy squeezed by sanctions, weak currency

TEHRAN, April 29, (AP): Iran's national rial currency hit a record low Wednesday of 1.8 million to the dollar as a shaky ceasefire with the U.S. and Israel holds.

The rial had remained stable in the early weeks of the war that began Feb. 28, in part because there was little trading or imports.

The rial began to slide two days ago. Experts warn that its fall is likely to further fuel inflation in a country where many imported goods, from food and medicine to electronics and raw materials, are affected by the dollar rate.

A U.S. naval blockade during the ceasefire has increased pressure on Iran's already battered economy, cutting into a key source of government revenue and hard currency by stopping or intercepting oil shipments.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Wednesday his government was continuing efforts to help ease tensions between the U.S. and Iran following an initial round of direct talks on April 11.

The latest slide of Iran's currency comes months after a currency shock helped fuel nationwide protests in January. At the time, the rial weakened from about 1.4 million to 1.6 million to the dollar in less than a week, deepening public anger over rising prices and fears about the

country's economic future.

Iran's economy has faced decades of sanctions, chronic inflation and a widening gap between official and open-market exchange rates.

Prices of basic household goods had already been rising before the rial's latest fall, adding to pressure on Iranian families. Over the past two weeks, people buying daily essentials have faced higher prices for milk, yogurt, cooking oil, bread, rice, cheese and detergents.

The increases point to broader inflationary pressure in the economy driven by uncertainty, supply disruptions, higher transport and production costs and the continuing impact of the U.S. blockade. The rial's latest slide is likely to add further pressure particularly on goods tied to imports, packaging and raw materials.

The economic pressure also has extended to the labor market. The reformist Shargh newspaper reported Monday that 500 workers at Pinak in Rasht and 700 workers at Borujerd Textile Factory had been laid off since the beginning of the new Iranian calendar year in late March after their contracts ended.

The reported layoffs add to concerns that rising costs, weaker demand and uncertainty after the war and blockade are forcing some companies to cut jobs or avoid renewing temporary contracts.



Tankers anchored in the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Qeshm Island, Iran, Saturday, April 18, 2026. (AP)

United Arab Emirates departure from OPEC shakes up the alliance that influences oil prices worldwide

FRANKFURT, April 29, (AP): The decision by the United Arab Emirates to leave the OPEC oil cartel shook up the 65-year-old alliance that produces some 40% of the world's crude oil and exerts major influence over the price of energy around the globe.

The UAE said in the announcement Tuesday that when it leaves OPEC this Friday, it plans to carry on with its long-held goal of increasing crude production "in a gradual and measured manner, aligned with demand and market conditions."

Right now, that's academic as far as oil prices go, since Iran is still blocking the Strait of Hormuz, which means much of the oil from Persian Gulf producers such as the UAE cannot be exported. But the departure could have long-term effects on oil prices.

Here's what to know about the UAE's decision to leave OPEC:

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries was formed in Baghdad in September 1960 by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. It has 12 members - counting the UAE - that hold more than 80% of the world's proven oil reserves. Other members are Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria and the Republic of the Congo.

The group, headquartered in Vienna, aims to regulate oil prices by coordinating increases or decreases in production.

The goal has been to keep prices high enough so member governments can balance their budgets and reap the benefits of their natural resources - but not so high as to cause a recession in consuming countries or to halt energy-consuming activity, a phenomenon known as demand destruction.

That approach has sometimes drawn pushback from leaders in the U.S., where the price of gasoline is highly political. President Donald Trump at one point accused OPEC of "ripping off the rest of the world," and his predecessor Joe Biden also badgered OPEC to produce more oil.

OPEC says its objective is "to coordinate and unify petroleum policies among member countries, in order to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry."

The creation of OPEC signaled a change from a world in which Western companies dominated the oil market to one where the countries with the reserves took more control over their resources and profits.

At times, OPEC's production moves have



An oil technician climbs down a tower at a refinery in Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates, about 30 kilometers (18 miles) south of Dubai, in March 2004. (AP)

had large effects on the global economy. In 1973, its Arab members imposed an oil embargo on the U.S. and other countries that supported Israel during the Yom Kippur War. Oil prices quadrupled, and long lines appeared at American gas stations.

In 2016, OPEC joined with another 10 oil-producing countries, the largest of which is Russia, to form an alliance known as OPEC+.

The UAE is seeking more independence in how much oil it sells. Cartels keep prices higher, but they restrict members' earnings and market share against non-cartel members. There has been longstanding friction between the UAE and Saudi Arabia, the biggest OPEC producer and de facto leader of the cartel.

One reason for producing more now: Experts think oil consumption will peak in coming years as the world transitions to renewable energy sources that do not emit carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas that fuels climate change.

That means barrels underground could be worth more today than they might be later, when oil consumption declines, so restraining production might mean losing out on profits.

The UAE's withdrawal removes one of OPEC's few members with the ability to quickly increase production - the mechanism through which the cartel manages oil prices,

said Jorge Leon, head of geopolitical analysis at Rystad Energy.

"A structurally weaker OPEC, with less spare capacity concentrated within the group, will find it increasingly difficult to calibrate supply and stabilize prices," Leon said. "The net effect points to a more fragmented supply landscape and a potentially more volatile oil market over time as OPEC's capacity to smooth imbalances diminishes."

Iran is blocking the Strait of Hormuz, the passage for tankers carrying a fifth of the world's oil and gas supplies. That prevents much of the oil produced by Persian Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE from getting to customers. For the short term, that's the biggest issue affecting oil prices, which have risen sharply as a result.

If the UAE achieves its goal of producing more oil after the war, that could speed a return to prices levels more in line with those before the war, said Michael Brown, research strategist at Pepperstone foreign exchange brokerage.

"As for crude in the here and now, all that really matters is whether the Strait of Hormuz is open or closed," he said. "At present, it's essentially shut, tightening supply conditions day by day and probably seeing benchmarks continue to grind higher on a daily basis as well."

Expanding CSR to empower Kuwait's youth

talabat hosts the 3rd 'Next Tech Gen' session in collaboration with LOYAC

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Building on the success of its previous sessions, talabat, the leading on-demand online ordering platform in the MENA region, hosted the third "Next Tech Gen" (NTG) session at its headquarters in collaboration with LOYAC, the youth empowerment non-profit organization. The initiative aims to empower young talent with practical skills, contributing to the development of the next generation of Kuwait's technology and innovation leaders.



Amal Bukhamseen

fresh graduates from diverse academic backgrounds to the latest round of NTG, the company's long-term knowledge-sharing program, delivered through structured monthly visits to universities, schools, and academies. Through NTG, talabat designs its sessions to bridge the gap between academia and the evolving needs of

the labor market. "As a people-first tech company, we are committed to equipping youth with the skills and knowledge needed to lead the future of Kuwait's technology and innovation sectors," commented Amal Bukhamseen, Manager of Corporate Affairs at talabat Kuwait. "Through NTG, we provide a platform for students and fresh graduates to explore their academic knowledge from a real-world perspective, helping them better understand how the industry operates and how they can succeed within it." "We are pleased to collaborate with market leaders such as talabat, whose expertise supports our mission to equip Kuwait's youth with the skills needed for success," said Nada Ali Pour Daneshi, Professional Empowerment Manager at LOYAC. "By creating opportunities for young professionals to learn directly from industry experts, we contribute to building a generation of future-ready talent capable of supporting Kuwait's long-term growth."

During the session, talabat experts shared their insights on marketing, branding, data, and people operations in a series of interactive lectures that enabled participants to explore the real-life application of the academic disciplines they studied. The session also featured a special guest speaker from talabat's regional Digital Product Team, who covered several topics, including the digital product development life-cycle, artificial intelligence (AI) for business growth, and customer behavior analysis.

This initiative reflects talabat's ongoing commitment to supporting tech education and preparing a future-ready generation of professionals, in alignment with Kuwait's national human capital development strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035.



talabat x NTG Loyac

As part of its commitment towards sustainability

NBK renews its partnership with Kuwait's Diving Team for the 4th consecutive year

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Confirming its commitment to supporting national environmental initiatives that help preserve Kuwait's coastlines and natural marine resources, as well as promoting environmental sustainability for future generations, National Bank of Kuwait renewed its strategic partnership with the Kuwait Diving Team for the fourth consecutive year.

NBK's sponsorship of the Kuwait Diving Team stems from its comprehensive vision for social responsibility and its ongoing commitment to supporting volunteer efforts and projects that serve Kuwaiti society and protect its natural resources, particularly initiatives focused on coastal cleanups, marine life protection, and raising environmental awareness.

Kuwait's diving team applauded NBK's efforts and its leading role in serving the community, and committing to the principles of social responsibility and sustainable national development, stressing the importance of maintaining this collaboration in the "Protection of the Marine Environment and Life 2026" project, as it is one of the leading voluntary projects aimed at protecting and preserving coral reefs and marine diversity in Kuwait.

The project includes a number of specialized environmental programs that focus on protecting and rehabilitating the marine environment, including the maintenance of marine moorings in the coral reef sites in southern Kuwait, namely: Al-Bunyah site south of Al-Kh-iran, Al-Zour, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Marine Reserve, Central Bnaider, and Sotherm Bnaider, where the team installs these moorings around the coral reefs to preserve them and protect the marine organisms associated with them, in addition to monitoring them and removing any damage in order to ensure the sustainability of their natural environment.

The project also includes a program to remove debris and illegal fishing nets from coral reefs and the marine environment to preserve their health and prevent fish and marine life deaths, as well as to protect visitors to the islands and coral reef sites from consequent dangers. Additionally, these efforts are complemented by awareness campaigns to clean the coasts with the voluntary participation of various segments of society.

Moreover, the project involves salvaging sunken boats and marine vessels and organizing field patrols to monitor the overall state of marine life, thus contributing to preserving a healthy and sustainable marine environment.

On this occasion, Talal Al-Turki, Vice President, Head of Public Relations



Al-Turki:

- This partnership embodies our continued efforts to preserve Kuwait's coastlines and natural marine resources.
- We aspire to make a positive impact that reflects our corporate values and social responsibility.
- NBK has succeeded in becoming the largest contributor in the field of social responsibility in Kuwait.



Kuwait Diving Team.

and Event Management at NBK said, "We are delighted to renew our partnership with the Kuwaiti Diving Team for the fourth consecutive year. This team represents a leading national model in volunteer and environmental work, and this partnership embodies our belief in the importance of investing in our community and reflects our ongoing efforts to support initiatives that leave a lasting positive impact on the environment and society."

"Through these strategic partnerships," Al-Turki added, "we strive to instill a culture of preserving natural resources, which aligns with the Bank's strategy of adopting the best practices in environmental governance and aligns as well with Kuwait's future vision."

Al-Turki also emphasized that NBK is always keen to be an active partner in the

journey of community and environmental development and to continue leaving a positive impact that reflects its corporate values and its responsibility towards Kuwaiti society.

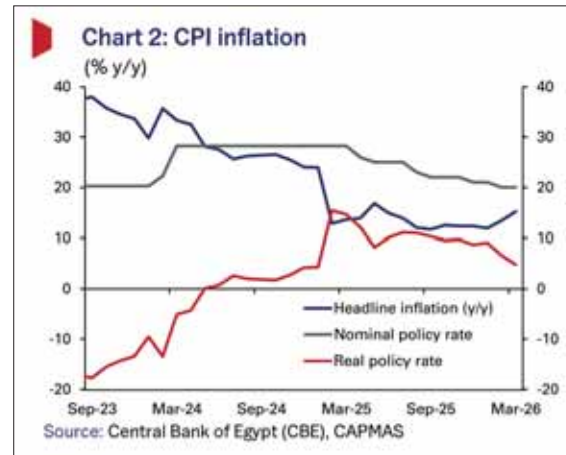
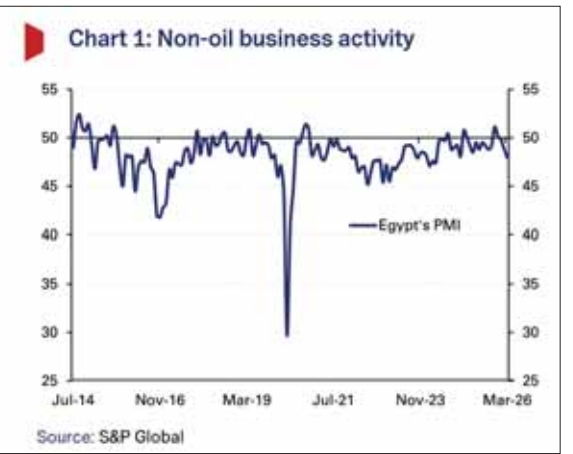
It is worth noting that NBK maintains its position as a major contributor to community, as per its social responsibility and corporate sustainability strategies, evident in the launch of large-scale programs and initiatives across various sectors, most notably education, health, and the environment.

The Kuwaiti Diving Team has also largely contributed to the protection and rehabilitation of Kuwait's marine life since its establishment through a range of activities, including documenting and protecting coral reefs, cleaning beaches, establishing fish colonies, and salvaging sunken ships and boats.

Table 1: Key macroeconomic indicators

		23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
Nominal GDP	\$ billion	392.3	359.9	409.1	453.1
Real GDP	% y/y	2.4	4.4	4.7	5.0
Private Consumption	% y/y	5.8	5.5	5.3	4.1
Private Investment	% y/y	-0.4	1.6	1.1	2.2
Overall fiscal balance	% of GDP	-3.6	-7.1	-7.5	-7.0
Primary fiscal balance	% of GDP	6.1	3.6	4	4.1
Public debt	% of GDP	89.4	85.6	87	82.5
Current acc. balance	% of GDP	-5.4	-4.2	-4.4	-3.2
Headline Inflation (avg.)	% y/y	33.6	20.9	13.4	12.6
FX rate (eop)	EGP/\$1	48.1	49.6	-	-

Source: Official sources, NBK forecasts



Inflation rises as energy costs surge

Egypt economy softens despite strong underlying fundamentals

By National Bank of Kuwait

The US-Iran conflict has introduced new headwinds for Egypt's economy, but although we expect slightly slower growth over the next year than previously, the positive longer-term story remains intact. Growth had strengthened to 5.3% in H1 FY25/26, supported by a recovery in non-oil activity and improving private investment, before spillovers from the conflict began to weigh on sentiment and external inflows.

The conflict shock is transmitted primarily through higher energy prices, weaker Suez Canal traffic, and rising volatility in portfolio flows, putting pressure on the exchange rate and inflation. Despite this, external buffers remain relatively solid, with elevated reserves and improved net foreign asset positions providing a cushion against renewed outflows. Inflation has resumed an upward trend, delaying the monetary easing cycle, while fiscal pressures are re-emerging through higher subsidy costs. Looking ahead, the reform agenda and continued international support remain critical anchors, helping contain vulnerabilities and position the economy for stronger growth once external conditions stabilize.

Latest developments
 ■ Growth peaks at a three-year high ahead of the conflict. GDP growth held steady at 5.3% y/y in Q2 FY25/26 (October - December 2025), matching the pace recorded in Q1 and exceeding the level seen a year earlier by one percentage point. This marks the strongest FYH1 growth performance in three years, prior to the onset of the regional conflict. The expansion was broad-based across non-oil sectors, with the notable exception of construction, which contracted for the first time since Q2 2020 during the pandemic. Suez Canal activity, tourism, and communications led growth with double-digit expansions, followed by financial intermediation and insurance. In particular, Suez Canal activity returned to growth for the first time since Q4 2023, reflecting a temporary normalization in Red Sea shipping conditions before the latest disruptions. On the investment side, private sector investment increased by 5.4% and accounted for 58% of total investment, signaling a gradual recovery in confidence and capital formation. However, its contribution to overall growth remained limited at around 1 percentage point, highlighting that the private sector has yet to fully assume a leading role in driving economic activity.

■ PMI confirms activity under fresh pressure in March as war weighs on demand and costs. The PMI gauge of non-oil private sector activity declined for the fourth consecutive month in March to 48, down from 48.9 in February, signaling a deeper contraction in business activity and consistent with a slowdown in GDP growth from the 5%+ rate mentioned above. The slowdown was primarily driven by sharper declines in output and new orders, both of which fell to their lowest levels in nearly two years. Survey evidence pointed to the regional conflict as a key drag on demand, as heightened uncertainty and rising prices weighed on client spending decisions. On the cost side, businesses faced intensifying input price pressures, with purchase price inflation accelerating to its fastest pace in around one and a half years. Firms largely attributed this to higher fuel and raw material costs, compounded by the strength of the US dollar. In response, companies raised their selling prices at the fastest rate since May 2025, attempting to partially pass through the cost increases.

■ Inflation accelerates in March on energy and supply-side pressures. Inflationary pressures intensified in March, marking the second consecutive monthly increase amid rising energy costs and spillovers from the regional conflict. Headline inflation rose to 15.2% y/y (3.2% m/m), up from 13.4% y/y (2.8% m/m) in February. (Chart 2.) Core inflation also accelerated to 14% y/y (2% m/m), compared to 12.7% y/y (3% m/m) in the previous month, according to the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE), pointing to increasingly broad-based price pressures. The monthly increase was primarily driven by the transport component, which surged to 9.8% m/m in March from just 0.2% in February, reflecting the pass-through of higher global oil prices and recent domestic fuel price adjustments. Food inflation also picked up, rising by 4.7% m/m, largely due to higher vegetable prices. In addition, housing and utilities costs increased by 3.3% m/m, further contributing to the overall rise in inflation.

■ Capital flow volatility drives sharp FX swings, reflecting greater exchange rate flexibility. Heightened volatility in capital flows has translated into notable fluctuations in the Egyptian pound. Foreign appetite for local government debt was strong ahead of the conflict but reversed amid rising uncertainty, with net outflows from the secondary market reaching \$1.7 billion in February and a further \$2.1 billion in March. Cumulative net inflows into the secondary market had stood at a solid \$17.1 billion for 2025. (Chart 3.) More recently, improving sentiment around ongoing US-Iran negotiations has supported a partial return of carry trade inflows, with around \$4.2 billion re-entering the market in recent weeks. The Egyptian pound depreciated by roughly 16% during the peak of the crisis, reaching its weakest level on April 7, before rebounding by around 5% as inflows resumed. This two-way movement underscores the increasing role of exchange rate flexibility in absorbing external shocks, in contrast to previous episodes, and is further supported by stronger external buffers within the banking sector.

■ CBE keeps interest rates on hold in April. The main lending rate was left at 20% (having been cut by 100 bps in February), with the CBE citing the global energy shock and upside risk to inflation. The April decision reinforces a higher-for-longer interest rate environment. While positive real rates (5% as of March) support external stability and help contain inflationary pressures, they continue to weigh on credit demand, investment, and private sector growth. Still, the CBE noted the depreciation in the exchange rate

as helping to mitigate the impact of the shock on domestic economic activity.

■ Current account deficit narrows on stronger remittances and tourism, despite widening trade deficit. The current account deficit narrowed to \$9.5 billion in H1 FY25/26 (July to December 2025), down from \$11 billion in the same period a year earlier, supported by robust growth in key foreign currency inflows. Remittances from Egyptians abroad rose by 30% y/y to \$22.1 billion, up from \$17.1 billion, while tourism revenues increased by 17.3% to \$10.2 billion, compared to \$8.7 billion previously. Suez Canal receipts also improved, rising by 19% to \$2.2 billion, driven by a 16% increase in net tonnage and a 5.8% rise in the number of transiting vessels. On the downside, the oil trade deficit widened to \$8.9 billion from \$6.7 billion, primarily reflecting a 20% y/y increase in oil imports. Meanwhile, net FDI inflows rose to \$9.3 billion, up from \$6 billion, largely supported by the implementation of Alam El-Roum deal with Qatar, which contributed \$3.5 billion by the end of 2025.

■ Net foreign assets (NFAs) reached a 14-year high. NFAs in the banking system reached \$27.4 billion at the end of February, down from a 14-year high of \$29.5 billion in January. February's NFAs divided between the CBE (\$15.7 billion) and commercial banks (\$11.8 billion), which gave the banking sector ample ammunition ahead of the current regional market turbulence. Moreover, official net international reserves at the CBE reached a record high of \$52.8 billion at the end of March, which cover around 6 months of imports. In addition to that, the unofficial reserves that consist of securities and deposits not included in the official reserves reached \$15 billion at the end of March as well, which gave an additional layer of support to the financial system.

■ Fiscal pressures persist despite strong revenues. The fiscal deficit widened to 4.2% of GDP in H1 FY25/26. Expenditure rose 27% y/y, largely driven by interest payments, which increased 35% to EGP 1.3 trillion. Revenues grew 30%, with tax revenues reaching record levels, highlighting improved collection efficiency. While debt servicing remains the central fiscal challenge, strong revenue performance supports the consolidation path, especially as interest rates begin to moderate.

Forecast
 Near-term growth outlook softens slightly, but positive long-term story remains intact. GDP growth is now projected at 4.7% in FY25/26, slightly below earlier expectations of 5.0%, but still up from 4.4% in FY24/25. The modest downgrade reflects spillovers from the regional conflict that weigh on consumer and business sentiment, foreign currency inflows, and raise energy costs. Elevated inflation is expected to dampen private consumption, while weaker tourism and Suez Canal activity will turn net exports into a modest drag on growth. Investment growth will also moderate, affected by higher input costs, a slowdown in public spending, and softer GCC inflows in H2 FY25/26. Growth is expected to regain momentum next year, reaching 5% supported by continued reforms and a gradual recovery in foreign investment. This projection assumes that the US-Iran conflict will end soon, and the authorities adhere to the IMF-backed reform path. Household consumption is expected to remain the primary driver of growth over the forecast horizon, with purchasing power helped by the decline in inflation from 30%+ previously and the fading impact of the earlier currency depreciation. That said, a more balanced and sustainable growth trajectory will depend on a stronger recovery in investment, particularly new capex. In our view, private investment is likely to gain traction once there is clearer confirmation that the monetary easing cycle is firmly restarted. A policy lending rate closer to 13% would provide a more supportive benchmark for banks' pricing and a more acceptable cost of financing for businesses, encouraging capacity expansion and enabling the private sector to play a more meaningful role in driving growth over the medium term. Moreover, large scale projects such as Ras El-Hekma and Alam El-Roum are expected to support construction, generate foreign inflows, and stimulate domestic supply chains. Additionally, infrastructure upgrades around the Suez Canal economic zone will continue to reinforce Egypt's positioning as a regional logistics and manufacturing hub. Long-term structural reforms to streamline licensing procedures and improve competition levels are expected to enhance the business environment, lower barriers to entry and support a more dynamic, private sector-led growth model over time.

Inflation to rise before easing back, cautious monetary stance to persist

Inflation is expected to pick up in the near term, driven by higher energy prices and currency depreciation, before gradually moderating through late 2026 and into 2027 as reform momentum holds and external pressures ease. Domestic fuel price adjustments, implemented twice within six months, in October and March, are adding to costpush pressures. Inflation is projected to average around 14.6% in 2026, above the inflation target range of 5-9%, easing to 9.1% in 2027. Against this backdrop, the CBE is likely to maintain a cautious policy stance. While policy rates were kept unchanged at April's monetary policy committee meeting, the current real interest rate, at around 5%, provides a sufficient buffer to contain inflationary pressures and support external stability. Under our baseline scenario, we do not expect further rate hikes, particularly if the US-Iran conflict is resolved in the near term and external pressures begin to subside. However, risks remain tilted to the upside. In the event of a prolonged conflict, which would sustain inflationary pressures and compress real interest rates toward or below the 2% threshold, the CBE is likely to intervene proactively. In such a scenario, a measured and cautious tightening cycle could be deployed, with rate hikes of around 100 to 200 basis points, aimed at preserving macroeconomic stability while limiting the drag on domestic activity.

Powell signals next move as Fed leadership shifts

WASHINGTON, April 29, (AP): Wednesday will likely be a momentous day for the future of the Federal Reserve as Chair Jerome Powell could signal he will stay with the Fed even as a Senate panel is expected to confirm his replacement.

Powell will preside over what will probably be his last meeting as chair and hold a news conference Wednesday afternoon, when he may say whether he will take the unusual step of remaining on the central bank's board of governors, even after his term as chair ends May 15.

Separately, the Senate Banking Committee is scheduled to vote on the nomination of Kevin Warsh to succeed Powell. The

nomination is expected to be approved on a party-line vote, and will then be taken up by the full Senate next month. President Donald Trump nominated Warsh, a former top Fed official, in January. Last year, Warsh echoed Trump's calls for the Fed to lower its key interest rate, leading many Democrats in Congress to question how independently he will operate as Fed chair.

The Fed is widely expected to keep its key rate unchanged Wednesday for a third straight meeting at 3.6%. Most policymakers believe at that level, the rate can still cool inflation by slowing borrowing and spending, but not so much that it will drag down hiring or raise unemployment.

Nisreen Rubaian exits Kuwait, leaves lasting humanitarian mark

Built on empathy, led by purpose

By Chaitali B. Roy
Special to the Arab Times

When you first meet Nisreen Rubaian, the UNHCR Representative in Kuwait, you are struck by her warmth and ability to instantly connect with people, no matter who they are. Nisreen does not discriminate; she reaches out, and it is this quality, I dare say, that has smoothed her career path. I first met her in mid-2023, and since then, I have observed her raise not only money, which, anyway, traditionally, Kuwaitis are very generous with, but also their trust and goodwill. Today, as she prepares to leave Kuwait after a successful tenure, Arab Times pays tribute to her story, which is one of a woman who chose early in life to stand at the intersection of human rights, law, and compassion and who carried that choice across continents, crises, and communities.

Long before she became a leading voice in refugee protection, Nisreen Rubaian was a young Jordanian with a clear sense of direction. Her decision to specialise in human rights and international law was not incidental; it was intentional, almost instinctive. Her journey began in Jordan, where she studied law and later specialised in public international law and human rights in the United Kingdom. But the turning point came when she joined UNHCR as a volunteer. Reflecting on those early days, she once shared with me, "My first year with UNHCR was a dream come true. I was working directly on case management of refugees, real people, real lives. The impact was immediate." That immediacy became a defining feature of her career. Unlike many professions where results are abstract or delayed, humanitarian work offers no such distance. Decisions are personal. Consequences are immediate. And accountability is deeply human.

I once asked her about the emotional weight of this responsibility, and she responded with striking honesty, "Imagine you are 26 years old, and someone in their 50s or 60s looks at you as their lifeline. The action you take will impact their life forever. It's not easy. It's draining, but it's also deeply rewarding." This duality, the burden and the beauty of humanitarian work, became the foundation upon which she built her career.

Over the years, her work took her across vastly different contexts: from the remote island of Nauru to the complex refugee landscapes of Pakistan, from post-conflict Sierra Leone to the strategic corridors of the UAE, and later to Libya, Egypt, and Romania. Each location presented a unique humanitarian challenge. Yet, as she often emphasised, the mission remained constant, "In all these countries, we have the same mission to protect refugees and provide solutions. What changes is the context." In Nauru, she dealt with early waves of maritime migration. In Pakistan, she encountered one of the world's most protracted refugee situations, with generations of Afghan refugees living in limbo. In Sierra Leone, the focus shifted to reintegration after conflict. These experiences did more than broaden her professional scope. They deepened her understanding of displacement as



Nisreen Rubaian

a global, multifaceted phenomenon. And through it all, one truth remained central - refugees are not statistics. They are individuals whose lives have been interrupted, whose futures depend on the decisions of others.

When Nisreen Rubaian arrived in Kuwait, she stepped into a country already known for its humanitarian leadership. But what she helped build and amplify was something more nuanced: a model of partnership that transcended traditional donor-recipient dynamics. Kuwait's relationship with UNHCR dates back to 1991, evolving into one of the most strategic and enduring partnerships in the organization's history. Under Rubaian's leadership, this relationship deepened significantly. She described it not as a funding arrangement, but as something far more meaningful: "We don't look at it as resource mobilisation. We look at it as a partnership. Kuwait is a strong partner in supporting the refugee cause through advocacy, collaboration, and shared vision." Indeed, Kuwait has consistently ranked among the top global donors to humanitarian causes, contributing over \$500 million to UN initiatives, including the UNHCR. But numbers tell only part of the story. What distinguishes Kuwait, as Rubaian often highlighted, is the alignment between leadership and society, a shared commitment to humanitarian values that permeates government institutions, civil society, and the private sector.

Kuwait's humanitarian ethos is not confined to crisis response. It is embedded in its identity. From rapid mobilisation during emergencies such as the Turkey-Syria earthquake to sustained support for protracted crises in Syria, Afghanistan, and beyond, Kuwait has demonstrated a rare combination of responsiveness and consistency. "It is not difficult to speak about refugees in Kuwait," says Rubaian. "People understand their suffering immediately. There is a natural empathy." This empathy translates into action through government funding, private sector engagement, and grassroots initiatives. Organisations such as the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, alongside numerous charities and foundations, have played a pivotal role in extending Kuwait's humanitarian reach across continents. Moreover, Kuwait's contributions are not limited by geography or politics. From Syria to Ukraine, from Bangladesh to Sudan, the country's support reflects a genuinely global outlook.

“ I will miss Kuwait in its entirety ... its people, traditions, culture, and the genuine warmth that defines everyday life. ”

One of Nisreen Rubaian's most significant achievements in Kuwait has been expanding and diversifying partnerships. Under her leadership, UNHCR strengthened ties not only with government entities but also with private sector organisations, academic institutions, and civil society groups. She speaks with pride about these collaborations, "Each partnership brings a unique dimension. Together, they create a model of cooperation that has been shared across UNHCR operations globally." These partnerships go beyond financial contributions. They fostered advocacy, innovation, and long-term engagement. From joint field missions with development institutions to youth-focused initiatives like architecture competitions for refugee housing, the approach was holistic and forward-thinking. It was about building a community of humanitarian actors, not just donors.

Beyond her professional achievements, what sets Nisreen Rubaian apart is her deeply human approach to leadership. She does not shy away from acknowledging the emotional toll of her work. Instead, she speaks of responsibility, integrity, and the need to remain grounded. "You must be fair. You must be right. There is no room for unfairness because you don't know what could happen," she says. This sense of accountability has guided her throughout her career, shaping not only her decisions but also her leadership style. As a woman in leadership, particularly in complex and often challenging environments, she has also served as a role model demonstrating that strength and empathy are not mutually exclusive but deeply interconnected.

As she prepares to leave Kuwait, Rubaian does so at a moment of transition, not only for herself but for the partnerships and initiatives she helped build. The upcoming strategic dialogue between UNHCR and the Kuwaiti government in 2026 will serve as a platform to carry forward this momentum, exploring new avenues for collaboration and innovation. Her vision for the future is clear: empower communities, strengthen local leadership, and continue bridging humanitarian and development efforts.

When asked what she would miss most about Kuwait, her response was simple, yet profound. "I will miss Kuwait in its entirety," she says, "its people, traditions, culture, and the genuine warmth that defines everyday life." For someone who has lived and worked across so many countries, this sentiment carries weight. It speaks to a connection that goes beyond professional duty, a sense of belonging that is rare and deeply meaningful.

Brushstrokes rise where homes have fallen

Gaza paints its pain in open-air gallery of survival

BUREIJ, Gaza Strip, April 29, (AP): Young Palestinian artists in Gaza staged an impromptu exhibit on Tuesday, seeking another way to show the world what has happened during the war and the fragile ceasefire.

The row of paintings, like much of Gaza life itself, was displayed outdoors, open to the weather and curious stares. There was a painting of a dove, a bullet hole, a person's silhouette in a territory where the war between Israel and the militant Hamas group has killed well over 70,000 people.

It was a sunny day in Bureij in central Gaza. Children shouted and played as admirers of the paintings took photos and reflected.

"They painted their feelings, their ambitions, their hopes, their visions, over four months during a continuous workshop in my studio," said Ghanem Al-Din, who organized the exhibit of dozens of paintings.

Obay Al-Qarshali, 21, was one of the artists. He said he fled his home in Gaza City in late 2023 after the war began, sparked by the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack on southern Israel. He took only what he could in his hurry, leaving over 30 of his paintings behind.

They are now lost in the bombing and destruction, he said.

His painting on display showed broken glass, cars topped with mattresses and other belongings and

the debris of buildings. All are too familiar for him and hundreds of thousands of fellow Palestinians who have been displaced, often more than once.

Al-Qarshali said he had changed locations at least seven times in the war.

"Because of how much we were displaced and suffered in moving and carrying our belongings, the tents, the crowds, and so much more, I wanted to express something that deeply troubled me: that we left our homes and our safe places, forced to flee, scatter, and change our location. This piece expresses so much," he said.

The timing of next steps in Gaza's ceasefire is unclear. The disarming of Hamas is a major challenge before the territory's shift in governance, stabilization and reconstruction can begin in earnest.

"Critical demilitarization talks with Hamas are continuing," former British prime minister Tony Blair, a key member of the U.S.-created Board of Peace meant to focus on Gaza, told a U.N. Security Council meeting on Tuesday.

Reconstruction likely will cost over \$70 billion and take a decade, a report by the United Nations and the European Union said last week.

It said Gaza's economy has contracted by 84%. More than 371,000 housing units have been destroyed. Over half of Gaza's hospitals are



People look at paintings by Palestinian artists during an exhibition in Al-Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip Tuesday, April 28, 2026. (AP)

"non-functional." Nearly all schools are destroyed or damaged in the territory of over 2 million people.

In a report on Tuesday, Doctors Without Borders said Israel has destroyed or damaged about 90% of

Gaza's water and sanitation infrastructure. And a Mercy Corps study found only 7% of Gaza's agricultural infrastructure remains functional.

While large-scale fighting has eased since the ceasefire took ef-

fect in October, Israeli forces have continued near-daily strikes and fire around military-held zones, killing over 800 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry, part of the Hamas-

led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts. It does not give a breakdown of civilians and militants.

People & Places

Sporty Spice channels rave roots and reinvention

Melanie C says she's bringing joy to club with 'Sweat,' an athletic album from the Spice Girl

NEW YORK, April 29, (AP): Get your heart pumpin'. She'll make you "Sweat."

Such is the promise sung by the artist known as Melanie C, or Mel C and Sporty Spice of the game-changing '90s girl group Spice Girls, in the lead single from her ninth album of the same name. Atop a sample of Diana Ross' "Work That Body" and sleek house-pop production, it is equal parts club banger and workout anthem, something for the DJ booth and a runner's playlist.

Surprised? Don't be. Eight or so years ago, Melanie C began deejaying, reinvigorating her love of rave and dance music - early loves that predate her girl group days. "Deejaying is so much fun, and it's brought so much joy into my life that it made it really important that this album, as an artist, was a lot closer to what I love to play as a DJ," she told The Associated Press.

It might come as a surprise to some of her fans, but the truth is, this musical world has always held a special place in her heart.

"Before I was part of the Spice Girls, I discovered rave culture," she explains. "I was 19. I went into this nightclub. I was on holiday with some friends. I heard this music. I saw people dancing. It was like this utopia I'd never experienced."

Then superstar fame happened, which makes "Sweat" an unusual release for her in at least one very specific way: "I feel like I brought some of my life pre-Spice Girls into this album," she said. "Which is something I haven't really done before."

Melanie C was hard at work on "Sweat" for two and a half years, writing and recording across London, Stockholm and Los Angeles, a period that proved to be uniquely transformative. "My life had twists and turns. You know? I had a long-term relationship that ended. I had a management change. I'm back with Virgin Records," she lists. "I'm in a new relationship. So, there's been difficult moments within it and there's been great times. And all of that is reflected in the album."



Melanie C poses for a portrait in New York on Nov. 18, 2025. (AP)

Appropriately, catharsis appears to be a major theme. Like on the song "Attitude" - with its sample of Inner Life's '80s disco classic, "Moment Of My Life" - where she cheers, "Every night's a Friday!"

Or, even more directly, the song "Pressure."

"Under the pressure," she sings on the explosive electronic track, before offering a one-word solution: "Release."

"We're under such incredible pressure and I think we put ourselves under it, too. And that's why I've loved bringing in this joy of, you know, the club," she said. "For me, as a human, that is the release."

There has long been a connection between dance music, joy and resiliency - particularly in queer club culture. Melanie C always honoring her LGBTQ+ audience has always been key to her work.

"It's a community that's been important to myself and the Spice Girls for such a long time," she said. "It's always going to be a

big part of the music that I make."

If "Sweat" is an album about the freedom of a dance floor, it's a destination Melanie C has worked hard to arrive at - particularly considering her life now, three decades removed from the Spice Girls' heyday. For many, she is still Sporty Spice. And she understands that.

"I'm not Sporty Spice or Melanie C; I'm both of those things. And not just some of the time, but all of the time," she said. "I think it's really important to acknowledge that," to embrace her legacy and build a new one.

"I want to make people feel good," she says of this new musical era. "I want to empower them. I want to motivate people."

But she also hopes they use "Sweat" as a break, an escape, some downtime.

"Recovery is a really important part of working out," she laughs.

Spoken like Sporty Spice - and Melanie C.

Blooming tourism fuels local economy

Guizhou's Azalea sea draws global crowds



An aerial drone photo shows azaleas shrouded in morning mist at an azalea scenic area in Bijie City, southwest China's Guizhou Province, April 1, 2026. Inset: People sing a song of the Dong ethnic group at an azalea scenic area in Bijie City, southwest China's Guizhou Province, April 1, 2026. (Xinhua)

GUIYANG, April 29, (Xinhua): As spring unfolds in southwest China's Guizhou Province, a 125.8-square-kilometer ancient azalea forest in the Baili azalea scenic area in Bijie City stretches across the mountains like a vibrant ribbon, with more than 40 varieties in full bloom drawing visitors from home and abroad.

Cynthia Tan, a tourist from Malaysia, took a direct charter flight from Kuala Lumpur to Guizhou to experience this sea of flowers, thanks to China's visa-free policy.

"The spring in this garden is amazing. Here we can see so many beautiful flowers. It's a special experience for Malaysians," Tan said.

According to Song Jiqiong, head of the ticketing department at the scenic area, in just one week at the end of March, the scenic area received over 180,000 visitors, an increase of 200 percent to 300 percent compared to 2025. The

scenic area has also introduced an extended ticket validity policy this year, allowing visitors to enter the park for free within five days after purchasing a single ticket.

Perched on a hill in Dujuan Village within the Gamu management area of the Baili azalea scenic area, an ancient azalea -- carefully enclosed by a wooden fence -- rises several meters high with an 80-centimeter trunk and a dense canopy of blossoms. Known as the "king of azaleas," it is over 1,200 years old.

"The unique climate, soil and other natural conditions are ideal for azaleas," said Luo Dan, an official with the scenic area. Since the Baili azalea provincial nature reserve was established in 2007, local authorities have strengthened the protection of the ecosystem, natural landscapes and rare plants and animals, preserving sufficient ecological space for this azalea forest belt.

Thanks to long-term conservation efforts, this primitive azalea forest belt, which contains many ancient trees over a hundred years old, has become one of the world's

largest, most species-rich and best-preserved primitive azalea forests to date.

Though the azalea bloom lasts just over two months, the "flower



Tourists visit an azalea scenic area in Bijie City, southwest China's Guizhou Province, April 1, 2026. (Xinhua)



achieved artificial propagation and off-season blooming of azaleas through wild seed collection and development, tissue culture experiments and greenhouse cultivation.

"Artificially cultivated potted azaleas are in short supply both online and offline," said Li Tingyi, the company's general manager. Having successfully bred more than 110 varieties of alpine rhododendrons, the company achieved an output value of over 12 million yuan (about 1.75 million U.S. dollars) in 2025.

Its products sell well both at home and abroad, reaching markets in the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Japan, among others. "This technology has significantly curbed the poaching of wild azaleas and other illegal acts, striking a win-win balance between protection and development," Li said.

The growth of the flower industry has also created close-to-home jobs for local villagers. Wu Xuemin, 53, has been working at Li's company for four years, where she is in charge of seedling management as well as watering and fertilizing. "It's only a five to six-minute ride on my e-bike to work. Super convenient," she said.

In addition, the influx of tourists has boosted local agritainment businesses. In the Baili azalea scenic area, 50-year-old Huang Tianqing and her husband spent many years as migrant workers in coastal regions. Seeing the opportunities brought by the development of tourism in their hometown, they renovated their old house in 2019 and opened an agritainment business featuring 30 guest rooms and a dining area that can accommodate up to 200 people.

"We serve authentic local farmhouse dishes that are very popular with tourists from other regions. Last year, we made over 1 million yuan in revenue, and our family's life has become more prosperous," Huang said.

Data shows that in 2025, the scenic area received over 8 million visits, and the output value of its flower cultivation industry exceeded 10 million yuan.

Beijing unveils 'GO BEIJING' platform to better serve inbound visitors

BEIJING, April 29, (Xinhua): Beijing has launched "GO BEIJING," a comprehensive online service platform offering a full range of services for inbound visitors across different scenarios, local authorities said Tuesday.

The platform was jointly built by the Beijing Municipal Administration of Government Services and Data Management and payment services platform Alipay, in cooperation with other local government departments, such as the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism, the Beijing Municipal Commerce Bureau and the Beijing Municipal Tax Service.

Overseas visitors can access the platform via the international version of

Alipay and enjoy 39 services in 16 languages, including ride-hailing, ticket booking and hotel reservations. The platform also features digital services such as an "AI tour companion."

International visitors can open a "travel wallet" account on the platform, transfer funds into the account via cross-border remittance, and use it to make payments in the Chinese mainland. The service is available to users from 40 countries and regions.

Beijing has been continuously improving services for foreigners. For example, one-stop service counters have been operational since last year in the

international arrival areas of Beijing Capital International Airport and Beijing Daxing International Airport, offering over 20 types of essential services in areas such as finance, communication, transportation, culture and tourism.

Beijing had recorded more than 7 million border crossings in 2026 as of Sunday morning, representing a year-on-year increase of 13 percent. The recent surge in Beijing's inbound tourism is partly attributable to the continuous optimization of visa-free policies. To date, China has introduced unilateral visa-free policies for 50 countries and implemented 240-hour transit visa-free arrangements for 55 countries.

Department continues to operate round the clock to handle emergency cases: Dr Ismail

Cardiology Dept at Mubarak Al-Kabeer hospital performs over 250 catheterization procedures

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, April 29: Head of the Cardiology Department at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital Dr. Abdullah Ismail revealed that more than 250 catheterization procedures were performed in the last five weeks.

In a televised interview, Ismail pointed out that this is the normal workload of the department, as it is operating at full capacity. He confirmed that the department efficiently dealt with acute myocardial infarction patients arriving at the emergency room while adhering to the scheduled procedures. He added the waiting time has been reduced, such that patients can now obtain a catheterization appointment in less than 15 days.

He stressed that the department



Dr. Abdullah Ismail

continues to operate round the clock to handle emergency cases, ensuring rapid intervention and catheterization in record time. He disclosed that complications are pre-



Dr. Fahad Al-Hajri

vented and survival rates are increased through an integrated system, combining highly qualified medical staff and state-of-the-art equipment.



Dr. Ali Al-Sulaimi

Meanwhile, Dr. Fahad Al-Hajri, consultant and interventional cardiologist, disclosed that the department consists of several specialized units – catheterization, intensive

care, echocardiography, advanced heart failure, electrophysiology and outpatient clinics

He also confirmed the availability of 25 cardiology clinics weekly,

indicating the tremendous efforts of the staff expedited patient consultations and reduced waiting times.

Dr. Ali Al-Sulaimi, another consultant and interventional cardiologist, said the hospital is equipped with the latest cardiac and vascular equipment for monitoring indicators, along with a comprehensive system of medical supplies like modern stents, catheters, wires and endoscopic ultrasound devices.

He added that the continuous development in cardiac catheterization techniques greatly contributed to increasing success rates and reducing the time required for interventions.

He emphasized that teamwork among doctors, nurses and technical staff is a key factor in handling critical cases quickly, guaranteeing the provision of accurate and safe medical care for patients at all stages of treatment.



The Golden Triangle border region between Thailand, left, Myanmar, center, and Laos, right, in Chiang Saen on Feb 22. (AP)

Rare earth mining poisoning Mekong River tributaries, threatening 'world's kitchen'

CHIANG SAEN, Thailand, April 29, (AP) Perched on the bow of his long-tail fishing boat, 75-year-old Sukjai Yana untangled a handful of small fish from his net, disappointed by his catch and fretting over whether he can sell them.

Some days Yana earns nothing: demand for fish is falling due to worries over contamination of the Mekong River and its tributaries by toxic runoff from rare earth mines upstream that is threatening millions who rely on those waters for farms and fisheries.

Chiang Saen, a fishing hub in northern Thailand, has been Yana's family's home for decades. "I don't know where else I'd go," he said.

Yana is one of 70 million people in mainland Southeast Asia who depend on the nearly 5,000-kilometer (3,100-mile) Mekong River. Rising demand for rare earth materials is driving an unregulated mining boom centered in war-torn Myanmar, to the west, that is spreading to Laos, in the east.

The Mekong has long faced mounting pressures, from plastic pollution to hydropower dams hemming it upstream and sand mining devouring its banks. But experts warn that the toxic runoff from the mines could pose an existential threat.

Exposure to heavy metals such as arsenic, mercury, lead and cadmium raises risks of cancer, organ failure and developmental harm, especially for children and pregnant women.



Researcher Warakorn Maneechuket dissects a fish at a Naresuan University laboratory in Phitsanulok, Thailand, on Feb 19. (AP)

Thailand is bearing the brunt of the mining boom as such toxins imperil its global food exports - from bags of rice in U.S. supermarkets to edamame snacks served in Japan and garlic used in Malaysian kitchens. Responses remain local and limited, while smuggling and Myanmar's civil war complicate regional fixes, raising concerns for downstream Cambodia and Vietnam.

Agriculture is the backbone of Southeast Asia's economies, said Suebsakun Kidnokorn of Mae Fah Luang University in northern Thailand's Chiang Rai,

warning that rare earth mines are destroying "the world's kitchen."

While cutting banana bunches on a farm in the hilly Thai village of Tha Ton, 63-year-old Lah Boonruang taps his fingers to count the toxin-exposed crops he harvests - rice, garlic, corn, onion, mangoes and bananas.

He irrigates his fields with water from the Kok River, a Mekong tributary that flows into Thailand from Myanmar and is laden with toxins.

"Everyone is afraid of the toxins," he said. "If we can't export, a farmer is the first to die."

The Conversation

No guidelines exist for healthy people to interpret numbers

Wearable glucose monitors offer real-time data

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

□ □ □

By Liao Yue

University of Texas at Arlington

Keeping tabs on blood sugar throughout the day used to be the exclusive domain of people with diabetes. But in 2026, anyone can buy a user-friendly wearable device that provides minute-by-minute readouts on how their glucose levels respond to food and movement.

These glucose numbers are increasingly being tracked by people who are healthy but want to lose weight or optimize their wellness.

I am a behavioral scientist who has spent the past decade studying how real-time data captured through wearable sensors and mobile technologies can help promote a healthier lifestyle. I've found that for people who don't have diabetes, using such a device for a few weeks can bring insight into how their body reacts to their eating patterns and daily habits.

But researchers still don't know how these fluctuations affect health for people who don't have diabetes. In the absence of meaningful metrics for interpreting these numbers, monitoring a constant stream of data doesn't directly help people make health-relat-

ed decisions and can lead to confusion and needless anxiety.

Glucose is a type of sugar that circulates in the bloodstream after being absorbed from food. It is the body's primary source of energy.

For people without diabetes, glucose levels generally stay in the range of 70-120 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) of blood throughout the day. After eating or drinking, levels could exceed 140 mg/dL but should come down to the normal range within a couple of hours. That's because the pancreas responds to a glucose spike by releasing a hormone called insulin, which brings the glucose number down.

Muscles burn glucose for fuel, so physical activity also helps normalize glucose levels.

Glucose levels generally run high with diabetes. People with Type 1 diabetes, whose bodies don't make enough insulin, rely on glucose numbers to tell them when to take a dose of insulin. People with Type 2 diabetes use the numbers to monitor the effect of their medications and lifestyle changes and to get a fuller picture of their glucose control.

Devices that track glucose numbers have been around since the early 1970s. Early versions consisted of test strips that detected glucose levels in urine. Finger prick tests, or glucometers, which were developed in the 1980s, are still used by some people today and measure them more directly by applying a tiny blood drop to a test strip.

To make the technology more convenient, companies in the early 2000s developed continuous monitoring devices that consist of tiny sensors inserted just under the skin that detect glucose in fluid that surrounds cells. Initially, these devices could give readings every 15 minutes for several days at a time, but recent versions sample more frequently.

Today, the technology has evolved even further. The most advanced glucose monitors under development come in the form of watches or rings with noninvasive sensors that use light-based techniques to detect glucose in body fluids. Many also rely on machine learning to provide more accurate readings by detecting each person's unique physiological patterns over time.

For decades, continuous glucose monitors were available only with a doctor's prescription. But in March 2024, the Food and Drug Administration approved the first over-the-counter continuous glucose monitor in the U.S., making them widely accessible.

There's no doubt that continuous glucose monitors are a game-changer. People living with diabetes rely on these devices to track what percentage of the day their blood glucose stays within healthy limits - a measure called "time in range." Patients make decisions about managing their condition - for example, when to take insulin - on guidelines developed by researchers and physicians based on that measure. (AP)

'More physician oversight during treatment'

Texas wants to ban in-home ketamine

WASHINGTON, April 29, (AP) The Texas Medical Board is proposing tighter regulations around ketamine, a popular fast-acting sedative used to treat mental illness, including more physician oversight during administration of the drug and banning in-home use of it.

The revised rules are expected to publish May 8, and the Texas Medical Board is scheduled to vote on the changes in June.

Supporters of ketamine regulations in Texas say the drug, which can cause comas and even death, has grown in popularity because it is easy to access. One of the most common ways people access ketamine is through telehealth prescriptions, which allows them to take it at home while a medical professional monitors them online.

Medical spas, which often do not have the stringent regulations of a medical clinic, also administer the highly addictive sedative, and night clubs promote it as a social drug instead of a potentially dangerous medication.

"People think ketamine is a wellness treatment when it's not. Everyone wants a miracle cure. But the reality is this is a dangerous anesthetic," said Rep. Tom Oliverson, R-Cypress, an anesthesiologist and a former medical board member who helped pass rules on administering sedatives for things like cosmetic surgery and dental work. "So then the question is, who should be allowed to administer those things so that it's done safely?"

Ketamine's role in the death of actor Matthew Perry has increased the drug's visibility, including its dangers. The most recent medical report examining

data from poison centers across the country found that ketamine poisonings are at their highest point in recent history, more than doubling since 2019 to 414 in 2023.

Data provided by the Texas Poison Center Network confirms a steady increase in ketamine-related calls beginning in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, from 15 to 40 calls in 2024.

Of the 167 cumulative ketamine-related calls to poison centers from 2020 to 2025, two resulted in death, and 75 reported moderate effects.

Although ketamine clinics in Texas usually have a physician on staff to respond to bad reactions to the treatment, a physician is rarely on site. Advanced-practice registered nurses and certified registered nurse anesthetists primarily administer and oversee several ketamine treatments at a time in clinics.

The proposed rules, first released in January, included a requirement that if a physician is not on site, medical staff can't administer ketamine to more than two patients at a time. It also prohibits ketamine treatments outside of a registered clinic, including in-home use. The rules also require health providers to complete training on mental health treatment before being allowed to administer ketamine.

"Due to its potency, proper administration methods are essential. Ketamine, unlike opioids, cannot be counteracted by other medications like Narcan," said Spencer Miller-Payne, spokesperson for TMB. "Therefore, it can be dangerous if a patient accidentally moves into moderate or deep sedation from ketamine."

Miller-Payne said the board doesn't

want to reduce access to care, but it also recognizes that the environment in which these ketamine treatments are being offered plays an important role in ensuring patient safety.

Industry leaders criticized the proposal, saying that forcing them to choose between hiring an on-site physician or seeing fewer patients will severely limit the number of people they can serve and will raise the price of treatment by \$300 to \$500.

APRNs and other non-physician medical providers say requiring a physician to oversee them is confusing, unnecessary and insulting because they know the same life-saving measures that medical doctors do. They say the current proposal is a power grab by physicians under the guise of patient safety and will force clinics to shutter.

"It doesn't make sense. Nurse practitioners are running the entire intensive care units with 25 patients who are very sick, and they are comfortable with them doing that, but they can't be in a space with a very safe drug?" said Alli Waddell, CEO and co-founder of Illumna, an Austin ketamine clinic. "They keep telling us it's about patient safety, and it's not."

When used in a clinical setting, ketamine is considered one of the safest drugs to use. In low doses, ketamine creates an altered state of consciousness and, paired with counseling, can lead to rapid relief of severe mental illness for a period of time.

Mental health providers say a lot of ketamine clients are low-income and highly suicidal and can't afford the cost — financially or mentally — of these new rules.



People gather around NASA's Artemis II capsule aboard the USS John P. Murtha at Naval Base San Diego on April 11 in San Diego. (AP)

NASA's Artemis II moonship returns home to launch site after voyage

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., April 29, (AP) The spacecraft that flew four astronauts around the moon is back where its record-breaking journey began.

NASA's Artemis II capsule returned to Florida's Kennedy Space Center on Tuesday, almost a month after blasting off on humanity's first lunar trip in more than a half-century.

Following its splashdown in the Pacific on April 10, the Orion capsule was trucked from San Diego to Cape Canaveral. Engineers will examine the capsule's heat shield in more detail along with everything else in preparation for next year's Artemis III docking demo in orbit around Earth. The capsule's electronic boxes will be removed and recycled, along with research equipment.

The capsule, dubbed Integrity by its US-Canadian crew, carried astronauts deeper into space than humans have ever traveled before. Aside from a finicky toilet, the capsule appeared to perform well during the nearly 10-day voyage, according to NASA.

Commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Canada's Jeremy Hansen are finally getting a break after medical exams and other tests that followed their mission.



This photo provided by NASA shows the Orion spacecraft arriving at the Kennedy Space Center Multi Payload Processing Facility in Merritt Island, Fla. on April 28. (AP)

"Been waiting for this moment," Wiseman said via X late last week, posting a video of himself relaxing on the beach. "There is a lot in my head that I must process and very little has to do with leaving the planet. Today is my first step. I have never in my life felt peace like this."

Until Artemis II, astronauts had not

flown to the moon since Apollo 17 in 1972.

Artemis III will feature a fresh capsule and crew. They will remain in orbit around Earth for docking exercises with lunar landers still in development by SpaceX and Blue Origin. That will set the stage for a moon landing by two new astronauts as early as 2028.

Peshawar secures place in final

Hundreds stuck in long lines as PSL ticket snag slows return of spectators

ISLAMABAD, April 29, (AP): Fans had to wait a month to watch Pakistan Super League games in person after the Twenty20 cricket tournament was impacted by the Iran war.

They had to wait a few extra hours because of a ticketing problem. A day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved the return of fans to stadiums for the remaining four games of the nation's premier cricket event, ticket distribution hit a snag.

"Printing of tickets was done in Lahore and it was supposed to come to Karachi through cargo at 1 p.m., but the flight got canceled," league CEO Salman Naseer told reporters.

So, hundreds of fans waited in line for several hours ahead of the first playoff match - between Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi in the southern port city of Karachi - until tickets arrived.

"We received lots of complaints, but the problem was that we got very short time," Naseer said. "Prior to this only the final was announced (for fans) and our whole focus was on Lahore."

"Passion of fans is there ... My only fear is that spectators will get the tickets, but they might not be able to watch the complete game."

Tickets went on sale four hours before the qualifier started and around 5,000 spectators were inside the National Bank Stadium when Islamabad captain Shadab Khan won the toss and elected to field against Peshawar, led by Babar Azam.



Fans show their tickets as they wait for the opening of the National Stadium for the Pakistan Super League Qualifier cricket match between Peshawar Zalmi and Islamabad United, in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP)

"I came here to support Peshawar Zalmi, especially Babar bhai (brother)," Jawad Ahmed said as he waited in a long queue to get

his ticket. "Had we got more matches in Karachi, we could have got more opportunities to see players in action. Now they have allowed one game, but you can see our excitement. The rush is in front of you."

And Babar didn't disappoint Peshawar fans.

He hit an aggressive 103 off 59 balls, including 12 fours and four sixes, in his team's total of 221-7. Babar's second century this season was enough to secure Peshawar's place in Sunday's final as Islamabad got bowled out for 151 in 18.4 overs to lose by 70 runs.

Pakistan's biggest sports spectacle had started behind closed doors with fans asked to stay home because of soaring fuel prices related to the Iran war.

The government had urged people to restrict travel. Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi also said it wouldn't be right to have 30,000 fans attending cricket matches every day while the government is asking the public to stay home.

Permission for spectators to attend the four playoff games was granted just 24 hours before the qualifier between Peshawar and Islamabad started. The final will be at Lahore next Sunday.

Last week, Sharif approved a request from franchise owners to open the doors to the final before giving approval to the remaining three playoff games on Monday.

Rajasthan hands Punjab first loss



Rajasthan Royals' Donovan Ferreira hits a six during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Rajasthan Royals and Punjab Kings in New Chandigarh, India. (AP)

Teen batting sensation Sooryavanshi continues to inspire

NEW CHANDIGARH, India, April 29, (AP): Table-toppers Punjab Kings' unbeaten run in the Indian Premier League ended when Donovan Ferreira struck an aggressive half-century to lead Rajasthan Royals to a six-wicket win.

Ferreira's 52 not out off 26 balls was supported by impact player Shubham Dubey's equally aggressive unbeaten 31 off 12 balls in Rajasthan's chase of 228-4 in 19.2 overs.

Marcus Stoinis, who had faced just 27 balls this season, earlier struck 62 not out off 22 balls and propelled Punjab to 222-4 after Rajasthan won the toss and elected to field.

Teenage batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (43) continued to inspire and provided Rajasthan a strong start by smashing five sixes and three fours inside the first four overs and Yashasvi Jaiswal made 51 off 27 balls before Punjab pulled back through Yuzvendra Chahal's fine spell of 3-36.

Ferreira and Dubey counter-charged Punjab in the last six



Rajasthan Royals' Yash Punja, left, celebrates with teammates the wicket of Punjab Kings' Cooper Connolly during the Indian Premier League cricket match between Rajasthan Royals and Punjab Kings in New Chandigarh, India. (AP)

overs before Ferreira smacked Marco Jansen for a winning six and also completed his half-century.

"We need to keep showing intent and not be predictable," Ferreira said. "Luckily for me, Shubham took the pressure off me. It is a long tournament, we keep reminding ourselves that different guys need to put their hands up."

Punjab pacers Arshdeep Singh (1-68) and Lockie Ferguson (0-

57) bowled too many boundary balls while the third fast bowler Jansen (0-41) was also expensive. Spinners Harpreet Brar and Chahal bowled well in the middle overs, but pacers kept on leaking boundaries from the other end to ease out pressure on Rajasthan batters.

Chahal picked up three wickets in three successive overs, but Ferreira, who hit six fours and three sixes, was well supplemented by Dubey's three boundaries and

two sixes.

Earlier, opening batter Prabhsimran Singh's (59) stellar season against the fast bowler continued before he fell to spin for the fifth time when he holed out to extra cover as he tried to play big shot against Yash Raj Punja (2-41).

Captain Shreyas Iyer (30), Cooper Connolly (30) and Priyansh Arya (29) all got good starts, but it was Stoinis' late assault that lifted Punjab's total. Stoinis completed his half-century off 20 balls in the last over and smashed Brijesh Sharma (0-42) for 24 runs in the final over.

"This is our first loss, it definitely teaches you a lot," Iyer said. "We have played games where we have chased and defended 200-plus. One of those days where it did not go our way. Want to be positive and optimistic."

Punjab, which came into the Tuesday's game with six wins and a point from its washout game against Kolkata Knight Riders, still leads the table with 13 points after eight games. Rajasthan rose to third with 12 points. Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru also have 12 points but are ahead of Rajasthan on net run-rate.

Team set for entry into Olympic qualifiers

Afghan women's refugee team allowed to play in FIFA tournaments

VANCOUVER, April 29, (AP): An Afghanistan women's refugee team has been granted eligibility for international competitions, some five years after national team players fled their country's Taliban rule.

The FIFA Council, meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, agreed on Tuesday to amend its regulations to recognize the refugee team, which plays under the name Afghan Women United.

While it is too late for the refugee team to try to qualify for the 2027 Women's World Cup in Brazil, it could participate in qualification for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

"We are proud of the beautiful journey initiated by Afghan Women United, and with this initiative we aim to enable them, as well as other FIFA member associations that may not be able to register a national or representative team for a FIFA competition, to make the next step, in coordination with the relevant confederation," FIFA President Gianni Infantino said in a statement.

The first move toward recognition came last October, when the Afghan refugees played in a tournament that included Chad, Libya and Tunisia in Morocco. That event followed years of lobbying on the team's behalf by players, former captain and activist Khalida Popal and human rights groups.

"For five years, we were told the Afghanistan women's national team could never compete again because the men who took our country would not allow it," Popal said in a statement. "I am extremely proud of this decision by FIFA and glad that our collective advocacy has not only changed the future for Afghan women but also ensured that no other national team has to sacrifice what our players did."

There are more than 80 Afghan refugee players scattered

across Australia, the United States and Europe. Two camps were recently held for the women, one in England and another in Australia.

The team, coached by Pauline Hamill, is expected to play a pair of exhibitions during the upcoming June international window against opponents to be determined.

"For the last few years, we have played under many names - as refugees, as Afghan Women United, and as guests of other clubs - but in our hearts, we were always the national team," Australia-based player Nazia Ali said. "To hopefully be able to wear our flag again officially is a feeling I cannot describe."

The Afghan women's team played its last competitive match in 2018. The Taliban, an Islamic fundamentalist group, shut down all women's sports when it returned to power in 2021. The players fled Afghanistan, fearing persecution.

Even before the demise of the team, the Afghan soccer federation was under investigation for misconduct involving the women's program, including allegations of rape and physical abuse. Keramuddin Keram, the federation president, was banned for life by FIFA.

Discrimination is not allowed under FIFA regulations, but the Afghan federation hasn't been suspended from international soccer despite failing to acknowledge the women's team.

"FIFA has finally done the right thing by closing the loophole that allowed the Taliban's discriminatory policies to be enforced on the global stage," said Minky Worden, director of global initiatives for Human Rights Watch. "FIFA's action should serve as a model for how international sports bodies should respond when athletes are systemically excluded because of their gender, ethnicity or beliefs."



Members of Afghan Women United soccer team celebrate after scoring a goal against Chad, in their first international tournament since fleeing their country, in Casablanca, Morocco. (AP)

Boxers from Russia, Belarus to be allowed to fight as neutral athletes

WASHINGTON, April 29, (AP): Boxers from Russia and Belarus will be allowed to compete as neutral athletes by the new governing body recently put in charge of Olympic boxing competitions.

World Boxing announced its decision Tuesday to treat Russian and Belarusian boxers as neutral athletes, emulating the approach usually taken by the International Olympic Committee since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Fighters and support personnel from Russia and Belarus will not be allowed to participate in World Boxing events with flags, uniforms or national anthems. They also must be approved in a vetting process to ensure they have not supported the war in Ukraine or have any links to the Rus-

sian army.

World Boxing was formed in 2023 as an alternative to the International Boxing Association, which received the unprecedented punishment of being permanently banned from the Olympic movement that year. The IOC had lost patience with the IBA after years of governance problems and financial misdeeds compounded by the organization's endemic ties to Russia following its election of president Umar Kremlev in 2020.

The IBA largely ignored the strictures against Russian and Belarusian athletes across sport in recent years, allowing them to compete with their national flags and symbols starting in 2023.

World Boxing was given provisional recognition in February 2025 by

the IOC, which ran the Olympic boxing tournaments in Tokyo and Paris following the banishment of the IBA. One month later, boxing was formally confirmed as part of the program for the Los Angeles Olympics after months of uncertainty because of its precarious state of governance.

World Boxing has gradually accumulated membership from almost every nation - and it even added federations from Russia and Belarus last month. Ukraine's federation joined the organization last year.

Gennadiy Golovkin, the former middleweight world champion who won an Olympic silver medal for Kazakhstan in 2004, was chosen as World Boxing's president last year.

Opening match at Azteca-Banorte Stadium will be historic event

Mexico and its third time hosting the World Cup!



Left: Ambassador of Mexico to Kuwait Eduardo Peña Haller. Right: Hidalgo national Mesoamerican ballgame tournament.



On June 11, 2026, a new World Cup will kick off. This time, for the first time in history, three countries will serve as hosts. Mexico, Canada, and the United States will host the largest number of participating national teams, totaling 48 teams divided into twelve groups. As a result, the World Cup will run until July 19, 2026, when the final will be held at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

In the case of Mexico specifically, a total of 13 matches will be played across three cities: Mexico City, Guadalajara, Jalisco, and Monterrey, Nuevo León. The opening match at Azteca-Banorte Stadium in Mexico City will be a historic event virtually impossible to match, as it is the only venue in the world to have hosted three FIFA World Cup opening matches, as follows:

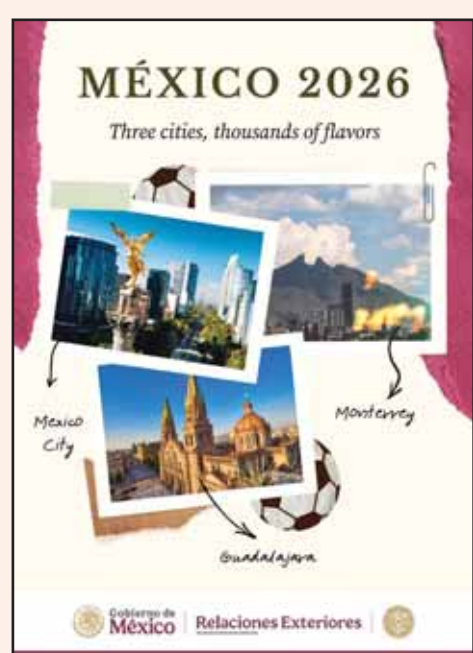
1. May 31, 1970: Mexico vs. Soviet Union (0-0). It was the first World Cup in Mexico.

2. May 31, 1986: Italy vs. Bulgaria (1-1). Mexico.

3. June 11, 2026: Mexico vs. South Africa will be the opening match of the Mexico-Canada-United States World Cup.

Additionally, the Azteca-Banorte Stadium is the only stadium to have hosted two World Cup finals (1970: Brazil 4-1 Italy; 1986: Argentina 3-2 West Germany). Pelé and Maradona lifted the trophy there, and it was also the venue for the so-called "Match of the Century" (Italy 4-3 Germany in the 1970 semifinals).

Also known as the "Colossus of Santa Úrsula," Azteca Stadium opened in May 1966. It once had a capacity to comfortably seat 110,000 fans, but due to subsequent renovations and modernization, its capacity was reduced to 83,300 to make room for restaurants and hospitality facilities



Visual proposal for Gastronomy Week.

inside. By 2026, it was renovated again to meet FIFA standards, while maintaining its iconic essence. It is a temple of soccer that unites generations and continues to make history.

In Mexico, soccer is the most popular sport. According to FIFA data, Mexico is one of the countries with the most professional soccer players worldwide, with approximately 9,464 players distributed across 244 clubs in various divisions.

If the amateur level is included, the number of registered players rises to over 128,000.

Delving into the history of pre-Columbian Mexico, we find that 3,500 years ago the ancient Mexicans (Olmecs, Mayans, Aztecs, Mixtecs-Zapotecs) were already playing a ball game for more than 3,500 years, known as tlachtli by the Aztecs and pitz or pok-ta-pok by the Mayans. Although it is not a direct ancestor of soccer (which has roots more in other ancient games such as the Chinese cuju), this pre-Hispanic game is considered an important precursor to team ball sports played in a competitive, community-oriented spirit that resonates strongly with modern soccer.

The Mesoamerican ball game was played by two teams competing by hitting a heavy rubber ball weighing up to 7 kg, primarily with their hips, elbows, or knees, aiming to pass it through stone rings on sloping walls, representing the movement of the sun and the cosmic struggle. The ball was made of natural rubber (latex) from the rubber tree, which allowed it to bounce – something unheard of in the Old World at that time. Sites such as Chichén Itzá, Tajín, Copán, Xochicalco, Monte Albán, and Tikal preserve some of the most impressive ball courts. In the following video, you can see how the ballgame is still played in Mexico:

The ancient Mayan sport making a comeback – BBC REEL

It's fascinating how team sports unite generations across continents and centuries!

Mexico is ready to participate in the best possible way in this major global competition and to welcome all visitors from around the world, dressed in their finest and with the warmth that distinguishes Mexicans.

'Ready for what's next'

17-year-old sensation Mora could make World Cup history for Mexico

MEXICO CITY, April 29, (AP): Seventeen-year-old midfielder Gilberto Mora could become the youngest Mexican player to appear in a World Cup.

He was among the initial 12 players picked by coach Javier Aguirre in Mexico's World Cup squad on Tuesday, all of them from the local Liga MX. They begin training together next Monday.

Aguirre also called up eight others to fill out the training sessions until the European-based players arrive at the end of May.

Mora just resumed playing for Tijuana after a groin injury sidelined him for two months. Mexico's youngest World Cup player is Manuel "Chaquetas" Rosas, who was 18 years, 88 days when he played in the inaugural 1930 World Cup.

"I had an injury that kept me out for most of the (Liga MX) but I'm happy to be back," Mora said on Saturday. "The recovery was a bit long but thank God I'm fine now, I feel great physically and ready for what's next. I'm 100% in every aspect."

Seven 17-year-olds including Pele have played in a World Cup, the youngest of them Northern Ireland's Norman Whiteside in 1982 in Spain.

Depending on when Mora makes his World Cup debut - Mexico opens against South Africa on June 11 - he would become the sixth or seventh youngest ever.

The teenager has made waves in Liga MX and started for the Mexico team that won the Gold Cup in 2025. But his injury has sidelined him from Mexico's last six matches.

"Morita" could return for



In this file photo, Mexico's Gilberto Mora controls the ball during a FIFA U-20 World Cup quarter-final soccer match against Argentina at National Stadium in Santiago, Chile. (AP)

Mexico on May 22 in a World Cup warmup against Ghana in Puebla, Mexico.

Mora already owns several youngest records. In August 2024, he was the youngest to start and score in the Mexican first division at age 15. In January 2025 he was the youngest to debut for Mexico at 16.

Mexico:
Goalkeepers: Raul Rangel (Chivas), Carlos Acevedo (Santos).

Defenders: Israel Reyes (América), Jesus Gallardo (Toluca), Luis Romo (Chivas)

Midfielders: Erik Lira (Cruz Azul), Brian Gutiérrez (Chivas), Gilberto Mora (Tijuana), Roberto Alvarado (Chivas)

Forwards: Alexis Vega (Toluca), Guillermo Martínez (Pumas), Armando González (Chivas).

Wemby powers Spurs into West semis; 76ers keep season alive

Knicks take 3-2 advantage

SAN ANTONIO, April 29, (AP): Victor Wembanyama had 17 points, 14 rebounds and six blocks and the San Antonio Spurs never trailed in eliminating the Portland Trail Blazers 114-95 in Game 5 of their first-round playoff series.

De'Aaron Fox had 21 points, Julian Champagnie added 19 points and Dylan Harper had 17 as the Spurs led by as many as 28 points in winning their third straight game to advance to the second round.

San Antonio advances to the Western Conference semifinals for the first time since 2017, when it beat the Houston Rockets before losing Kawhi Leonard to an ankle injury and then getting swept by Golden State in the conference finals.

The Spurs will face the winner of the series between the Denver Nuggets and Minnesota Timberwolves. The Timberwolves lead that series 3-2, with Game 6 scheduled for Thursday.

Leonard's injury and subsequent trade led to a rapid descent in the Spurs' fortunes. That futility allowed San Antonio to draft Wembanyama, and the 7-foot-4 center from France was stellar in closing out the series.

Portland cut its deficit to 91-82 with eight minutes remaining following an 11-0 run. But, San



San Antonio Spurs guard Dylan Harper (2) goes to the basket past Portland Trail Blazers guard/forward Matisse Thybulle (4) during the second half in Game 5 of a first-round NBA playoffs basketball series in San Antonio. (AP)

Antonio stuffed the rally, including Wembanyama sending Deni Avdija's floater off the top of the backboard and into the crowd in the final minutes.

76ers 113, Celtics 97

In Boston, Joel Embiid scored 33 points, Tyrese Maxey had 25 points and 10 rebounds, and the Philadelphia 76ers avoided elimination, beating the Boston Celtics in Game 5 of their first-round playoff series.

Paul George had 16 points and nine rebounds for the seventh-seeded Sixers, who lost Games 3 and 4 at home to fall behind 3-1 in

the series before returning to Boston to keep their season alive.

Game 6 is back in Philadelphia on Thursday night, when the Sixers will try to force the series to a decisive seventh game in Boston on Saturday.

In his second game back from an emergency appendectomy, Embiid helped rally Philly from a 13-point, third-quarter deficit. After scoring 13 points in the second quarter, he added 10 in the third and eight more in the fourth, when the Sixers went on a 12-0 run to turn a three-point lead into a 15-point runaway.

Jayson Tatum had 24 points and

16 rebounds for Boston and Jaylen Brown scored 22.

Knicks 126, Hawks 97

In New York, Jalen Brunson scored 39 points, nearly extending his own franchise record for 40-point playoff games, and New York routed Atlanta for a 3-2 lead in the first-round playoff series.

With their second straight lopsided victory, the Knicks positioned themselves to win the series Thursday night in Atlanta. They would have another chance at home in Game 7 if they need it - and it's getting harder to picture why they should.

The Hawks took a 2-1 lead in the series with one-point victories in Games 2 and 3, but a pretty sizable gap between the teams has appeared since. The Knicks led by 24 on their way to a 114-98 win in Game 4 in Atlanta and by 32 on Tuesday, when the lead was never below double digits in the second half.

OG Anunoby added 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Knicks, while Karl-Anthony Towns had 16 points, 14 rebounds and six assists. The Knicks need one more victory to reach the second round for the fourth straight season, which would continue their longest streak since advancing nine straight times from 1991-92 through 1999-2000.

Jalen Johnson had 18 points, 10 rebounds and six assists for the Hawks. Dyson Daniels scored 17, but CJ McCollum, the catalyst of both Atlanta victories, had just six.

Iran federation officials absent from key Asian soccer leaders meeting

VANCOUVER, B.C., April 29, (AP): Representatives from Iran's soccer federation were not present Tuesday at the largest formal meeting of Asia's soccer leaders before this summer's World Cup.

In the presence of FIFA President Gianni Infantino, there was no discussion at the Asian Football Confederation Congress about Iran's participation in the tournament or whether the team's games should be moved out of the United States because of the conflict between the two nations.

There have been concerns that visa issues could impact the Iranian delegation's ability to travel to both Tuesday's confederation meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, and the overall FIFA Congress on Thursday, as well as the World Cup starting on June 11. The 48-team tournament is being hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

It was not clear if visa issues prevented Iranian representatives from attending the AFC Congress. However, as the nine AFC teams that qualified for the World Cup were presented with commemorative gifts, it was announced that Iran would receive its token "once they arrive."

An Iranian government spokesperson said last week that the national team was

preparing for "proud and successful participation" in its World Cup games in the United States.

FIFA, soccer's international governing body, has consistently said Iran will stick to the World Cup game schedule decided last December, before the U.S. and Israel launched military attacks on Feb. 28, and has refused to entertain suggestions that the team's games be moved to Mexico.

"Now even more, now that the world is going through a very, very delicate, difficult, dangerous time with many conflicts, and many of you are directly affected and involved in these conflicts," Infantino told the AFC leaders. "Now even more, we need to find ways to build these famous bridges, or maybe to build football fields instead. And to build competitions where people can join and come together."

Iran is in Group G with Belgium, New Zealand and Egypt. Iran's planned training camp would be in Tucson, Arizona, and the team opens the World Cup on June 15 against New Zealand in Inglewood, California, near Los Angeles.

Iran goes on to play Belgium in Inglewood on June 21 before facing Egypt in the final group match in Seattle on June 26.

FIFA to pay out \$100 mln in extra cash to help cover World Cup teams' costs in North America

VANCOUVER, April 29, (AP): FIFA is paying out more than \$100 million in extra cash to World Cup teams to help cover higher-than-expected costs of being in North America.

FIFA's ruling council agreed Tuesday to increase the basic payments to each federation by \$2 million to a minimum of \$12.5 million. The governing body is expecting revenue of at least \$11 billion for the tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico that starts June 11.

Some of the 48 federations, especially from Europe, told FIFA that the prize money structure and payments for preparation costs that had been set last year would see them lose money on the tournament unless their team went deep into the knockout rounds.

Teams playing games in the United States also face some tax obligations that are exempted in Canada and Mexico.

The financial support for pre-tournament training and expenses will now rise to \$2.5 million from \$1.5 million and each federation gets a \$1 million raise in basic prize money to \$10 million, the FIFA Council

agreed at a meeting in World Cup host city Vancouver.

The total prize money fund of \$655 million that was announced in December is set to give \$50 million to the eventual champion.

Argentina's federation got \$42 million in prize money for winning the 2022 tournament in Qatar. That 32-team edition had a total prize fund of \$440 million.

FIFA said it will also allocate an extra \$16 million in "subsidies for team delegation costs" and giving more tickets to each federation for its games.

Under the World Cup regulations, FIFA is already obliged to pay for business-class return flights for each federation to travel to the tournament plus board and lodging for a 50-person delegation. The hotel payments start five nights before a team's first game and one night after it is eliminated.

FIFA also covers the cost of domestic travel for up to 50 delegation members, and "a dedicated fleet of vehicles, including an equipment truck."

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Cherif Samba (left)/Ahmed Janko of Qatar celebrate after the beach volleyball men's final match between Abolhassan Khakizadeh/Amir Ali Ghalehnoovi of Iran and Cherif Samba/Ahmed Janko of Qatar at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, south China's Hainan Province. (Xinhua)

Sports

AFC suspends bidding for 2031, 2035 Asian Cup to improve coordination

VANCOUVER, April 29: Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and First Vice President of FIFA, said the decision to suspend the bidding process for the 2031 and 2035 AFC Asian Cup editions was taken to enhance coordination and efficiency among prospective host nations.

Speaking at the 36th AFC Congress in Vancouver, Canada, Sheikh Salman stressed that the move is intended to ensure greater alignment between countries interested in hosting the tournament. The meeting was attended by FIFA President Gianni Infantino, along with continental federation leaders and representatives of Asian member associations.

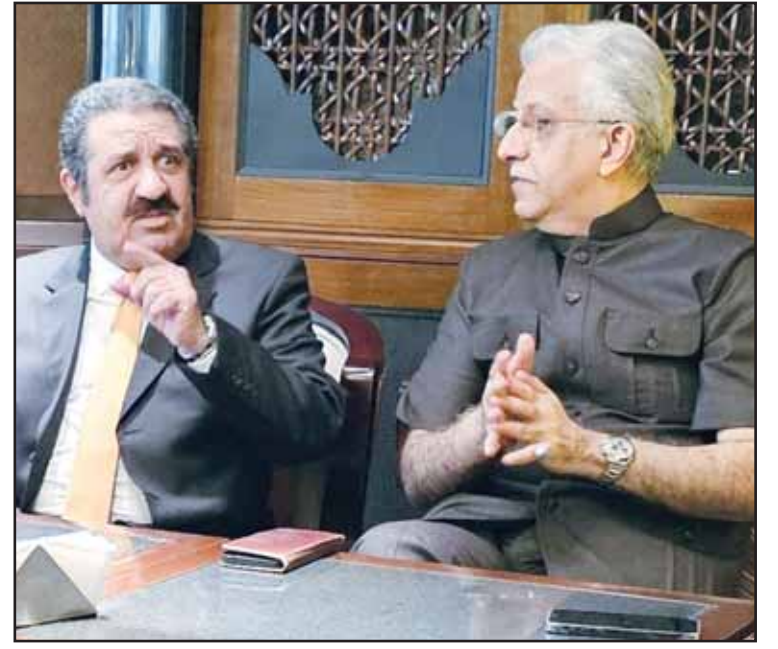
Earlier, Kuwait Football Association President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef confirmed that Kuwait had entered the race to host the 2031 and 2035 Asian Cups, competing against bids from Australia, India, South Korea, and Japan, as well as a joint proposal from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—marking a significant step for Kuwaiti football.

In a statement from its headquarters in Malaysia, the AFC highlighted Sheikh Salman's emphasis on unity and continued growth across Asian football, praising the commitment of national and regional associations.

He noted that the past year represented a turning point for the sport in Asia, driven by sustained efforts from member associations to maintain and develop football activities across the continent.

Sheikh Salman also pointed to a new phase of record investment in national associations, regional bodies, and clubs, supported by reforms included in the 2025 financial statements and the 2027 and 2028 budgets approved by the Congress, aimed at strengthening financial stability and building on current momentum.

He concluded by wishing success to nine Asian teams preparing for the upcoming World Cup, while commending the progress made by the Saudi Arabian Football Federation and the local organizing committee of the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 as preparations continue for the tournament scheduled next January.



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef with Sheikh Salman

PSG edges Bayern in 9-goal thriller for the ages

'An exceptional match'

PARIS, April 29, (AP): Titleholder Paris Saint-Germain trailed early, led by three goals and ultimately held on for a pulsating 5-4 win over Bayern Munich in the highest-scoring semifinal match in Champions League history.

And there's still next week's second leg to come.

PSG built a 5-2 lead early in the second half thanks to two goals each from flying winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Ousmane Dembélé at Parc des Princes.

"We deserved to win, we deserved to lose, we deserved to draw," PSG coach Luis Enrique said. "It was an exceptional match, I have never experienced a match of such intensity as a coach. I have never seen a rhythm like that, it was incredible, you have to congratulate all the play-

ers."

Down by three goals, Bayern fought back brilliantly.

Defender Dayot Upamecano's header midway through the second half from Joshua Kimmich's free kick gave Bayern hope and Luis Díaz's stinging strike made it a one-goal deficit heading into next Wednesday's return leg in Munich.

"I think something special can happen at home, there will be 75,000 people, it will be a hell of an atmosphere," Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said. "The Allianz Arena is a mythical area where Bayern has enjoyed much success."

Rather than scale back and defend more, Kompany said he was ready to take even more risks.

"There is no middle ground," he said. "We will give everything, everything, everything we have. We're waiting for them, we want this."

Kompany was suspended and watched from the stands, so assistant Aaron Danks took over on the touchline as Bayern lost for the first time in any competition since Jan. 24.

Harry Kane's penalty gave Bayern the lead in the 17th minute and Kvaratskhelia equalized soon after for PSG. Midfielder João Neves - who is 5-foot-7 - then headed PSG ahead from a corner.

A dramatic first half saw Michael Olise equalize for Bayern after bursting into the area before Swiss referee Sandro Schärer awarded a penalty for PSG when a video review spotted a handball from Canada defender Alphonso Davies.

PSG's penalty was contested by Bayern's players. Davies turned his body to Dembélé's right-wing cross but the ball bounced off his hip and hit his arm. Although Davies was turning away from play he failed to keep his hands behind his back.

"The rules about handball change every week," Kompany said. "The ball hits the body then the hand and



PSG players celebrate at the end of a Champions League semifinal, first leg, soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich in Paris. (AP)

you give a penalty, I don't agree." Dembélé fired the penalty past Manuel Neuer - who guessed the right way - to send PSG ahead 3-2 at the break.

"Two great teams who attack and don't question themselves," Dembélé said. "It was an incredible match, but now we go to Munich to qualify. We won't change our way of playing, and it will be two teams who attack."

Bayern started well. Moments after PSG defender Marquinhos was shown a yellow card for stopping Díaz in his tracks, the left winger earned a penalty when he was fouled by Willian Pacheco, and from the spot Kane beat goalkeeper Matvey Safonov for his 13th goal of the competition - two behind Real

Madrid's Kylian Mbappé - and 54th goal of another prolific season.

Safonov made a good save moments later from Olise, then Dembélé missed a one-on-one.

PSG equalized in the 24th when Désiré Doué's pass found Kvaratskhelia on the left and the Georgia star cut inside before curling the ball into the bottom right corner for his 10th goal of the competition.

Dembélé and Doué missed further first half-chances from counterattacks which exposed Bayern's tactic of playing with a perilously high defensive line.

The lesson was not heeded in the second half as PSG scored twice from rapid counterattacks.

Kvaratskhelia rifled in a powerful shot in the 56th after running onto a ball across the area that eluded all the defenders and Bayern's poor defending was exposed again two minutes later. Doué was given far too much room before feeding Dembélé on the left, and he scored with a low shot off in the post for a 5-2 lead.

"You were standing on the field going 'what's going on here?'" because we definitely weren't three goals worse," Kimmich said. "It was important that we stayed relatively calm."

But at the end, PSG was struggling and Pacheco headed Kimmich's looping header off the line with seconds remaining in stoppage time.

"It was a very, very intense game," Bayern defender Jonathan Tah told Prime Video. "We showed what sort of a team we are, that we can cope with adversity and also with difficult refereeing decisions."

Luis Enrique was exhausted just watching. "I'm so tired, and I didn't run a single kilometer," he said. "So I don't know how the players are feeling."

He does not expect any respite next week. "I just asked my staff 'how many goals do you think we will need to win this match?' They said 'minimum three.' Bayern Munich in their stadium are even stronger but we will try and show the same mentality."



Bayern's Luis Diaz, foreground, controls the ball as PSG's Achraf Hakimi tries to stop him during the Champions League semifinal first leg soccer match between Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich in Paris. (AP)

Qatar retains beach volleyball title at Asian Beach Games

SANYA, April 29, (Xinhua): Defending champions Cherif Samba and Ahmed Janko of Qatar retained the men's beach volleyball title at the Asian Beach Games, while Thailand won the women's competition in Wednesday's action.

The Qatari duo, both former Olympic bronze medalists from Tokyo 2020, entered the final undefeated and showed their class by beating Iran's Abolhassan Khakizadeh and Amir Ali Ghalehnoovi 21-15, 21-12.

"I want to share the victory with my family," said Samba, adding that staying focused was the key to their dominant performance.

It is Iran's second silver medal in men's beach volleyball at the Games, after the team finished runners-up in 2014.

Thailand made history in the bronze-medal match, beating Oman 21-18, 21-15 to secure their first-ever men's beach volleyball podium at the event. Earlier in the day, Thai pair Worapachayakorn Kongphoparatwadee and Taravadee Naraphornratprut too strong for Japan's sisters Non and Ren Matsumoto, winning the women's final 21-17, 21-15.

China's Jiang Kaiyue and Dong Jie took the bronze after a 21-14, 18-21, 15-13 victory over another Thai duo, Salinda Mungkhon and Patcharaporn Seehawong.

"I just couldn't hold back my tears," said Dong. "We are a new partnership and we kept encouraging each other under huge pressure. This medal means everything to us," she added.

The Asian Beach Games, held in the southern Chinese resort city of Sanya, run from April 22 to 30.

Iran edged China 3-2 in the final round-robin match to claim its first men's water polo gold medal at the 6th Asian Beach Games on Wednesday, while China took silver for its best-ever finish.

Affected by weather conditions, the match, originally scheduled for 3:30 p.m., was brought forward to 8 a.m. Both China and Iran entered the final round with four straight wins, making their meeting a direct title decider.

China fought back from a 1-2 deficit in sets to level the match and force a penalty shootout. Iran's goalkeeper then made a crucial save on China's third attempt to seal victory for his side.

"We came here with the goal of winning the gold medal, and this is the result of our long-term training," said Iran's Amin Ghavidel Hajiaghha.

"China is a very strong and young team. Sanya has brought us good luck, and we appreciate the excellent organization by the host." "Although we lost, we performed well today," said Chinese goalkeeper Zhang Yiwen. "I failed to make the key save at a crucial moment, but it will motivate me to improve. We will now fully prepare for the Asian Games and the qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics." Kazakhstan, winner of the previous five editions, took bronze this time. Head coach Damir Temyrkanov said, "We have indeed won multiple titles before, but beach sports are not very developed in Kazakhstan, as our country experiences winter for about half the year. We have lacked competition experience in recent years, and we would like to have more matches with other teams in the future." South Korea finished fourth with two wins, followed by China's Hong Kong and Thailand.

'Players can be penalized with a red card if they cover their mouths'

FIFA push for new red-card rules at WC approved

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, April 29, (AP): Rules for showing red cards to players at the World Cup were updated Tuesday because of two controversies in international soccer this year.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino pushed for changes after Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni tried to hide verbal insults toward Vinícius Júnior in a Champions League game and Senegal's team walked off the field to protest a referee's decision in a heated and chaotic Africa Cup of Nations final.

Soccer's rulemaking panel, the International Football Association Board, agreed that players can be penalized with a red card if they cover their mouths when verbally confronting another player.

The rule is not mandatory within The Laws of the Game but gives competition organizers like FIFA the option to use it.

It was unanimously approved by IFAB officials from FIFA and the four British soccer federations at a special meeting Tuesday in Vancouver, British



FIFA President Gianni Infantino addresses delegates during a CONMEBOL Congress in Quito, Ecuador. (AP)

Columbia, ahead of the FIFA Congress on Thursday.

FIFA's proposal followed Vinícius, backed by Real Madrid teammate Kylian Mbappé, accusing Prestianni of making a racially charged insult while raising his jersey to cover his mouth during the game in February.

Last week, UEFA handed Prestianni a six-game ban - three of the games deferred for a probationary period - for the verbal

abuse, which it said was homophobic. UEFA could not prove the racial insult which Prestianni denied, though he admitted using a homophobic slur.

If Prestianni is selected for Argentina's World Cup squad, he must sit out the defending champion's first two matches in June, although the ban can be appealed.

"At the discretion of the competition organizer, any player covering their mouth

in a confrontational situation with an opponent may be sanctioned with a red card," IFAB said.

IFAB also agreed any player who leaves the field in protest of a referee's decision can be sanctioned with a red card. The rule also applies to team officials who urge players to leave the field.

Senegal players left the field during stoppage time of the AFCON final in January to protest host nation Morocco being awarded a penalty when the score was 0-0. Play was delayed for nearly 15 minutes before Morocco's spot-kick was saved. Senegal scored in extra time to win the title.

Senegal was later stripped of the title by an appeals panel of African soccer's governing body, and the case will now be judged at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland.

IFAB said the amendments will be communicated to all 48 teams playing in the World Cup starting June 11, hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.